HOW DO FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE A SELF-REGULATED LEARNING INTERVENTION IN A COMPOSITION COURSE

by

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A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Arts
Community College Education

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Fall Semester 2016
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA
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Acknowledgements

There are so many people who supported me on this journey. I begin by thanking my family, especially my husband Mike. Your steadfast belief in me, your constant cheerleading, your sense of humor, and your “threat” that you were going to a graduation in 2016 whether I was there or not, sustained me and kept me going. Truly, I never would have started down this road, let alone finished it, without your support.

To my children, Madeline, Michael, Rebecca and Gregory. I have been a student for most of your lives. I’m pretty sure I’m done now, but I hope you never stop learning.

To my committee chair Dr. Shelley Reid, who has been working with me on versions of this research project for several years. Thank you for your supportive and collaborative approach to guiding me through this project. Your wise counsel has made me so grateful that I chose you as my chair. Both my research project and this report are many times better because of your involvement.

To my committee members, Dr. Jan Arminio and Dr. Amy Swan. Thank you for availing yourselves when I had questions or when I needed feedback. Your accessibility and willingness to provide help and your constructive input were crucial to the quality of this project. Thank you for agreeing to be on my committee.

To the students who participated in the intervention. Thank you for agreeing to let your words be published. My hope is that your experiences will guide college instructors as they design self-regulated learning curriculums for their courses.
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Abstract

HOW DO FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE A SELF-REGULATED LEARNING INTERVENTION IN A COMPOSITION COURSE

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George Mason University, 2016

Dissertation Director: Dr. E. Shelley Reid

This dissertation examines how students experienced and valued a self-regulated learning intervention in their first-year college writing course. This study’s main research question was: how do students experience self-regulated learning in a first-year composition course? The study also looked at the extent to which students valued self-regulated learning and whether they reported altering their writing behaviors as a result of the intervention. Because much of the published research on college students and self-regulated learning is quantitative, conducted in pre-post survey formats, much about the nuances of how students learn to self-regulate, and how they apply self-regulatory practices, is unknown. A longer-term qualitative approach was needed to acquire a richer understanding of how students interact and engage with self-regulatory concepts and strategies. By studying student perspectives on their experiences throughout the semester, educators and researchers alike will gain insight into what matters to students about self-
regulation in their first-year writing course, and how self-regulated learning might best be integrated into a content course.

Using a phenomenological approach, this study analyzed the journal writing of students in two sections of first-year composition, as they wrote three major essays for the course. In these journal entries, students created goals and plans, monitored their performance and progress, and reflected on their process at points roughly correlated to stages in the writing process: upon receiving the assignment, about mid-way through composing the essay, and upon submitting their work. The primary data set for this study comprises the online journal entries written over the course of a semester; each student responded to approximately 11-13 journal entry prompts as they wrote their assigned essays. The intervention was designed to take minimal class-time so as to maximize the content learning required in the course.

The study found that students did not immediately take to self-regulated learning as a means for writing achievement. Rather they used the intervention to explore more personal and pressing concerns such as their ability to manage their time, and concerns about learning the expectations of a college-level writing course. Yet, this study also found that many students benefitted from extended and repeated practice with self-regulating, in that they reported improvements in adhering to their planned strategies as the semester continued. Self-regulating one’s learning is not intuitive for most students and so they benefitted especially from having more time and opportunity to practice self-regulation with the deliberate intentionality they needed in order to sustain their learning.
Even so, a few students resisted the experience entirely. Implications for practice, policy and further research are discussed.

Key words:
First-year composition
Writing
College students
Self-regulated learning
Time management
Metacognition
Phenomenology
Journaling
Chapter 1

Introduction

This dissertation is a report of a qualitative study examining whether and how college students participated in and responded to a self-regulated learning (SRL) intervention in a first-year composition course. The study used a phenomenological approach to illuminate how first-year college students learned to self-regulate their learning and how they applied SRL practices to their work in their first-year composition course. SRL is known to have a positive impact on student engagement and academic achievement and, as I will discuss, most colleges and universities teach learning strategies or SRL in some form, in college success types of courses. Yet, much about how students take up self-regulation, and what they do with the SRL learning, is unknown. This first chapter addresses the necessity of engaging students in their learning, and discusses research showing that SRL can have a positive impact on student engagement and academic achievement. This chapter also exposes a gap in the research: much about how college students learn SRL and how they learn to effectively apply the framework to their work, remains unknown.
Background

Colleges and universities clearly see the value in self-regulated learning to the extent that many institutions of higher education teach aspects of self-regulated learning (SRL) in “study skills” or college success types of courses. Research validates the importance of teaching SRL and shows that college students have higher rates of engagement and retention when they learn how to self-regulate through college success types of courses (Ahuna, Tinnesz, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2011; Cho & Karp, 2013; Hofer & Yu, 2003; Karp et al., 2012; Patterson, Ahuna, Tinnesz, & Vanzile-Tamsen, 2014; Reeves & Stitch, 2011). However, other studies suggest that while these courses are useful to students, they are without sufficient learning context, and thus fail to have a long lasting impact on student outcomes (Karp et al, 2012; Kitsantas, Winsler, & Huie, 2008). This is because college success courses tend to be somewhat disconnected from academic coursework, which limits their effectiveness.

It is understood that faculty have an important role to play in engagement efforts. The literature on student engagement finds that engaged students are good learners and that effective teaching stimulates student engagement (Cleary & Platten, 2013; Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek, 2006; Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Powell, 2009; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Tinto (2006), in his work on how engagement impacts retention, suggested the effects of classroom practice upon student learning are “ripe” for exploration (p. 7). Tinto's work on engagement, and more recently, national surveys such as The Freshman Survey (TFS) produced by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program and the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), explore student
engagement on a broad campus-wide level. The surveys consistently find that engagement at the campus-level and in the classroom matters to student success (Tinto, 2006). While student engagement has been a concern of higher education faculty and administrators for many years, what is less clear is how to make engagement happen in ways that enhance student success. The present study sheds light on how students experience and participate in an intervention widely acknowledged to activate student engagement.

This study’s intervention was intended to complement and extend the instruction students might have received in their college success course, but which they were unable to apply in practice. While research indicates a range of positive outcomes for students who take college success types of courses, especially during their first semester, Karp et.al. (2012) suggested that these courses have limited long term impact because students do not have the opportunity to practice the concepts they are being taught. By weaving SRL throughout the first-year composition course (FYC), students would be able to practice and apply SRL to the writing assignments for the course.

Guided by the promising research on SRL and student engagement, and, on a more personal note, compelled by my decade-long first-year composition teaching experiences, I sought a process, or a framework which would help me to guide students as they attempted to structure their academic lives in such a way as to maximize their learning. Before piloting SRL instruction in my writing courses, I experimented with various ways to help my students organize their work for the writing courses I taught. Students reported to me that they were stressed in the course—and with college overall—
and were often disappointed with their academic performance. At the same time, I was aware that while an instructor can do much toward helping first-year students acclimate to the very different educational setting of college, there also needed to be ownership and personal accountability on the part of the students. SRL provides both a structural framework and the personal autonomy that has been shown to help students feel more in control of their learning (Patterson et al., 2014; Reeves & Stich, 2011; Zimmerman, 2002).

Writing, at its core, is a solitary and, for many, a difficult endeavor. It requires not only content knowledge, but also rhetorical knowledge about its context, as well as a range of strategies for managing the complex process of planning, drafting, evaluating, and revising. Because of its difficulty, writing also requires substantial motivational resources and self-regulation. Yet, as the results of this study showed, motivating and regulating oneself is complicated in new situations where the student has little or no experience. These new college students are still acquiring the necessary resources to make sense of academic writing instruction, as well as navigating the complex world of new academic demands and social freedoms. The data acquired from a longer-term, deeper immersion in SRL is needed to understand how FYC instructors can use SRL concepts to support writing instruction, and how students respond to such instruction. Information on how students participate in SRL on a long-term basis is missing from the literature on SRL—yet this information is valuable to content course instructors who wish to incorporate SRL into their courses, as suggested by the research cited above.
This study is based on Zimmerman’s cyclical model of self-regulated learning (1990), which is briefly described below, and in detail in Chapter 2. The three phases of this model of SRL require that students become actively engaged in their learning process by (1) setting goals and planning strategies to help them achieve those goals; (2) monitoring their progress and performance and making adjustments to their strategies if necessary; and, finally (3) reflecting on the cycle of goals and monitoring and applying what they have learned about themselves to the next assignment. By studying how students were applying and adapting the self-regulating learning strategies they were shown throughout the semester, I was able to show which features of the Zimmerman model students responded to, and which proved difficult to master. While the literature leads one to believe that SRL is a relatively straightforward concept, the results of the present study show a more complex picture of students learning to self-regulate their learning. Yet, as the research cited earlier also suggested (Zimmerman, 2000), many participants in this study eventually seemed to show some control over their learning as a result of repeated, deliberative practice.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions were explored and are further elaborated upon in Chapter 3:

- **RQ1**: How do students experience a self-regulated learning intervention in a composition course?

- **RQ2**: What facilitates or prevents a student from responding to SRL in a composition course?
RQ3: How do students value the concept of SRL? How does their valuing SRL influence their lived experience?

Understanding how students are using the self-regulatory skills they are learning is useful for instructors who wish to incorporate self-regulated learning into their classwork. Writing theorists have recognized that writing is a self-regulatory process requiring a great deal of self-discipline, and a willingness to devote personal time, and effort to a text until it communicates effectively. Yet, as the results of this research showed (and are discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6), many of the ways students responded to SRL were not composition-specific, but are applicable to any student learning to self-regulate in the academic realm. Furthermore, the successes and failures reported by the students are useful knowledge for any instructor who wishes to incorporate SRL into their instruction. As faculty are brought more fully into efforts to engage and retain students, they may want to know how to effectively and efficiently utilize self-regulated learning in their classrooms. The results gathered from this study may help teachers decide how to bring SRL instruction into their courses.

Another important goal of this study was to learn how a nominal intervention in a content course impacted student experiences with writing behaviors. The intervention was intentionally designed to take no more than 10 minutes of class time, once or twice a week, for the duration of the semester. The data gathered showed how, and to what extent, participants reported altering their behavior (and their writing behavior), and their perceptions about SRL in connection with writing, as a result of a minimal intervention. The results suggested that many students benefited from learning SRL, even with a
minimal intervention. Yet, there were some participants for whom a semester-length experience with instruction and practice with SRL was insufficient; another semester of practice might have allowed these students to begin to adjust their behaviors in light of the self-feedback they generated on themselves.

A brief overview of the results of the intervention is presented at the end of this chapter.

**Statement of Problem**

Unlike in high school, in college the responsibility for learning falls on the shoulders of the student—ultimately, the student is in charge of his or her own learning experiences. However, for a variety of reasons discussed more fully in Chapter 2, many students have difficulty adjusting to college life and to the rigor of the college academic experience. This difficulty not only impacts their ability to engage with their course work, but also impacts persistence, retention. This difficulty also has financial implications (college is expensive), implications for pedagogy, and general implications for preparing students for employment in the twenty-first century. This section provides an overview of some of the content areas that converge on student engagement and shows the gaps in current pedagogical practices—factors that may have an impact on classroom engagement, and thus, on college engagement generally. This section also briefly explores some of the implications of a lack of engagement in the classroom and why higher education officials and faculty will benefit from a deeper understanding of how students respond to and participate in SRL.
The importance of student engagement both on campus and in the classroom is widely accepted and is most critical during the first year of college (Powell, 2009; Tinto, 2006). Research shows that it is the first-year students who are the mostly likely to leave school; therefore retention scholars view engaging students in their first year as especially critical (Levitz, Noel & Richter, 1999; Powell, 2009; Tinto, 1993; Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot, 2005). Student engagement in educational activities is positively related to both grades and persistence (Kuh, 2005), so institutions are now paying closer attention to first-year students by developing interventions to reach them before they have an opportunity to fail. Some of these interventions include redesigning orientation, creating living-learning communities, and requiring a “college-success” type of course. Student behavior and engagement can certainly be influenced by the institution, but it can also be proactively addressed in the classroom. As retention efforts move into the classroom, composition faculty are particularly well-positioned to inspire engagement.

The first-year composition course (FYC) is often a troublesome one for first time college students. First-year composition is often considered a gateway course, defined by Marsh, Vandehey, and Diekhoff (2008) as a credit-bearing course which is typically a mandatory first- or second-year course that has been shown to predict future student success at college. There are many reasons students might struggle in FYC—among them are a lack of preparation from high school, a lack of confidence in writing ability, seeing little value in the course, not knowing how to engage or take responsibility for themselves, or simply an inability to keep up with the work (McCarthy & Kuh, 2006). These factors impact the degree to which students engage with their work.
Furthermore, engagement and responsibility for learning can be especially problematic for first-year students. This is because new students particularly rely on previously learned ways of coping when they encounter new circumstances, including preparing for class (Dembo & Praks-Seli, 2004; McCarthy & Kuh, 2006). The cyclical phases of SRL can help by giving students a structure by which to measure and observe their level of engagement and academic achievements. And while research shows that all people are self-regulated to some degree (Bandura, 1986), educators should not assume that students know how to self-regulate in the academic realm. Educators also cannot assume that simply because students show up for class, learning is occurring. SRL has been shown to be effective in increasing academic achievement (Masui & DeCorte, 2005; Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990) because it requires that students deliberately and actively engage to help themselves perform better.

Finally, beyond engagement and retention, some researchers suggest that learning how to self-regulate is an important 21st-century skill (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2015; Wolters, 2010). Therefore, giving students more practice and experience with SRL in a classroom setting is not an unreasonable investment of classroom time. Self-regulated learning involves competencies that are necessary for students to be effective learners within an academic context as well as to function productively beyond college (Zimmerman, 2002). There are currently no other published, qualitative studies looking at how students respond to and value SRL in a content course; thus the results presented here will help instructors refine their practice and pedagogy to maximize student practice and engagement with SRL.
FYC is an ideal space to teach first-year students the expectations and goals of college writing, as well as to introduce ways to become more engaged and reflective with their learning and to break away from the (possibly unproductive) habits formed by the standardized testing culture. Writing in college is a student-centered endeavor rooted in discovery and process which is very different from the writing most students have done in high school. Unlike in the standardized testing culture of middle and high school, college students will be expected to take an active, exploratory role in their learning and writing process (Lumpkin, Achen & Dodd, 2015; Schuster, 2004; Shafer, 2005). Helping students to think about thinking and teaching the practice of mindfulness will increase their ability to learn new skills by applying existing knowledge appropriately (Beaufort, 2007). These are precisely the skills learned and refined when a student engages in self-regulatory processes. The students entering our composition classrooms today have come from more than a decade of the No Child Left Behind Act culture where testing and teaching to the test focus on writing to conform to a standard (i.e., the five paragraph essay) (Shafer, 2005). Lost in the testing culture is any sense of audience or voice and the concept that writing is an organic exploratory process with no specific “right” answer. Incorporating SRL into a composition course, as a way of spurring engagement with course material and engaging in the process of writing and learning in general, is not an unreasonable stretch of the curriculum.

**Purpose and Significance of Study**

While educators can still learn from the traditional data points typically gathered to assess SRL (pre-test and post-test questionnaires, GPAs, and surveys), the
contextually-linked data obtained from journal entries in a FYC course is useful in understanding how to adapt SRL training to college students. Thus, this study adds to the literature in several ways: (1) educators can learn more about how, and to what extent, students respond to and value SRL by their online journal entries; (2) educators and administrators can acquire a sense of what is going on in students’ lives (environmental, cognitive, or social concerns) outside the context of the FYC that may both hinder and help engagement with SRL; (3) educators can see how students responded to and reflected on an SRL practice requiring regular, repeated journaling at certain points in the writing process, and whether students saw this practice as useful or valuable; and (4) educators can learn to what extent a minimally intrusive SRL intervention influences students to carry SRL through the semester and into their other courses. Difficult to measure quantitatively, the objectives of this study were analyzed through a phenomenological approach, which allowed for a more complete yet nuanced picture of student engagement with SRL.

The main purpose of this study was to understand how students engaged in and evaluated their self-regulated learning in a content course. As already discussed, studies have shown that to maximize the effect of teaching self-regulated learning, the skills should be taught in the context of a content, or discipline-based course (Karp et al, 2012; Kitsantas, Winsler & Huie, 2008; Zimmerman, 2008; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007). For the present study, I taught self-regulated learning concepts within the context of a first-year composition (FYC) course. Participants wrote journal reflections (over 350 journal entries in total) throughout the semester, which revealed how they responded to,
and interacted with, self-regulating concepts, and how and whether they saw value in self-regulating as they completed the work for the course. The journal entries also revealed the kinds of concerns that preoccupied students as they composed their essays, and the ways they coped or responded to these concerns over the course of the semester.

An additional purpose for the study was to learn whether and how a simple SRL intervention, one that intentionally takes a minimum of classroom time, would affect student uptake of SRL. Because most colleges now require a college-success type of course to spur retention and engagement efforts for their first-year students, students are already learning about some aspects of self-regulation such as time management and study skills. But studies show that students are not transferring what they learn about engagement and self-regulation from those courses into their academic courses (Cho & Karp, 2013; Dembo & Praks-Seli, 2004; Karp et al., 2012). Researchers suggest that instructors of introductory-level content courses should provide first-year students with the skills they will need to succeed in college (Kitsantas et al., 2008) and scholars also recommend that domain-specific interventions be provided for college students (Karp, et al. 2012, Kitsantas et al., 2008). A more closely integrated program between the college success course and first-year courses might have a more significant effect on students’ willingness and ability to self-regulate.

Zimmerman (2008) suggested, in his review of SRL research methodologies, that the diary (or journal) entry is a more sensitive measure of student engagement with SRL than traditional questionnaire measures. Furthermore, he noted that this methodology has much to offer as a way to assess the effects of SRL training in various contexts, and
recommended that more work involving student journals may benefit instructors because they provide a real-time glimpse of how students are interacting with the material. To date, there have been no published studies like the kind herewith discussed. The journaling methodology as seen through a phenomenological approach is necessary to tease out the underlying issues and motivating factors, affecting the ways students respond to learning self-regulatory processes. Because the focus of the phenomenological approach is in uncovering and interpreting the essence of the experience, the procedures allowed students not only to participate in an SRL intervention, but also to write about it as they were experiencing it “in the moment.”

**Theoretical Framework**


**Theoretical Basis of Self-Regulated Learning**

Bandura’s theory of self-regulation explains the natural human tendency to self-regulate behavior: “self-regulatory systems…provide the very basis for purposeful action” (1986, p. 248). As Bandura observed, most human behavior is intentional and is regulated by forethought. He theorized that people form beliefs about what they can do, anticipate the likely consequences of prospective actions, set goals for themselves, and plan a course of action that is likely to produce desired outcomes.
Extending Bandura’s theory to the academic sphere, Zimmerman (1990) proposed that learning regulation could be described in a cyclical process composed of three phases: 1) forethought, 2) performance monitoring, and 3) reflection. These three learning phases are influenced by various motivational beliefs such as self-efficacy beliefs, motivational beliefs and task value, and the strategies designed to optimize these beliefs (Zimmerman, 1990). These strategies refer to the actions and beliefs that are directed at acquiring a skill or accomplishing a task. For example, a learning strategy might entail that a student seek help from a professor, engage in self-evaluation, or study in the library rather than in the residence hall.

SRL refers to the degree to which students are active and responsible participants in their own learning process (Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2008). Self-regulation is not only a behavior however. It is a process that exists along a continuum, across and within each of the three phases which are closely entwined with motivation, task value, and self-efficacy (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). How deeply students engage in self-regulated learning is driven by their belief in their ability to do a task, the value they place on the task, and their goals or anticipated outcomes. Skilled self-regulators establish goals and create a plan for how to proceed. Their goals motivate them to behave in such a way so as to ensure success. And they self-evaluate their performance against their personal goals (Zimmerman, 2002). Unlike skilled self-regulators, novice self-regulators often have no goals or plans, and attempt to self-regulate their learning reactively, relying on comparisons with others to judge their learning effectiveness (Zimmerman, 2002).
Zimmerman’s three phased model is an easily understood framework that can be taught successfully (although it requires practice). It also corresponds to logical (though not static) points in a student’s writing process. Writing is clearly a self-regulatory activity which requires preparatory processes, performance, and self-judgments or self-reactions (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007). However, researchers are still trying to determine how students strive to improve their writing through self-regulatory processes and what motivates them to do so (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007). The present study, in which students recorded their processes “in the moment,” will help researchers and practitioners get closer to understanding how students enact self-regulatory practices as they complete their writing assignments.

**Overview of Research Design**

The present qualitative study used a phenomenological approach to understand the students’ lived experience. The phenomenological approach aims at a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of our everyday experiences, and offers “plausible insights” that help people understand that experience more completely (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). Because this approach is concerned with the “concreteness as well as the essential nature” of a lived experience (van Manen, p. 39), this approach allows a researcher to explore more fully the nature of the SRL intervention experience for the student participants. This methodology, which is also a philosophy, aims at discovering “the qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and without which, the phenomenon could not be what it is” (van Manen, p. 107). Ultimately, the reader of a phenomenology should be able to sense what it is like to have experienced that phenomenon.
The analysis for this proposed study was guided by the interpretive (or hermeneutic) phenomenological approach. One philosophical assumption underlying the interpretive phenomenology is that presuppositions or knowledge on the part of the researcher are valuable to the inquiry. Indeed, van Manen (1990) claimed that there was no such thing as un-interpreted phenomena. This distinction will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Briefly, however, the interpretive phenomenology embraces the idea that individuals’ experiences are influenced by the world in which they live (both the participant’s and the researcher’s). Gadamer (2006) observed that all human knowledge is “linguistically mediated” (p. 48); as a result, he argued, the primary task of hermeneutics is to show what it means to integrate all knowledge into the personal knowing of the individual experience. As it relates to the present study, this integration blends the meanings articulated by both the participants and the researcher within the focus of the study.

This inquiry studied the journal writing of the participant students and described their experiences so as to understand the “meaning structures” of the experience for the participants (van Manen, 1990, p.10). Students’ online journal entries showed to what extent they reportedly practiced and valued SRL, and how that valuing influenced their responses to and participation with SRL as well as their writing behaviors. In addition, their journal entries showed the behavioral, environmental, and personal influences which facilitated and hindered their responding to or participating in SRL. Finally, their entries helped to clarify whether a nominal SRL intervention had an effect on student behavior outside the context of the composition course. The phenomenological approach allowed
me to focus on the meaning of the experience for the students, by using their words to understand their levels of engagement.

The study was conducted at a small, Catholic university in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The 34 participants in the study were the students in two sections of a first-year composition course during the spring semester. All but one of the students were in their second semester of college, and their demographic characteristics mirrored those of the college as a whole. The primary instrument used to collect the data was the journal writing of the students; secondary sources of data were student interviews and my notes and observations of the course and of the students.

The procedure for the study is described in detail in Chapter 3. Briefly, students were introduced to SRL and were taught about motivational influences and learning strategies as a way to become more self-directed in their learning. Zimmerman’s (1990) three-phased cyclical model of SRL guided the SRL intervention. As in most FYC courses, the bulk of the course work was comprised of written essays of varying length and complexity. At various points in the essay-writing processes, students responded to reflective journal prompts focused on a particular phase of SRL. The reflective writing continued for each of the first three major essays assigned in the course (there was not enough time to write journal entries for the fourth essay). These reflective writings were recorded in the private Blackboard Journal module in the online course management system—only I and the individual student could read their entries. In addition to regular reflective journaling, early in the semester students were asked to create course-related long term goals for themselves. And at the end of the semester, they were asked to reflect
on their attainment or progress toward those goals. After final grades were posted, early in the following semester, all students were invited to a semi-structured interview. Data analysis is discussed in Chapter 3.

**Overview of Results**

The findings of the present study will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Briefly, however, the phenomenological approach combined with the journaling method showed that student uptake of SRL was neither simple nor straightforward. Models of self-regulation all share the assumption that students can already actively regulate their motivation and behavior and through these processes, enhance performance (Hofer & Yu, 2003; Zimmerman, 1989). Yet, when asked, none of the participants claimed to have ever heard of or practiced self-regulated learning, and the reflections in their journals showed varying degrees of comfort and control (with both the course itself, and with SRL practice) as students wrote about their processes. This study showed that learning to self-regulate one’s learning is neither simple nor easy for many students, who are at the same time, thrust into a completely new educational and social situation. A key finding showed that this novice status, in the course and in the college, is a factor which could hinder, or stall, a student’s ability to regulate their learning. Students seemed to need to have a baseline of self-knowledge and experience first, and only then could they focus on self-regulatory processes. Yet, the length and repetitious nature of the intervention allowed students to show that they evolved and developed both in the ways they handled their course work, and in their attempts to regulate their learning.
Overview of Study Limitations

A detailed discussion of the study’s limitations is presented in Chapter 3; however, it is important to briefly mention them here. First, while the number of participants was somewhat large for a phenomenology, the study was limited in that any generalization to a wider population may not be appropriate. A larger number of participants would be necessary to gain sufficient yet varied data on the nature of the experience for the participants. A second limitation to this study was instructional in nature: as the researcher I was also the teacher. For a variety of reasons some participants may not have been entirely accurate in their reflective writing (i.e., they might have wanted to please me to gain a higher grade). A few of those journal entries which did seem inauthentic, along with possible reasons for this inauthenticity, will be discussed in the results chapters. The last limitation to point out is that while SRL is known to have a positive impact on academic achievement, this study did not look at grades or any other measure of academic performance. Therefore, it is unknown whether students’ learning or grades benefited from the intervention, outside of what the students themselves revealed in their reflections.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organized into seven chapters, including this first introductory one which provided an overview of the problem of student engagement, positioning it within the realm of self-regulated learning. The implications for lack of engagement for first-year college students and a possible intervention within the context of a FYC were
also discussed. This first chapter also introduced Zimmerman’s model of SRL, a key theory which has informed this research.

Chapter 2 will provide a detailed discussion of the many areas where student engagement and self-regulated learning intersect in the FYC classroom. The chapter begins with an overview of the theoretical framework used for this study, and is followed by a discussion of how self-regulated learning is particularly relevant for first-year students in terms of both engagement and academic achievement. Also included is an examination of the research on self-regulation and writing for first-year students and the relationship between self-regulatory processes and the writing process. Finally, I will explore the research outside the composition and writing context which shows how SRL impacts transfer and 21st-century employability skills.

The third chapter will explain the methodology of the research study in detail, including the method employed, the gathering of data and the tools used to analyze the data.

Chapters 4, 5, and 6 explore the ways students interacted with the self-regulatory concepts and practices they learned through the intervention. As I discuss in an Overview for Chapters 4, 5, and 6, the results of the present study are organized according to the SRL phases in Zimmerman's (1990) model of SRL. Thus, Chapter 4 is an exploration of how students respond to an invitation to set goals and create a plan for meeting their goals. Chapter 5 is an analysis of how students monitored their performance, and Chapter 6 is an exploration into reflection and the ways students interacted with reflecting on their
performance. Chapter 7 offers my reflections on the phenomenological themes and implications for practice.
Chapter 2

Overview of Self-Regulated Learning Research and its Relevance to First-Year Composition

Writing is often a solitary activity. Writers have to envision their final product and write until that version is produced. Along the way, they generate ideas and often rephrase and rewrite several times before they are satisfied with what is written. The act of writing is an example of a behavior that is continuously regulated through self-evaluation. In a college writing course, writing is a process where assignment objectives ideally meet (or perhaps do not meet) personal objectives or standards in order to create an original final product. Many students do not realize that writing takes practice and that competency develops over time. They may also be afraid to take risks in their writing because of the new writing situation of first-year composition (FYC). For these and other reasons discussed in detail in this section, many students quickly become overwhelmed with the demands of their first-year writing course and may fail to optimally benefit from the immersion in academic writing (Sommers, 2008; Sommers & Saltz, 2004).

An acknowledged solution to help the first-year student navigate the new terrain of college is self-regulated learning (SRL). Students are typically introduced to some of the features of SRL in a college success type of course. The present study seeks to extend
the SRL instruction students are exposed to in their college success course to a first-year composition course. This study explored how students in a first-year composition course engaged with SRL in an academic setting. The research uses the structured cyclical format of Zimmerman’s self-regulated learning approach as a framework to guide students through multiple essay assignments through the course of a semester. Students’ observations and reflections about themselves and their work was recorded in written journals.

The present study is useful to several fields of research. Understanding how college students respond to SRL in a for-credit composition course impacts not only composition and learning transfer studies but also retention analysis and student-engagement studies. Higher education is facing increasing pressure from many constituencies to boost degree attainment. Students and parents are concerned with the cost of college and the ultimate benefit, administrators of colleges think about funding sources and graduation rates, and state and national governments focus on employment prospects and the competency and the economic competitiveness of the nation. As I discuss in this chapter, researchers and college administrators are approaching the issue of student success from various perspectives in order to find some general common ground. SRL shows promise as a framework by which students can attain academic success; therefore, understanding how college students engage with SRL helps inform the pedagogy of the instructors of first-year college students. Few published studies look at SRL in the college population – most are conducted with students in K-12. Yet just as colleges face pressure to improve, so do students themselves face an array of pressures
and distractions when they arrive on campus. This study can guide those of us who teach first-year college students understand how and to what extent they are utilizing and valuing SRL strategies in a college composition course, and provides information that will help instructors utilize SRL concepts in their content-based courses.

My primary goal in this chapter is not to present an exhaustive review of all SRL research, but rather to provide a few examples of the research to date in the several areas touched by the present study. To that end, this chapter will begin with a discussion of the theoretical framework for self-regulated learning and define the model I used in this study. Following that is a discussion of how self-regulated learning is particularly relevant for first-year students in terms of both engagement and academic achievement. The third section examines the research on self-regulation and writing for first-year students and the relationship between self-regulatory processes and the writing process. Finally, I explore the research outside the composition and writing context which shows how SRL impacts transfer and 21st-century employability skills.

**Theoretical Framework**

The present study uses Zimmerman’s (1990) model of self-regulated learning to engage students with self-regulation in a first-year writing course. Zimmerman’s model is based on Bandura’s 1986 research into human behavior and is used for this study because it accounts for the underlying behavioral, cognitive and motivational foundations of learning. Furthermore, Zimmerman’s model is divided into three phases which easily correspond to the general stages students will engage with as they compose an essay (it also easily corresponds to the stages of studying for an exam, or learning a new skill).
The model, as described below, is easy for students to understand and relate to, and most importantly, can guide them as they write about their self-regulatory and writing processes through the composition of several essays in a college course.

The following section discusses self-regulated learning beginning with Bandura’s research (1986) into human behavior which forms the basis of Zimmerman’s model of self-regulated learning. The discussion of SRL is followed by research on key motivational features of SRL, and finally a review of the literature on how self-regulated learning and college engagement are conceptually and practically linked.

**Theoretical Basis of Self-Regulated Learning**

Bandura’s theory of self-regulation was first published in 1986. In a 1991 article updating his theory, Bandura explained the natural human tendency to self-regulate our behavior by stating, “self-regulatory systems … provide the very basis for purposeful action” (p. 248). As Bandura indicated, most human behavior is intentional and can be regulated by forethought. He theorized that people form beliefs about what they can do, they anticipate the likely consequences of prospective actions, they set goals for themselves, and they plan a course of action that is likely to produce desired outcomes.

Bandura’s theory is pervasive across contexts and domains of human functioning. Doctors use the concepts to help patients regulate their health conditions, athletes use the concepts to motivate their training, and teachers use the concepts to motivate students to accept challenging tasks.

Bandura (1991) structured human behavior into three sub-functions which he broadly categorized as 1) self-observing, 2) judgment of progress, and 3) self-reactions.
Each of these requires honest and consistent self-evaluation and can provide information to the individual about their behavior and their environment. Bandura (1991) theorized that “knowledge of how one is doing alters one’s subsequent behavior to the extent that it activates self-reactive influences in the form of personal goal setting and self-evaluative reactions” (p. 251).

**Zimmerman’s model of self-regulated learning.** In his work studying self-regulatory mechanisms Bandura was not specifically addressing learning. Rather he was attempting to account for human behavior generally. Zimmerman extended this understanding of human behavior to explain how students learn to account for the behavioral, environmental, and personal influences on their way to achieving a goal. Zimmerman’s social cognitive account of self-regulated learning distinguishes between the effects of personal (self) regulatory influences like self-efficacy and goal orientation and the effects of overt behavioral ones. For example, while Bandura’s three sub-functions might help explain how a patient decides to stop smoking—and then actually does so—Zimmerman is more interested in understanding and explaining how a student resolves to learn, or to attain a certain grade, and then reaches that goal. His model links students’ self-regulatory processes to specific learning or behavioral experiences, and identifies the key processes through which self-regulated learning is achieved (Zimmerman, 1989). This social cognitive approach has been shown to be a trainable approach, as many of the studies referenced below show.

According to Zimmerman, self-regulated learning (SRL) refers to the degree to which students are active and responsible participants in their own learning process.
This means that students personally initiate and direct their own learning rather than rely on teachers or parents. To explain this process, Zimmerman developed three cyclical process phases which are broadly reminiscent of Bandura’s process: (1) forethought and planning, (2) performance process, and (3) self-reflection. As shown in Figure 1 below, these three learning phases are influenced by various motivational beliefs (Zimmerman, 1990). Essential to self-regulation are self-beliefs like self-efficacy, motivational beliefs and task value, and the strategies students employ to optimize these beliefs to help themselves learn (Zimmerman, 1990). Although there are other models describing SRL (e.g., Pintrich, 2000b), the model for the present study is based on work done by Zimmerman (1990) because of its simplicity and its close correlation to the writing process.
During the forethought phase, students specify intended outcomes (goals), and the actions (or strategies) they will take to arrive at those outcomes. They also devise a plan to get the work done. For example, in FYC a self-regulated student will receive an essay assignment, think about learning goals for the assignment, and lay out a plan for achieving those goals. That plan might include strategies such as spending two hours on research, spending two hours on drafting, visiting a tutor, etc. As the task progresses, the second phase of SRL is underway. Here, students continually monitor themselves.
keeping track of their performance in terms of the goals and strategies laid out in the forethought phase. At any point during the performance monitoring process, the self-regulating student may become aware that progress is not going as planned and may decide to either adjust the plan, or to try a new strategy. This awareness of the relationship between actions and the outcomes distinguishes a self-regulated learner (Zimmerman, 1990).

The final phase, self-reflection, refers to students reflecting on their goals (expected outcomes) and evaluating how their strategies and plans worked toward achieving those goals. The student takes (or transfers) the self-knowledge gained from reflecting and evaluates and applies this knowledge to goals and plans for the next task. For example, upon reflection, a student realized that a visit to the professor for clarification of the assignment might have been beneficial. For the next assignment, the student might make meeting with the professor part of the initial strategic plan. The SRL cycle is complete when students consider or reflect on the final outcomes of a task and apply lessons learned to the next task. This feedback loop is a dynamic process in which students monitor the effectiveness of their strategies or learning methods, and react to this self-generated feedback. A self-regulated learner will react by perhaps changing behavior, or adjusting self-perception, or altering the use of a learning strategy. On the other hand, a student who is not self-aware is not likely to set goals and make a plan to achieve those goals, and is unlikely to draw conclusions or make attributions with regard to outcomes.
Zimmerman’s model of self-regulated learning is particularly appropriate for phenomenological study of how students engage with self-regulated learning for two reasons. First, Zimmerman’s cyclical format is easy for a student to visualize and understand. And second, it does not limit the students from discussing any environmental, personal or behavioral issues that may be helping or hindering their academic achievement. Furthermore, according to Zimmerman’s model, the feedback cycle is complete when students draw conclusions for the next learning task cycle. This cycle is relevant in a college course where the material typically builds in increasing difficulty or complexity and may require more time and additional strategic planning. Self-regulation is not exclusively an internal or personal process. The environment and one's behavior influence the personal processes in a reciprocal fashion, but the three influences are not symmetrical (Zimmerman, 1989). And in college, away from the influence of parents, and without daily interactions with teachers, a student's personal or behavioral factors may become the main influence students will need to control as they learn to self-regulate. This study explored the relationship between these three factors as college students experienced and recorded their efforts in a first-year writing course.

**Motivational Sources of Self-Regulated Learning**

Discussion of SRL in relation to the current investigation of how students engage with it in a composition course is incomplete without a general understanding of the motivational aspects of SRL. Writing, especially a first draft, is often a solitary activity and, simply put, one must be motivated in order to finish it. Motivation has been shown to be a critical factor in sustaining and developing learning (Bandura, 1993; Zimmerman,
However, motivation and writing begin to get tangled when considering the roles of self-efficacy beliefs, task value, and goals on the writing process, on the written product, and on learning. The literature makes it clear that if students do not see value in learning tasks, they are less likely to spend much time planning strategies to successfully complete those tasks (Wolters & Pintrich, 1998; Wolters, Yu, & Pintrich, 1996). Additionally, self-efficacy beliefs play a role, especially during the forethought and planning, and monitoring phases (Zimmerman, 2000). Furthermore, research has found a positive relationship between self-efficacy and the use of self-regulation strategies. For example, when learning disabled students are taught self-regulatory strategies, both their writing skills and their self-efficacy beliefs increase (Graham & Harris, 1989a).

There are several reasons why motivation is important for SRL (Zimmerman, 2011): (a) it can increase students’ attention to their learning processes and outcomes; (b) it can influence choice of task and therefore structuring of environment (choosing to practice piano instead of playing a video game); (c) it increases effort to learn; and (d) it increases persistence on a time consuming skill (such as practicing piano). Achievement of an academic goal is regulated in large part through the self-motivating influences just mentioned. Collectively, these motivational beliefs, self-efficacy, task interest or valuing, and goal or outcome expectations have been found to affect the strategic choices that students make, their effort and persistence during learning, and the quality of their reflective processes following performance (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008).

This section will briefly discuss the important motivational features of SRL, and issues of concern for FYC instructors—focusing particularly on those related to the
forethought phase, since without forethought and planning, SRL does not exist. The present study gathered student reflections, and illuminated not only their motivation to participate and engage with self-regulation, but also the extent of their motivation and engagement with their course work and how SRL impacted their involvement with their course work.

**Setting goals.** A critical feature of SRL is that students are setting their own goals, and planning their own strategies to meet those goals. Studies show that when students create their own goals and make their own plan to achieve those goals (as opposed to parents or teachers suggesting goals or outcomes), they are more likely to work toward them (Acee, Cho, Kim & Weinstein, 2012; Zimmerman, Bandura & Martinez-Pons, 1992). Furthermore, teaching students to set goals for themselves enhances their sense of self-efficacy, their academic achievement and their interest in the material (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). This is because goal setting compels the individual to self-evaluate, and as a result to mobilize efforts toward achieving the goal (Bandura, 1986). In other words, goals can be thought of as the standards that regulate an individual’s actions (Schunk, 2001). If students fail to set specific goals, or to self-monitor their behavior and their progress, they will not see connections between their results and the actions they took to get the work done (Zimmerman, 2002). Still, few teachers encourage students to establish specific goals for their work (Zimmerman, 2002). Because the present study used the journal writing of students as they set their goals and created their plans, students’ reflections indicated how successful they were in
creating goals, whether their ability to create goals improved over time, and how realistic and specific their goals and plans were.

According to Flower and Hayes (1981), writers create their own goals and “constantly regenerate or recreate their own goals in light of what they learn” about their writing as they write (p. 381). They defined goals as “‘logic’ that moves the composing process forward” (p. 379). Supporting this research, Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) found that writing regulation was predictive of writing success when students stated their intentions for the piece of writing. Understanding the goal-setting tendencies of today’s students is helpful to instructors, because the vast majority of students have come from a tightly structured and controlled learning environment, driven by the standardized testing culture of No Child Left Behind. They very likely did not set their own goals since those were set by a teacher, a parent, a school, or a state (Usher & Kober, 2012; Zimmerman, 2002). Research has indicated that students in high school often do not adopt the academic goals imposed upon them (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992), but it isn’t clear how first-year college students experience setting their own goals, and holding themselves accountable to their academic goals. The present study clearly showed a wide range of abilities in setting goals (both specific and vague, or non-existent) and similarly, students wrote in varying degrees of specificity about their plans for achieving their goals. Because goals are such an important motivator for students, and the measure by which their ability to self-regulate is evaluated, their varying abilities to create goals is instructive for educators who wish to teach college students how to self-regulate their learning.
**Self-efficacy beliefs.** Self-efficacy describes students’ assessments of their competence to perform a task. The types of goals people set for themselves and the strength of their commitment to their goals, are determined by their perceptions of their abilities to perform the task (Bandura, 1986). Individuals with high self-efficacy tend to be good at setting reasonable and achievable goals for themselves (Locke & Lantham, 2002). Furthermore, students with high self-efficacy are more likely than students with low self-efficacy to work hard, to be persistent when faced with obstacles, and to feel less anxious about their work (Zimmerman, 2002). Self-efficacy becomes more important when students are facing unfamiliar or overwhelming tasks—such as the writing expected in a FYC course. Research has shown that students who held more positive beliefs about their ability to do the writing produced better writing (McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985).

In their survey of first-year composition students, House and Prion (1998) found that students’ initial self-beliefs in their abilities predicted college academic performance in their first-year composition course. House (2000) extended this finding with research which concluded that students’ positive self-beliefs about their academic and intellectual abilities were positively correlated to their academic performance. These findings echoed McCarthy et al. (1985) who found that students holding more positive beliefs about their abilities produced better writing. This may be because when people believe they can accomplish a task they are more likely to engage in the task and to persist even in the face of difficulty (Wigfield, Eccles, Schiefele, Roeser, & Davis-Kean, 2006).
A student’s self-efficacy beliefs then affect academic performance in several ways. They determine how much effort students will expend on an activity, how long they will persevere, and how resilient they will be in the face of obstacles (Pajares, 2002). They also influence the amount of stress and anxiety students experience as they engage a task. Bandura (1986) showed that one’s judgment about what one can accomplish is a powerful determinant of behavior.

A better understanding of the role self-efficacy plays in writing and writing anxiety as well as in learning to self-regulate will assist instructors who want to engage their students effectively. The journal writing in this study provided valuable information as to how students were coping with both their ability to take charge of their learning and their ability to complete the writing assignment. As the participants reflected on their assignments, it began to be clear that for some students, their belief in their ability to complete the assignment had an impact on whether, or to what extent, the students were able to self-regulate their learning. Also discussed in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 will be those specific situations or factors inhibiting self-efficacy and SRL. Pajares (2003) argued that if students are to realize academic success, instructors must work actively to identify and challenge students’ inaccurate beliefs about their ability to write. And Linnenbrink and Pintrich (2003) suggested that future research should be focused on how self-efficacy and other motivational constructs work together to influence student engagement. As students recorded their efforts to engage both in SRL and a writing task, their writing revealed important information about how first-year composition students are motivated.
**Task value.** Purposeful engagement takes a great deal of effort. It is related to the value students place on the task (Stolk & Harari, 2014) and the adoption of goals. Task value (sometimes referred to as task interest), which is a student’s perceived worth of a particular task, is another important source of motivation for a self-regulated learner. Because this study looked specifically into whether and how students valued and evaluated SRL, research on task value is relevant.

Students’ interest in learning not only influences engagement and investment in learning but also the extent to which they will engage in self-regulation (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). Eccles (1987) identified several types of task values that are important in motivation and achievement: attainment value (i.e., the relevance of the task), intrinsic value (i.e., the extent to which the task presents a challenge, invites curiosity, and permits a sense of control), utility value (i.e., the importance of the task), and cost (i.e., how much effort, anxiety, and loss are associated with the task). The present study uncovered information on most of these types of task values as students learned about and practiced self-regulating. Moreover, the intervention occurred in a required course. Thus, they might not have valued the course content like they would in a course in their major. While self-regulating can motivate a student to expend effort on a task (i.e., writing an assigned essay), this study explored in detail how students valued their writing overall, how they valued the learning opportunities presented with the assignments, and how that impacted their ability or willingness to regulate their learning.

Perceiving value in a task has been associated with motivation and interest in activities (Hulleman, Durik, Schweigert, & Harackiewicz, 2008). For example, during the
forethought/planning stage, when students think about how much effort to put into an activity, their interests and values are factored into the decision (Wolters et al., 1996; Wolters & Pintrich, 1998). If students do not see value in the learning task given their general goals in life, they are less likely to spend time setting goals and planning strategies to complete that task; they expend little effort on the devalued task (Bandura, 1986). For instance, if a student has no interest in and sees no value to chemistry, that student may not be motivated to spend time to learn chemistry. This insight could be particularly relevant not only in FYC but in other core courses that students may have little choice in taking.

There are few published studies examining task value in a content-course. While these studies contain valuable information, none answers the questions I am asking about task value. For instance, using a survey-based methodology, Hullman et al. (2008) compared the development of interest and value between college students in an introductory psychology course and high school students in a football camp. The authors found a positive association between value and motivation and performance but their method did not allow them to uncover how this association develops, a question which remains unanswered.

This study is relevant because it looks at task value in an introductory course (which could have been a required course—thus of minimal interest to some students), thereby providing an opportunity to explore the development of task value and interest. Since goal setting is an important component of developing and motivating task value, the journal reflections developed in the present study showed a more nuanced portrayal
of how students develop interest in a task especially when goals and standards are not necessarily clear, as is often the case in new situations.

In another questionnaire-based study, VanZile-Tamsen (2001) studied the importance of expectancy of success and task value in predicting sustained self-regulatory strategy use in upper-class education students. Her findings supported the theory that task value is an important predictor of self-regulatory strategy use in college students. She also found that task value was more important than expectancy of success in keeping students engaged. To account for this, VanZile-Tamsen hypothesized that perhaps when students expect to be successful they will not exert strategic effort if they do not value the task at hand. However, her study did not address how or why task value is important in engagement. Understanding this piece of the puzzle could help faculty and student affairs professionals be more effective (VanZile-Tamsen, 2001).

In a similar study in an online engineering course, Lawanto, Santoso, Goodridge, and Lawanto (2014) surveyed undergraduate students and found that students with high task value beliefs are more self-regulated than those with lower task value beliefs, and that task value predicted students’ use of SRL. On the other hand, in a study looking at task value and self-efficacy beliefs in agriculture majors, Velez, Sorenson, McKim, and Cano (2013) found through their survey (the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire survey instrument) that first-year students increased task value until their junior year, and it tapered off for their senior year. While their survey identified motivational trends in self-efficacy and task value, again the researchers called for more detailed insight into these trends.
Researchers have advocated for richer characterizations of how students think, feel, and behave; the present study helps toward that effort by the development of a more finely tuned intervention which also takes advantage of what is known about student engagement. Each of the studies discussed here used questionnaires to learn about student feelings and behaviors, questionnaires which recorded a student's feelings at a fixed point in time. While some students may have the desire to use self-regulatory processes and understand the importance of SRL, they may lack the skill or confidence to self-manage. Since the pathways between self-efficacy and task interest or value are presently unclear (Troia, Shankland, & Wolbers, 2012), more research is needed to understand how these motivational constructs affect each other. Interest appears to have a positive effect on writing performance (Hidi & Anderson, 1992) and Hidi and Renninger (2006) suggested that there is a developmental thread that links the repeated experiences of interested engagements to produce a psychological state of interest and its development as a disposition. And Wolters’ (1998) survey of college students in an introductory psychology class showed that individuals can devise and use interest-enhancing strategies to overcome boredom. In fact, it would seem as though the role of task value supports the inclusion of SRL in a content courses generally, rather than only in the college success types of courses.

Self-reflection. One final source of motivation of particular relevance for this study, which is also the ultimate goal of self-regulation, is metacognitive self-reflection. Self-reflection is an important component in SRL because it provides information to assess one’s progress toward a goal and it can provide information about a person’s
behavior as well as about the environment (Schmitz, Klug, & Schmidt, 2011). For example, self-evaluative learners can identify certain features of their environment that make it difficult to study (i.e., noise level) which can lead to changing the environment (i.e., studying somewhere else, or, asking people to quiet down). A self-reflective learner who can make causal attributions between a poor grade and controllable processes (i.e., a poor study strategy) will sustain motivation because this learner understands that a different strategy will lead to success (Zimmerman, 2002). Students are more likely to become self-regulated learners when they have an opportunity to evaluate their own learning (as opposed to the teacher’s evaluation). Self-reflections from prior efforts affect later forethought processes, which is what makes self-regulation a cyclical process.

Adjusting one's strategies so that they are in line with task demands is a metacognitive self-regulatory process for successful learning. Research into whether or how students are adjusting their cognitive strategies to meet the demands of the task is largely short-term and quantitative in nature using pre- and post-test designs and Likert-type scales to measure metacognitive awareness. For instance, Cook, Kennedy, and McGuire (2013) taught undergraduate chemistry students about metacognition and study strategies in a single 50-minute class session. At the end of three weeks, students were asked to respond to a survey about which study strategies they used. The authors concluded that not only can college students be taught learning strategies in a single class session, but they also found that by explaining how to think about studying and carefully considering study strategies, students can earn higher grades in the course. Huff and Neitfeld (2009) conducted a similar study with fifth grade students. In this comparative
study, students in the two-week project scored higher on a post-test when they had participated in SRL instruction. In both of these studies, which spanned a few weeks, positive correlations were shown between metacognitive monitoring and improved grades.

Schmitz and Perels (2011) used guided diaries to study the self-monitoring behavior of German eighth grade math students. They found that students who responded daily to the reflections (in this case, students were asked to rank their mood to do homework, what strategy they planned to use to get the work done, and whether they learned anything from the homework) about their self-regulatory behavior earned higher grades on their math tests than those students who did not write in the diaries. In this case, the eighth grade students responded to a Likert-type survey before they began their homework and after they finished it. The analysis also showed continuous increasing of self-regulation and self-efficacy during the intervention period (seven weeks) as a result of daily diaries.

Using a similar approach to the present study, Negretti (2012) analyzed journals in FYC to track the connection between task value and rhetorical awareness and metacognitive awareness of strategies for writing self-regulation. However, unlike the present study, Negretti’s (2012) study was focused on how metacognition affected the development of rhetorical awareness. The journal prompts to which her participant students responded each week showed that students developed metacognitive awareness of the writing task in rhetorical terms. This awareness correlated to the development of personal strategies to complete the task, and also influenced their ability to evaluate their
performance in terms of rhetorical effectiveness. In other words, students were able to more accurately evaluate the effectiveness of their writing through the practice of responding to the journal prompts.

While the Negretti (2012) study was similar to the present research project, there are important differences. First, the goals of my research were different. My study taught SRL (there is no indication that Negretti did this) and students responded to prompts which were nearly the same for every essay assignment. This repetition of prompts hopefully allowed students to respond more thoughtfully with each new essay cycle. Moreover, I also hoped to engender a degree of automaticity to the process (according to Perkins & Salomon [1992], automaticity is a factor in near transfer), as opposed to Negretti’s method of answering a new question every week. Second, unlike Negretti’s project, another goal of the present research was to learn whether a simple, but ongoing, intervention can alter student writing behavior.

As these few studies indicate, teaching students metacognitive skills as they are learning new material can have a direct impact on student learning. A few other studies corroborate this finding through very similar methods: students are taught about metacognition and then later asked to respond, usually at a single point in time, typically through a survey, as to whether or how, they thought about their learning. However, a large proportion of the scholarship on metacognition is conceptual in nature, rather than data-based. This research seeks clarification of metacognition by defining terms (such as metacognition and self-regulated learning, as in Dinsmore, Alexander, Loughlin, 2008; or self-regulated learning as distinct from self-regulated action, as in Kaplan, 2008), or
consisting of recommendations for research (i.e., Schunk, 2008). A few articles address metacognition feedback in computer-based learning environments (i.e., Lee, Lim, & Grabowski, 2010).

In their review of the literature on metacognition and self-regulated learning, authors Dinsmore et al. (2008) noted that there remains too strong a reliance on self-report and Likert-type measures to measure self-regulated learning and metacognition. Although this study relies on self-report, the rich student commentary provides a more thorough view of how students engage metacognitively with a writing task. A phenomenological approach was needed to fill in the gaps left by purely survey-based studies. Bandura cautioned, “people cannot affect the directions of their actions if they are inattentive to relevant aspects of their behavior” (1986, p. 336). As a method for training and measuring learning progress, self-reflective journals can have a positive effect on self-regulation by supplementing the SRL training in three ways: (a) possibly enhancing motivation by detecting small increments in skill; (b) serving as a written record for increasing self-regulatory competence by fostering metacognitive activity; and (c) enhancing the effect of training by tracking transfer (Schmitz, Klug, & Schmidt 2011).

Despite what research shows about certain features of SRL and certain learning environments, educators do not know how college students engage with SRL in their first college writing course. While Negretti (2012) showed that task awareness develops with metacognitive monitoring, understanding how students are experiencing these concepts and motivating themselves matters for higher education faculty, particularly composition
teachers, because of who our students are. Typically, first-year students have completed twelve years of school under the No Child Left Behind Act where, as a result of the standardized essay exam, the ways students understand writing, is primarily as a timed endeavor. The resultant five-paragraph essay is radically different not only from academic writing (Applebee & Langer, 2009; Shafer, 2005) but also the writing they may do eventually in their jobs. In college, they will be expected to write longer, more analytical, researched work in not only FYC, but many of their courses. This kind of writing requires deeper, harder thinking: engagement with the task; effort; and motivation (this connection between SRL and writing is discussed in more detail later in this chapter).

The present study, an extended, qualitative study with a phenomenological approach, provides the opportunity to explore student motivation and self-regulation more deeply. As noted at the beginning of this section, motivation is crucial for undertaking and sustaining writing. For many people, writing is a lonely, demanding task, which frequently results in unsatisfying results, requiring repeated revisions. According to current theories, a person's writing skill involves a complex system of processes and sources of motivation that must be self-regulated in order to attain one's goals (Zimmerman, 2008). Understanding how personal motivational influences such as self-efficacy and task value impact a student’s willingness to engage in SRL and the writing assignment will enable FYC instructors to consider these influences as weave SRL pedagogies through their courses. Many of the studies mentioned in this discussion of motivation and self-regulation focus on children in K-12 and on diverse areas such as
math and psychology. The composition field will benefit from more insight into how students make meaning of their writing assignments (i.e., what they are doing, how they are managing, why they make certain strategic choices, and what they are thinking) by exposing their thinking in their journal reflections. Schunk (2008) suggested connecting SRL instruction to classroom instruction. But this necessitates knowing how students are responding to, or participating in, self-regulated learning in a content-based course or else it may be taught ineffectively. The phenomenological approach used for this study allowed me to see, up close, the subtle thoughts and actions that students take as they engage with self-regulated learning on a conscious level, and in a new academic environment filled with new challenges.

**SRL and Student Engagement**

Broadly speaking, self-regulation is an understanding of how people take an active, purposeful and reflective role in their own functioning; research shows that all people are self-regulated to some degree (Bandura, 1986). More specifically, models of self-regulated learning look toward the classroom and attempt to understand how students actively manage their own motivational, behavioral and cognitive functioning within the academic sphere. The concept of engagement is similar in concept, and as I will show in this section, SRL and engagement are both theoretically and practically linked. Engagement is an important factor to consider in learning because engagement is linked to the increased use of strategies that encourage retention of learned material (Fredericks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). Students who are cognitively engaged are more willing to
expend effort to learn and show increased metacognitive awareness (Fredericks et al., 2004).

The literature shows that engaged students are good learners and that effective teaching stimulates and sustains student engagement (Pintrich & DeGroot, 1990; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). Researchers are especially concerned with engagement during the critical first year of college because attrition rates for students between their first and second years are the highest of all four years (Levitz, Noel, & Richter, 1999; Tinto, 1975). Tinto and other retention scholars are increasingly convinced that the actions of faculty, especially in the classroom, are key to institutional efforts to enhance retention (2006). Faculty are encouraged to engage students by using relevant technology and creating active learning opportunities. As a result, the traditional lecture format is slowly giving way to a more active and interactive learning experience which, by its nature, also shifts the responsibility for learning and engaging onto the students.

However, educators cannot assume that simply because students show some regulation—they show up for class consistently, for instance—they are engaged in learning. Just as SRL requires motivation even as it influences motivation, SRL also requires engagement and at the same time influences engagement. Motivation not only stimulates student engagement, the two concepts are practically and conceptually linked in terms of their cognitive, behavioral, and emotional features (Wolters & Taylor, 2012).

As the understanding of the links between engagement and retention become clearer, Zimmerman’s model of self-regulated learning gives educators a framework to affect student engagement in the classroom by teaching students how to actively
participate in their learning. Self-regulated learning provides a structure to bridge contextual and personal factors to student learning and academic achievement (Wolters & Taylor, 2012). Both engagement and self-regulated learning theories attempt to account for behavioral, cognitive and emotional processes within a context—which for the present study is the first-year composition course. Like engaged learners, self-regulated learners are described as actively involved in their own learning metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally (Zimmerman, 2002). In fact, self-regulation has been identified as a characteristic of engagement. Strategies that reflect planning, goal setting, and monitoring are basic to how theorists describe the metacognitive activities displayed by both self-regulated learners and students who are cognitively engaged (Fredericks et al., 2004).

The two concepts are interconnected not only cognitively, but also behaviorally and emotionally (Fredricks et al., 2004). For example, cognitive self-regulated learning might be shown by a student practicing math problems after class or making use of a writing strategy such as creating a list of paragraph topics (Wolters & Taylor, 2012). Cognitive awareness in terms of engagement is practically indistinguishable from cognitive self-regulated learning. It is the student’s willingness to expend effort to learn by utilizing various strategies to enhance understanding (Fredricks et al., 2004). Both theoretical frameworks converge on the belief that “more efficient, more effective, and higher quality engagement follows when students utilize and array of cognitive strategies and have the metacognitive knowledge and skills necessary to deploy and manage these strategies effectively” (Wolters & Taylor, 2012, p. 641).
Behaviorally, engagement and SRL are also similar. Students who are self-regulating are examining their level of effort or time on a task (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003) and they use time management strategies to plan to complete a task (Kitsantas, Winsler, & Huie, 2008). Research has found that students who are able to manage their time effectively and put themselves in situations that help their learning (rather than distract learning) have higher GPAs (Britton & Tesser, 1991; Tuckman, 2003). In addition, Britton and Tesser’s (1991) questionnaire-based study found that students who reported strong time management also reported feeling in charge of their time. They were able to say “no” to people and to stop unproductive routines or activities (Britton & Tesser, 1991). This finding supported Bandura’s (1993) research on self-efficacy which observed that such feelings of self-efficacy support more persevering behavior and other positive cognitive engagement tendencies. Behavioral engagement can be shown in a student’s attendance, classroom participation and involvement in extra-curricular activities as well as in displaying behaviors that reflect effort and persistence (Wolters & Taylor, 2012).

Finally, engagement and SRL are comparable in terms of emotional features. Emotional engagement refers to student’s affective reactions in the classroom such as interest, boredom, happiness, and anxiety (Fredricks et al., 2004). Emotional engagement also includes connection to the school and feelings of belonging or of having value (Fredricks et al., 2004). Likewise, self-regulated learners are generally thought to have more positive experiences in the academic setting (Wolters & Taylor, 2012). They
display interest in the task and derive greater personal satisfaction with their learning (Zimmerman, 2002).

Clearly the two constructs are intertwined, and it is important to understand how they are linked because, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, engagement is linked to the increased use of learning strategies, effort to learn, and metacognitive awareness (Fredericks et al., 2004). Both academic self-regulation and engagement can be inspired or developed from the classroom experience (Fredricks et al., 2004). They are both malleable and adaptable and result from the interaction of the individual with the context. For example, a person may be self-regulated at a sport but fail to be self-regulated academically. However, while there are clear conceptual overlaps with the two concepts (Fredricks et al., 2004; Schunk & Zimmerman, 2003; Wolters & Taylor, 2012), the need for more research is evident. Research on how intentionally college students are engaging does not exist. Wolters and Taylor (2012) recommended more active and integrated research into how these two constructs affect each other by documenting students’ efforts to plan, monitor, and manage their participation. Insight into how students manage their behaviors and engagement metacognitively, over extended periods, would also be valuable for researchers studying how students learn (Wolters & Taylor, 2012). For example, setting goals and monitoring performance involves attention and reasoning, intentionally making decisions and making adjustments. There is little research that documents the metacognitive SRL processes of college students as they go about completing several writing tasks. To some extent Negretti (2012) tracked students’ metacognitive evolution in her study on student perception of the task and evaluation of
performance. However, while her study brings the scholarship a step closer to understanding student motivation in terms of task awareness, the goals of her study were different from those of the present research. The present research is a step toward understanding how students make adjustments and decisions and whether their processes and strategies change as they gain experience with self-regulatory practices in their college composition class.

Moreover, the research is needed on first-year college students particularly. All of the research cited by Fredricks et al. in their comprehensive article studying student engagement was conducted with students in kindergarten through twelfth grade. None of the research they referenced was conducted with college students. Moreover, most of the research referenced throughout this chapter was acquired through quantitative studies; the results obtained through the present, qualitative study will be useful to faculty and administrators as they explore how to more productively engage students with SRL.

**SRL in College Success**

**Types of Courses vs. in Content Courses**

SRL has been shown to be effective in increasing academic achievement because it requires that students deliberately engage to improve performance (Masui & DeCorte, 2005; Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). Because many new students tend to rely on previously learned ways of coping when they encounter new circumstances, including preparing for class, programs to support first-year students, particularly college success courses, have been implemented at most colleges and universities. This section will discuss these types of courses, and show how they have a
less enduring impact than intended, a result that is one of the strong motivating factors for the current research project.

Recognizing the importance of student engagement both academically and generally, many colleges have created intervention courses aimed at first-year students to teach them how to engage in their new environment. These courses were originally taught by student affairs professionals, but are now taught by a variety of educators and administrators on campus (Tinto, 2006). They are generally titled with names such as College 101, Student Success, Discovery, or Methods of Inquiry, to name of few, but for purposes of this report I will refer to them all as the college success course. They have the potential to help students in educational achievement and have been shown to be successful in a range of positive outcomes. However, they do not quite reach their potential for several reasons.

The college success courses typically provide students with academic and career planning and techniques to improve study habits and personal skills such as planning and time management – in effect, self-regulating skills. Several quantitative studies which examined GPA and enrollment data showed that students who complete these courses are more likely to stay in college and more likely to be academically successful (Ahuna et al., 2011; Cho & Karp, 2013; Hofer & Yu, 2003; Patterson et al., 2014; Reeves & Stich, 2011). However, other studies suggested that while these courses are useful to students, without more context these college success types of courses fail to have a long lasting impact on students’ outcomes (Karp et al, 2012; Kitsantas et al., 2008). This is because
the courses tend to be somewhat disconnected from academic coursework which limits their effectiveness.

The active-learning kinds of behavior associated with a self-regulated learner taught in these courses (such as managing time, managing the environment, seeking help, and setting goals, as well as developing reading and study skills) may encourage the student to be successful at college. Missing from college success courses however, is direct application to the student’s course work. Transfer of the skills learned in these courses is rarely achieved through “mere exposure” (Karp et al., 2012, p. 5). Rather, applying the cognitive or behavioral skills learned in college success courses may only come about with pedagogies that “allow for deep engagement with, application of and practice of new knowledge and skills” (Karp et al., 2012, p. 5). Information from these courses is unlikely to be internalized for future use unless students are given context, connection and opportunities for practice (Bransford, Derry, Berliner, & Hammerness, 2005). Brunner (1977) suggested that “teaching specific topics or skills without making clear their context in the broader fundamental structure of a field of knowledge is uneconomical” (as cited in Bransford et al., 2005, p. 47). For the college success courses to be more meaningful, students should be able to apply the course content from college success to new situations (Karp et al., 2012), such as in a content course.

As retention scholars have come to understand the complexities around why students stay or leave, they now understand the limits of some of the early models of retention and the resultant interventions. While college success courses could potentially help a student be a more active participant in his or her learning, researchers suggest that
more interventions within the boundaries of particular subject matter courses are especially needed for first-year students (Kitsantas, Winsler, & Huie, 2008). Because college professors cannot assume their students know how to be self-regulated learners, teaching and integrating self-regulatory behaviors within a for-credit writing course could help students not engage with the work itself, but also achieve higher grades and retain writing skills for transfer to their upper-level courses.

Incorporating SRL into a composition course, as a way of spurring engagement with course material and engaging in the process of writing and learning in general, is not an unreasonable stretch of the curriculum. Because the very act of writing requires a great deal of self-discipline, FYC is an ideal course to not only teach first-year students the expectations and goals of college writing, but also to introduce them to ways to become more engaged, confident, and reflective with their learning, and break away from the (possibly unproductive) habits formed by the standardized testing culture.

**Self-Regulated Learning and Writing**

While the discussion above shows how SRL can support student engagement in the classroom, I will now narrow the discussion to an examination of how SRL connects to writing, specifically first-year college students in their first college writing course.

Researchers have long recognized that self-regulation plays a major role in the writing process. At the same time as Baudura was publishing his understanding of the regulation of human behavior, writing process pioneers Emig (1977) and Flower and Hayes (1981) developed a model of writing that veered from the traditional linear process designated by stages in the development of the written product, to a cognitive process.
model. Their model recognized that any of the mental acts involved in composing, such as generating ideas or revising a sentence, for example, could occur at any time in the writing process. This is because, as Emig elegantly said, “information from the process is immediately and visibly available from the product” (p. 125, 1977).

Flower and Hayes (1981) described writing as involving three main processes: planning, translating ideas into text, and reviewing. And all the while, as the text is being written and reviewed, ideas are still generating, organizing those ideas is ongoing, and goals for the composition are continually coming into play (Flower & Hayes, 1981). In fact, writing is a goal-directed activity (Graham & Harris, 1994) and the writer directs the process of composing by identifying and organizing goals for what to do and say.

All of this cognitive activity is under the control of what Flower and Hayes described as “the Monitor” (1981, p. 369). The function of the monitor is to determine when the writer will move from one process to the next, or back. The moves a writer makes are intentional choices determined by the goals for the composition (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Choices are not determined by a static stage, such as the revision stage, but rather a metacognitive feedback process that can occur at any time. For a self-regulated person, the act of writing is a behavior that is continuously self-regulated through self-evaluation (Bandura, 1986). Therefore, self-regulatory strategies which focus on managing one’s behavior “are viewed as essential for explaining how writers can acquire greater skill from their own writing efforts” (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007, p. 53). A significant part of the skill in writing is the ability to direct one’s own composing process. However, while most students are aware that they must acquire knowledge of vocabulary
and grammar, they are less aware of their need for high levels of self-regulation (Zimmerman & Reisemberg, 1997).

Zimmerman’s model (1990) of self-regulation explains several factors that are central to motivating a writer through the task of creating an essay which were clarified to some extent through this research project: goal setting (or as Flower and Hayes referred to it, planning), self-efficacy, task value, and metacognitive reflection. These are not static concepts—they are constantly considered, cycled and recycled through the process of composing an essay. For example, students may revise or reset their goals and plans as a result of feelings about their ability to do the work, and by their awareness of how they are progressing with the task. In a review of literature (examining writing behaviors of a range of ages and abilities) on SRL, Graham and Harris (2000) concluded that (a) skilled writers are more self-regulated than less skilled writers; (b) developing writers become increasingly self-regulated with age and schooling; and (c) teaching SRL strategies improves the writing performance of developing and struggling writers. These improvements in writing occur because writing is a deliberate activity that is usually self-planned and self-sustained, therefore, self-regulating is necessary to keep going (i.e., to finish the essay assignment).

Scholars do not debate that writing is a self-regulatory activity. In a questionnaire-based study of first-year college students, Zimmerman and Bandura (1994) found that writing regulation was predictive of writing success when students articulated their intentions to concentrate on, manage, and complete a task. To further clarify the connection between SRL and writing, Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2007) developed a
three-phase model of writing self-regulation which mirrored certain phases of the writing process. This model called for a pre-writing phase (forethought), a writing performance phase (monitoring progress on the task as well as monitoring environmental impediments to progress), and a self-reflective phase. Self-observation and self-judgment are used during writing to provide information that can lead to changes in what writers know and do (Graham & Harris, 1994). Ultimately though, “writers must be willing to devote personal time and effort to revise drafts until they communicate effectively” (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007, p. 53). As with writing, engagement with SRL requires effort and motivation, and, for challenging tasks, engagement may be difficult.

While research confirms that writing is a self-regulatory process and that motivational characteristics are critically important for a student to be self-regulated, research has not confirmed how these motivational factors play a role in moving a student through the composing process. Research that includes the explanations, justifications or explorations of students as they write will add to the scant literature on college students and writing so that instructors can more effectively teach skills like goal-setting or metacognitive awareness, or perhaps influence students’ self-efficacy. Most of the studies exploring SRL and writing focus on younger students or those with learning disabilities; or, if they do look at college students, they are quantitative in nature. Understanding how our current generation of college students is motivating themselves through a series of increasingly challenging writing tasks may help instructors of all courses implement appropriate pedagogies that tap into our students’ strengths and weaknesses.
The importance of an SRL intervention in a first-year composition course

The first-year composition course is typically filled with students who are also navigating the novelty of college, both academically and socially. They have not yet experienced the kind of independent learning expected in most college courses, and they may not fully understand their role as learners in the college environment (Kuh, 2005). In college, students need to take more control over external influences, motivate themselves, and attempt to make the necessary adjustments to the new learning environment. In most college success types of courses, students will be taught study skills, some self-regulatory skills, and learn about academic supports such as tutoring or writing centers. However, unless they are highly self-motivated or already self-regulated learners, they will not have an opportunity to learn how to apply SRL to their academic coursework thereby minimizing the effect of that instruction.

Many students entering college today appear to be disengaged from the learning process in terms of attitudes, study habits, and academic skills (Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges & Hayek 2006, McCarthy & Kuh, 2006). In their analysis of the HSSSE survey (The High School Survey of Student Engagement) McCarthy and Kuh (2006) noted that there was a substantial gap between how much the majority of seniors write and the amount of writing that the majority of first-year college students do. One reason for the absence of substantial writing in high school could be a result of the emphasis on standardized testing. The students entering our composition classrooms today have come from more than a decade of the No Child Left Behind Act culture where testing and teaching to the test focus on writing to conform to a standard (the five paragraph essay)
For example, in the commonwealth of Virginia students entering their first year of college have been taught under the SOL (Standards of Learning) since they entered elementary school (the first tests were administered in 1998). The Virginia SOL writing assessments have admirable stated goals: (a) the student will write in a variety of forms, with an emphasis on persuasion, and (b) the student will edit writing for correct grammar, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, and paragraphing (Virginia Department of Education, 2010). However, in practice the tests do not realize those goals. This is because the two goals are largely tested in a multiple-choice situation. For example, in the 2010 exam, there were 30 multiple choice questions related to English grammar and usage. The writing prompt, selected at random, usually looks like this:

Thomas Jefferson wrote, “Determine never to be idle... It is wonderful how much may be done if we are always doing.” Do we accomplish more if we are always doing something, or does inactivity also serve a purpose? Take a position on this question. Support your response with reasons and specific examples (Department of Education, Virginia).

The resultant essays, composed in 50 minutes, are graded on a four-point scale which rank the essay as consistent, reasonably consistent, inconsistent, or having little to no control of the domain. Moreover, the standardized test gives students no sense of authenticity or process. It truncates the recursive nature of the writing process: planning, drafting, revising, re-drafting, re-evaluating, and re-writing.

The types of writing students are trained for with these high stakes tests is utterly unlike the writing they will do in college. Students learn “recipe-writing” as a direct response to the exam (Schuster, 2004; Shafer, 2005). This is in direct contrast to Elbow’s
assertion thirty years ago that writing is like growing: “think of writing then not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and cook a message” (1981, p. 15). Elbow argued that writing is a way to think and learn, and to figure out what your ideas are. He described the writing process as somewhat chaotic and messy, but as the writers persevere, eventually they figure out what they wanted to say all along. When educators contrast the model that students are leaving the twelfth grade with, and the completely different experience of writing for college, it is understandable that some students might struggle with first-year writing courses. The demand that students compose an essay in one sitting sets up students for unrealistic experiences in their first-year writing course. In fact, McCarthy and Kuh (2006) noted that 18% of college students indicated that they wrote at least one paper longer than 20 pages during their first year.

Writing is one of the most complex skills taught in school. Test-based forms of writing instruction give little attention to understanding the motivating dimensions of writing, possibly because teachers don’t need to attend to that dimension. In addition, a survey of high school students showed that they believed that in order to write, one had to have “the knack” of it (McCrimmon, 2005). In this study, fewer than one-third of the high school students surveyed felt confident about their writing. Most felt indifferent (34%) or undecided (19%). Tellingly, almost half of the students surveyed agreed with the statement that “some people have a knack for writing while others will never write well no matter how hard they try” (McCrimmon, 2005, p. 254).

To overcome the standardized test culture and ease students into academic and eventually professional writing, researchers studying grade-school children continue to
show the positive relationship between SRL and writing, and urge its utilization. SRL is effective in teaching writing because not only does it fit neatly with the writing process, it also expects continual self-monitoring, self-evaluation and self-judgment, which help a student move through multiple revisions of an essay. For many students, being self-regulative during writing can be challenging, but if they do have high levels of self-regulation, they are more likely to become skilled writers (Graham & Harris, 2000; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997).

These skills are equally, if not more, valuable for college students. In their study of college students, Sommers and Salz (2004) defined the first-year writer as a student who is once again a novice. Students are asked to read and write in a way in which they may have never experienced, and at a volume which they likely have not yet experienced. Sommers and Salz (2004) described a tension in which the novice writers are pushed by their college instructors to synthesize, argue, judge, interpret, and integrate—some of which they have never done before. Not only are these students being asked to do more, they are asked to engage with complex texts and are required to engage with their writing in a deeper, perhaps unfamiliar, way. Yet at the same time, these first-year writers are being pulled by the allure of the old, familiar way, relying on high school writing techniques. One student described first-year writing as “being asked to build a house without any tools” (Sommers & Saltz, 2004, p. 131). The tension caused by the new and the unfamiliar requires that students become novices again. Sommers and Saltz (2004) suggested that students who cling to their old habits and formulas and who resent the uncertainty and humility of being a novice, have a more difficult time adjusting to the
demands of college writing. Additionally, as noted by Summers (2008), students do not only struggle in first-year writing, they struggle with writing whenever they find themselves as novices—unfamiliar with the ideas and subject matter. Shulman (1987) explained that effective teaching includes an understanding of novices as they struggle to master a domain and an understanding of strategies to help them learn.

Self-regulation is a process that students can utilize in both new and familiar situations. The cyclical process of setting goals, creating or utilizing strategies to achieve those goals, managing and monitoring the process, and finally, reflecting on the entire process with an understanding of how to approach the task the next time around, will guide any task—including a writing task or a future job assignment. Novices fail to engage in forethought (to set goals and make a plan) and instead “attempt to self-regulate their learning reactively… they tend to rely on comparisons with the performance of others to judge their learning effectiveness” (Zimmerman, 2002, p 69). If they find they are underperforming as compared to others, they may blame their own ability rather than examine their process (Driscoll & Wells, 2012). Other research found that less competent students, who are in “acclimation stage,” have less interest and knowledge in the material and therefore use surface learning strategies (Alexander, 2003, p.11). As students increase their competence, they begin to employ deeper learning strategies and to engage with the material they are learning.

Students who fail to adapt to new situations are characterized as “boundary guarders” (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011, p. 314). These are students who guard their prior knowledge by using only strategies that preserve what they already understand. They
may be unwilling to try new learning strategies as a way to adapt to their new environment. “Boundary crossers,” on the other hand, accept the uncertainty and unknowing, and seek to understand the demands of the new writing task (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011, p. 314). They appear willing to assume a learner’s role. In their article on college success courses, Dembo and Praks-Seli (2004) explained why these “boundary guarders” have difficulty changing their behaviors: (a1) they believe they can’t change, (b) they don’t want to change, (c) they don’t know what to change, or (d) they don’t know how to change. Considering the writing backgrounds of our students and writing training they have acquired, the amount of re-adjusting they must do in their FYC is significant. Self-regulation offers a structured framework for students to guide them through the new writing and learning situation.

Other Implications for Understanding Student Engagement with SRL in the First-Year Composition Course

Aside from prompting academic achievement and influencing engagement, motivation, and metacognitive skills, learning how to self-regulate has implications as students continue through college, for the transfer of writing skills, for their work in other courses, and for their work beyond college. The last section of this literature review discusses self-regulation and the transfer of writing skills and some of the 21st-century competencies needed for work after college.

**Self-regulated learning and writing transfer.** Often in instructional settings, students acquire skills in one situation and fail to make connections to other situations where this skill would be useful (Perkins & Salomon, 1992). Transfer scholarship
continues to explore how and why students transfer knowledge and skills from the first-year writing course to other contexts. Perkins and Salomon (1992) suggested that transfer will not occur unless teachers are proactive about creating conditions that favor the transfer of knowledge.

Research shows that transfer in writing learning is a complex process but that metacognition and motivation seem to have a notable role in the process (Robertson, Taczak, & Yancey, 2012; Wardle, 2007). In other research, Jarratt, Mack, Sartor and Watson (2009) found that whether upper-level students made connections from their lower-level writing courses to upper level courses was largely a matter of their ability to describe their experiences learning to write. This suggests that requiring students to focus and reflect on their experiences is beneficial. This study showed, as Perkins and Salomon (1988) suggested, that transfer does not happen on its own. There seems to be agreement that certain methods and strategies that encourage transfer make it more likely. However, scholarship on what those methods are, is scant. Metacognition has been increasingly regarded as one of the facilitating factors of self-regulated learning as it helps people transfer skills, knowledge, and strategies across contexts and situations (Azevdo & Witherspoon, 2009). Recent research has explored how prior knowledge and disposition influence transfer (Driscoll & Wells, 2012; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Robertson et al., 2012), how curriculum change to focus on the rhetorical aspects of writing (such as how writing works, how it is context specific) might encourage transfer (Downs & Wardle, 2007), and how the language teachers use can encourage transfer (Bransford et. al., 2005).
Transfer is elusive, is difficult to measure, and is not automatic. But it does happen, given the appropriate conditions. Metacognition seems to be a contributor to transfer (Wardle, 2007) and reflective activities can enhance transfer by raising knowledge to a more conscious level (Brent, 2011). For instance, explicit writing cues that encourage learners to consider the relationship between their actions and outcomes could be important for transfer by helping students make connections that might otherwise elude them (Brent 2011). However, Brent’s suggestions have not yet been tested in a sustained way. The present study extends the insights of Wardle and Brent by asking students to metacognitively engage with both a writing task and a self-regulatory process, and write about them as they are experiencing them, thus yielding important information on how students carry their learning through the semester and into other courses.

**Twenty-first century competencies.** Beyond academic engagement though, some researchers suggest that learning how to self-regulate is an important 21st-century skill (Partnership for 21st-Century Skills, 2015; Wolters, 2010). The competencies involved with self-regulated learning are necessary for students to be effective learners within an academic context as well as to function productively beyond college (Zimmerman, 2002). For instance, initiation and self-direction are emphasized in SRL in the academic context but are also stressed as “employability skills,” as are written and oral communication skills (Baldwin, 2014; Brent, 2011). Adaptability or flexibility, the ability to adjust, is emphasized in SRL, but is also viewed as an important competency according to the 21st-century framework (Partnership for 21st-Century Skills, 2015).
Individuals will need to be able to work within shifting demands or ambiguous contexts—in essence to be flexible and to adapt. In their study of employability, Qenani, MacDougall, and Sexton (2014) showed that as students become more responsible to themselves, there is likely to be greater engagement and attention to what they are doing and what decisions they are making. Furthermore, as students become more self-aware, more motivated and more informed, they will make better decisions after they graduate (Qenani, MacDougall, & Sexton, 2014).

Considering the uncertainties in today’s economic climate, it is important that educators help students develop the skills they will need for whatever job in which they find themselves. Personal dispositional traits such as self-confidence, self-awareness, motivation, and emotional intelligence are all needed for the workplace and for life outside the workplace (Baldwin, 2014). Contemporary workers will likely meet a large array of changes, from layoffs and unemployment to re-employment and corporate mergers. Moreover, companies are already investing less in training and human resources (Nota, Ginevra, Santilli, & Soresi, 2014) and consequently there will be fewer job opportunities for people who cannot adjust to new situations. One key trait of self-regulated individuals is adaptability (or flexibility), meaning that they have the ability to adjust to changing circumstances. Therefore, self-regulation is not only an academic necessity it will be necessary in order to succeed in future jobs. Research suggests that flexible employability is becoming more important as life-long careers become less common. Van der Heijde (2014) noted four similarities between employability and self-regulation concepts: (a) they are both outcome or results-oriented, (b) in both, personal
motivational orientation is relevant to attaining results; (c) they both require the deployment of strategies to get results; and (d) they both have an important link with coping when goals are not met, or when plans have to be adapted. Because self-regulation learning is a social, behavioral and motivational process, it makes sense that it plays a role in employability. Higher education administrators already know that self-regulative strategies are critical for student success as evidenced by its inclusion in college success courses (Ahuna et al., 2010; Cho & Karp, 2013; Patterson et al., 2014). However, research also shows that a deeper immersion (i.e., in a content course) is necessary for students to continue to practice self-regulatory skills.

**Summary**

Self-regulation is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon, but rather exists along a continuum across and within three phases. The ability to metacognitively self-evaluate, and the self-awareness to revise strategies, can motivate learners to examine causal links and to create their own strategic interventions. While research indicates that SRL has a positive effect on academic achievement, experts in fields like composition, first-year experience and retention, and student engagement need more information on how students learn, and how they motivate themselves to learn. The SRL instruction in college success courses has been shown to have less impact than originally hoped; therefore researchers recommend bringing SRL instruction into the classroom. If composition instructors (or any first-year instructors, for that matter) are to realize the learning potential of SRL, they need to know how to effectively incorporate instruction into their courses. By understanding *how* students were applying the SRL information they were
learning and practicing to the essay assignments they were writing, I was able to hone in on which features of SRL were immediately utilized by students, which learning strategies were preferred, which aspects of SRL proved to be troublesome for students, and where my SRL instruction might have been inadequate.

There are calls for SRL research to be linked explicitly with academic performance (Schunk, 2008). However, the results of the present study showed that students just beginning to learn SRL do not immediately see a connection between self-regulating their learning and academic achievement. While the students in the present study fully participated in the intervention by recording their actions and feelings in journal entries, these beginners seemed to see SRL as a framework for helping them to understand their individual work processes. This foundation of self-knowledge, which is not addressed in the literature as it pertains to learning to self-regulate, seemed to be necessary knowledge before students could then, presumably, begin to see the implications of SRL for academic achievement. The journal entries collected for this study revealed the extent to which certain motivators discussed in this chapter (such as task value, valuing SRL, and self-efficacy) were important for self-regulating, but they also revealed the kinds of stumbling blocks which stalled or hindered students’ ability to self-regulate.

Despite a wealth of quantitative studies on SRL, how students internalize SRL and apply the practice to their work remains unknown. This study therefore adds to the literature in some important ways. First, no other study has looked at how students are engaging with SRL in a college composition course, or any other course. As this review
of the literature has demonstrated, some aspects of SRL have been studied in college students, but most studies researching the connections between SRL and writing have been conducted with students in K-12. Furthermore, most of these studies are quantitative in nature, using pre-post surveys to draw conclusions. Second, no other studies have used a phenomenological approach to understand the learning experience, as it was experienced. This approach, discussed in detail in Chapter 3, provided a deeper understanding of how students were utilizing the self-regulatory skills they were learning as they simultaneously engaged in the new writing situations posed in a first-year composition course. Faculty and college administrators already agree that SRL is an important skill for students, and much of the research cited here emphasizes the importance of teaching students self-regulated learning. Understanding whether and how students were setting goals, self-monitoring, and reflecting, gives future researchers and instructors information on how to teach SRL within the confines of a course.
Chapter 3

Research Design and Methods

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the qualitative method used to conduct the present research and to provide a detailed description of the study design. The qualitative method chosen for this study, phenomenology, allowed me to approach the research questions by examining the meaning of an SRL experience in a way that has not been extensively explored. The hallmark of the phenomenological approach is an ability to uncover and describe the essence, or meaning, of the experience for the participants. This methodology emphasizes a description of the nature of the phenomenon, or the experience, as well as the situation or context shaping the inquiry, in order to understand the meaning of the experience for the participants.

This chapter includes detailed information pertaining to the research questions, the method used to investigate the questions, the procedures for the study, the study population and setting, data analysis, trustworthiness, researcher role, and the limitations of the study.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to learn how students experienced an SRL intervention in a first-year composition course. The questions are elaborated below.
RQ1: How do students experience an SRL intervention in a first-year composition course?

RQ2: What facilitates or prevents a student from responding to SRL in a composition course?

RQ3: How do students value the concept of SRL? How does their valuing of SRL influence their lived experience?

In a first-year composition course, the focus is on student writing and not necessarily on learning strategies for college success. To expand on scholarship calling for more course-based SRL learning opportunities (Karp et al, 2012; Kitsantas et al., 2008; Zimmerman, 2008; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007), this study was designed to explore specifically how students just beginning to learn about self-regulated learning participated in and engaged with SRL concepts as they composed essays. For example, how do they set goals? Do they set realistic goals? Do they effectively monitor themselves? How do they monitor themselves? And how do students use the SRL training in managing their work load for the composition course?

I also wanted to learn what facilitated or prevented students from responding to SRL in the composition course. The journaling method allowed students to discuss the obstacles they encountered (personal, behavioral, attitudinal, or environmental) as they wrote about their progress, and the strategies they employed (if any) to achieve their goals. The phenomenological approach allowed me to discover some of the not-so-apparent stumbling blocks for first-year composition students—knowledge which is
helpful not only FYC instructors but also to student affairs professionals as they design appropriate interventions for improving engagement.

The third question—how did students value the concept of SRL—was directed at whether and how students valued the practice and how valuing SRL, or having an interest in self-regulating, affected a student’s inclination to respond to or participate in the concepts and practices. When students think about how much effort to put into a task, their interests and values are factored into that decision (Wolters et al., 1996; Wolters & Pintrich, 1998). Analysis of students’ journal writing can show how valuing both the writing task and SRL impacted students’ willingness or ability to regulate their learning.

In general, this study explored how an SRL intervention impacted student behaviors and showed how, over the course of the semester, many students shifted or changed in response to the intervention. This was not a question of attaining higher grades, but rather of whether students developed an awareness of learning, studying, or writing behaviors, and made changes in response to their new self-awareness. As described below, the procedure used for this intervention was intentionally minimally intrusive, thus allowing the majority of the time in the course to focus on the course content itself. The method, a phenomenological approach, allowed me to focus my analysis on the nuances of the experience—analysis useful to the overall needs of the field, and also to practitioners.
**Research Method**

This study used a phenomenological approach to understand the students lived experience. The phenomenological approach aims at a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of our everyday experiences and seeks to offer “plausible insights” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9). To learn about the nature of an experience, the researcher engages in a “systematic attempt to uncover and describe the structures, the internal meaning structures, of lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p.10).

Van Manen (1990) defined phenomenology as a study of essences. A phenomenologist is less interested in whether something happened than in what the particular phenomenon was like for the people experiencing it. The essence or nature of the experience is described and interpreted by the researcher, by reflecting on the themes that are uncovered in the data (see the Data Analysis section for more information on this process). This approach to inquiry (also referred to as a philosophical movement) was founded by Husserl, who believed that experience as perceived by human consciousness has value and should be an object of scientific study (Koch, 1995).

More specifically, this study is an interpretative or hermeneutic phenomenology. The interpretive practice is built upon Husserl’s work on descriptive phenomenology as expanded by Martin Heidegger, one of his students. Heidegger questioned some of Husserl’s assumptions on phenomenology, specifically the idea that the researcher can and must in fact bracket herself from the inquiry. Bracketing is the process of shedding all prior personal knowledge in order to grasp the essential lived experience of those being studied. However, in an interpretive phenomenology, it is the researcher’s
contextual interpretation of the narratives that forms the description of the experience. Indeed, an important assumption of the interpretive phenomenological approach is that it is the expertise and input of the researcher which makes the research a meaningful activity (Lopez & Willis, 2004). And Heidegger further explained that it is impossible to rid the mind of the background and understandings that have made the research possible in the first place; therefore, the researcher may bring him or herself into the inquiry (Heidegger, 1962).

More recently, phenomenology has moved from being not only a philosophy but a research method used to fortify contemporary qualitative research. My guide in the phenomenological approach for this research study was van Manen. He combines an emphasis on the descriptive approach of Husserl with arguments that the phenomenological approach involve interpretation. Like Heidegger, van Manen did not embrace Husserl’s view of bracketing arguing that if we “simply try to forget or ignore what we already ‘know,’ we may find that presuppositions persistently creep back into our reflections” (van Manen, 1990, p. 47). Meanings that the researcher arrives at in an interpretive approach are a blend of the meanings articulated by both the participants and the researcher within the focus of the study (Lopez & Willis, 2004). Gadamer (2006) used the analogy “fusion of … horizons” (p. 45) to describe the intersubjectivity, understanding and interpretations involved in interpretive phenomenology.

For van Manen (1990) the purpose of a phenomenology is to construct an animated, evocative description of human actions, behaviors, intentions and experiences. The goal is not to generate a theory or provide empirical evidence, rather the researcher
aims to acquire understandings about concrete, lived experiences. A good phenomenological description “is collected by lived experience and recollects lived experience” (van Manen, 1990, p. 27). Thus, in hermeneutic phenomenological work, writing is closely fused with the research activity and with reflection; the reader must be able to follow the thought processes of the writer and accept them as meaningful. While the Dutch phenomenologist Buytendijk termed phenomenology "the science of examples" (van Manen, 1990, p. 121), van Manen characterized a phenomenological description as an example composed of examples. Varying the examples is the way to address the phenomenological themes so that aspects of the phenomenon can be seen. Yet the writing of a phenomenological description in particular also includes the reflective stance of the writer (and, in this case, the researcher). The phenomenological method requires the art of being sensitive to language and an understanding that language is the only way to bring an experience to light.

Furthermore, a phenomenological text must be strongly oriented toward a pedagogic interpretation of the experience (van Manen, 1990). As a researcher using this method, I am therefore charged with gaining clarity about a certain notion and using my understanding as a resource for producing pedagogic understandings and interpretations. A person who explores an experience with a phenomenological approach does so out of personal engagement, thus the pedagogic actions reflected upon in the next few chapters are always personal and situated. Consistent with a phenomenology, these chapters provide a rich, deep description of students’ experiences, with an orientation toward my own reflection, understanding, and pedagogic actions.
This study looked at the experience of first-year students in a composition course to acquire a more complete idea of the nature or essence of their experience with an SRL intervention. This inquiry used the journal writing and interviews of the participant students to explore commonalities and differences in their experiences so as to understand the “meaning structures” of the experience for the participants (van Manen, 1990, p.10). The phenomenological approach allowed me to focus on the meaning of the experience for the students, using their words. Because the procedure required students to write about their experience as they were experiencing it, the interpretive phenomenological approach enabled me to shed light on what may be the hidden or veiled aspects of the experience and make recommendations for teaching practice and for future research.

**Setting and Participants**

The study was conducted at a small, Catholic university in the mid-Atlantic region which serves approximately 3,600 undergraduate and graduate students. The university is committed to diversity and this commitment shows in its demographic make-up: 47% White, 15% African American, 15% Hispanic, and 27% other ethnicities. The university’s first-year acceptance rate is approximately 80%; about 24% of the admitted students end up attending the university (Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, 2012-13 Benchmarking Analysis). Approximately 30% of the students are on the university’s competitive sports teams. The university’s freshmen-sophomore five-year average retention rate is 71% (Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, 2012-13 Benchmarking Analysis, 2014).
The study, which has met criteria for IRB approval at both George Mason University and the study site, was conducted in two sections of English 101- College Composition I, in their respective classrooms, during the spring semester. English 101 runs for one semester; upon completion, students take English 102 thereby completing the first-year composition series. As the author of this study I was also the instructor for both sections of the course.

For a qualitative study, sample size is generally smaller than for quantitative research. However, in phenomenology, the number of participants in a study is not as important as the variety and quality of the descriptions provided by the participants (Polkinghorne, 1989). To understand the students’ SRL experience fully, it was necessary to collect a rich, deep trove of data. While each section of English 101 could enroll a maximum of 20 students, a total of 34 students were enrolled across the two sections and began the semester participating in the study. Their demographic characteristics typified the social variation of the college as a whole. All but one of the students were in their second semester of college. Four of the 34 students were repeating the course.

One section of the course met on the main campus and consisted of 19 students: 7 males and 12 females. The course met twice a week on Tuesdays and Fridays, from 2:00-3:15. The second section of the course met at a satellite campus approximately one mile away. Shuttle buses run at 15 minute intervals between the two campuses. The second section, located on the satellite campus, enrolled 15 students: 12 males and 3 females. This section met on Mondays and Thursdays from 10:15-11:30.
Before participating in the study, students in both sections of the course were given an overview of the project with the assistance of a PowerPoint presentation (see Appendix A for complete presentation). Students had an opportunity to ask questions after which I distributed and read aloud the letter of informed consent. As students considered whether to participate, I left the room. A volunteer student collected and returned all letters to the English Department office where they remained sealed until after final grades were posted. Participation in the study was optional; however, no students declined to participate. Furthermore, no students signed the “Withdraw Consent” letter administered in the same fashion at the end of the semester.

**Course Content**

During the semester, English 101 students practiced specific writing genres such as summary and analysis and learned about concepts such as audience and purpose. To provide context and content for the course, instructors of English 101 at this college build their course around a theme. For the semester in which this intervention occurred, the theme of the course was “issues in higher education,” a theme I had created and taught for the previous three semesters. To support the theme of the course, students read from a variety of publications intended for both scholarly and general audiences. The reading material covered topics which might interest or concern new college students, such as financial aid, the cost of college, graduation rates and their impact, college athletics, time management, and more. (See Appendix B for the course syllabus.)

To support the SRL intervention, short lessons on SRL and in-class journal writing were interspersed through the coursework. In these SRL lessons (which
comprised either a PowerPoint presentation or a discussion of an assigned article related to an aspect of SRL), students learned about the importance of attending class, seeking help from their professors, time management strategies, reading and study strategies, and self-evaluative and self-motivational ideas such as rewarding or incentivizing oneself. In sum, in addition to the reading material relating to issues in higher education, students also read articles connected to learning strategies which would help students succeed in higher education.

Four major essays were assigned in the course; however, due to time constraints, only journal entries from the first three essays were analyzed for this study. The first two assignments supported a personal exploration of SRL as well as a connection to the course theme (see Appendix C for all essay assignments). Essay 1 was a self-observation assignment, and Essay 2 was an exploration of online learning. The third and fourth essay assignments were designed to allow students to explore their own individual interests connected to the theme of the course. Essay 3 was a rhetorical bibliography and Essay 4 was an evidence-based opinion piece. Shorter written assignments were also incorporated into the course.

In sum, the course content explored general higher education concerns that a typical student might have, yet also incorporated directed discussions on how self-regulating one's learning could have an impact on engagement, retention and academic achievement. The course topic and writing assignments were intentionally designed to complement and support students’ participation in SRL.
Method

Because the course in which the study was conducted was a three-credit composition course, the SRL intervention was intentionally designed to be minimally intrusive so as to maximize the development of the students as writers. A minimally intrusive intervention therefore dictated the length of the SRL lessons and the resulting data. First, although a study guided by phenomenology typically uses interviews to gain a sense of participants' experiences, the primary data source for this study was the students’ private, written journals. These guided journal entries were written in a private Blackboard Journal module in an online course management system (see the following section for a detailed description of the journal writing procedure). Furthermore, the SRL lessons in which students learned about the phases of SRL and about various learning strategies were kept to less than 10 minutes of class time. These lessons consisted of brief PowerPoint presentations and short discussions. All PowerPoint presentations were posted to the course Blackboard site for reference.

Keeping with the idea of a minimally intrusive intervention, I asked students to volunteer for a follow-up interview after the final grades were posted. However, because the study was conducted in the spring semester, interviews were not held until the following fall. As anticipated, participation in these interviews was very low, and consequently the data collected during them was infrequently referenced. This section details the intervention procedure, the reflective journal writing, the interview process and the extent to which researcher materials were used.
The Intervention Procedure: SRL Instruction and Reflective Journal Writing

The following section details the ways SRL instruction was woven with journal writing to produce the data for the study.

**SRL instruction.** In the second week of the course, after describing this research project and requesting informed consent from the students, I presented the concept of self-regulated learning. Using Zimmerman’s model (1990) as described in Chapter 2 of this document, I discussed self-regulated learning generally and, more specifically, how SRL could be used to manage the reading and writing in a composition course. Students were shown SRL concepts via a PowerPoint to assist them in visualizing and understanding the concepts (see Appendix A for complete presentation).

At least once a week for the first several weeks of the semester, I introduced a self-regulatory concept or strategy and spent no more than 10 minutes of class time on the topic. For example, the first time I asked students to create goals for their essay assignment, I presented a PowerPoint on goal setting and goal orientation. I discussed the importance of setting goals – why personal goals matter and how setting goals can help with motivation. Immediately following this first presentation, I asked students to respond to a guided prompt wherein they established goals for the recently assigned essay and created a plan to meet their goals. Continuing in this vein, the first time I asked students to formally monitor their performance, I followed a similar procedure: a presentation and a discussion, followed by time to respond to the guided journal prompt.
As the semester progressed, I continued to discuss at least one or two self-regulation concepts or strategies each week. Sometimes these mini-SRL lessons corresponded to a journal entry immediately, but other times, they were merely lessons that might be useful to a student learning to self-regulate (e.g. seeking help from the professor, or the importance of attending class). Often, the course reading provided entry into a discussion of a self-regulating strategy. These formal lessons comprised no more than approximately 10 minutes of class time, and all PowerPoint presentations and reading materials were made available to the students through the Blackboard course management system.

**SRL instruction and reflective journal writing.** Corresponding to stages in their writing process, students wrote journal responses at three points in the essay composing process: first, upon receiving the assignment, second, at one or two points during the writing process, and third, as they submitted their essay for grading. At each of the three points in the composing process, the students wrote of their goals and plans (forethought/planning) for the assignment, described their progress (monitoring progress), and self-evaluated, writing about lessons learned for the next assignment (reflection). Figure 2 below depicts the inter-connection between the self-regulated learning intervention and the essay writing process. The cycle of journal responses occurred for each of first three essays assigned in the course. Time did not permit a full cycle of SRL participation for the fourth essay. As students worked on their essays, I continued to provide instructions on SRL strategies to motivate and to cope with
obstacles (for example, time management, seeking help, self-evaluating). However, as the semester continued, the SRL instructions tapered off, but the journal responses continued.

As students learned about SRL and practiced setting goals, monitoring their progress and reflecting on their work and their engagement in SRL, they wrote about their experiences in online journal entries, described in the next section. This direct intervention—I was providing leading questions that reinforced and/or re-introduced SRL concepts—allowed me to gather information on the experience as students were
experiencing it, in the moment. Not only was I gathering information about student experiences and perceptions, but also information about their skills and behavior, as they were experiencing SRL and composing their essays.

**Student journals.** Periodically, and timed to coincide with their essay assignments, students were asked to write reflective responses to questions which were phrased to elicit a sense of students’ perceptions of and their response to SRL concepts (see Appendix D for a complete description of all journal prompts). The guided journal writing occurred during class time and was written in the Journal module in Blackboard. Students who were absent, or did not have laptops in class, could respond to the prompts at any point after class. All journals were private – only I and the individual student could see that journal. SRL lessons and journal writing typically took approximately 10 minutes.

The journals were guided by prompts described in Appendix D and were completed for the first three essay assignments. For each of the essay assignments, the first prompt, asking students to create goals for the assignment and to create a strategy or a plan to meet those goals, remained the same. Likewise, for each of the two remaining SRL phases, students responded to the same prompts (i.e., each time students were asked to reflect on their performance progress, the prompt was the same.) This intentional sameness or consistency with the prompts not only enabled students to practice with setting goals and creating a plan, but also brought some automaticity to the practice of SRL, something that is known to facilitate transfer. (Perkins and Salomon, 1988, described the "automatic triggering" of well-practiced routines as contributing to
transfer.) As the semester continued, the reflective journal writing became an expected and normal part of the course. I accumulated 373 journal responses, ranging in length from one or two sentences, to several paragraphs, during the study with each student writing approximately 13 entries.

The journal writing was graded on a completion grading scale. Students earned 10 points if the journal was written and zero points if it was not written. Whether or not students had agreed to participate in the study, all students could earn completion points for their journal entries. Beyond the awarded points, there were no external rewards or incentives to participate in the journal writing activity, nor did I comment on the journals.

Typically, the primary data source in a phenomenological study is the interview. However, this study prioritized the journal writing of the participants for several reasons. Van Manen (1990) suggested that that journal writings can be “very helpful” (p. 72) and that such sources may contain reflective accounts of human experience that are of phenomenological value. Scholarship in the field has also demonstrated that written data can be appropriate in revealing students’ relationship to SRL. Zimmerman (2008) suggested that the diary has much to offer as a way to assess the training effects of SRL. Schmitz, Klug, and Schmidt (2011) noted that diaries can foster self-monitoring because they involve systematic observation and Negretti (2012) used journals to understand metacognitive awareness in a community college first-year writing course. These researchers have used journals or diaries as a source of data although none adopted the idea of cyclical journal entries for an entire semester.
In addition to research that validates journals as an important source of data, there were some practical considerations for analyzing primarily the journal writing of the participants for this study. First, the journal writing of students as they were immediately experiencing self-regulated learning provided useful insights into how students were using or applying the learning “in the moment.” The alternative, interviewing students “in the moment,” would have been an unsustainable method of collecting data for one important reason: the duration of the study would likely have presented a problem for students to commit to periodic interviews. Therefore, students were asked to participate in an interview only after final grades were posted. Second, the proposed intervention was meant to be minimally intrusive because the course was a composition course – not a college success course. The simplicity and repetitiveness of the response writing took very little time from the course yet yielded valuable insight into teaching SRL in a content course, and, at the same time, provided a valuable metacognitive learning experience for the students.

Last, because the SRL intervention for the proposed study took place in a writing course, reflective journal writing was seamlessly integrated into the course on a regular and ongoing basis. Students wrote reflections during class time, and could edit or add to their reflections at any time. The journals were intended as a self-study for the students as well as for my own study of SRL.

**Student Interviews**

A secondary source of data for this study was the student interviews conducted after final grades were posted. Because the study took the duration of the spring semester,
I was unable to conduct interviews until the following fall semester. Early in the fall following the intervention study, I emailed all participant students seeking volunteers for a private interview. Despite several emailed solicitations, only four students returned for interviews.

The private interview was a semi-structured focused meeting at a mutually agreed upon time. In the focused interview approach, “it is up to the participant to bring forth the dimensions he or she finds important in the theme of inquiry” (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). For this study, each volunteer was interviewed once and the interview questions asked students to elaborate on their participation or engagement with the SRL intervention (see Appendix E for the interview questions). All interviews began with the same series of questions framed to help participants recall and describe their experience. Occasionally, depending on the answers or the ideas the participant discussed, there were follow-up questions for clarification. According to van Manen (1990), the interview serves as a means for “gathering experiential narrative material that may serve as a resource for developing a richer and deeper understanding of a human phenomena” (p. 66). Recognizing that interviews are important to a phenomenological approach, the purpose of the interviews was to gather additional insight into students’ experiences with SRL.

The interviews occurred on campus in an empty office/conference room. The room doubles as an adjunct office and a meeting room. There is a large table in the middle of the room at which the interviews were held. Students were given the interview questions as they arrived so that they could follow along. I took notes during the
interviews and transcribed the interviews shortly after they occurred. Students were emailed the notes and given the opportunity to review them for accuracy and to comment further if they wished.

Because so much time had elapsed between the intervention and the interviews, participation was low. This was expected and therefore I did not rely heavily on the interview responses for understanding the intervention experience. Students who did interview were not able to answer all the questions—they had forgotten some of the actions they took or the thinking they might have engaged in, and were occasionally somewhat vague. This again was likely a function of the elapsed time.

**Researcher/Teacher Observations and Materials**

A final source of data was teacher/researcher notes and materials collected during the semester. This material was rarely referred to and when used, helped to interpret or explain a student’s experience. The researcher notes were loosely organized comments about the students and the course. The notes referenced changes in reading assignments, observations about classroom engagement or attendance or any number of other observations that I deemed of possible interest to the study.

**Data Analysis**

In a phenomenological study, data is analyzed through two perspectives: from the participants who are living the experience and from the researcher who has an interest in the phenomenon. However, the researcher must be aware of his or her own experience being infused into the analysis of data. While Husserl recommended “bracketing” to suspend one’s personal beliefs, van Manen (1990) suggested that it is better to explicitly
state researcher beliefs and assumptions, theories and biases in order to see the phenomenon in a non-abstracting manner. My own beliefs and biases are stated below in the section titled Researcher Role.

**Thematic Analysis**

In a phenomenological approach, thematic analysis is the process of making meaning of the data. Phenomenological themes may be understood as the structures of the experience—they give shape to the idea or describe the meaning or point (van Manen, 1990). While themes are a simplification, at best, of the notion of the experience, they are the form of capturing the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990). There are three approaches to uncovering thematic aspects in a text: (1) the holistic approach when the researcher tries to capture the meaning of the text as a whole; (2) the selective approach when the researcher selects a phrase or word that seems particularly essential or revealing about the experience; or (3) the detailed approach when the researcher looks at every sentence or sentence cluster and asks what that sentence or sentence cluster reveals. The thematic analysis for this study used the detailed approach and was conducted in three cycles which are herewith described.

**Thematic coding of journal entries.** To begin the thematic analysis, I downloaded the journal entries to NVivo Pro. NVivo Pro was used because of its flexibility in coding and its functionality in querying multiple variations of coding nodes. (A node is simply a reference to an idea, person, place, idea, or whatever it is being coded. A user creates a hierarchy of nodes referred to as parent and child nodes. Typically, a parent node is a larger category and the child node is a sub-category related
to the parent.) I ultimately created nine parent nodes such as Goals, Planned Strategy, Possible Problems, and Reflection (see Appendix F for a complete depiction of the node tree). Under each parent node were several related, more specifically phrased child nodes. For example, under the Goals node I eventually settled on four child nodes: grade goal, learning goal, writing goal, and meet all deadlines goal. If a student mentioned a grade goal in the forethought entry, I coded that phrase as a grade goal under the Goals parent node. If a student identified a learning goal, that phrase was coded as a learning goal under the Goals parent node, and so forth. Likewise, for example, under the Possible Problems parent node, I created several child nodes such as demands on time, distractions, laziness or procrastination, and other writing problems. A child node was created only when the student journal entries called for it; I did not create nodes that I believed should exist. Rather I used only the students’ words to generate the nodes.

The analysis was conducted in three cycles. For the first cycle, because of the large number of journal entries, I created a sample set of six selected students. This sample set helped me determine some of the parent and child nodes I needed to create, as well as a general structure to organize the themes I was discovering. These six students were intentionally selected to ensure I had an even number of males and females, athletes and commuters and students who were neither athletes and who lived on campus. As discussed above, consistent with phenomenology, I used the students’ words when coding and generated as many codes as possible. I did not infer or deduce meaning rather, I allowed the students to determine the codes. For example, if students wrote that they planned to go to the library, I coded that plan “go to library” under the parent node titled
Planned Strategy. The descriptions I created were validated for accuracy by colleagues and peers who were familiar with SRL.

When the sample set was coded, I merged some codes because they were sparsely used. Too many nodes would make queries almost meaningless; and, combining sparsely cited nodes into categories such as "other" or to similarly themed categories, would allow me to show a range of experiences within a theme. For example, under Planned Strategy, one student wrote that the plan was “to attend class.” “Attend class” was a child node with only one reference, therefore I merged it into a child node referred to as “other.” Other nodes with only one reference were merged because they seemed to be inconsequential themes as opposed to meaningful trends.

After some lightly-coded child nodes were combined, I began a second cycle of coding, this time coding an additional one-third of the journal entries. Again, I needed to merge codes to reduce the number of references. As before, I combined nodes that seemed to have a logical connection, and added sparsely coded themes to the “other” node. For example, under the Reflection parent node, only two students wrote that they would “start their next project sooner.” Therefore, I merged the “start sooner” node with the “manage time” node because it seemed that it was an idea about managing one’s time. Upon completing this round of merging, I reviewed all coding to date. I then began the third wave of coding where I coded the remaining journal entries. There was no further merging of nodes.

By using the language of the participants, I was able to detect emerging patterns that took on eventual significance. For example, students’ preoccupation with time
management emerged as a significant theme, but self-rewards—a category predicted in other SRL models and scholarship—did not (although I initially coded for it). In differentiating between incidental and essential themes, I considered how often students wrote about a topic and how the theme developed over time. According to van Manen (1990), the essential themes contain qualities that make a phenomenon what it is and “without which the phenomenon could not be what it is” (p. 107). In other words, would the phenomenon lose its meaning without this theme? For this study, I eventually discovered four themes that described the essential quality of the intervention experience for the students: time management matters, students’ acquisition of self-knowledge, students’ development of a college-level writing skill, and SRL transfer. These four themes will be described in detail in Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

**Trustworthiness**

A general characteristic of qualitative research is that the researchers collect the data themselves by examining documents, observing behavior or interviewing participants (Creswell, 2008). However, as the teacher—the one awarding participants their grades—and as the researcher, I knew my duel status could pose an ethical dilemma. To mitigate any appearance of influence, consent forms were kept sealed in the English Department office until after final grades were posted. I did not know who had agreed to participate in the study until after the semester had ended. As a result, I was not influenced in any way to change my teaching practice to favor participants. Furthermore, whether or not they gave consent, all students participated in the journal writing and could earn completion points as described above. Thus, all students in the class might
have benefited from the intervention, but only the journal entries of those students who
gave consent were analyzed. For this study, there were no students who declined to
participate in the study.

Other aspects of this research project ensured its credibility from a qualitative
research perspective. First, the procedures employed to collect the data (journaling during
class, interviewing after final grades are posted) ensured that students were not coerced or
punished for not participating. All participation was voluntary. Students signed consent
forms at the beginning of the semester and also had an opportunity to withdraw consent
at the end of the semester. There were no students who withdrew their consent.

Second, this study was triangulated by the researcher memos I kept (described
above) as well as with the student interviews. A third way this study ensured
trustworthiness was the student review of their interview transcripts. Students were given
the opportunity to review their interview transcripts for accuracy and to request further
dialog about the study. All interviewees replied with no additions or modifications to
their transcripts. While interview participation was very low, the triangulation of
interview data with the journal entry data served to support some of the themes that were
discovered in the journal entries.

A fourth way this study ensured trustworthiness was that participant students were
emailed and asked if they would like to read drafts of the results (Chapters 4, 5, and 6).
To date, two students replied to the emailed offer. The fifth way this study sought
trustworthiness was by asking a peer researcher, who was familiar with SRL, to review
my themes.
Last, to ensure trustworthiness, this study was vetted by my committee at George Mason University and by the Director of the Composition Department at the university where it was conducted. Essay assignments were discussed in advance and advice and guidance was obtained from the Director of the Composition Program.

**Researcher Role**

Consistent with qualitative research methods, the data was interpreted in light of my own background and prior understanding (Creswell, 2008). In the interpretive phenomenological approach, a researcher recognizes that personal experience and background will inform the data analysis. For the present study, my background as a composition instructor of nearly 10 years had given me the sense that a need exists for many first-year students to have some way to structure their lives as new college students, so that they can achieve their goals. As the researcher, my personal biases are herewith discussed.

As the researcher, and a college writing teacher, I have a bias in favor of the usefulness of self-regulating. In my experience, many first-year students struggle to pace themselves with all the new demands and freedoms of college. Others struggle with confidence and uncertainty with the quality of their work and their study habits. I view self-regulating as a skill that all people can learn and to use not only in academics but in any situation in life where one has to complete a task – to lose weight, to pass an exam, to complete a project for work. I agree with Bandura’s (1986) observation that all people self-regulate at various times and I see the value to self-regulating in the academic sphere, an application which may not have occurred to the students in my courses.
As a parent of college-aged children, I also have a bias in favor of students finishing college in four years, and I believe self-regulating in the academic sphere can help students stay on track to graduation. At the university where this study was conducted, between 1% and 23% of the students must repeat FYC in any given semester (Office of Planning and Institutional Effectiveness, unpublished data). Repeating a course costs not only time, but also money. On the other hand, full-time students who attempt to stay on track with 15 credits per semester, can easily become overwhelmed if they cannot manage their time and their environment. I believe SRL can provide students a motivational framework to manage their work, and as important, an opportunity to learn more about themselves and their work habits.

However, fully aware that the participants are adults and therefore make their own choices, I attempted to be as genuine and sincere as possible about the voluntary nature of self-regulating. One way to navigate through my biases is through the subject matter and theme of the course. The theme of the course is “issues in higher education” which explores concerns such as graduation rates, choosing a major, academic achievement, and the cost of college. At the same time, positioned within the course was a strategic intervention that is well known to positively impact academic achievement. In a way, the course was introducing students to a problem but also providing solutions and a framework by which students could more intentionally engage in their college education.

Another way I diminished the effect of my biases was to discuss ways in which students may already be self-regulating, thereby showing them it is not just their teacher who recommends this practice. For example, a student athlete on the baseball team will
have engaged in self-regulatory practice enough to achieve a spot on a college team. He will have set a goal (a college baseball scholarship, for example) and worked to achieve that goal. If students see that they may already be setting goals and achieving those goals in one area of their lives, they may be more open to valuing SRL in the academic sphere.

**Limitations**

One of the goals of this research project was to study whether and how students responded to an intervention which did not take too much class time from the content of the course. As was discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, students are likely learning some SRL concepts and strategies in their college success courses, but these are failing to have a sustaining influence. The SRL instruction I provided was in short lessons which eventually tapered off as the semester continued. As important, the focus of the course itself was not on SRL, but rather on academic writing. The relatively minimal emphasis on SRL was a limitation for a few students as the instruction failed to make much of an impression on them. The lack of interest in SRL and the unwillingness to try a new approach to learning is discussed in the following chapters.

Another limitation to this study was that as the researcher, I was also the teacher. Students may not have been completely honest in their journal writing because they wanted to please me. This is a limitation for any study relying on self-reported data. While I could discern a handful of journal entries in which students did seem to be writing “what the teacher wants,” when relevant, these journal entries are part of the discussion in the following three chapters. Yet, it was my hope that the repetition and regularity of the journal writing deterred students from falsely reporting and any who
were inclined to do so, eventually lost interest. Participation was voluntary and students were under no pressure to participate nor were there incentives for participating (aside from getting practice self-regulating).

Last, while SRL is known to be effective in increasing academic achievement (Masui & DeCorte, 2005; Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990), this study did not consider grades or other measures of academic success of the participants. There are no answers as to whether participating in SRL helped students improve their grades or their performance. Rather, the study explores the interactions of students with SRL to understand how they learn and apply the concepts to their work.

Nonetheless, some of these limitations could also be viewed as strengths. Keeping the process simple and repetitive is a strength in terms of instructor time and in terms of providing ample practice opportunities for the student. Many of the studies referenced in Chapter 2 looked at SRL at a single point in time, or for the duration of a single project. Additionally, previous researchers used GPA or survey data to draw conclusions about various aspects of SRL. The present study gave students a more in-depth immersion into SRL and provided data for how students were experiencing self-regulatory processes throughout the semester.

Furthermore, the simplicity of the design is a strength in terms of its accessibility for teacher practice and for extending the study. Any teacher, in any content course, could easily ask students to set goals for completing an assignment, for studying for a test, or for creating a sculpture. Any teacher could ask students to assess their progress at
one or several points in the process. And any teacher could ask students to reflect on what they might do differently the next time.

Summary

In this chapter, I described my plan for conducting the research. I discussed the phenomenological approach and the reasons for using this approach, the data collection and analysis procedures and finally issues of trustworthiness and limitations. The phenomenological approach seeks to describe an experience in the voices of the individuals who are living the experience. The following three chapters combine the results and discussion of the participants as they experienced the SRL intervention. The information and experiences I gathered are analyzed and described next.
Chapters 4, 5, and 6

Overview

The results and discussion of the phenomenological data analysis are presented in the following three chapters. In trying to understand how students experienced an SRL intervention in a composition course, it seemed logical to break apart the results into a discussion of how students experienced each of the three distinct phases of SRL. In each chapter the results are organized by clusters of significant meanings which situate the broader thematic experiences. However, because SRL is recursive in that each phase informs or influences the others, within each of the following three chapters, occasionally results from other phases are referenced for contextual or illustrative purposes.

Phenomenology asks meaning questions. It asks for the meaning and significance of a certain phenomena. Meaning questions cannot be solved, but researchers can provide a deeper understanding so that I (or my interested reader) can be enriched, informed and act more thoughtfully – in other words, to become more experienced. As I read through the students' journal entries, unsure of where they might lead, I gradually understood some of the ways in which the SRL intervention was experienced by the participants, and how my own pedagogy influenced those experiences. There has been a gap in the literature about how college students experience SRL and as a result, how both content
instructors and college success course instructors could more effectively teach self-
regulatory skills was unclear. My hope is that these results begin to fill that gap.

Phenomenology is not only a description of the meanings of an experience, it is
also a “philosophy of action” (van Manen, 1990, p. 154). Hermeneutic phenomenological
reflection deepens thought and therefore changes the action that flows from it. Studies
which do little more than present and organize fragments of transcripts “fall short of their
interpretive and narrative task” (van Manen, 1990, p. 167). Therefore, in keeping with
van Manen’s guidance, I occasionally offer pedagogic actions which I believe might
engender a more meaningful experience with SRL.

In Chapter 4, I examine whether and how students experienced forethought (goal
setting and planning). I discuss the types of goals they set and the research which helps to
explain their goal setting experiences. I then show how the broader thematic descriptions
of the experience emerge in the goal setting journal entries. In Chapter 5, I discuss the
performance monitoring phase and how students experienced self-monitoring. I explore
whether or how students monitored themselves in relation to their goals, and the
conditions which facilitated or hindered their engagement in the SRL process. And as
with Chapter 4, I discuss how broad thematic descriptions of this experience surfaced in
the performance monitoring journal entries. In Chapter 6, I discuss how students
experienced metacognitive reflection by writing about their goals and their work
processes, and what they learned and valued from the experience in general. And again I
return to broader experiential themes as they appear in the reflections after each essay
cycle.
Within each chapter is an exploration of the four larger themes describing the experience for the participants as it relates to the phases of SRL. In some chapters these themes are explored in depth, and in others, I cover them more lightly because the data do not add significantly new perspectives. Recalling that phenomenological themes are at best a simplification—a way to understand the structure of the experience—the following themes emerged from this experience:

- Students’ concerns about time management matters
- Students’ acquisition of self-knowledge
- Students’ development of college-level writing skills
- Students’ experiences with beginning to transfer SRL

Novice learners acquire self-regulatory skills and strategies through practice (Zimmerman 2000), yet many of the studies referenced in Chapter 2 do not give students exposure to SRL for long periods of time. The present study, longer in duration than most of the studies already discussed, provided 15 weeks of SRL practice. The following three chapters provide both results and discussion of how students experienced a longer immersion in SRL as they practiced within in the context of FYC, while at the same time providing insight into the research questions posed for this project. Reflections and additional implications for practice are discussed in Chapter 7.
Chapter 4

Phase 1: Forethought

How Did Students Experience Goal Setting and Strategic Planning?

An important question in this research asked how students experienced an invitation to set goals. An exploration of this question will shed light on what might facilitate or prevent a student from participating in SRL and how, generally, students value the concept of SRL. I was hoping to learn how the goal setting experience impacted their experience with SRL specifically and impacted their writing process overall. This chapter presents the results and discussion of the students’ experiences as they participated in forethought for three essay assignments.

While all phases of Zimmerman’s (1990) three-phased model of SRL are integral, according to Zimmerman everything begins with goal setting. Flower and Hayes (1981) also described writing goals as the driver guiding the writing process. By participating in forethought, goal setting and planning, students could potentially proactively engage with their academic tasks (in this case, their essay assignments) and not simply react to circumstances as they unfolded. The purpose of forethought is to lead students to think about their known experiences (either writing experiences or behavioral experiences) in relation to the current assignment and their personal situations.
Considering what is known, students then devise a plan to complete the assignment in a manner that satisfies their goals.

At the outset of each essay assignment students were asked to set various goals for the essay-writing experience. They were also asked to anticipate possible problems in reaching their goal(s). These problems might be related to a time consuming commute or sports practice, or be academic in nature such as concern about the new writing situation. Or students might expect to have problems with their personal behavior, such as a tendency to procrastinate. Bandura (1991) suggested that people plan a course of action that is likely to produce desired outcomes. By articulating possible problems, I wondered whether students would anticipate consequences and therefore be strategic in creating their plans. Lastly, students were also asked to create a plan for reaching their goal, taking into account what is known or what they expect. Considering that many students may never have set goals for an assignment, the prompt highlighted below was designed to provide specific guidance leading students to engage in forethought for the first essay assignment. Subsequent forethought prompts explicitly asked students to consider their experience with the previous essay as they created goals and plans (See Appendix D for all SRL prompts).

What are your personal goals for this essay – both learning and writing goals? What grade do you hope to earn on this assignment? What is your plan for meeting all interim deadlines? Please list at least three strategies you could use to meet your goals. What problems (or concerns) do you foresee in completing this essay assignment?
Because it is the goal setting that begins engagement with the SRL process as well as the writing process, the following results and discussion describe the goal setting experiences of the participants while also connecting those experiences with the research. To give a sense of the participation levels of the students, Table 1 below shows the numbers of responses analyzed for each essay assignment.

Table 1

*Participation levels for forethought and planning*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students enrolled</th>
<th>34</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of forethought entries for each essay</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long term goals</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who responded to all 3 essay-based forethought prompts</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who responded to 2 or fewer essay-based forethought prompts</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 1 above, while participation was generally high throughout the semester, there was never 100% participation in writing forethought entries. The same trend held for performance monitoring and reflection (similar tables are found in those
chapters). Students were given time in class to write their journal reflections, and if they missed class they were encouraged to write them later—at any time. Yet, even with participation points awarded (10 points for writing the entry, 0 points for no entry) there were students who simply did not write a response. A few of these reflect the students who dropped the course or stopped attending, but in other cases students simply did not create a forethought entry for unknown reasons. This participation trend showing uneven participation paralleled the uneven learning I will be describing in these results chapters; if students are not participating fully, they do not allow themselves the chance to learn to self-regulate. When it comes to setting goals, this chapter will show that generally, students’ goal setting (both in terms of specificity and articulating types of goals) and plan creation improved over the semester.

It is difficult to identify a universal theme with regard to how students experienced setting goals and plans except to say it was inconsistent and erratic—which in itself leads to important questions and implications I will be addressing throughout these results chapters. While students reported at the end of the semester that overall, setting goals and monitoring their progress was helpful, their goal setting in practice was optimistic yet also uneven. As the excerpts in this chapter will show, goals ranged from specific to vague to non-existent; planned strategies ranged from specific to non-existent. Some students set the very same goals for each essay, while other students were inconsistent and set a specific goal for one essay and a vague goal the next. Some set no goals.
This chapter is therefore divided into two parts. To provide context for the students' experiences, the chapter begins with a broad discussion of the participants’ goal characteristics such as goal specificity and goal orientation. This is because the students' experiences seemed to be connected to these two goal characteristics. The second half of the chapter is a discussion of the broader phenomenological themes I discovered as students formally engaged in forethought: time management concerns, their acquisition of self-knowledge, their development of college-level writing skills, and the transfer of SRL. For the sake of space, when possible, journal entries are excerpted to more concisely illustrate the point; in some cases, I have added italics to help highlight students’ attention to particular SRL concepts. Furthermore, generally the broader phenomenological themes are discussed only to the extent to which they emerge in these forethought entries. And because SRL is a repeating, circular process, performance monitoring and reflection entries are referenced as appropriate. NOTE: As journal entries were transposed, all spelling errors were corrected for readability. No other errors were corrected. To protect privacy, all names are pseudonyms.

**Goal Specificity**

Goal specificity refers to the extent to which an explicit goal exists to which problem-solving activities are directed (Rossano & Reardon, 1999). In his research on human behavior Bandura (1986) observed that people have to set personal standards for themselves and respond to their actions self-evaluatively. When a goal has an unclear standard it can be difficult to decide the type and amount of effort to expend to achieve the goal, and evaluating goal progress can also be difficult (Bandura & Cervone, 1983).
Unlike goals that state a general intention to do one's best, the setting of specific goals involves stating a clear and measurable standard of performance that can be used to determine if a goal has been reached (Locke, Chah, Harrison & Lustgarten, 1989). The goals are the standards around which all SRL activities revolve and as I will discuss in this chapter (and in Chapters 5, 6 and 7), goal specificity has implications for how successfully students are able to self-regulate their learning to reach their goals.

For purposes of this discussion I initially considered goals to be non-specific if they did not clearly state a measurable standard of performance. However, after carefully considering the students’ goal experiences I realized that specificity could not be an either/or designation. Therefore, I defined goal characteristics as having vague tendencies or specific tendencies. Guided by the research discussed above, I identified the following types of phrases as having specific tendencies: “complete the essay on time” or “to get an A or B.” The following types of phrases I labeled as having vague tendencies: “to pay attention” or “to improve myself.” The following table (Table 2) shows additional examples of the kinds of phrases I identified as showing students thinking more specifically and less specifically.
Table 2

*Goal characteristics: Excerpts showing specific and vague goal tendencies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student/Essay</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
<th>Student/Essay</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reid/Essay 1</td>
<td>Earn the best grade…which would be an A</td>
<td>Jay/Essay 1</td>
<td>I hope to fully portray my learning and writing process so that it can be observed well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla/Essay 2</td>
<td>to have it completed by the 22nd of February</td>
<td>Paul/Essay 1</td>
<td>to learn about how I think and spend my time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cassidy/Essay 3</td>
<td>do better on this paper than the papers due in the past</td>
<td>Sarah/Essay 2</td>
<td>get a good grade</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goal specificity is a concern in SRL because students need to create a strategy to meet their goal(s). For example, if a student creates a goal to read 100 pages over the weekend, the student needs to create a plan for meeting that goal. Strategic planning for this goal might include going to the library, getting up early, or any number of other possible strategies. Without a specific goal, students may have trouble selecting or deploying appropriate strategies. Early in the semester in a short SRL lesson about creating goals (See Appendix A for the Goals PowerPoint), students were shown reasons for setting realistic goals and for creating specific plans to help reach the goal. However, aside from discussing the motivating influences of goals, I did not guide the students nor did I provide any kind of feedback on the quality of their goals. The reasons for this are: first, the intervention was designed to be minimalistic; and second, I did not know how students would experience goal setting and therefore I provided no additional instruction.
except to guide students to think about various types of goals (e.g., performance and learning goals). It is helpful from an instructional standpoint to learn how students participating in SRL for the first time experienced goal setting and making a plan with minimal instruction and no feedback. Future interventions should consider students’ inexperience with setting goals and perhaps provide feedback the first few times time students create goals.

While research shows that having a clear and measurable standard to work toward might help students decide the type and amount of effort to expend in order to reach their goals (Locke & Latham, 2002), not every student is capable of articulating clear goals. However, the journal responses showed that when students were setting specific goals, they also tended to be more specific with their intended strategy to meet those goals. For example, Reid (excerpted in Table 2 above) planned to “stay on top of the deadlines” and do all his work on “Wednesday evenings and Saturday evenings.” Kayla (also excerpted in Table 2) wrote, “I expect to finish the video by the 11th of February. This will give me enough time to finish my first draft in time for the peer review.” As is evident, Reid and Kayla are very specific with their date-related goals and plans.

Immediately apparent from Table 2 and the discussion is the relative specificity of the goals and the specific-tending plans (because at the same time, these plans might also be considered as having vaguer tendencies too). As mentioned above, because these students were just beginning to learn how to self-regulate their learning, specificity was not considered either/or and many of the goals and plans excerpted in this chapter will
exhibit both vague and specific tendencies. For example, Reid (excerpted above in Table 2) was aiming for a specific grade. Similarly, Maggie wanted to learn more about online classes. In her forethought entry her goals were “to learn more about online courses and to experience an online lecture.” These goals seem to me to be relatively specific; one could measure Reid’s grade or whether Maggie watched the online lecture and thus presumably learned something about how online learning works. The plans to attain these goals were somewhat specific, and also at the same time somewhat disconnected from the goals. For example, Cassidy's strategy (her goals are excerpted in Table 2 above) was to “meet with you if I have questions…work on this paper for several days.” This was a somewhat measurable plan (working for several days is at least partially measurable). At the same time, Cassidy seemed tentative about seeking help and the connection to her goals seemed vague. She reported that she had been “receiving Cs” on her papers, but at this late point in the semester (Essay 3 was assigned about two-thirds through the semester) it might have been more helpful for her to create a more specific plan with a wider range of strategies. Some students, like those excerpted in Table 2, seemed comfortable in setting goals which tended to be slightly more specific and relatively clear and about creating a plan to attain their goals. However, their goal-to-strategy link did not always seem to be strong.

Table 3 below shows examples of goals and strategies that tended to be vague. These goals are difficult to measure such as Dana's goal to “just focus.” However, at the same time Dana also wrote that she planned to start early which was a relatively specific plan. As with the excerpts shown above in Table 2, many students who showed vaguer
tendencies described goals and plans that exhibited various degrees of specificity.

However, despite the fact that these goals seemed vague (e.g., Alice’s goal was to “improve myself more”), occasionally the strategies were specific (e.g., Alice’s plan was to “to start taking notes as soon as I start”), yet at the same time, those strategies were also sometimes disconnected from the goal.

Table 3

*Goal characteristics: Excerpts showing vaguely worded goals corresponding to vaguely worded strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Vague-tending goals</th>
<th>Vague-tending strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>My personal goals for this essay will be to stay on top the work...I intend to achieve a good grade and try my best to reach every requirement.</td>
<td>remembering to write down my daily routine, meet the standards in which are expected of me and my work, as well as trying my best to give a good presentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>Alice</td>
<td>I am planning to improve myself more in this essay ... I hope that I can a good grade</td>
<td>My plan is to start taking notes as soon as I start to watch the video and try to get information as much as I can</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>My main goal is to just focus, and find all my articles.</td>
<td>For previous assignments, I have always started them early...and I plan to do the same with this one.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Previous research might shed some light on possible reasons why students cannot or will not set specific goals, have unclear strategies, or have difficulty expressing their goals and plans in writing. Bandura (1991) has suggested that one's previous behavior is used as a reference against which ongoing performance is judged. Therefore, it is possible that some students may have felt they have no reference point in their prior
experience against which to set a goal and create a plan to reach the goal. Contrast this with Cassidy’s goal (in Table 2) where she planned “to do better on this paper than the papers due in the past.” Here Cassidy had a clear performance standard against which she was setting new goals. Bandura’s (1991) research showed that “past attainments affect self-appraisal mainly through their effect on goal setting” (p. 255), which implies that those students who exhibited vaguer tendencies in their goal setting may not see connections between the writing they did in high school, or even earlier in the semester, and the writing they are expected to do for the assignment. This could be one of the reasons why Julie in Table 3 above did not set a specific goal for the first essay assignment. She might feel she has no point of reference (either from high school or an earlier college assignment) against which to set a measurable standard. This inexperience could also be why students gravitated toward time management strategies, with which they were more familiar, rather than to more writing-specific strategies.

On the other hand, those students who exhibited vaguer tendencies in their goals and strategies might have actually been having trouble writing them—either in knowing or caring what to write in response to the prompt. This might be where Driscoll and Wells’s (2012) research on dispositional traits like curiosity and value could offer insight; they compiled research which argued that dispositional characteristics such as curiosity, goal pursuit, impulsiveness, and distractibility determine or prevent learning. McCune and Entwistle (2011) further refined definitions of learning dispositions in relation to 21st-century competencies as including a willingness to put in necessary time, effort, and concentration to apply learning strategies effectively. Examples of students not knowing,
not valuing, or not willing to engage were few, but they did exist. For example, for the Essay 3 forethought journal entry, Grace wrote the following: “My writing goals for my rhetorical bibliography is to complete it without any plagiarism.” This entry was written on a day when the course topic was on how to cite their work. Without asking the student it is hard to say whether this was a true goal, or whether the student just did not know what to write, or was not invested in considering a goal. Another example comes from Nate's long-term goals for the course. In this entry Nate wrote about his writing goals: “I want to be able to summarize better and be able to take the main points out of articles and summaries to understand how the writing process works.” This entry stands out to me because it refers to specific topics discussed recently in class. The handful of students who struggled with articulating goals and plans might simply have had no idea what to write about and therefore were just doing what they thought was expected.

**Case study of goal specificity.** To show a typical trend over the semester in how students experienced setting goals and making a plan, I selected two typical students and their three forethought journal entries, which were written as each essay was assigned. As already discussed and again evidenced in the excerpts shown in Table 4 below, students were inconsistent in their goal setting – sometimes a journal entry for an individual student was very specific and clear about goals, but another journal entry would be vague. Interestingly, even when students wrote vague goals, their planned strategies tended to be more specific. It seemed that for many students, planning a strategy was a more straightforward task than setting goals. They seemed to be more comfortable with the concept of making a plan.
Pedro's entries, excerpted in Table 4 below, are an excellent example of the students who wrote at length about a plan but did not set clear or specific goals. His only specific goal is for Essay 2 when he wrote, “My goal … is to watch the hour long video as soon as possible.” It seemed that Pedro was uncomfortable setting goals for his essays, or perhaps using the language of goals. In fact, for Essay 1, his initial plans (which might really be goals) are very similar to his strategy: “I plan to put a lot of time for each journal entry… reflect on my day” and his strategy was to “write my journal entry every day.” However, watching a video (required for Essay 2) is something he can measure, and also something he must do in order to write the essay and therefore he was able to set a clear goal. For Essay 3, Pedro returned to writing in terms of “plans.” While Pedro did not write about goals, he was detailed and clear about his plans and strategies.

For Mary, the grade and learning goals were specific, and remained largely constant through the semester. The student expected a high grade on each assignment and intended to work proactively, being vigilant with her time. The matter of time management was a frequently mentioned concern and in fact, to help deal with that for Essay 3, Mary decided to set incremental goals to help manage her time.
Table 4

**Case study: Goal specificity tendencies for Mary and Pedro**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Specific (Mary)</th>
<th>Vague (Pedro)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>My personal goals for this assignment is to receive an A or a B, preferably an A... I plan to turn in all of my assignments, journal entries, and final essay on time and complete them with the best of my ability.</td>
<td>I plan to put in a lot of time for each journal entry, I plan to reflect on my day and see how I studied for classes... I plan to learn more about myself, my study habits... I also hope to become a better writer through this assignment, I plan to look over my work a couple times ...My Strategies are: first, write in my journal entry every day; second, finish my essay two days ahead of time; third, give myself at least 2 plus days to write the essay.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>My personal goals are to receive a high B or A. finish my work without rushing, and to do the best I can. ...I hope to learn ... what it is like taking an online course. ... I plan to start working on this right away and to pace myself</td>
<td>My goals for this new essay. is to watch the hour long video as soon as possible ... I plan to write this essay a couple of times. ... I hope to receive an A on this assignment ... I plan to work on this essay whenever I have the opportunity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>My goals right now are just to get everything in on time. ... I'm going to make small goals and take baby steps day by day to do this project. I'm going to definitely start as soon as possible to find articles ... I want to take advantage of all of the help recourses I can get. I'm going to manage my time well, maybe go to the CTL, and see Mrs. [Name omitted] from the library....</td>
<td>I plan on trying to get on the essays as soon as possible and trying to post early so that I am able to get some feedback on each essay ... I am going to try and give myself a couple of days to write each essay, or at least a couple of hours a night so that I can write in time .... I think that I can probably look over my paper a little bit better so that I can achieve a higher grade, since my steps last time didn't work so well...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown here, Mary usually tended toward specific goals ("My goal is to receive a high B or A," "to learn...what it is like taking an online course.") Her plans in
each case varied between specific and vague (“turn everything in on time,” “pace myself,” “make small goals and take baby steps day by day.”) Finally, for Essay 3, Mary incorporated new strategies to her plan (go to the tutoring center [CTL] and meet the librarian). There was some consistency with her goals—they were similar for the first two essays—but there was little evolution in employing new strategies until the third essay. Like many of the students, Mary also occasionally seemed to exhibit a disconnection between her goals and her strategies and her strategies often revolved around managing her time. On the other hand, because Mary seemed to be developing an awareness of appropriate strategies to help with the challenging research task for Essay 3, it seems that her experience with forethought was leading her to be a more self-regulated learner.

Interestingly, for Essay 2, in her performance monitoring entry, Mary referred to her vague plan and she wrote:

In the post I made about the goals I have for the rhetorical analysis essay, I didn't really make myself a specific plan. My plan now, is to do the assignment on a timely fashion so I can take my time and not rush…I've read the online articles and brainstormed some ideas…I'm going to have to do a lot more reading about what a rhetorical analysis essay is, so I can understand it more.

Although Mary had never experienced SRL before, she was already what Zimmerman (2002) would consider a self-regulated learner (as shown by her demonstrating personal initiative by researching the essay genre) and was clearly productively engaged with both the assignment and the SRL intervention. Even though her goals remained constant for the semester, she had a toolkit of SRL strategies that helped her through the increasingly challenging work in the course.
Whereas Mary’s goals had spiraled from specific-to-vaguer by the third essay, Pedro’s goals wavered between vague (Essay 1: “I plan to learn more about myself, my study habits”) and non-existent. His journal entries showed he was much more interested (or able) in writing about his plan, and like Mary he created subgoals to manage the third assignment. For Essay 3, Pedro also added a plan to proofread and work harder as a result of his awareness that his plans for the first two essays have not led to higher achievement. Unlike Mary, Pedro did not seem to be on his way to being a self-regulated learner. He did not write about goals, and his learning strategies seemed to be very much the same from essay to essay. He acknowledged that his performance has been disappointing, yet he seemed unable or unwilling to deploy more effective strategies.

The trends illustrated by both of these students just beginning to learn self-regulatory concepts support research that shows that it is difficult to change the study skills that students have acquired, usually over many years of study. In their research Dembo and Praks-Seli (2004) discussed four reasons students do not change their study habits: (a) they believe they cannot change, (b) they do not want to change, (c) they do not know what to change, or (d) they do not know how to change. The forethought entries of Pedro illustrate some of these reasons quite clearly; for Essay 3 he wrote, “I think that I can probably look over my paper a little bit better so that I can achieve a higher grade, since my steps last time didn't work so well. So I'd like to work a little bit harder.” Pedro knew that his strategies had been weak, but it is possible either he did not want to try new strategies, he might not know what to change, or he did not know how to employ new strategies (as suggested by Dembo & Praks-Seli, items b, c, and d). The toolkit of
strategies he carried with him from high school might not have been sufficient for FYC (at the time Essay 1 was assigned, it was only the third week of school) and therefore he was using the journal entries and the assignments to discover (and record) information about himself (a broader phenomenological theme I will discuss later in the chapter) and perhaps tentatively attempt to become more self-regulated.

On the other hand, according to my researcher notes Pedro came to my office hours at least once every other week, and some weeks he came more often. We typically discussed the assigned reading, and I occasionally gave him feedback on portions of his essays. While it could be inferred that Pedro was utilizing a learning strategy (to seek help), upon reflection, it seems to me that Pedro very often was not seeking specific help; rather, he was interested in making sure he understood what he needed to do (i.e., read a certain article). He seemed concerned with learning how to be a college student and the purpose of his visits seemed intended to boost his confidence as a student, rather than to deal with writing-specific concerns. These visits help illuminate ways in which even the examination of student journal entries can leave gaps in understanding student motivations and concerns.

The course assignments increased in intensity as the semester continued and yet, just when students might need to engage more intentionally in forethought and planning, many of them preferred strategies that were somewhat comfortable for them. The SRL mini-lessons described in Chapter 3 tapered off as the semester continued, and so perhaps students would have responded differently if SRL training had continued at a consistent rate throughout the semester. Reminding students of the reasons for setting goals,
providing guidance in establishing specific goals, and teaching a wider variety of strategies, including task-specific strategies, might have enabled students to feel more confident and willing to set goals and to deploy new learning strategies. Overall, the goal setting tendencies of the students was mixed; some did not seem to experience significant changes in their SRL goal-setting abilities across the 15-week semester and others did began to set clearer goals. However, as I will discuss later in this report, many students reported in their final reflections that setting goals and making plans helped them with their work.

**Performance Goals and Learning Goals**

Historically, performance orientations and learning goal orientations have been viewed as mutually exclusive. The performance goal orientation (e.g., “my goal is to get an A”) has been characterized as disadvantageous and unhelpful, whereas the learning goal orientation (e.g., “my goal is to learn to write a thesis statement”) has been characterized as adaptive and beneficial (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2000). Other researchers however have argued that a performance goal orientation may be beneficial in some situations (Harackiewicz, Barron, & Elliot, 1998), and that the adoption of a performance goal orientation need not rule out the simultaneous adoption of other types of goals (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2000; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2000). Furthermore, beyond the college setting, research on employability shows that both performance and learning goal orientations are meaningful in employment situations. Employment situations in particular are largely results oriented and require a worker to flexibly apply
as many different resources and skills as necessary, to achieve a goal (van der Heijde, 2014).

This research is relevant because when participants were invited to create goals and strategies for an essay assignment, students responded by setting multiple types of goals for the same assignment. The journal entries showed that regardless of the academic argument over the benefits of different types of goals, students were focused first on their grade, and second, in this study, on their writing goals. Learning goals, which mostly involved learning about themselves, were third most frequently cited.

Pintrich (2000a) explored the idea of having multiple goal orientations—both performance and learning goals—especially in a classroom setting where there may be motivational concerns between the two types of goals. He speculated that there might be multiple pathways, or developmental trajectories, that are fostered by different goal orientations. And he suggested that learning and performance goals together “could set up and foster different patterns of motivation, affect and strategy use” (Pintrich, 2000a, p. 545). Depending on their pathways, students might end up in the same place in terms of actual achievement or performance but have different experiences along the way. And Harackiewicz et al. (1998) suggested that it might not matter which types of goals are pursued but rather that the goals lead to cognitive and affective involvement in the task.

**Performance goals.** When students used the word “goal” or “hope” in relation to an achievement, I considered it a goal (e.g., “I hope to get an A”). When students used words like “plan” or “strategy” I generally considered those phrases to be strategies. There were a few forethought journal entries in which students set no goals, and there
were many entries in which students set multiple goals. However, the majority of students reported goals were performance goals, and most of the performance goals were grade goals such as “I am hoping I get an A,” or “obtain a decent grade.”

Without teacher-generated feedback on their goals, as with this study, students generally gravitated toward performance-types of goals. Frequent report of performance goals is consistent with beginners learning to self-regulate (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997). However, this focus on performance goals could also impact students acquisition of SRL because (a) there is typically a delay in time for learning an outcome, and (b) performance goals place additional demands on novices’ limited resources (Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992; Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997). On the other hand, research showed that performance goals facilitated self-regulation when students were low in mastery goals or in new situations (Pintrich & Garcia, 1996), which suggests that performance goals have positive effects for some people. Other research supporting the interactions between multiple goals suggests that students focus on the performance or learning goal that is most important to them at a particular time (Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001). Understanding goals and their effects on motivation and in facilitating learning continues to be a strong focus of researchers and educators alike, and is clearly needed (Harackiewicz & Linnenbrink, 2005).

Learning goals. While students’ performance goals were largely about attaining a grade, their learning goals were a little more varied and slightly less clear-cut. Some learning goals were strategy-related, some were writing-related, others were content-related, and still others referred to self-learning (a phenomenological theme I will discuss
later in this chapter). As this was a writing class, I decided to consider goals related to writing separately so that I could more clearly understand the writing concerns of the students. A discussion of writing goals follows this section.

As with the distinctions I attempted to draw with goal specificity, I came to realize that learning goals too needed to be qualified as tending to show learning goal characteristics. Generally, I considered a goal a learning goal if the students wrote phrases such as “I want to learn” or “I would like to see if I can...” If the phrasing seemed to indicate that a learning outcome was in mind, I considered it a general learning goal. For example, among her other goals Kayla wrote that she wanted “to be able to read long articles without becoming distracted.” I considered this a learning goal because Kayla said she wanted to learn to a strategy be a more attentive reader. Juan, who is excerpted below, wrote, “I hope to learn from an online class about myself is to see if it will help me.” In this case, he wants to learn whether he is a good candidate for online learning. In the first example, Kayla wants to acquire a specific skill, and in the second, Juan wants to learn about himself and his tolerance for online learning. Additional examples of typical learning goals are excerpted in Table 5 below.
Table 5

*Goal orientation: Excerpts showing learning goals*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>I plan on learning and realizing how I live my life and really figure out what's different about me than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>My plan and goals...includes learning more about what I do with my time during each day that contributes to or hurts my academic success in this class.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>My learning goal is to learn how to do this essay and learn something from the lectures or articles that I soon have to read and watch. What I hope to learn from an online class about myself is to see if it will help me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>I would like to see if I would be able to take any online classes and to see if I can focus for an hour without getting side-tracked and starting something else</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* No students created learning goals for Essay 3.

The learning goals excerpted above are typical of the types of learning goals students wrote about. Furthermore, their non-writing-based learning goals were largely focused on learning about themselves, a larger thematic finding from this study which I will discuss later in this chapter, and likely directly correlated to the writing assignments themselves, which were created to support this type of learning. Generally, for Essay 1 (see Appendix C for the essay assignments), a self-observation essay, those who wrote about learning goals wanted to learn about their individual work processes during an assignment. Likewise, for Essay 2, an analysis of an online course, students wanted to learn about how they might handle an online class. Interestingly, no students created learning goals for Essay 3, yet this was the research assignment where students had an opportunity to learn about a topic of their choice. There are some possible reasons why
students did not specify a learning goal for this research project: (a) if learning goals add to or reflect a student's sense of ownership in the learning process, it is possible they were not all that interested in their topics, (b) perhaps they did not know enough about what they were doing to generate a learning goal, or (c) perhaps they already had experience doing research projects and did not view them as learning opportunities.

The “no learning goals” phenomenon for the research project (Essay 3) raises some important questions about the purpose of assigning research projects when juxtaposed with students’ goals for their assignments. As mentioned earlier, most of the students specified performance or grade-based goals for most of their assignments, yet the point of a research project is to learn about a topic. The fact that no students wrote of having any interest in learning about their topic suggests that they may not have been oriented toward this type of independent, questioning learning. Yet, many students did describe learning goals for the first two essay assignments, which were more oriented toward learning about themselves. Perhaps, as discussed later in this chapter, students were more interested in learning about themselves than in a researched topic of their choice, and thus were in a better position to describe learning goals. Or perhaps as mentioned above, the students did not see the purpose of research, or were not invested in their research projects.

**Writing goals: Another form of learning goals.** Because the intervention occurred in a composition course, the forethought prompts for each essay asked students about their writing goals; I was hoping to learn about the kinds of writing issues that concerned students. I considered writing goals to be those goals that referenced some
aspect of either the writing process, the writing genre (i.e., a summary, or a rhetorical bibliography), or some other writing concern. Sometimes the writing goals tended to be vague like Chase's writing goal: “My writing goal is to become a much better writer.” Others were more genre-specific like Nate's writing goal for Essay 3: “to learn more on how to write a good bibliography.” And although each assignment and indeed the course had writing goals and objectives clearly stated, students did not adopt or appropriate these goals, and in fact, seemed to pay little attention to them. Table 6 below shows additional excerpts of the kinds of writing goals students wrote about.

Table 6

Goal orientation: Excerpts showing writing goals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1 Dana</td>
<td>My goals for this essay are to strengthen my writing skills for my future. Although my career path may not involve much writing, I would like to go into it fully prepared...I have a tendency to write as if I am talking and I would love to break that habit.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>My goals for this essay is to get a good grade and express all of my thoughts and ideas in an organized way so it will make sense and be considered correct.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2 Grace</td>
<td>I plan to perfect my grammar in this paper as well as my transitions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>I plan on trying to focus more on my structure of the essay and have the words flow smoothly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3 Juan</td>
<td>My writing goals for this rhetorical bibliography are to proofread more often and to fix my mistakes from previous papers that I have done.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nate</td>
<td>My writing goals for this project are to learn more on how to write a good bibliography and to earn a good grade for the assignment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the journal prompts expressly asked for different types of goals, including writing goals, only two students (Alexis and Grace) specified writing goals for all three essay assignments while most students did not specify a writing goal at all. Furthermore, as shown in Table 6 above, most of the writing goals were vague—very few were specific. One reason for this may be the students' primary focus on grades. A grade goal may be a familiar and easy goal to set, and clearly measurable, while a writing goal may not be that easy to figure out—especially in an unfamiliar situation. Pintrich and Garcia (1996) proposed that in classroom settings where obtaining good grades is an important goal, a focus on learning as well as grades might be the most adaptive orientation. Although I anticipated that students would be somewhat comfortable writing about a grade goal, I was also hoping to encourage them to think about other types of goals they might set for each assignment which is why the prompt asked for learning and writing goals. Butler and Winne (1995) argued from a self-regulated learning perspective that both learning and performance goal orientations can be adopted by students and that these multiple goals can provide students with important guides for interpreting feedback and regulating their learning. However, it is clear from the journal entries that students were most comfortable creating grade goals for themselves and were more vague, uncertain, or unwilling, in writing about other types of goals.

**Students Who Set No Goals**

As I looked at how students experienced goal setting, and recalling research that showed the importance of goals in writing activities (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007; Flower & Hayes, 1981), I began to have questions about those students who did not set
goals: What prevents a student from setting a performance goal, a learning goal, or a writing goal, even when explicitly prompted to do so? What are the reasons for setting no goals? For example, Pedro, who was excerpted in the case study (Table 4 above), rarely set goals in his forethought entries. His forethought entry for the third essay said:

I plan on trying to get on the essays as soon as possible and trying to post early so that I am able to get some feedback on each essay … I am going to try and give myself a couple of days to write each essay, or at least a couple of hours a night…. I think that I can probably look over my paper a little bit better so that I can achieve a higher grade, since my steps last time didn't work so well. (Pedro, Forethought, Essay 3)

In this entry, Pedro side-stepped the goal question altogether and discussed only his plan for getting his work done.

Finding scholarly research to answer this question is difficult because much of the research focuses on the characteristics of students’ goals but not on why a student would set no goals in the first place. I found no literature on the “no goal” characteristic of students. However, research in the fields of business management, employee psychology, and psychology in general provided a few ideas that could be generalized to relate to students. In their final reflections on the course, the students themselves also offered glimpses into why they might have set no goals.

First, in their research on work motivation, Lantham and Pinder (2005) observed that people are motivated to attain goals that are compatible with their self-identity. In the context of the present study, perhaps this might mean that those students who do not set goals do not yet self-identify as college writers. Second, Dweck (1999) argued that people's conception of their ability influences the goals they pursue. It is possible therefore that those students who avoided setting goals did not feel they could attain any
kind of goal; thus they did not set goals in the first place. In other words, setting no goals may be a way to avoid undesirable outcomes. A third possibility for why students do not set goals is that they might associate goals with positive or negative feelings leading to approach or avoidance (Pervin, 1983). Perhaps students might wish to avoid showing incompetence and as a result, they set no goals.

The students themselves provided some other ideas which might explain why some did not set goals. First, some students were skeptical and did not believe goals would make a difference. For example, in her final reflection Kayla wrote, “I don't think setting the goals…helped me much. I forgot what my goals were and I didn't achieve them very well.” Second, a lack of prior knowledge or no contextual comparison might make defining goals difficult. If the student doesn't know what to expect he or she might be unable to set a realistic goal for the new situation. For example, Luke did not set a goal but he did make a plan which, at the very least, might help him complete the assignment: “My main plan for this assignment is to keep up with all the deadlines.” Perhaps a plan is easier to visualize when a student has no ability to create a goal. A third reason suggested by the student journal entries might be that setting goals takes students outside of their comfort zone. Setting goals (and sharing them) might be an uncomfortable experience for some people. Dana wrote the following: “As far as my personal goals for this class, I tend to put this class before my others because it requires a bit more of my time and attention…I am out of my comfort zone.” Her anxiety about the course might be prohibiting Dana from setting goals.
Locke and Lantham (2002) noted that as the complexity of the task increases and higher level skills and strategies have yet to become automatized, the effect of setting a goal depends on an individual's ability to discover appropriate strategies for the task. This idea relates to feelings of self-efficacy. If a student does not understand the task or has little belief that she is able to do the task, she might not even begin to figure out how to set goals or deploy appropriate strategies. Yet at the same time, the work must get done, so these students are still scrambling for strategies—which may not match the task or their personal situations.

While all these suggestions seem plausible, one last idea worth exploring is the idea that students may be unwilling or unable to set realistic goals because it may seem impossible to control all the factors influencing the attainment of those goals. Competence in dealing with one's environment is not a fixed act or a matter of simply knowing what to do. SRL was presented to the participants as a way to actively engage in their learning, to attempt to understand and control aspects of their lives, to help them reach their goals, and to improve their academic outcomes. The concerns identified by many students in their forethought journal entries showed that while some may be unwilling or unable as yet to state a specific goal, most were also working through some of their other priorities and their largest priority was managing their time. Students wrote of managing their time so often that I determined it was one of the main thematic descriptions of the SRL experience for the students. Many of the journal entries, across all three SRL phases, spoke to worries about time management and control. While first-year writing students may not feel they have the confidence or experience yet to manage
the essay writing, they seemed very comfortable talking about their time management strategies and in the self-monitoring and reflection phases, talking about the degree to which they successfully controlled their time.

**Theme: Students’ Concerns about Time Management Matters**

The most often-cited planned strategy was to manage time and project deadlines. Research findings indicate that students with effective time management skills prioritize their goals, plan their activities effectively, and establish and maintain schedules to fulfill their goals (Bembenutty, 2009). Not only is time management an important strategy, but it can also be viewed as an important performance outcome that students can use to regulate their academic performance (Zimmerman, Greenberg & Weinstein 1984). This research was supported by the present study as shown by the handful of students who indicated that their goal was to manage their time. While this study did not track academic performance, and did not track students’ ability to manage their time other than what they reported, clearly students were aware of a need to manage or control their time, and this broader theme quickly emerged as an important description of their experience.

Managing time and project deadlines as a planned strategy (or a goal) in the forethought phase was a fairly consistent strategy throughout the semester. Most of the students wrote about managing some aspect of their time in most of the forethought entries. For example, in the 27 total forethought entries for Essay 2, there were 33 references to time management. Moreover, this strategy far outweighed any other strategy students mentioned. Occasionally students planned to seek help, work with a
friend, proofread, or work harder, but often these strategies accompanied a time
management goal or strategy. Furthermore, among those students who did not set goals,
many often commented on their plan to start early or to finish early, or on some other
aspect of time management.

Case Study of Time Management

A good example of student pre-occupation with time management can be seen in
the goals and planning entries of Dani, excerpted in Table 7 below. For Essay 1, her goal
was vague (“become a better writer”) but there was a specific focus and plan to meet
deadlines (“create an organized list… of… dates”). However, there was no plan for how
to “become a better writer.” As discussed early in this chapter, a weak connection
between goals and strategies was common. For Essay 2, Dani’s goals turned into time
management goals (“manage my time”) combined with a grade goal. Again Dani showed
a single-minded focus with the necessity of managing time. For the third essay, Dani
seemed to be setting a time management goal, and as with her other essays, her strategy
to complete the assignment remained a time management strategy.
Table 7

Case study: Time management excerpts for Dani

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forethought entries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As mentioned earlier, time management concerns might be better understood through the lens of controllability. Control beliefs are students’ perceptions about the likelihood of accomplishing desired outcomes under certain conditions (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2006). Students are likely to feel in control when the factors attributed to their outcomes are seen as stable and controllable (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2006). Therefore, students are likely to persist in their learning, or in writing an essay for example, when they feel they are in control. For example, in her self-monitoring entry for
Essay 3 Dana wrote, “I am getting this paper done faster than any others that I have written. I am surprised with myself on my time management.” A student who feels he or she cannot control a causal factor may begin to feel hopeless or out of control, and may therefore no longer put effort into achievement-related activities (Anderman & Wolters, 2006). While the present study did not look at writing achievement, student reflections in the performance monitoring phase did show that students felt successful and confident when they had some control over their time management. For instance, for Essay 2, Michael was mostly confident with his progress, yet he also felt he might be further along if he had managed his time better: “I am happy with my progression … but I would have liked to been completely finished before the start of this weekend.”

Another way to consider time management is through the lens of behavior patterns established in K-12 schooling environments and students’ backgrounds. Because behavioral patterns established in elementary and secondary school may persist through the college years, students are often unprepared to undertake the kind of independent work they must do for college—hence the college success course requirement at many colleges and universities. Furthermore, in high school, students needed to structure their time only after school, but in college the course schedules can vary greatly often leaving large blocks of time with no structured activity. When they get to college, students often find that the strategies they used in high school do not work for college and they need specific instruction on how to adapt and change (Dembo & Praks-Seli, 2004). Interestingly, at the university where the present study occurred, the college success
course does not claim to teach time management skills in its course curriculum. On the webpage for the college success course, the curriculum is described as follows:

```
Each section of [college success] has a theme which is selected by the course instructor, but in all sections you will:

- Learn how to engage questions and answer them (inquiry learning)
- Locate and use information through the Internet, library, and field trips
- Write and make oral presentations about a variety of topics
- Get connected with [university] resources that can help and support you
- Explore your interests and skills, and begin to create an electronic portfolio that will be yours for your four years of college
```

However, a perusal of a few syllabi for this course does show that at about half-way through the semester, time management is a topic for discussion for half-a-class period (shared with learning styles). In an often cited study, researchers found that time management attitudes and skills are positively related to grade-point average (Britton & Tesser, 1991), and it seemed that in the present study, students genuinely felt a need to learn or improve their time management, and perhaps that is why it was so often either a goal or a strategy. There is a strong possibility therefore that the students in this study used SRL as a way to explore their ability to manage their time.

A third reason students focused on time management may be related to their status as novice learners. They were new students in a new situation, most with little prior knowledge of how things worked in FYC. With little, or no, college writing experience and unsure expectations of the course, they found time management (while worthy) was a familiar topic to write about. As first-year students, the participants were learning to
navigate a more independent style of learning, and they were managing multiple deadlines. Interestingly however, this study was conducted in the spring semester, at which point one would think that students had mostly learned how to manage the college learning environment. Yet, as I discuss further in Chapters 5 and 6, the journal entries showed that many students did not have much experience setting academic goals, most said they had never monitored their processes, and none of the students said they had ever heard of self-regulated learning. Despite the objectives of SRL to improve learning and academic achievement, the students in this intervention used SRL to improve or hone time management strategies and to learn about themselves. I have come to understand that perhaps there is a necessary base-line of self-knowledge and self-awareness that must be reached before students can begin to fully and deeply explore SRL as a path toward academic achievement. These broader experiences defined the intervention for many of the participants and I will continue to elaborate on them in these results-oriented chapters.

**Theme: Students’ Acquisition of Self-knowledge**

Through my analysis of the learning and writing goals, it became apparent that another broad theme describing the participant’ experiences in the SRL intervention was learning about themselves. Responses were consistent with this theme throughout the semester and through all three phases of SRL. Perhaps this should not come as a surprise because students do not have many opportunities to discover an independent learning process before they get to college—hence the emphasis on the college success type of course. As discussed in Chapter 2, college success courses can improve long-term
outcomes for students if they help students learn to apply their course related skills and knowledge. It seems possible though, that these students had not yet had enough opportunities to learn about, or become aware of their individual learning styles and processes, and used the SRL intervention to work through various ideas and practices on the way to self-discovery.

To provide context for the discussion of this theme, I will discuss each essay separately because the assignments were intentionally designed to permit self-exploration. Like the metacognitive reflections students wrote as they experienced forethought, monitoring, and reflection, the first two essay assignments were meant to guide and support students into self-regulating their learning with the third essay, an exploration of a topic of their choice, intended as a researchable question related to their higher education experience. Essay 1 was a self-observation essay in which students were encouraged to keep track of activities and their time, attempt to identify trends in behavior, and draw conclusions about the type of learner they are (see Appendix C for the essay assignment). Obviously this essay prompt was meant to lead the students toward some self-knowledge and at the same time to also guide them into self-regulating their learning. Students seemed forthright about the self-knowledge they hoped to acquire through the assignment. For example, Dani wanted some clarity on the way she learned: “I hope to…. have a better understanding of the way I learn.” Pedro, who is excerpted in Table 8 below, seemed to be interested in self-knowledge as a way to improve his work and his work ethic. Excerpts of other typical comments for Essay 1 are shown in Table 8 below. As these excerpts show, from the very beginning of the semester, students wanted
to learn more about themselves and were intentional about discussing their personal learning outcomes for the assignment and the semester.

Table 8

_Students' acquisition of self-knowledge: Forethought entries from Essay 1_

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Excerpts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>I plan on learning and realizing how <em>I</em> live <em>my</em> life and really figure out what's different about <em>me</em> than others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pedro</td>
<td>I plan to reflect on my day and see how <em>I</em> studied for classes, what <em>I</em> did, whether <em>I</em> was in class or just messing around and not doing anything. I plan to learn more about <em>myself</em>, <em>my</em> study habits and how <em>I</em> can improve <em>my</em> work and <em>my</em> work ethics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>I plan on learning more about what <em>I</em> do with <em>my</em> time during each day that contributes to or hurts <em>my</em> academic success in <em>this</em> class. <em>I</em> plan on trying to fill out <em>my</em> personal log each day so <em>I</em> can see how <em>I</em> am using <em>my</em> time</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For Essay 1, students were asked to keep a log of their daily activities (not necessarily a minute-by-minute log, but in chunks of time) to help them identify trends in their behavior as they participated in their courses and in college life. The resulting patterns would then become the discussion points for their self-observation essay. One particularly enthusiastic student (Patrick) wrote in the self-monitoring entry for this essay, “At first, I don't think it is a good thing, however, after _I_ finished _my_ 10 days logs journey, _I_ can't stop the recording.” Many other students wrote similarly at the conclusion of the essay. Yet, all but one of the students in this course were in their second semester of college and many had likely taken the university's college success course. Nonetheless,
many of the students in the course were interested—indeed eager—to learn more about themselves and their work/study/time management habits.

This trend continued into the second essay assignment which required that students “take” a lecture from an online course as a way to learn whether online learning might be a realistic option for them. The assignment was an exploration into the effectiveness of online learning generally, but also personally, and it again elicited the same kinds of expectations about acquiring self-knowledge. As with Essay 1 (self-observation), Essay 2 was intentionally designed to be a metacognitive learning opportunity, and students continued to write about the kinds of self-knowledge they were hoping for (see Appendix C for the assignment). Dana wrote about this journey of self-discovery: “I learned a lot about myself from writing the observation essay so I'm hoping to do the same with this.” Excerpts from the journal entries for Essay 2 are shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Students’ acquisition of self-knowledge: Forethought entries from Essay 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maddie</td>
<td>I hope to learn about myself from this course is how I differ from learning in a classroom and on a computer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kayla</td>
<td>I would like to learn how I can cope in a class where the professor isn't at your disposal. You can't ask questions in class. If you don't understand something, just have to rewind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana</td>
<td>I'm not sure if online lectures will be for me seeing that I am an active learner and I prefer to be hands on and participate in class… I learned a lot about myself from writing the observation essay so I'm hoping to do the same with this.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Essay 2 also required composing in an unfamiliar genre, a rhetorical analysis, which provided another new learning experience for the students. Most of the students focused on what the video-lecture portion of the assignment could teach them about themselves. No students wrote about learning how to compose in this genre. A handful of students had vague writing goals such as “write the best essay possible,” but overall it seemed that students were mostly interested in what they might learn about themselves (a topic they were much more familiar with) rather than what they might learn through writing a rhetorical analysis. Most students said they had never written a rhetorical analysis before but their focus was on the concern of never having taken an online course before either.

The acquisition of self-knowledge theme changed in the forethought entries for Essay 3, where glimpses of SRL engagement came through many of the forethought entries. Essay 3 was a research bibliography in which students had to summarize and analyze four articles on a topic of their choice. At this point perhaps students had enough experience in FYC to determine that in some cases extra steps like seeing a tutor, meeting with the professor, or working harder were going to be required. For example, Patrick created a detailed plan to tackle Essay 3 yet also wrote, “I feel like I do need to take extra steps to achieve my desired grade.” At this point in the semester he knew his work habits well enough to understand that extra was now required. Ben wrote that his experiences with previous essays showed him that “doing the work as soon as possible” would help him with the assignment.
The forethought entries for Essay 3 seemed to be more strategy-related self-knowledge rather than learning self-knowledge. But because they also show a degree of metacognitive self-awareness, it is appropriate to discuss them here. Many of the forethought entries also indicated that transfer was occurring. In the third forethought entries especially, students wrote of understanding that their past practices were (or were not) enough to succeed with the third assignment. Like Patrick, Pedro realized that he needed to take extra steps: “my steps last time didn't work so well. So I'd like to work a little bit harder.”

Learning about oneself requires a certain amount of metacognitive thinking and reflection. Metacognition has been increasingly regarded as one of the facilitating factors in self-regulated learning as it enables individuals to acquire insight into their own strengths and weaknesses as well as into the strategies they employ to complete a task. Through metacognition people can transfer skills, knowledge and strategies across contexts and situations (Negretti, 2012). It seemed that whether it was via SRL or through experience, by the third essay assignment, students were clearer and more intentional about what they needed to do to achieve their goals. While many of their goals were still not about writing or even about learning, students did seem to be developing clearer understandings of themselves and possible strategies that might be useful for them.
**Theme: Students’ Development of College Level Writing Skills**

Like the development of time management skills, another broad theme that emerged from the students’ experiences was their metacognitive awareness in taking more initiative in writing, and their interest in developing a college level writing skill. In the forethought phase, students were concerned with writing essays that would produce good grades, and with understanding their writing process in relation to meeting the deadlines. However, by the reflection stage, in general, students were more specific when discussing their writing concerns and goals—which makes sense because they now have a little more experience upon which they can base their understanding of college level writing.

The types of concerns that emerged in the forethought entries varied widely from specific genre concerns (“I want to improve my skills with rhetorical analysis”), to organizational concerns and writing conventions (“I plan to perfect my grammar as well as my transitions”). Many students were vague about their writing abilities saying, “I want to improve my writing,” or “I want to become a better writer.”

At the beginning of the semester, before essays were assigned, students were asked to write about their long term goals for the course and for their personal writing development (see Appendix D for the complete prompt). In their long term goals for the course students wrote more specifically about their concerns for developing a college-level writing ability. For example, Juan wrote, “My personal goals…is probably to learn how to write better grammatically, more structural, and on point with the main points”
and Nate wrote, “My goals for this course are to finish with a good grade and take something from this class that will be valuable in the long run.” In the first example, Juan was interested in improving his writing generally. On the other hand, Nate said he was interested in learning about the kinds of writing that will be useful for him as a college student. As both of these examples show, there was a somewhat limited view of what “learning to write” is given the objectives and outcomes of the course.

This theme will be discussed in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6 because it is in the monitoring and reflection phases where students seemed to pay closer attention to how the essay process went for them—in terms of their writing successes and failures. They were able to communicate writing concerns more specifically perhaps because they had a little more experience with the essay itself.

**Theme: Students’ Experiences with Beginning to Transfer SRL**

A student’s willingness to self-regulate will assist in their ability to transfer knowledge (Driscoll & Wells, 2012); furthermore, the skills required to self-regulate (such as self-monitoring and metacognitive reflection) are skills which promote the transfer of learning (Perkins & Salomon, 1992). As students practiced SRL within the context of the composition course therefore, theoretically, transfer should occur. However, I was curious to see whether and how students would indeed transfer their SRL insights from their forethought participation for first essay to the second and then to the third. I also wondered whether students would recognize similar problems or successes as the course proceeded and whether they would be able to apply their SRL feedback from
one essay to the next. That cyclical feedback loop is at the crux of SRL. With this phenomenological theme, I explore how students experienced the feedback loop.

As the semester continued and students experienced a cycle or two of SRL, according to self-regulation theory they should have been creating goals and planning to use certain learning strategies informed in part on what they learned from the prior essay cycle. A good example of a student just beginning to create goals and plans in light of new knowledge about himself is Juan (whose journal entries are excerpted in Table 10 below). For Essay 1, his goals were to attempt the essay and to get an A or a B. His plans were related to managing his time and his environment (as discussed earlier, like many other students, Juan also showed a disconnect between his goals and his plans). For Essay 2, Juan had a time management goal as well as vague writing and learning goals. His plan was about organizing his time by recording deadlines. His time management/organization plan was more specific for Essay 2. By Essay 3, Juan set specific writing goals because he had been submitting essays with mistakes that he should have caught and fixed. He was aware of his tendency to be distracted and thought he should probably seek help with the third assignment.

Juan's forethought entries were fairly typical as they seemed to slowly evolve to be more precise, to show a little more connection between the goals and the planned strategy, and to be informed by prior experiences.
The reflection journal entries for Juan further showed his struggles with managing his time and distractions. For Essay 1, upon submitting the essay for a grade, he wrote:

It was very hard to stick to the plan in my opinion because I would always have distractions while doing some of these things. I don't think I had the will to sit there and follow my plan as well...I didn't have any adjustments really, because the easiest solution would be not doing the things that distracted me...For the next assignment I will probably be more in the mental state of trying out new things to help me get my work done. (Juan, Essay 1, Reflection)

Juan was writing about some of the very common problems students face: distractions, interest in the task, and the will to do his work. Bandura (1991) said that just because someone has the will to do a task does not mean they have the skill. Juan seemed
to be aware that he has some unhelpful tendencies (procrastination, distractability) but does not yet have the skills to manage them.

However, for his Essay 3 reflection, Juan wrote about being satisfied with his work because he spent a lot of time on it. Perhaps at this point in the semester he had figured out what he needed to do to manage procrastination and distractions.

I think I made a plan for the project by doing one rhetorical bib for each day leading to the peer review day. I think I'm somewhat satisfied with what I have because I spent a large amount of time working with each article. If I was asked to do it all over again, I would probably have asked for more peer reviews just to get it right. If I had one more day, I would probably have asked Professor Nardacci to look at it one last time and make the final adjustments. (Juan, Essay 3, Reflection)

Transfer will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 6 because it is facilitated through metacognitive reflection. However, the example above does show that to some extent Juan, like many other students, had begun to see connections and behavior patterns from one essay to the next.

**Conclusion**

The questions explored in the present study were an attempt to learn how students experience SRL in a composition course. By looking at the forethought responses of the participants it seemed clear that most students entered the intervention without practice or experience setting systematic academic goals and making complementary plans to achieve those goals. Students seemed very interested in using the forethought entries to talk about time management concerns, which also seemed to be their first and preferred learning strategy. However, there were also glimpses of SRL
uptake occurring with some students. These students wrote about using the feedback they
generated on themselves to inform their subsequent essay processes. While it appeared
that only a few students showed regulatory control over their learning, according to the
forethought journal responses the large majority of participants appeared to be SRL-
engaged as they showed intentional consideration with other aspects of self-regulating
such as environmental structuring and time management. As the semester continued,
more students planned to seek help and as the end of the semester reflections
demonstrated, they felt they made large strides in their writing abilities.

The forethought entries showed that many of these students, who were just
beginning to learn SRL, might have benefited from teacher feedback on their goals and
plans – in particular with creating specific goals and devising strategies that would help
them achieve their goals. Most of the students admittedly had never formally set
academic goals within a course and the SRL intervention was a new experience for them.
When students are left to their own methods, especially during the early stages of
learning new skills, they tend to focus on performance outcomes (Zimmerman &
Kitsantas, 1997). Without specific goals, students had no reference point against which to
hold themselves accountable or no standard to work toward. Specific goals are
particularly necessary for effective performance monitoring as discussed in the next
chapter.
Chapter 5

Phase 2: Performance Monitoring

How Did Students Experience Performance Monitoring?

Self-regulated learning is not a series of three distinct actions proceeding in a linear fashion, but rather a recursive and reciprocal, sometimes messy process. Even so, some elements of SRL are most strongly emphasized in the monitoring stage. During the performance monitoring phase of Zimmerman’s SRL cycle, students observe their progress toward their goal(s). They reevaluate their behavioral, environmental, and cognitive behaviors and make decisions based on their assessments. Performance monitoring requires a certain willingness to engage in metacognitive activities such as reflection and a willingness and ability to try new strategies if students feel they are not progressing satisfactorily toward the goal. Through reviewing the journal entries written during the performance monitoring phase, I hoped to learn whether and how students were monitoring their performance and how they experienced self-monitoring generally. I also hoped to learn more about what concerned the students in the midst of their writing processes and how that impacted their experience with SRL. In this chapter I begin with broader contextual findings about how students experienced performance monitoring. And as with Chapter 4, I return to some of the phenomenological themes of this study—
time management, acquisition of self-knowledge, acquisition of college-level writing skills, and SRL transfer—discussing new perspectives that surfaced as students participated in performance monitoring.

An ability to monitor one's learning is one of the key building blocks in SRL (Issacson & Fugita, 2006). Students who are skilled at SRL understand their strengths and weaknesses as well as the demands of the specific tasks. They approach learning with an assortment of strategies that they might apply to their goals. Because they are also skilled at metacognitive monitoring, self-regulated learners are aware of their progress toward their learning goal and can adjust their study time and strategies (Issacson & Fugita, 2006). Butler and Winne (1995) described monitoring as “the cognitive process that assesses states of progress relative to goals and generates feedback that can guide further action” (p. 259). What a student discovers as a result of monitoring his or her performance then is used to determine the amount of work or time required to achieve the goals.

According to Zimmerman’s (1990) model of SRL, the performance phase is grouped into two major classes: self-control methods and self-observation methods. Self-control refers to self-instruction, attention focusing and task strategies; self-observation refers to self-recording and self-experimentation. In their SRL model for writers, Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2007) referred to self-control as the class of strategies that writers use such as task arrangement strategies (e.g., breaking up an assignment), focusing attention, managing time, structuring the environment, or seeking help. Self-observation refers to metacognitive monitoring of specific aspects of one's performance
and the conditions that surround it, and determining whether changes (e.g. behavioral or environmental) need to be made (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007). As I provide excerpts showing various performance monitoring trends and themes, it will be apparent that as students observed and monitored their writing performance, they reported varying degrees of success at self-control. Self-observation judgments seemed easier for them but did not always generate changes in strategy.

Students responded to a guided prompt at least once (and sometimes twice when time permitted) during the process of writing each of the assigned essays. The prompt changed slightly depending on the assignment but all monitoring prompts generally asked the same questions guiding students toward reflective performance monitoring. The following prompt for Essay 2 is representative of the performance monitoring prompts to which students responded.

| Read through your earlier post on goals and your plan for the rhetorical analysis essay. Did you make a plan? If so, have you stuck to your plan? Have you experienced unforeseen issues that are preventing you from making progress? Do you understand the assignment? If not, have you asked for help? |
| As of today, what have you done so far on the rhetorical analysis essay? Explain what parts of your progress satisfy you. What learning strategies have you used so far on this project (eliminated distractions, rewards, avoided procrastination, sought help)? |
| What problems do you foresee in completing this essay? What is your plan (day-by-day) for completing the work satisfactorily? |

Because it may be helpful to understanding the data I discuss in this chapter, Table 11 below provides participation levels on the monitoring entries I analyzed for this
chapter. For Essay 1, students responded to one performance monitoring prompt. However, for Essays 2 and 3, because there was time built into the essay process, students responded to two performance monitoring prompts spaced about one week apart. This gave them an opportunity to formally assess their progress at two points before finally handing in the essay.

Table 11

*Participation levels for performance monitoring*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of monitoring entries for each essay</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2/Monitor 1</th>
<th>Essay 2/Monitor 2</th>
<th>Essay 3/Monitor 1</th>
<th>Essay 3/Monitor 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who responded to all 5 monitoring prompts</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who responded to 4 monitoring prompts</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who responded to fewer than 4 monitoring prompts</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As with the participation levels for forethought and planning (Table 1), participation was fairly consistent for performance monitoring. Interesting to note here, however, is that only 12 students responded to every monitoring prompt. Performance monitoring is an active, constructive process which enables students to recognize when
they have mastered content and cluing them in to when more study is necessary. As the center of SRL, it is the bridge between forethought and reflection and can be used as a tool for improving self-regulating skills overall (Bercher, 2012). Often students cannot accurately monitor their progress toward their goals, and overestimate their abilities or mastery of a task (Bercher, 2012). Furthermore, because novice learners lack detailed knowledge of the mastery level of skill they are learning (for example, how to write an effective, A-plus essay), they must rely on personal (possibly uninformed) estimates of progress and vague feelings of how they are doing (Zimmerman & Paulsen, 1995). But precisely because monitoring helps students discriminate between effective and ineffective strategies by asking students to focus on their performance and progress, it is especially useful in new situations, such as FYC (Zimmerman & Paulsen, 1995).

Effective academic self-monitoring is an acquired skill, however, requiring practice for accuracy and effectiveness. Students who did not engage in formal self-monitoring might simply have not known how to evaluate their strategies or they might have felt they had nothing to report, although that in itself is worth reporting. As I will discuss in this chapter, the performance monitoring entries served a variety of purposes for the students (including a “jump start” to actually begin work which should have been underway).

Pintrich, Wolters and Baxter (2000) compared monitoring to the thermostat of a furnace. When temperatures fall below a specified level, the thermostat tells the furnace to turn on the heat. Similarly, when a student does not understand what they are studying, monitoring tells the student to regulate their behavior and adjust their strategies to increase learning. Learning to monitor one’s progress toward a goal also has implications
outside the classroom too. For example, in an employment situation, workers often need to re-evaluate, re-assess, and adapt to changing situations or shifting goals. Given the purpose and significance of performance monitoring in the self-regulated learning cycle, it is important to understand how students experienced self-monitoring. To this end, I will discuss students' reactions to their self-monitoring observations; not surprisingly, students were satisfied when they followed their plans and unsatisfied when they did not. Next I will discuss each of the three essay assignments and the different concerns—such as how to achieve a certain length, how to complete the assignment when one has no interest, or how to decide on quality research sources—that surfaced in the monitoring entries for each assignment. Last, I will discuss three of the phenomenological themes discovered through this study as they emerged in the performance monitoring phase: time management, the development of a college-level writing skill, and SRL transfer. While the theme “students’ acquisition of self-knowledge” is present in the monitoring entries, there were no unique perspectives that emerged while students monitored their performance, thus this theme is examined only briefly in this chapter.

**Students’ Reactions to Their Performance Monitoring Observations**

Students’ reactions to their self-observations, and the general impact of self-monitoring, can be seen in Table 12 below. In the performance monitoring prompt, students were asked specifically whether they were satisfied with their progress, and most students responded to this question. Table 12 below shows students’ reports of satisfaction as they monitored their progress. I considered students to be satisfied if they wrote that they were satisfied, happy or pleased with progress. Likewise, I considered
students to be unsatisfied if they used words such as “unsatisfied” or “not happy” or similar terms. As shown in Table 12, of the 29 monitoring responses for Essay 1, only five students reported being unsatisfied or behind on their work. For Essays 2 and 3 (recall that students were asked to self-monitor at two points in the essay process, spaced about a week apart), most students reported being unsatisfied early in the writing process; however, by the second opportunity for formal self-observation, students seemed to be feeling more satisfied about their work.

Table 12

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay/Journal entry</th>
<th>Total Monitoring entries</th>
<th>Satisfied/Making progress</th>
<th>Unsatisfied/not making progress</th>
<th>Other*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2/Monitoring 1</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2/Monitoring 2</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3/Monitoring 1</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3/Monitoring 2</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These responses were unusable because they are either forethought entries or reflection entries typed into the monitoring space.

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, self-monitoring is a critical component of self-regulated learning, yet it does require training and practice because it involves so many self-controlling factors (i.e., self-instruction, time management, task strategies, environmental structuring, help seeking). Not only did students need to implement learning strategies and understand their effectiveness, but at the same time, they were
also in a challenging and unfamiliar writing environment where applying so many of these self-controlling strategies might have been counterintuitive and possibly unfamiliar for some students. Performance monitoring is especially important for unfamiliar or complex tasks (Zimmerman & Paulsen, 1995) but at the same time difficult to accomplish effectively; thus as the writing tasks became more demanding or complex, it seemed that students at first not only had difficulty with the assignment but also had difficulty self-regulating. It is possible that students did not have the variety of SRL and metacognitive skills they needed for the substantially different college writing tasks they were encountering (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006). Overall, however, as shown in Table 12 above, it seemed that once students made significant progress on the assignment (for Essays 2 and 3) they began to feel more satisfied with their work, although whether this was a result of self-regulating their learning, or simply making progress on the assignment, is unclear. This trend will be analyzed in depth below when I discuss monitoring trends for Essays 2 and 3.

As requested in the prompt, students tended to write about their feelings toward their progress (e.g., satisfaction or dissatisfaction, pride, confidence) and their plans to finish the assignment. The monitoring entries excerpted in Table 13 below show typical experiences for Essays 1, 2, and 3 when students were adhering to their plan and making satisfactory progress. For example, Maggie (excerpted below) eliminated distractions and tried to avoid procrastination. Grace was satisfied with her progress: she changed her environment by going “to a secluded area.” And Michael “avoided procrastination and
made sure I was focused 100%.” Max was very specific, writing, “I’m satisfied with my progress because I'm following my plan.”

Table 13

Performance monitoring: Students who adhered to their plan were satisfied with their work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Performance monitoring excerpt</th>
<th>Goals &amp; Plans for the essay (excerpted)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td>I finished my first draft on time. I am overly satisfied because I spent a lot of time working on that … I wrote a lot which surprised me because I usually have difficulties writing long essays ... For this essay I used eliminating distractions and I tried to avoid procrastination. I think I succeeded achieving those goals. I don't think I will have problems completing this essay on time but my problems might be in the essay.</td>
<td>goals are to finish it on time and receive a good grade… My strategies would be to limit procrastination, concentrate more and try not to distracted myself, think about the essay and spent 30 min or an hour a day working on it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>Ben Monitor 1</td>
<td>I have stuck to this plan even though a lot of distractions came up. … What satisfies me is that I am sticking to my plan in that I watched the video on the day and time that I said I would watch it. I have eliminated most distractions but not all because I always keep my phone on</td>
<td>My goal for this essay is to get a good grade and learn while doing it. …. I will find times of the day to watch the video maybe even in one sitting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>Lee Monitor 1</td>
<td>My research process to finding my article was to type in the keywords of my topic into google browse… I skimmed through about 10 articles but the first one I found was the best one. I foresee little problems writing the four bibs. I can spend more time in the library to make sure I get the work done on time</td>
<td>goals … is to get it done ahead of time ... My plan for meeting my goals is creating a checklist for ever thing I need to do. Set the personnel due date to 4 days before the actual due date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the processes of forethought, monitoring performance and self-reflection are sometimes described as distinct, together they become a way of thinking that guides
planning and performance (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). In the above examples students are writing about their personal capabilities and interested in their learning conditions which influenced their response to their self-generated SRL feedback. They not only seem willing to engage in learning but also report some degree of skill in regulating themselves and their engagement. As prompted, many of the satisfied students continued to strategize or plan for the remainder of the essay process demonstrating self-awareness, flexibility and adaptability. For example, Lee suggested to himself that he should probably go to the library to get his work done. And Michael made a plan to write a couple of paragraphs every day until “I feel confident in this paper.”

However, effective self-regulating is done in reference to a goal – a self-set standard, which guides strategic planning and action. As shown in the forethought and monitoring entries in Table 13 above, students did not consistently monitor relative to their goals. For example, Lee (excerpted above) wrote about his research process in his performance monitoring entry, yet his goal was to “get it done ahead of time” and his plan was to “create a checklist” and set personal due-dates. While his goal and plan are specific, his monitoring entry seems to side-step his goal and takes another direction. Yet, he seemed satisfied overall with his progress. This was a trend I noticed throughout the performance monitoring entries: even though many students were satisfied with their progress, some were not referencing their satisfaction in relation to their plan or their goals. Students beginning to learn to self-regulate would likely benefit from more instructor feedback to ensure that they connect their performance monitoring assessments
to their goals. A completely “hands-off” intervention such as the present study might not be realistic given the ways students experienced goal setting.

**Performance Monitoring Trends for Each Essay**

Performance monitoring varied according to each essay assignment, which raised a number of pedagogical implications. I will continue to discuss student satisfaction trends and the resultant reactions by using examples from Essay 1 journal entries (a self-observation essay). This discussion is illuminating because students reported that they had never experienced formal self-monitoring, and various trends emerged as students tried monitoring their performance for the first time. Using the journal excerpts from Essay 2 (a rhetorical analysis of online learning), I will discuss the wide variety of reported problems students experienced with Essay 2 and how these problems impacted their ability or willingness to self-regulate. I will also discuss research and implications of formally monitoring—as students did in this study—and how that affected their work. I will use excerpts from Essay 3 journals (a research project) to discuss students concerns (and successes and failures) with doing college-level research. This discussion has direct implications for FYC instructors, or any instructor who teaches a research project to first-year college students.

**Performance monitoring experiences for Essay 1.** When students said they were satisfied with their progress, their satisfaction was a result of actually doing the writing, gaining a clearer understanding of the assignment, or meeting with the professor. For example, Grace was satisfied because she had written her draft. She wrote, “I have completed a draft. This is satisfactory to me because I at least have the first part of the
essay done.” On the other hand, Kayla was unsatisfied because she had not yet begun the essay (“I haven’t yet started writing the final draft”); however, she made a plan to “log out of facebook…log out of personal email” so that she could begin her draft. Luke reported a different kind of trouble with Essay 1. He wrote, “I have the ideas I need for the paper, but just not enough words on paper. I need more to write…I have made a check list for what I need to accomplish before Monday.” It seemed like Luke was having problems achieving the required length, yet while he wrote nothing about how to achieve length, he did create a plan to ensure he finished his work. Like those students who were satisfied with their progress, those few students who reported being unsatisfied with their progress on Essay 1, such as Kayla and Luke, reported revisions to their planned strategy.

Judging one’s performance in the monitoring phase involves making an assessment of how easy or difficult a learning task is, monitoring comprehension or learning, and making a judgment of the correctness or appropriateness of the strategies employed (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). It also involves intentionally allocating resources (i.e., time) and making decisions about which strategies to use or when to change strategies. As the excerpts explained above and in Table 13 show, while most students wrote that they were adhering to their initial plans for Essay 1, at the same time they seemed to be very intentional about the strategies they selected. Those who were having trouble progressing knew the reasons for their trouble and wrote of making changes to their environment and/or behavior to get their work done. For example, Lee gave himself a pep-talk in attempt to regain control so that he could achieve his goals: “I
haven't stuck to my plan I have been very unfocused and have had many issues…but that stops today.” Few students seemed to have difficulty on a cognitive level as Kayla did; she did not have “a clear picture” of what she needed to do. Without a clear picture, Kayla wrote, she was susceptible to procrastination.

When students believe that they are making acceptable progress toward a goal and because of that feel more satisfied, that belief enhances self-efficacy and sustains motivation (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). However, negative self-evaluations will not decrease motivation if students believe they are capable of improving by working harder or using more effective strategies (Bandura, 1986; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1997). Student responses support this research. Even when they were negatively evaluating themselves, students seemed resolved to keep working, and decided on new strategies to enable them to do so. Despite being unsatisfied with their progress, students who wrote of problems also seemed to believe they were capable of completing the assignment.

**Performance monitoring experiences for Essay 2.** With Essay 1, I explored how students reacted to their self-observations in relation to feelings of satisfaction. With excerpts from Essay 2 (a rhetorical analysis of online learning), I will discuss the kinds of problems or experiences that prevented students from self-regulating their learning and the impact of formally self-monitoring. Because there was more time built into the second and third essay assignments, I asked the students to formally self-monitor twice during the writing process. The first monitoring point for Essay 2 was arbitrarily established: although there was no work due by that point I was interested in how students were independently participating with the assignment with no instructor-set
deadlines. However, the second monitoring response was written at the conclusion of a peer review workshop for which students were required to have a four-page draft. In their first monitoring responses, many students wrote about progressing poorly, if at all. Fortunately, a week later—after peer reviewing drafts—most of these students reported that they were now on track and satisfied with their work (see Table 12 for data describing this trend). The journal responses excerpted in Table 14 below support the idea that it was a combination of self-regulating and participating in peer review that helped drive up satisfaction at the second monitoring point.

This phenomenon raises questions: When should students monitor their performance? Is it useful to monitor often? Zimmerman and Paulsen (1995) suggested that college students should informally monitor many of their activities (e.g., eating or exercise habits, social life, or work productivity). Informal self-monitoring involves casual observation or spontaneous reflection. However, when a task is new or difficult, formal monitoring, such as that which occurred through this intervention, can be especially useful. As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, performance monitoring in new situations can be helpful because it involves deliberate observations and judgments that reflect not only the present activity but also experiences leading up to the activity (Zimmerman & Paulsen, 1995). Not only is performance monitoring useful in assessing progress toward one's goals, it can also provide information about one's behavior as well as modifiable aspects of the environment; yet, as previously mentioned, it also does require practice. In many of the monitoring entries excerpted in this chapter, students were writing about changing their behavior or their environment. Furthermore, the trends
exemplified in Table 12 (in the data for Essays 2 and 3) support the research suggesting that formal self-monitoring is useful for new experiences. Students used the monitoring responses to talk about resetting their strategies, and in some cases to determine to actually begin the work.

For example, in his monitoring reflection for Essay 2, Nate (excerpted in Table 14 below) showed the not unusual characteristic of new students with new tasks—a general misunderstanding and miscalculation of what was required for the assignment (“I think I underestimated the assignment”)—and perhaps no strategy to help him cope with this problem; therefore, he had not started the essay. His new plan was to do a little work every day. Aidan (excerpted in Table 14) also ran into problems but they were of an external or unpredictable nature: handling the after-effects of a snow storm. He created a new detailed plan with deadlines for specific parts of the essay. The third excerpted student, Emma, was hindered by a bias against online learning (the subject of the assigned essay); consequently, she had trouble getting started on the work. Her new plan was to start “tonight.” Each of these students was reacting to their self-generated feedback, and wrote of making changes to their behavior.
Table 14

**Performance monitoring trends: Essay 2**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Monitor 1 (no work was required by this point)</th>
<th>Monitor 2 (approx. one week later at a peer review deadline)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nate</td>
<td>... <em>I haven't started</em> on my rhetorical essay, but haven't finished it yet. I think I have underestimated the assignment not on purpose but just because I like to put things off to the last minute...I plan to do more and more each day to break this assignment up to make it more manageable...*</td>
<td><em>I'm pretty confident that I am fulfilling all the requirements for this assignment. I'm very happy with the progress I have made on this paper considering how it took me a while to finally figure out the basic guidelines of the assignment... My plan for finishing up the essay is to spend as much time as possible correcting all my mistakes and trying to expand the paper into 4 solid pages...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aidan</td>
<td><em>So far I feel a little bit behind</em> on my essay progress... A recent snow day left several inches of snow in front of my house. I had spent a day intended for homework shoveling snow... I also have had many assignments to review for other classes... I plan to start working on the draft tonight or tomorrow afternoon. I will review my draft again on Thursday to make any necessary adjustments and then print out the draft for Friday. I also have a clearer picture of how to write my essay after attending EN101 today...*</td>
<td><em>Today I gained more confidence in my draft. Although there are several changes that I need to make I know what direction I need to take with my draft. I also feel better about my paragraphs supporting my thesis after hearing comments from my peers... I feel I have made a substantial amount of progress from the time I submitted my two page draft to now...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td><em>I have not watched the video yet but I intend on doing so tonight... I personally cannot take online courses because I don't understand them. As I watch one course I plan to reflect my opinion about online classes and if they are effective or not.</em></td>
<td><em>I'm not as confident as I should be... however I am happy with the way I have progressed with this paper because I got to experience new way of learning and write about it... my plan is to use the peer review to help me improve my paper and also to start on my work cited page.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Students who are skilled at self-regulation modify what to expect based on the feedback they receive from monitoring themselves and from external input (e.g., peer
review or grades). As shown in the excerpts above, in the first monitoring response the students were negatively self-evaluating and as a result were also planning to adjust their strategies. For example, Nate had not started watching the online lecture (upon which the assignment was based). As a result of his self-observation, he made a plan to break up the large amount of work he had yet to do to make it more manageable. Kayla (who was excerpted previously for Essay 1 as being unsatisfied with her progress) was relatively satisfied at the first monitoring response for Essay 2. She wrote, “I didn't watch the online course as early as I wanted too. … I just put it off a little longer than I expected.” Kayla also procrastinated longer than she would have liked. And like many of the students in their performance monitoring observations, she continued to use the monitoring entries to discuss the problems she was having and to remind herself to get back on track. In his interview, Juan reported that he used the monitoring entries to jump-start his writing process if he hadn't yet started (or progressed on) the assignment. If students were using the performance monitoring experience to “jump start” or get back on track, this might have implications for teaching—especially for first-year students who are not quite as adept at predicting the work or the appropriate strategies involved in a new task (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006). If frequent formal monitoring will compel students to self-appraise their progress (especially at points where there is no real deadline or work requirement) and encourage them to employ appropriate strategies so they can get their work done satisfactorily, perhaps it is worth class time to ask students to formally monitor their performance on a regular basis. For instance, very often instructors will remind students about work that should be underway (“Remember, you should be working on that essay
assignment...”). But it is possible that these kinds of reminders do not compel students to evaluate their progress (besides an “oh yeah. I have to do that”) and strategically plan, and implement that plan, based on that type of informal self-monitoring. When students are presented with tasks that require higher levels of thinking or skill than they experienced in high school, they must be able to accurately judge the difficulty and the requirements of the task in relation to their personal situations (Isaacson & Fujita, 2006). Formally self-monitoring can be especially helpful in guiding personal adjustment when informal self-monitoring becomes ineffective or the task becomes problematic (Zimmerman & Paulsen 1995).

In the performance monitoring observations excerpted in Table 14 above, a variety of problems are depicted. For example, Nate was behind because he underestimated the assignment, which is precisely what Isaacson and Fujita (2006) described: new college students sometimes do not recognize that new approaches to learning are required. Even though in his forethought entry Nate acknowledged starting the first essay too late, and discussed not getting too far behind for this second assignment, he still did not follow through on his vague plan to start early for the second essay. Aidan had to deal with some factors beyond his control (a snowstorm), which put him behind on his schedule. His forethought entry discussed a detailed plan to achieve his goals: reread the assignment, have a draft by Saturday afternoon, review it on Sunday.

On the other hand, Emma had different kinds of problems. In her first entry, she wrote about having trouble understanding the assignment and of her dislike of online courses. However, in both monitoring entries she made a specific plan that would enable
her to finish her work (she also did not write a forethought entry for this assignment). Her monitoring responses showed some of the reasons for her inability to start the work: (a) she was not interested in the subject matter; and (b) she did not quite understand the assignment. Both of these factors probably inhibited her ability or willingness to self-regulate for this essay. Moreover, the first monitoring opportunity could have been the impetus for her to formally acknowledge to herself the problems she was having and try to get back on track and do the work. While creating a menu of various assignments to pique interest may not be realistic for instructors of FYC, it is worth noting that formal performance monitoring may help students who are uninterested in the subject matter move past their bias and begin their work.

Research shows that students who do not see any value or purpose to the activity will have low motivation to do the work and expend little effort on the activity. Zimmerman (1990) describes a lack of interest as a personal limitation which leads to dysfunctions in SRL. When a task (or a skill) is not perceived as valuable, there is no incentive to self-regulate (Zimmerman, 1990). This has implications for SRL because in order to be able to make changes in their functioning, students must perceive academic benefits. Pintrich (2000b, 2003) found that students with high value beliefs were more regulated, competent learners than those with lower value beliefs. Moreover, task value significantly predicted students’ ability to self-regulate their learning (Lawanto, Santoso, Goodridge, & Lawanto, 2014). The performance monitoring entries support this research: students who did not see the value of the learning assignment had some trouble self-regulating. For example, Emma, excerpted for Essay 2 (in Table 14 above), had trouble
getting started because she already knew she did not value online learning. For Essay 1, Lee wrote in his reflection that he did not follow his plan: “[I] just did it the day before it was due. To be honest it wasn't that great of a paper. I ran into difficulty trying to write 4 pages on a simple topic that could be explained in a paragraph.” In Lee's case, it seemed that he did not value the exercise of writing at length and therefore he procrastinated until the day before the essay was due. He wrote further: “I didn't really stick to my plan on this project… I procrastinated way too much till the day before the essay was due.” He had difficulty self-regulating possibly because of this lack of value or interest. On the other hand, the converse is easily seen in Reid's forethought and performance monitoring for Essay 1. In his forethought entry Reid wrote, “I don't know what all I will actually learn from this [assignment] quite yet but I'm positive that I will learn something … My goal is to earn … an A. My plan to stay on top of the deadlines is to do all of my work in advanced on my free days, Wednesday evenings and on Saturday evenings.” Reid seemed engaged and involved with the assignment and his plan was specific even though he was unsure where it would lead. At the performance monitoring stage, Reid was indeed on schedule and satisfied with his work. These examples show that some disinterest, or a perceived lack of value in the task, might prevent students from getting to the work, or in other words failing to self-regulate their learning. Moreover, perceived value correlated with self-regulation even for students who were not sure what the exact value was.

**Performance monitoring experiences for Essay 3.** Students' shared concerns about research compelled me to explore how first-year students handle challenging
research tasks and how this activity impacted their SRL experiences. The third essay assignment was a research project that required analysis of four articles on a topic of choice. Each article analysis was graded on a 25-point scale according to a detailed rubric and thus the assignment was treated as four distinct essays. As with the second essay, at the first formal performance monitoring point, many students reported problems and re-strategized. The most often shared problems were with the research. For example, Nate wrote, “I might see problems finding articles…because there are going to be so many irrelevant topics that I will have to look through.” And similarly Alexis wrote, “I looked through a lot of articles in order to find 4 that I could use, it was very difficult to find good sources.” As with Essay 2, students wrote two performance monitoring reflections about a week apart, and generally reported feeling more confident by the second reflection. The following excerpts (Table 15) exemplify the typical monitoring trends for the third essay.
Table 15

*Performance monitoring trends; Essay 3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Monitor 1</th>
<th>Monitor 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>It was kind of hard looking for articles on my topic... I probably spent a good 2 to 3 hours looking for it, and also being distracted. I probably jumped to about only 6 to 7 articles because of the limited articles shown. The problems I see are probably the topic itself and doing the analysis. I probably will go to Professor Nardacci for help if I need anything.</td>
<td>I'm somewhat satisfied with I have so far, because I did four today... I feel that my rhet analysis has gotten stronger, but the summary and thesis sentence is still in need of a little more work. I will probably work on summarizing and concluding my bibs. I learned some things such as needing to summarize better. I don't see any problems handing this in on Friday... Honestly I don't think I'm too confident in reaching a full 25...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>I have been having trouble finding great articles on my topic. I think I need to use more of the library databases we learned about like google scholar to help me find the right article I need for my topic and essay. I've been skimming through around 5 or so articles before I come across a good article on my topic; sometimes I need to look through 10 different articles before I can find a good article. The only problems I foresee in this assignment is all the time I am going to have to spend to find articles</td>
<td>Today I have two completed bibliographies and I am satisfied with first rhetorical bibliography entry I did but my second entry was very weak... I don't foresee any problems with getting this assignment done by Thursday and I believe I can get a 25 on some articles but most likely not all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>I have found a couple of articles about this subject. Unfortunately, these articles are either from unheard sources or they are not in the time range that we are allowed to use... My main concern is whether my articles will be accepted to write a rhetorical analysis. I plan on asking the librarian for help.</td>
<td>I am satisfied with the work that I have done with my first two rhetorical bibliographies... I like peer review because different set of eyes are looking at my paper. ... I am not exactly confident that I will achieve a 25, but I am hoping it will result in getting an A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two issues are immediately apparent for instructors not only of FYC, but any instructor who requires research of first-year students: developing a research process,
and gaining confidence in locating relevant sources. For example, all three of the students excerpted above indicated they were having problems finding sources. For instance, Juan wrote, “It was kind of hard looking for articles on my topic.” These problems are possibly a result of the students’ general inexperience with college-level research and perhaps of having no solid research plan. Although students were given guidelines for evaluating sources, many seemed to have low confidence in their ability to produce quality research. For example, Andrew wrote, “I’ve been skimming 5 or so articles before I come across a good article on my topic, sometimes I need to look through 10 different articles.” Kayla wrote similarly: “I skimed about 15 articles and ended up going with the 4th or 5th one I looked at.” Renee wrote, “It took me two long weeks of searching to find four good articles.” These excerpts show concerns about the quality of their research, problems with research itself, and also concerns about the time commitment for research. It is unclear whether students were being extremely careful or critical, or whether they were inexperienced with evaluating articles as suitable source material, or possibly whether they were simply unprepared for the time commitment required for research.

I have discussed the transition from high school to college and the demands it places on young adults. Self-observation and evaluation are important contributors to the success of college students (Zimmerman & Paulsen, 1995). When students do not recognize that the new tasks require new approaches to learning and studying, they may be unable to make the necessary adjustments. According to Applebee and Langer (2009) in their analysis of the NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress), the
majority of 12th graders reported that they almost always used the Internet to look for information for a paper or a report. However, in FYC students were finding that the familiar method of Internet research might not produce the kinds of sources they needed. Taking the next steps (e.g., using the library databases or seeking help from the librarian) were reasonable new strategies for a student to use but few students wrote about adopting new strategies (even though they might have saved time). For example, Julie thought about seeking help and wrote, “I think it will be hard to find four strong articles based on my topic…I will most definitely seek my professors help…I can also go to the library and ask the librarians to help me.” Julie seemed to be willing to seek additional help and she clearly knew that help was available, but there was no indication from her later monitoring or reflection entries that she did indeed seek help (nor did I have a researcher note pertaining to Julie seeking help). Julie’s experience of identifying a strategy that should be used but not actually following through and using that strategy is another example of the complexity of learning to self-regulate one’s learning. In Chapter 4, I wrote about a range of experiences in setting goals and trends over time, and similarly in the monitoring phase, many students like Julie progressed toward being a self-regulated learner incrementally: there was an awareness of a need for a strategy, but very often it was not until the next essay (if at all) that students took productive action.

As with Essay 2, by the time the students were asked to formally monitor their performance for Essay 3 a second time, most wrote about feeling more comfortable with the situation. For example, Sarah wrote, “I am satisfied with the work that I have done with my first two rhetorical bibliographies.” Maddie wrote, “I am very confident about
the work effort I put into these two bibliographies I brought in for the peer review...I have simplified the project...I have other classmates to help me out by switching papers by a certain date because none of us want to be rushed.” Maddie was not only “very confident” in her work but she also created a strategy to conduct a private peer-review with classmates outside of class to ensure the quality of her work. It is not clear whether Maddie was confident because of her experience in writing Essay 3 or because she had self-regulated her learning, but she is also clearly SRL-engaged: she sought help (indicated in her first monitoring response), and she broke up the assignment into sections by creating “a layout of what each bibliography needs to have within the context and how it should be structured.” In her reflection for Essay 3 Maddie wrote, “I am very confident in my work effort that I put into this Rhetorical Bibliography, I took steps to stay on top of my work and really took the time to work in detail on these paragraphs. Taking more time to work on this project made academics a little less stressful considering the crunch time for the end of the year.”

These excerpts from Maddie's experience with Essay 3 show that for a student who is actively engaged in SRL while in a new situation, it is possible to come through the learning experience with less stress and more confidence in writing ability and time management abilities. Novice writers who learn to use self-regulatory techniques, as Maddie has, will increase their perceptions of self-efficacy to write effectively (Zimmerman & Reisemberg, 1997). This has important motivational implications, such as an improved effort to write, persistence when writing is difficult, and an interest in writing. Maddie was one of the four students in the course who was repeating FYC
because she failed it previously. In an early reflection on her goals for the course, she wrote that her habits of procrastination affected her self-beliefs: “When I finally got around to completing the work I wasn't really proud of the work I had done and turned in, which led me to believing I wasn't as great of a student.” And so from the beginning, Maddie was engaged with the SRL experience. In her first forethought entry (for Essay 1) she ended her reflection writing, “I never made any goals the first semester, so I am already a step ahead.” Even though it is unclear whether it was her prior experience in the course which helped her handle the course, the SRL intervention, or her adoption of SRL concepts, Maddie seemed to believe that SRL was going to be a helpful framework for her, and she seemed more confident as the semester continued.

On the other hand, Juan, who is excerpted in Table 15 above, did not seem to be SRL-engaged, and ultimately was not confident with the work he had done for Essay 3. He wrote of having difficulty with the assignment; he had trouble with the research and dealing with a world of online distractions, and as of the peer review date, while he felt his analyses were stronger, he was not confident in getting full credit. Yet, in contrast to Maddie’s situation, it is not clear Juan believed that self-regulating could enhance his ability to do the work. As of the second formal monitoring response, Juan was only somewhat confident and somewhat satisfied with his work. In his reflection for Essay 3 Juan wrote that although he spent a large amount of time with each article, he should have asked for more help and proofread it one more time. As with Julie who was discussed earlier, Juan showed an awareness of learning strategies he could have employed, but a reluctance to actually try them.
What Facilitates or Hinders Students’ Participating in SRL?

One of my research questions asked what facilitates or hinders a student from responding to SRL in a composition course. As I discussed in Chapter 4, various goal setting characteristics may inhibit a student from fully participating in SRL. And as I have discussed to some extent in this chapter and will continue to do in Chapter 6, an unwillingness to take action once one is aware that certain actions are needed, also seemed to prevent students from maximizing the learning potential of SRL. Other possible factors that may affect a student's response to SRL surfaced during the monitoring stage. These involve overall confusion or writing problems (e.g., Sarah wrote, “I'm not sure where to start…I don't know where to go with my body paragraphs”) or a lack of understanding of the assignment (e.g., Alexis wrote, “I don't completely understand the project yet”). Not surprisingly, students who said they did not understand the assignment seemed to stall in their progress on the essay and also stalled in their ability to self-regulate. Alexis knew she was having problems but she did not seem to have strategies to overcome her individual problems. The following case study (Table 16) excerpts her responses which were typical of students who were having trouble self-regulating their learning.
The reflection written by Alexis is also typical of those who struggled with understanding an assignment. Alexis's goal for the assignment exhibited vague tendencies ("work hard on receiving a good grade"), yet her more specific plan was to finish her work on time. A week later Alexis wrote, "I don't completely understand the project" – and at the same time she pointed out twice that she had not taken action on the project. And finally, after finishing the assignment Alexis wrote that she did not feel she had a
good understanding of the assignment. It is possible that even when the essay was assigned, Alexis did not understand it which hindered her ability to create specific goals and plans (as discussed in Chapter 4). Yet, she also did not write of implementing SRL strategies such as seeking help, or creating lists, or breaking the assignment into manageable pieces. It is possible her lack of understanding carried over to her ability to strategize and to effectively make progress. Perhaps if she had begun the work, she might have begun to understand it, but it seemed that she did not begin because she did not understand—an unhelpful loop.

Susan also wrote that she did not understand the essay assignment. And even when she wrote the final reflection upon submitting her essay, Susan said, “everything is still jumbled up in my head.” While Susan did not write about the strategies she employed to finish the assignment, even as she submitted her essay, she seemed uncertain of her work. Alexis created a daily plan for the weekend, but did not mention other plans such as seeking help to understand the assignment. Unlike their passive classmates, self-regulated learners proactively seek out information when needed and when they encounter obstacles such as confusing teachers or assignments, they find a way to succeed. (Zimmerman, 2002). I have mentioned that perhaps FYC students need to be taught task specific strategies for writing situations that are new or complex. But because there also seemed to be a handful of students who wrote of not understanding the assignment, instructors who are incorporating SRL into their curriculums might also need to show strategies to cope with confusing assignments or situations.
It is difficult to engage in self-regulation and reflection in areas that one does not understand. Metacognition develops gradually and is dependent on experience or prior knowledge (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000). If there is no prior knowledge or experience, it is difficult to focus on self-regulating and strategizing. A person's ability to act assumes that they are aware of what to do and they have the ability to develop strategies to control their actions (Negretti, 2012). However, while their unfamiliarity with the assignment seemed to affect their progress and their satisfaction, these students also seemed able to metacognitively self-monitor and accurately make some initial causal attributions. (For example, Alexis seemed to understand that she had not yet begun because she didn't quite know what to do.)

Accurate self-assessment of one's knowledge and performance leads to more effective use of feedback, improved time management and appropriate goal setting (Hacker, Bol, Horgan, & Rakow, 2000). This research is exemplified in Maddie’s (who was excerpted in the discussion about Essay 3 above) and others’ experiences. Students were not only making judgments about their strategies, but were also making judgments and attributions about their performance. They began to reflect on their performance and described a range of emotions (e.g., satisfaction, disappointment, pride). Many of the students seemed to make progress in accurately assessing their performance and redoubled their work efforts as a result of their self-feedback, and this then seemed to encourage them to become SRL-engaged. It was evident, as students experienced their writing tasks and participated in SRL, that the feedback loop was functioning in a back and forth, recursive sequence.
For example, Susan (referred to above) struggled with Essay 1, and even when she submitted her work for a grade, she reflected that she needed to pace herself and “set a more solid plan.” By Essay 3, however, she had made some progress with acting on her self-observations because she had not been getting acceptable grades. Her forethought entry for the third essay was as follows:

My writing goals are to make sure that I get a better grade than any of my other assignments… yes, I do need to take more time to achieve the grade that I want for this class because my previous grades have been unacceptable. I can ask as much people as possible to proof read my essay before I turn it in. (Susan, Essay 3, Forethought)

Her second monitoring entry for Essay 3 showed a great deal of satisfaction and confidence: “I am very satisfied with my work to date… I'm kind of confident of my grade for this assignment.” And her final reflection for the third essay assignment showed pride in her progress:

I did make a plan for this project, and I stuck to it… I am very satisfied with my work for this project because I worked really hard on it. (Susan, Essay 3, Reflection)

Students need to monitor their learning strategy use and evaluate whether they correctly matched different learning strategies to the complexity of the task. If students do not self-observe and evaluate the effectiveness of their behavior, they are unlikely to know what to change. As shown with Susan, perhaps it was the exercise of participating in SRL that finally brought her to a greater awareness of what she needed to do to succeed, or perhaps it was her poor grades that finally motivated her to make some changes. Fortunately, the outcome seemed positive. She was very satisfied with her work.
and with her performance for the third assignment. Her reflection showed a clear shift in becoming SRL-engaged and taking necessary steps to succeed. Without engaging in some kind of learning intervention like SRL, it is possible Susan might have continued to flounder as she did with Essay 1.

Writing is an activity that is continuously self-regulated through self-evaluation. However, writing theorists and cognitive behavioralists agree that goals are the driving force behind self-regulating. It is important to track both performance toward goals, and the conditions surrounding that performance because it helps writers learn when and how to make adjustments to strategies. However, in many cases students did not monitor themselves in relation to their goals. Susan's performance monitoring response for Essay 1 is a good example of this common trend. For Essay 1 her goals were grade-related; her planned strategy for Essay 1 was to seek quiet, avoid procrastinating and avoid TV. At the performance monitoring response for Essay 1, it seemed that Susan had not yet begun her work, and her monitoring entry said nothing about progress toward her grade goal nor about how well her plan was functioning in helping her achieve her goal. This goal-discount trend could be another factor inhibiting a student from participating in regulation of their learning. While many seemed to view SRL as a tool that might help them structure assignments or manage their time, students did not seem to view SRL as a way to attain their goals. Or perhaps they were initially unskilled in self-regulating to the extent in which it might help them achieve their goals. Fortunately, many students like Susan seemed to become more engaged with SRL as they gained more experience with the practice, as shown by their awareness of the feedback they were generating. This
repeated practice was helpful in learning how to self-regulate, but the intervention itself, writing journal entries and re-reading them before writing the next, also gave them more opportunities to try self-regulating again as well as monitor their ability to self-regulate.

The extent to which students become cognitively or strategically immersed in learning activities will vary depending on the academic setting and the demands of the situation (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). Students who struggled with the assignment not only had trouble setting goals but also seemed to experience difficulty in self-regulating as evidenced by their performance monitoring entries. It seems that a lack of understanding of the assignment, a lack of attention to goals and lack of interest in SRL for academic achievement (as opposed to a tool for learning to manage time, for example) could be factors that hindered participation in SRL. Likewise, valuing the writing assignment and being SRL-engaged seemed to facilitate deeper engagement with SRL.

Many Students Noticed Patterns in Their Work Process

Self-monitoring is useful because patterns of behavior become so routine that people often act without much awareness of what they are doing (Bandura, 1986). If they observe their behavior they can notice recurrent patterns and begin a process of change. As expected, many students saw patterns in their behavior and wrote about changing either their behavior or their environment. However, not all students who noticed unhelpful patterns were willing to make adjustments. For example, Chase (excerpted in Table 17 below) exemplified the type of student who identified a problem early in the semester (a tendency to procrastinate), and continued to identify it as a problem even late
in the semester. For the first essay Chase's plan was “to complete the assignment a few days before it is due.” However, for the monitoring entry he wrote, “it would be smarter if I started earlier.” This trend continued through the semester. For the third assignment Chase's plan was to manage his time, yet in his performance monitoring entry he wrote, “I still have until Thursday to correct them… I will turn it in on Thursday, but a problem I foresee is that I'll leave it last minute,” implying that he has not yet been able to control his time.
Table 17

Case study: Performance monitoring trends for Chase

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay/ Journal prompt</th>
<th>Monitoring</th>
<th>Forethought</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1/ Monitor</td>
<td>I finished my paper by eliminating distractions, by going to the library... rewarded myself with sleep, and sought some help from my older sister. Rarely any problems while writing this essay besides writing it two days before it was due. It would be smarter if I started earlier.</td>
<td>My writing goals is to become a much better writer... to get an A... strategies... to meet my goals are... complete the assignment a few days before it is due... check due dates, blackboard, and ask my teacher questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2/ Monitor 1</td>
<td>My original plan was to start on this essay several days before the due date. Unfortunately, I haven't stuck to that plan... I am procrastinating... As of today, I have done nothing for the essay. No progress so I am not satisfied. I am disappointed. The problems in completing this essay... is that I can't get started on it, I'm too lazy. My plan day to day is to get started and finally finish it.</td>
<td>...goals for this essay is to get an A or B... I will start on the assignment several days before it is due rather than starting 2 days before it is due. I will make sure to keep up with every deadline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3/ Monitor 2</td>
<td>Today I brought in two bibliographies and I'm pretty satisfied with my work. Although my papers need some improvements, I still have until Thursday to correct them... I will turn it in on Thursday, but a problem I foresee is that I'll leave it last minute. I'm not that confident</td>
<td>...goals for this assignment is to write a great final paper. I plan on writing all the required papers on time and before the deadline. I plan on managing my time correctly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chase did not respond to all monitoring prompts

Chase clearly observed his habit of procrastinating but seemed unmotivated to address it. Bandura's (1986) discussion of motivation might help explain Chase's reluctance to tackle his problematic behavior. He observed that “people who desire to change the behavior are the most prone to ... react self-evaluatively to the progress they are making” (p. 339). In other words, if a student is not motivated to change the behavior then self-monitoring likely will have no impact. Looking more closely at Chase, it
seemed that he generally set performance goals for himself and by the third essay he was also attempting to strategize with regard to his time management and planning problems:

My writing goals…to write a great final paper. I plan on writing all the required papers on time and before the deadline. I plan on managing my time correctly…My past experiences, has made me realize that I need to take some extra steps. For instance, I can't work on the assignment last minute as I usually did. Also, I need to get as much help as possible from my professor. I just need to…make more time for my studies, and less time for everything else. Hopefully, I will receive an A or a B. (Chase, Essay 3, Forethought)

By the third essay Chase seemed more on task and had half the project done at the time he wrote the performance monitoring prompt shown in Table 17 above, but he still had a lot of work ahead of him to finish the other half (within a few days) and little confidence his work would be satisfactory. While he showed an ongoing awareness of his struggle with procrastinating, at the same time did not seem able to make effective changes, although he seemed to be more satisfied with his performance by Essay 3. Students are motivated to intentionally change their behavior depending on their level of interest in the task, their valuing of the task, or their belief in why they are learning (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). It is possible that Chase did not value the learning experience in FYC, or it is possible a semester of SLR practice was not enough for him. Or, quite apart from value or belief, it is possible that time management concerns were the only ones Chase was comfortable articulating. He was seeing the trends and patterns, acknowledging consequences, and making plans (or at least stating plans) to handle his unhelpful habits, but he did not seem invested in trying strategies to help himself. If he had had a deeper immersion, perhaps other classes or additional semesters of SRL training, with more experience self-monitoring, holding himself accountable, and
generally more positive experiences with the results of self-regulating, one wonders if he might have become more successful in conquering his propensity to procrastinate. In interview data collected after the semester, Juan alluded to this phenomenon when he said it felt like the SRL intervention occurred in a vacuum; if more teachers asked students to self-regulate, students might improve their practice more substantially.

Personal change is often difficult to achieve because it tends to be associated with unfavorable conditions of reinforcement (Bandura, 1986). But self-observation alone has only temporary effects on behavior that is highly resistant to change. Efforts to control behavior often involve some discomfort or reluctant choices (e.g., write my essay versus watch a movie). Yet repeatedly trying to change behavior will produce a higher success rate than a single effort, as studies involving smokers trying to quit, and obese people trying to lose weight, have shown (Banduras, 1986). While this intervention lasted only for a semester, and while Chase was just beginning to intentionally change, perhaps the experience and self-awareness he gained will motivate him to continue to monitor his procrastination problem.

**Theme: Students’ Concerns About Time Management Matters**

People cannot influence their own motivation and actions very well if they do not pay adequate attention to their own performances (Bandura, 1991). Depending on a person's values and the significance of the activities, they attend selectively to certain aspects of their functioning and ignore those that are of little importance to them (Bandura, 1991). SRL is an entirely autonomous process that leaves the choice of goals
and strategies completely up to the learner. While many participants did report employing a variety of learning strategies as they wrote their monitoring reflections—for example, they sought help, they proofread their work, they broke assignments into manageable pieces—they also seemed to use time management as their first and preferred strategy.

Time management emerged as a phenomenological description of this SRL intervention because students so often wrote about their concern with managing or controlling their time. There was no discernable shift away from time management in the performance monitoring phase. In their forethought entries discussed in Chapter 4, students wrote about managing time as either a goal or a planned strategy. In the performance monitoring entries, students wrote about their skill or effectiveness in managing their time, and the problems they were facing in controlling or developing their time management skills. For example, Kayla struggled with managing her time: “I haven't yet started… I'm struggling with this essay on time management.” On the other hand, Dani reported that she was successful in following her plan to manage her time: “I have followed this plan by finishing different parts of the essay on the time frame I had planned.” Furthermore, even though Dani had successfully followed her plan and was making progress, she revised her time management plan to a detailed schedule: “I plan to get the two page draft by writing a page today and then the second page on Wednesday this way Thursday I can review it.” The self-monitoring responses excerpted here were quite typical for this study. Students were almost single-mindedly preoccupied with their time management abilities. For example, Kayla for whom time management was not going well, wrote entirely about scheduling her time for the essay assignment. Students’
focus continued to be on managing their time, allocating their time, and making more productive use of their time.

Performance monitoring entails not only self-observation but also self-control. And these students, who were focused on time management, seemed to be describing their belief that they could influence or control their behavior (and their environment) which is an important contributing factor in self-efficacy. Self-efficacy theory tells us that a sense of control, choice and volition enhances a person's motivation to perform a task, and people with a strong sense of self-efficacy figure out ways to exercise some measure of control (Bandura, 1991). Time management emerged as something students felt they could possibly control, and they were selectively attending to this aspect of their functioning.

Because SRL is student-driven, students create their own goals and plans and monitor the effectiveness of their plans and strategies. How and why students use a particular strategy is a key feature of SRL—students are shown learning strategies, but it is up to them to deploy strategies based on their self-feedback and on their desired outcomes. Selecting a particular learning strategy involves agency, purpose and usefulness perceptions by learners (Zimmerman, 1989). Perhaps then students gravitated toward time management as a learning strategy because it seemed the most useful for them and it was relatively easy to monitor and seemingly straightforward to control. An alternative writing strategy that could have been employed—such as outlining or free-writing—might seem like too much work or unnecessary. But at the same time, these writing strategies also require more cognitive engagement—thinking deeply about the
assignment, or exploring new angles to uncover—which are not easy. So in addition to students writing about time management concerns, they might have also considered it a more important or necessary strategy on which to focus. And too, the self-feedback they were generating by formally self-monitoring allowed them to observe the effectiveness of their time management capabilities and react to their findings; the usefulness of a brainstorming session might not be as easy or interesting, to gauge.

Obviously many writing activities are time consuming and solitary endeavors; therefore, managing time is an important process. And while it might have been more efficient or productive to deploy additional or alternative strategies, it is possible that in a high stakes writing situation, it might have been considered risky to try something new. While some aspects of the course remained the same (e.g., a focus on summary and writing conventions such as thesis, and essay cohesion), the writing situation from essay to essay changed to such an extent that many students simply defaulted to this familiar strategy.

**Theme: Students’ Acquisition of Self-Knowledge**

As discussed in Chapter 4, another broader phenomenological theme describing the experience was that students used the intervention to learn about themselves and their work processes. However, while this theme clearly existed in the performance monitoring entries, as with time management, students did not seem to experience acquiring self-knowledge in a way that was substantially different than in the forethought phase. Students continued to comment on their learning strategies and the self-knowledge they were gaining from employing (or not employing) various strategies. For example, Lee
decided to make a checklist for Essay 2 and was gratified that he was able to complete the work satisfactorily: “I put the rhetorical analysis into pieces so it would be easier to do… I’ve learned to make a check list which helps with my procrastination.” In this case Lee has used a few strategies to help him control a known problem: (a) dividing the assignment; and (b) making a checklist. These are strategies that he now knows are useful for him in new writing situations.

Many of the students showed the kind of self-awareness that will hopefully propel them to reach their goals. For example, Jay wrote, “Although I have been completing the work, I understand that I could take a little more time to do a better job.” And Maddie wrote, “I have been trying to avoid procrastination and so far I have done a great job, much better than I have ever done before.” As these few excerpts exemplify, most students were aware of their behaviors and how those behaviors impacted their progress on their assignment. However, their entries do not add materially to the performance monitoring discussion generally. New perspectives on the students’ acquisition of self-knowledge will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 6: Reflection.

**Theme: Students’ Development of College Level Writing Skills**

Student experiences associated with this theme raised some interesting observations as they related to feelings of self-efficacy. While self-regulation is the self-initiated thoughts, feelings, and actions that writers use to attain various goals, underlying these processes are feelings of self-efficacy (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). In terms of writing, self-efficacy refers to perceptions of one's own capabilities to plan and deploy
whatever strategies are necessary to attain one's writing goals (Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). A student who feels confident when writing an essay will have greater interest in the writing effort and will show greater perseverance and resiliency in the face of difficulties (Pajares, 2003). Writing self-efficacy is also associated with motivation variables such as writing apprehension and perceived value of writing (Pajares, 2003). Self-efficacy is both influenced, and influenced by, a person's experience during the writing process. As students researched and drafted their essays, their expressed concerns about the assignment, the length, and their own writing skills led me toward a discussion of self-efficacy in writing.

Self-efficacy beliefs are situational and based on the question, “Can I do this task in this situation?” Students who believe they are capable of doing the task are much more likely to try hard, to persist, and to seek help (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). The converse is also true: students who are not confident of their capabilities are much less likely to try hard, and more likely to give up easily at the first sign of difficulty (Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). As they wrote their performance monitoring reflections, students wrote of various problems and concerns with the writing situation such as concerns about essay length, confusion over the assignment, and writerly issues such as thesis statements, introductions and structure. Along with these concerns, some students expressed feelings of worry, anxiety, stress, and low confidence levels. This section will explore some of these concerns as they emerged while writing was underway, and discuss the connections to self-efficacy beliefs.

One of the concerns students wrote about as they worked on their essays was the
length requirement. Essays 1 and 2 were to be about four pages (double spaced). Essay 3 had no length requirement but did have a detailed list of features to be included in each article analysis, which also caused some stress. Students’ performance monitoring entries showed a connection between a lack of experience in writing long essays and low self-efficacy beliefs in achieving the page length requirement. For example, for Essay 1 Chase wrote, “My writing goals is to become a much better writer…but it's going to be a challenge because I was never assigned to write a 4 page paper.” Like Chase, other students reported having little to no experience in writing longer essays, and thus had little experience in how to achieve four pages. Luke and Mary did not comment on their prior experiences as they expressed concerns for achieving length. For Essay 2, Luke wrote, “I have the ideas I need for the paper, but just not enough words on paper” and Mary wrote, "I am having problems on meeting the length requirement." While the length requirement could be seen as a device for pushing first-year students to write more, it also puts them in an unfamiliar and possibly uncomfortable situation and many students were unsatisfied with or concerned about their progress.

For many students writing a four-page essay is a considerable challenge. As discussed in Chapter 2, the types of writing students have done in high school is typically for the purposes of test taking. Applebee and Langer (2009) showed that even as students are being asked to write more, fewer than 40% of twelfth-graders reported never or hardly ever writing essays of three or more pages in their high school English classes. It seems that many students were not assigned writing of any substantial length or complexity in high school and therefore had concerns about the writing assigned in FYC.
While there are valid reasons for asking for a length requirement (for example, to ensure a certain academic rigor, or to compel a student to move beyond superficial observations into deeper analysis), it is useful to see how students struggled with length and the strategies they deployed (if any) as they experienced this challenge. Some students, like Chase, did not believe they could write the required four pages, and predicted problems with length in their forethought statements. These self-beliefs may have impacted their ability to self-regulate. The present study supports research which suggests that the extent to which students engage in SRL is influenced by their interest in learning and their belief in their abilities (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). If they do not believe they can do the work, their level of engagement in SRL will be negatively affected. For example, Luke, who was quoted above as needing more length, did not set goals in his forethought entry, and his plan seemed vague as he wrote, “I want to make a plan and a deadline for each different task at hand. If there are multiple steps for this exam, I want to break it down to make it easier on myself.” In fact, it is not clear from his entry that he is truly focused on the essay project at hand (he wrote about an exam). Later, upon submitting the essay, he did not write a reflection on his process. Perhaps length was not the only worry for Luke, but it is clear that he was not SRL-engaged. Likewise, Chase was also concerned about the length requirement, yet his reflection upon submitting the essay was that he was satisfied except that he started the paper two days before it was due. Not only did he begin late, but his writing strategy was to “write whatever came to my head,” which he understood might impact his grade. Chase was discussed earlier as having trouble with his time management and it is not unreasonable...
to suggest that had he begun the writing process sooner, he might have discovered ways
to extend his writing.

Essay length, however, was not the only worry; many students discussed other
writing concerns. Table 18 below samples some of the various writing concerns that
surfaced as students were monitoring their performance. The timing of the monitoring
reflections was meant to coincide with at least some portion of the essay drafted—ideally,
at least a page or two would be drafted, or if the student was an outliner, a solid outline
would be done. The purpose of this is so that students could identify problems and figure
out the best strategies for handling those problems. For example, Dana worried about
plagiarism for Essay 3 (“I have a serious fear of plagiarism”) and Sarah (excerpted
below) seemed to be generally overwhelmed and confused in writing Essay 1: “I'm not
sure where I to start...I don't know where to go with my body paragraphs.” Perhaps the
wide variety of concerns expressed while monitoring their performance should be
expected—after all, students were in the midst of their writing. Confusion about an
assignment or about how to structure the essay would not typically set in until work was
underway and the writing was actually occurring. Writing anxiety or stress might set in
when the essay is assigned (as seen below with Alexis and Paul) and continue until the
essay is submitted (as seen with Dana). While many of these concerns, including length,
have implications specifically for instructors of first-year composition students, they also
have implications for learning and practicing SRL. Teaching strategies to handle
confusion and anxiety, whether it occurs when the task is assigned, or when it is
underway, for example, might be worthwhile additions to SRL training for first-year
Even though writing anxiety and stress are not exactly writing skills, I am considering writing anxiety and stress under this theme because these feelings affect a
person's self-efficacy, their ability to self-regulate, and therefore perhaps, their ability to compose an essay. Feelings of anxiety are largely a result of the confidence with which students approach a task. A student's belief in their ability to do the work influences their choices, how much effort they expend and the amount of stress they experience in coping with demanding situations (Bandura, 1991). Because self-regulation depends on self-beliefs and affective reactions such as doubts and fears about specific performances (Zimmerman 1990), these feelings are important to consider as students monitor their performance. As discussed in Chapter 2, students' general inexperience with college-level writing might also be playing a role in their level of writing apprehension and stress. In college, writing assignments are typically longer and require more critical thinking or synthesis, but also have more lead time than a typical high school assignment. Or it might be a combination of many other factors. What is clear is that the anxiety and stress affect a person's ability to self-regulate. For example, Alexis wrote about feeling stressed, but she also waited until the last day to write her draft and recognized that her strategy of “trying to make the best first draft” could have ended badly.

As with setting goals, skill in self-monitoring develops with practice and experience. People learn how and what to observe, and they gain knowledge about themselves and the demands of the task. But an important feature of SRL is the ability to employ a new learning strategy (e.g., asking for help or clarification) if the current one isn't working. A stronger, ongoing focus on learning and applying strategies, instead of the mini-lessons that gradually tapered off, might have had a more consistent impact and left students better prepared and more confident for the increasingly challenging work
later in the semester.

**Theme: Students’ Experiences with Beginning to Transfer SRL**

As I analyzed the performance monitoring experiences, it seemed that SRL transfer was occurring, to varying degrees, from one essay to the next, both in the ways students wrote about their goals and strategies and in the ways they observed their performances. This transfer seemed to be mostly “near transfer” (to closely related contexts); journal entries showed that the self-generated knowledge and feedback students were developing about themselves as they monitored their performances were often transferred to a subsequent essay assignment.

For this study I identified transfer as present in students’ experiences when it seemed that students were carrying their insights and self-knowledge and self-regulatory practices to the next essay assignment. For example, if a student noticed that he spent too many hours playing video games and as a consequence his draft poorly written at the last minute, he would implement a plan that would ensure he spent more time on his assignment and less time playing video games (for example, maybe he would go to the library, away from his games, and do his work). I considered his deliberate planning to avoid writing a last minute draft again to be a kind of transfer of SRL knowledge. Because the performance monitoring entries were written in the moment—as students were experiencing the writing—they illuminated factors that might help or prevent transfer of SRL from one essay to the next.
As shown in the entries excerpted in Table 19 below, some students like Max were able to act on their self-feedback. As the case study of Max shows, he incrementally added strategies for each assignment, acting on his self-generated feedback. For example, for Essay 1, he had been adhering to his plans but also had problems with the assignment: “I need to make my paper longer and have more information.” The page length requirement was proving to be a problem for the first essay but Max made no plan to resolve this problem (e.g., to seek help or to brainstorm ideas). He continued to be aware of his need for help with Essay 2 (“could use some help to make sure it is my best work”) and decided to seek help (my researcher notes confirm he did indeed seek help). Finally, by the third assignment, “seeking help” became part of Max's plan for the assignment (in his forethought entry). I considered Max's trajectory as an eventual form of transfer because he was building on his self-knowledge, and showing a growing awareness of strategies (and their usefulness) from assignment to assignment. Moreover, for each subsequent assignment, he wrote of adding another tool to his box of strategies. This purposeful use of strategies to improve his academic achievement is characteristic of a self-regulated learner (Zimmerman, 2002).
Table 19

*Case study: Transfer of SRL skills for Max*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay/Journal prompt</th>
<th>Monitoring excerpts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essay 1/ Monitor</strong></td>
<td>My plan was to complete my rough draft to the best of my ability, then have feedback to complete my final draft. So far I have stuck to my plan, but I have foreseen some issues. I need to make my paper longer and have more information. ... My progress somewhat satisfies me ... but I need to put in more work to complete my final.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essay 2/ Monitor 1</strong></td>
<td>I made a plan to make sure I complete all my work by the due date. If I complete my rough draft by Thursday I will be on track according to my plan... I do understand the assignment but could use some help to make sure it is my best work. ... I have used some learning strategies such as eliminate distractions by going to the library and rewarding myself with breaks...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essay 2/ Monitor 2</strong></td>
<td>I was confident that my work fulfilled the requirements but I need to find more information to make sure it is four pages. I am happy with my progress ... My plan is to meet with you and give myself enough time to complete my best work...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essay 3/ Monitor 1</strong></td>
<td>I searched active learning and found some articles that describe what active learning is at their school... I skimmmed about 3 to 4 before finding this one. ... Some things I can do ... see my Professor to discuss what articles will work for this topic. Also I need to place myself in a quiet area so I can focus on this essay and complete it to the best of my ability.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Essay 3/ Monitor 2</strong></td>
<td>I think I can score a higher grade on my bibliographies. I feel my summaries and rhetorical analysis were the best part of my assignment. ... I think I need to meet with you to get a better understanding of what a 25 looks like. I'm really not confident.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Max represents the typical slow but steady progress of SRL transfer over the course of the semester. Students were fairly consistent in their focus on managing time and their environment. As prompted, many eventually wrote about trying a new strategy (e.g., going to the library, logging out of email, seeking help) while acknowledging that their current strategies were insufficient. That awareness and ever more specific plans to
deal with time and environment indicate that students were responding to their self-generated feedback and SRL transfer was beginning to occur.

While the transfer exhibited here with Max is incremental, it does seem to be occurring. Like many of the participants, Max seemed to be building upon a base of knowledge and experience that was continually expanding, and he seemed willing to explore new options for each essay. Each essay assignment presented a new, more advanced learning situation, yet it seemed that a base of situational SRL learning was building and transferring from one essay to the next. The writing contexts were similar enough that he understood when a new learning strategy would be needed to be added to his new, higher baseline of strategies.

Conclusion

As I mentioned earlier in the chapter, self-monitoring is a critical component of self-regulated learning because it alerts students to the effectiveness of their learning strategies which students can then use to guide further action. Yet, it does require training and practice because it involves so many self-controlling factors (i.e., self-instructions, time management, task strategies, environmental structuring, help seeking). Performance monitoring is especially important for unfamiliar or complex tasks (Zimmerman & Paulsen 1995); thus as the writing tasks become more demanding or complex, it is necessary that students be willing to adapt their SRL strategies.

As shown throughout Chapters 4 and 5, many students who are in the beginning stages of learning to self-regulate are not always able to clearly focus on a goal; have
trouble adhering to their plans; and are not able to switch strategies easily, if at all. On the other hand, most students seemed interested and willing to learn to self-regulate, and many wrote at some length during the monitoring opportunities. While performance monitoring was not consistently done in relation to their goals, the students seem interested in monitoring their performance. As I have discovered, these activities, especially the exercise of self-monitoring, seemed to form a solid ground upon which students could continue to participate in SRL and build upon their SRL competence.

The monitoring experiences shared by students in this study resonate with Zimmerman & Paulsen's (1995) research on the value and purpose of performance monitoring. According to Zimmerman and Paulsen (1995), performance monitoring first focuses students' attention on a limited range of responses. As shown in this chapter, while many students eventually tried new strategies (or wrote about trying new strategies), most students at first limited themselves to strategies involving time management, which is important, but often additional strategies became necessary. Second, according to Zimmerman and Paulsen (1995), performance monitoring helps students discriminate between effective and ineffective performance. This finding was also clearly demonstrated in the students' monitoring experiences. Students wrote of understanding when and why their progress and performance was satisfactory or unsatisfactory. While some students needed additional essay experiences to iron out their performance, others were able to immediately make changes to their approach.

Third, self-monitoring often reveals the inadequacy of a strategy and prompts the student to find a more suitable one (Zimmerman and Paulsen, 1995). Student experiences
also largely support this finding—although, for some students, as I have mentioned, it was difficult either for them to try new strategies or to know which new strategies to employ. Finally, performance monitoring fosters reflective thinking, another function that was supported through this study. As just mentioned, the performance monitoring entries were generally longer than the forethought and reflection entries, largely as a result of students' thinking and writing about their writing ability and progress, and their degree of satisfaction with their performance. In sum, students’ experiences with monitoring reflected their other SRL experiences in the nuanced unevenness of their learning. This study clearly showed that students observed much about their learning, but acting on those observations and changing an approach to learning, or adapting a learning strategy, was not comfortable or even doable for many students.

The next chapter, Chapter 6: Reflection, will focus more on students’ metacognitive judgments and reflective thinking as students submitted their work for a grade.
Chapter 6

Phase 3: Reflection

How Did Students Experience Metacognitive Reflection?

While I have organized the discussion of results of the present study in terms of distinct actions (forethought, performance monitoring, reflection), it should again be noted that in learning situations these actions are intertwined and operate in a reciprocal, sometimes messy, fashion. Goals and plans established at the outset of an endeavor can be altered or adjusted as a result of ongoing performance monitoring or students may choose to lower their sights or adopt an even more challenging goal. And metacognitive reflection occurs throughout the learning process as students keep an eye on their progress and their performance. Much like the writing process itself, these self-regulatory actions do not occur in a linear order or symmetrical fashion; rather, as students self-direct their learning, they are informing actions in a recursive, bi-directional manner.

Focusing on students’ reflections at the conclusion of their tasks gave me a sense of how they evaluated their ability to self-regulate as they wrote their essays, and gave me insight into their thoughts about whether or how self-regulating impacted their writing process. Analyzing reflection, however, is difficult without referring to other stages in the process. In this chapter therefore, the reflection entries are analyzed as a component in helping to
understand how students set goals, strategized, and monitored their performances in their essay assignments.

Zimmerman (2002) identified “reflection processes” as a specific third stage of SRL occurring after performance efforts and involving a person’s response to that performance. Thus while forethought and monitoring both entail reflection as students look both backwards to their prior experiences and ahead to the unknown, for this study, the students’ final metacognitive journals completed at the end of each of the three major essay assignments illuminate this final phase of their SRL experience for the essay. Entries reflecting on their final written product and their writing process (reflection phase) were written when essays were submitted, before grading. My interest and focus for this intervention was on how students experienced goal setting, planning, performance monitoring, and finally formal reflection without the influence of a grade judging their work—hence the timing of the reflection entries. My focus was not on academic outcomes; rather I wanted to learn how students evaluated themselves and their reactions to their self-evaluations, without the influence or hindsight of teacher feedback on the particular essay. I hoped to learn how successful they believed they were in following their plans and attaining their goals, how thoughtfully they created new goals and plans based on their prior efforts, how satisfied they were with their performance, and—as emphasized in this chapter—how they self-evaluated their processes and their work. The following is a typical self-reflection prompt (sample for Essay 1). The text of the prompt varied slightly depending on the assignment.
Observing one's pattern of behavior is the first step toward doing something to affect it, but observation alone provides little basis for reaction. (As discussed in Chapter 5, while students easily observed the effectiveness or adequacy of some learning strategies, they did not easily or quickly respond by making changes in their behavior). Instead, reactions rise through a judgmental function (Bandura, 1986). This judgmental function involves two major classes of processes: self-evaluation and self-reaction (Zimmerman, 2002). Self-evaluation refers to comparisons of self-observed performance against some standard. Underlying self-evaluation are personal characteristics and processes such as self-efficacy, goals, and standards (Zimmerman, 1989). As students evaluate themselves they arrive at causal attributions or beliefs about their errors or successes. Bandura (1986) suggested that self-evaluation not only gives direction for behavior, it also creates motivators for it. This self-oriented, self-generated feedback loop is a cyclical process in which students monitor the effectiveness of their learning methods or strategies and respond in a variety of ways—from changes in self-perception to changes in behavior. SRL depends on the continuing feedback of learning effectiveness, either positive or negative. Intentionally reflecting on their plans, their goals, and their processes at the conclusion of a task provides students an opportunity to not only reflect

After reading through your goals and monitoring statements, how closely did you stick to your plan to complete this project? What adjustments (if any) did you make to complete the assignment? Where did you run into difficulty in completing the essay? What additional strategies did you have to use to finish the essay? Do you feel that you’ve met your goals? What will you do differently for the next assignment?
back and make evaluative decisions on their performance for the current task (something they may not have been able to do as they monitored), but also to look ahead to what they might do differently (if anything) in a future task.

The other process occurring during reflection is self-reaction, which refers to the feelings or responses to the self-evaluation. For instance, students may feel satisfied, proud, or disappointed depending on how they evaluated themselves. When people make self-satisfaction conditional upon certain accomplishments, they motivate themselves to expend the effort needed to attain the requisite performance (Bandura, 1986). In the present study, students were asked not only to evaluate their strategy use and goal attainment, but also to describe their reactions to their self-evaluations.

The cyclical nature of SRL theorizes that self-reflections from prior efforts to learn affect subsequent forethought processes by activating self-reactive influences in goal setting and self-evaluative reactions (Bandura, 1991; Zimmerman, 2002). This is the feedback loop integral to SRL. Bandura (1991) noted that neither intention nor desire alone has much effect if people lack the capability for exercising influence over their own motivation and behavior. Therefore, this chapter will also look how students changed as a result of the self-generated feedback they produced at the end of each essay cycle.

In this chapter two types of reflections are discussed. The first are the three essay-based reflections in which students evaluated their goal attainment and their strategy use (referred to as EB reflection). The second type of reflection was written at the end of the semester and asked students to reflect on their work for the semester as a whole and whether they had attained the goals they created early in the semester. I refer
to this response as LT (long term) reflection. The text of each EB reflection prompt as well as the LT reflection prompt can be found in Appendix D.

Similar to the information provided in Chapters 4 and 5, the following table (Table 20) shows participation levels for the reflection responses. As with the forethought and monitoring prompts, even though students could have responded to the reflection prompt at any time and receive participation points for doing so, fewer than half of the participants responded to all three essay-based reflections. These variations in participation levels across the phases seem to parallel the unevenness of the learning experience for the students. When students responded to the EB and LT reflections, for the most part, they seemed to be engaged in their responses. In fact, as the semester continued, responses grew more detailed and students seemed to grow more comfortable with the concepts and practices. Yet, uneven participation across all three phases could perhaps explain the uneven uptake of SRL, and could contribute to the expressed frustrations that SRL did not help improve their grades, as a handful of students observed. These experiences will be discussed further in this chapter.
Table 20

Participation levels for reflection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of reflection entries for each essay</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
<th>LT reflection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who responded to all 3 EB reflection prompts</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who responded to 2 EB reflection prompts</td>
<td></td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who responded to 1 EB prompt*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Four students did not respond to any reflection prompts.

How Did Students Experience Reflection?

The ultimate goal of SRL is to be able to direct one's own efforts to acquire knowledge and skills, rather than relying on teachers or parents (Zimmerman, 2002). To be able to direct their learning efforts, students must be willing to reflect on their learning and performance and make strategic decisions about whether and how to improve, both in the middle of the task and as they move to a new task. As prompted, while reflecting on the process for each essay, students wrote about what went well for them and where they saw weaknesses. Students generally gave themselves positive reviews, but with caveats. For example, in reflecting on her performance for her third essay Maggie wrote,
I did make a plan for this project and I followed it… I'm not fully satisfied with only first rhetorical bibliography entries for this project. If I could do this project again I would ask for more help and spend more time working on it.

On the one hand Maggie was satisfied with the way she followed her plan, but on the other hand she was somewhat disappointed with part of her work and wished she had asked for help. Like many students (and as requested in the prompt), she identified an action she might have taken which would have made a difference.

Rarely was a student entirely negative about his or her performance. Lee was one of the few students who had nothing positive to say about his work for Essay 1. In his reflection Lee wrote he was disappointed with the essay he submitted. He did not follow his plan and he procrastinated too long writing the essay the day before it was due. He did not meet his goals. He attributed his problems to “trying to write four pages on something that could be explained in a paragraph,” which forced him to “to try to think deeper.” As was explored in Chapter 5, Lee's problems with the assignment (misunderstanding, lack of interest) may have caused his SRL process to stall. However, just because he evaluated himself negatively does not mean he will give up (i.e., drop the course). Bandura (1986) suggested that people who desire to change their behavior are most prone to react self-evaluatively to their progress. Even though Lee gave himself a final low evaluation of his process, that self-awareness, in fact, seemed to motivate him to improve. Looking at Lee's next forethought journal entry (for the second essay) it seemed that his negative self-assessment on his first essay motivated him for the second. For Essay 2, Lee made a specific plan, and in both of the performance monitoring responses reported that he was adhering to his plan: “I put the rhetorical analysis into pieces so it would be easier…I've
learned to make a checklist which helps with my procrastinating.” In his second monitoring response for Essay 2, Lee wrote of being happy with his progress and “feeling very motivated.” In his reflection for Essay 2, he wrote that he had followed his plan, had created checklists and followed personal deadlines. He seemed much more engaged with his writing process: “I am very happy with the way I have progressed with this paper.” Lee’s satisfaction is important to note because people pursue courses of action that result in satisfaction and positive feelings, thus positively affecting motivation (Bandura, 1991). As shown, he was dissatisfied with his process for Essay 1 and intentionally took steps to ensure a more satisfactory outcome.

**Students were generally satisfied with their work.** As discussed briefly above most students wrote that they were generally satisfied with their work. They reported usually following their plans, yet they also, as prompted, typically added a strategy they should have employed (or may next time). For example, Alexis wrote, "For my next assignment I want to make sure that I don't wait too long to complete the final draft because it could have ended up badly.” And Susan wrote, "Next time I'll probably give myself more time to complete it so I don't feel rushed. Maybe I'll also go to the CTL for more help." Both of these students wrote of being generally satisfied with their work overall, but saw that for the next essay they might deploy additional strategies. Table 21 below shows this trend by providing a few more excerpts.
Table 21

Reflection: Students were generally satisfied with their work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Reflection excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>I think <em>I stuck to my plan</em> and completed my assignment on-time. One adjustment I made was asking for help… Some additional strategies I used were eliminating all distractions… I felt <em>I met my goals</em>…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>Cory</td>
<td><em>I kind of stuck to plan,</em> I was <em>pretty happy with my final drafts considering how bad my rough drafts were.</em> I would have tried to get a better understanding of the format of the paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>Reid</td>
<td>I did make a plan for this project, and for the most part <em>I did stick to my plan.</em> <em>I am satisfied</em> with my work for this project but also feel like I could of done better. If I had to do this project over, I'd change by probably using two or three more sources.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the components of reflection is self-reaction, which refers to a degree of satisfaction. By making self-satisfaction conditional upon performance, people get themselves to put forth the effort necessary to accomplish what they value (Bandura, 1986). This was exemplified in the discussion of Lee above. In areas involving achievement and the development of competence, people's personal standards rise as skills are developed and challenges are met (Bandura, 1986). Bandura's research bears true, as evidenced by the excerpts in Table 21 above. Even as the course grew more challenging, most students remained generally satisfied with their progress and their work—possibly either because they were improving their ability to self-regulate or because they were feeling more confident as college writers. Their satisfaction with their progress seemed connected to their learning behavior as students reported that they were generally satisfied when they followed their plan. This link between following a plan and
satisfaction could have broader implications within the context of a content course. For instance, as a way of building self-efficacy it might be helpful for instructors to create opportunities for students to feel satisfied with a process, even if satisfaction with a product (a lower than expected grade) is not immediately accessible. As discussed in Chapter 5, a student who feels confident when writing an essay will have greater interest in the writing effort (Pajares, 2003). Moreover, expectations of self-efficacy determine how much effort will be expended, and how long it will be sustained (Bandura, 1977). One can see that creating opportunities for building self-efficacy could have positive effects on learning.

A handful of students were so satisfied with the work they produced that if given the chance, they would not change any part of their process. For example, Michael wrote for Essay 3, “I am not sure if I would do anything else if I was able to do it all over again.” Aidan too was very satisfied with his process for Essay 3. He wrote, “In the future I will follow a similar timeline…I don't think I would have done anything differently.” However, this type of entry was unusual, even for late-in-the-semester assignments like Essay 3, as most students did indicate that they might do something differently. Without a grade to guide them, it is possible that these very few students could not think of other strategies they might have used, or their grades so far in the course (Essay 3 was assigned late in the semester) gave them reason to believe that their strategies would lead to an outside evaluation (mine, as their teacher) which was similar to their own self-evaluation. Or, as suggested by Dembo and Praks-Seli (2004), one of
the reasons students might not change learning habits is that they already liked their work processes and did not feel that it was necessary to change.

This research seemed to hold true for one particular student, Pedro. Whereas Michael and Aidan seemed SRL-engaged by reporting on various learning strategies and building on their SRL practice from the beginning of the semester, Pedro was consistent in seeming attached to his personal learning process and not wanting to change anything. Pedro often expressed mixed satisfaction but he also did not plan to make changes to his learning process. For Essay 1, Pedro wrote in his reflection:

I really kept up with my work and staying on the right track, and I truly stuck with my plan to complete this paper... I didn't use any other strategies during this essay to finish it. ... I feel like I will probably do exactly what I did for this essay. (Pedro, Essay 1, Reflection)

Pedro's reluctance to make any changes to his process was apparent in his reflections for Essays 1 (above) and 3, where he wrote: "I did follow my plan and it helped me out with this project ... There is nothing I would change about this project."

Yet even for Essay 2, Pedro "did not do anything special to cap off the essay," indicating that he had made no adjustments to his plan or strategies. Furthermore, Pedro's forethought entries showed that his planned strategies remained the same all semester. It is possible that students who are reluctant to employ new strategies may have experienced a teacher-controlled academic environment (i.e. the teacher tells the student what, how and when to learn) (Dembo & Praks-Seli, 2004). As a result, they lack skills necessary for college, such as critical thinking, and because their performance was acceptable in high school, these students often lack the ability to judge the new academic situation as different from high school (Dembo & Praks-Seli, 2004). Or, as Schon (1987)
suggested, perhaps it is more a characteristic of the individual and not of his or her prior experience. This type of student (a "counter-learner") has brought a “stance” to the writing classroom which impacts what (if anything) can be learned (Schon, 1987). A counter-learner according to Schon (1987) is unwilling or unable to reflect on a process by choosing not to engage with another's theories. This type of student eventually “gives the teacher what she wants” while remaining unengaged with their learning. While Pedro responded to every prompt throughout the semester and his responses were thorough (and as I discussed in Chapter 4, Pedro regularly visited office hours), he seemed unable or unwilling to try to self-regulate his learning. There is little research to help us understand why certain students are more willing or more likely to try new learning strategies. Encouraging strategy use among these reluctant students is challenging, and educators must be prepared to teach students who are not eager to benefit from SRL training.

Most students reported self-regulating by the third essay assignment. Most students’ reports showed a positive trajectory in terms of their ability to self-regulate. Even when they did not report self-regulating for the first essay, by the third and final essay reflections, many students were writing that they followed their plans and felt positively toward their work and their ability to do the work. For example, Susan wrote, “I did make a plan for this project, and I stuck to it because I turned it in on time. I am very satisfied with my work for this project because I worked really hard on it.” Dana was also satisfied with her work, writing, “I stuck to my plan for completing this assignment. I did not want to finish it at the last minute, so I gave myself an earlier deadline…I am very satisfied and comfortable with the work that I turned in.” Of the 22
EB reflection entries for the third essay, all but two students reported following their plan. It is possible that this adherence to their plans was a result of more experience in the course, with practicing self-regulating, or with the format of the assignment itself which lent itself to a clearer possibility of breaking it into manageable pieces. But as was discussed earlier in the chapter with Lee, students showed consistently that when they followed their plan they were satisfied with their work.

In their reflections on their work processes many students showed their willingness to adapt to each new learning situation, although it was sometimes unclear if they followed through with their adaptive plans. For instance, in her performance monitoring entry for Essay 1 Maddie wrote of her plan to get additional help: “I plan on going to the CTL [the tutoring center] on Tuesday.” However, in her reflection entry for Essay 1 Maddie did not mention getting help from the CTL; it is unclear whether she went. It is also unclear whether she fully intended to get help, or if she was just responding to the prompt which asked for strategies. Yet her reflection entry for Essay 2 does indicate that she sought help with that assignment, as she wrote, “I had gone to the CTL and met with an English tutor.” For Essay 2 she clearly took additional steps to achieve her goals.

Other students took a little longer to participate in self-regulating. For example, Chase, who struggled with the first essay, wrote that he started it two days before it was due which left him no time to revise it. He went on to say, “I am a bit disappointed I barely revised my first draft.” He feared his strategy of “writing whatever comes into my head” might affect his grade. However, by the third essay reflection, Chase reported that
he stuck to his plan to start early and he was “looking forward to see what my grade is.” In his reflection he seemed to be more confident with his work and was satisfied with his progress, and he wrote, “My plan was to finish to the best of my ability and on time. I think I've done a pretty good job.” This positive trajectory in his willingness and ability to self-regulate his learning is not only encouraging but also supports research that suggests SRL can be taught and must be practiced (Zimmerman 2002).

The case study in Table 22 below shows the positive trajectory for Juan. Like Chase, his reflection entries were typical of those students who reported this positive trend. For Essay 1, he wrote that following his plan and making progress on his writing was difficult. For Essay 2, Juan reflected that while he felt his time management was better, he underestimated the writing process and seemed to run out of time. His third reflection showed more confidence and more control. He seemed to have made a reasonable plan and he was able to adhere to that plan.
Table 22

Case study: A positive SRL trajectory for Juan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reflection journal excerpts</th>
<th>Essay 1</th>
<th>Essay 2</th>
<th>Essay 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It was very hard to stick to the plan in my opinion because I would always have distractions while doing some of these things. I don't think I had the will to sit there and follow my plan as well... I didn't have any adjustments really, because the easiest solution would be not doing the things that distracted me... For the next assignment I will probably be more in the mental state of trying out new things to help me get my work done.</td>
<td>I did set goals, but were not all accomplished. My time management was better this time, but still struggled a bit. I thought I had it under control, but I underestimated the whole procedure by having less time to do it. .... I would probably have a friend to look over it after I've taken a look at it.</td>
<td>I made a plan for the project by doing one rhetorical bib for each day leading to the peer review day. I think I'm somewhat satisfied with what I have because I spent a large amount of time working with each article. If I was asked to do it all over again, I would probably have asked for more peer reviews just to get it right.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The reflection entries of Juan and many other students seemed to show that by participating in mindful, metacognitively guided thinking, students were beginning to take control of their learning, or at the very least, to identify the strategies which might have helped them achieve their goals. In this sense, teaching students self-regulatory process in a content course seems that it would be useful to them; this study has shown that students who make a plan and follow it are more satisfied with their learning, but it does require steady practice to even get to a point where goals and plans are specific enough for adherence.
In his first reflection, Juan was distracted and somewhat unwilling to make a change. But he did seem aware that he needed to take control and wrote, “for the next assignment I will probably be more in the mental state of trying new things.” His reflection showed that he was not satisfied with his progress and he acknowledged that the old way of doing things was not sufficient for the new learning environment. This mindfulness and general alertness to his situation may encourage transfer (Perkins & Salomon, 1992) and certainly seemed to encourage Juan to try new approaches to his work. These reflections show evidence of transfer occurring in Juan's processes through the semester as each entry shows more specificity and greater attention to SRL.

Other students responded similarly and their entries demonstrated this mindful alertness toward their learning. These glimpses of self-regulated learning in the moment showed not only successes but also difficulties in predicting the demands of the work. For example, Alexis wrote about adjusting her schedule in her reflection for Essay 1: “I completed the draft early, which is what I wanted to do...I had to adjust my schedule a little.” Mary wrote about pacing herself better: “I realized that I stuck to my original plan pretty well. I think that for the next assignment I will pace myself a little more and set a more solid plan.” Kayla wrote about the failure of her plan for Essay 3: “I stuck to my plan as best as I could but I ended up editing all my articles the nights before it was due instead of having the whole week to edit and fix my papers as I planned to...I don’t actually think having the whole week to edit my papers was realistic.” In hindsight, Kayla seemed to understand that her plan was unrealistic and hopefully this learning experience will inform her goals and work processes for a future project.
While these entries show students were indeed self-regulating to some extent, they also show a sense of realism — an understanding of the reality of their individual situations relative to the demands of the task. Despite each student having a different personal situation, they each found their path through the assignment. Self-regulated learning depends on several personal characteristics like interest, self-efficacy, and motivation which are experienced at different degrees depending on the student, the assignment, and the environment. As the excerpts also show, SRL is a learned process which requires practice. For instance, despite having many weeks of practice and even as late as the third essay assignment, Kayla learned that her plan was unrealistic.

**Many students seemed to value SRL.** At the end of the semester students were asked to reflect on the semester's SRL practice and whether they met their goals for the semester. While they were not asked specifically about the value of self-regulating, students’ LT reflections seemed to indicate that they saw value in the SRL intervention experience. Most students wrote about what they had learned (about themselves and about college writing) and about how they had adjusted their learning to meet the demands of the course. For example, Max wrote that the practice helped motivate him to reach his goals. He also “learned to become an active learner and how important it can be,” and Reid learned that he needed to stop procrastinating and start doing his work ahead of time. Juan thought that “having the time to write about my progress isn't a bad idea,” which seems like a tentative step toward endorsing SRL.

As requested in the LT reflection prompt, many students were specific in addressing the question of whether self-regulating helped them reach their goals. Some
students said they used the goal-setting process to push themselves. Ben wrote that he was able to meet most of his goals and that “setting goals did help me because I knew what I had to work on and do. I found out about myself is when I feel like I am not doing well I set more goals for present situations to push me further.” He not only seemed to use goals to monitor and motivate himself, but he was also setting goals in other situations. Dana also learned about herself and “what necessary pressure I need to apply to myself in order to succeed.” On the other hand, in his LT reflection Patrick wrote, “I didn't set my goals at the start of the semester, because I know it doesn't work…but after I took this course…I am starting set goals for my upcoming exams and papers.” In his case, it seemed that Patrick was skeptical at the beginning but once he began practicing SRL and understanding how to be a self-regulated learner, he became an enthusiastic supporter.

While the majority of the students seemed to find value in the SRL intervention, there were a handful of students who did not seem to think that the SRL practice made a difference for them. Their comments generally referred to their disappointing performance and the pointlessness of setting goals. For example, Kayla wrote, “I don't think setting the goals at the beginning of the course helped me much. I forgot what my goals were and I didn't achieve them very well.” And Sarah said, "I feel like setting those goals did not necessarily help…[We] forget about the goals we set when we have a pile of work in our hands. We forget about the goals we planned and start to feel lost and overwhelmed." Both of these students seemed to be saying that they had lost sight of their goals and were not able to use goals to motivate themselves. Yet another student,
Julie, said that goals had no impact because “I have my own self motivator in my head that helps me want to get things done. I guess some students are different, working better with writing their goals. As for me, it didn't have much impact.”

Even when students felt they did not reach their goals, they were willing to make causal attributions and recognized that adding a strategy might have helped them stay on track. For example, all three of the students quoted above, Kayla, Julie, and Sarah, wrote about seeking help or other ways they might have improved their performance. Even though they did not buy into SRL, their comments may support future learning.

Metacognition enables individuals to acquire insight into their own strengths and weaknesses as well as appropriate strategies. While these students did not see value in the practice of setting goals and planning a strategy, they did seem to be participating in the metacognitive aspects of the intervention.

Furthermore, because it seemed that many students were using the SRL intervention as a tool to learn how to manage their time and their work load, their reflections for each essay did not show a great awareness or concern about their own learning. Rather their reflections were more pragmatic in nature, with discussions of actions that might have been taken especially with regard to managing their time.

**Theme: Students’ Concerns About Time Management Matters**

In my discussion of this theme in Chapter 4, I discussed three factors that might be behind students’ focus on time management: issues of controllability, their novice status in college, and their novice status in the course. In Chapter 5, I noted a continuing
focus on time management in the context of monitoring. And I raised the idea that SRL is an autonomous process wherein learners selectively attend to certain aspects of their performance and choose the strategy that they believe is most appropriate for the task which, for many students, was managing time. Here in the reflection stage, not only do the end of task reflections enable students to look at their time management in hindsight, but I can also look at whether their new understanding of their time management impacted their forethought process for the next essay.

When asked to reflect upon their process and their written products, as with forethought and performance monitoring, students continued to attend to the time management aspects of their performance. Students wrote of being happy with how they managed their time or how they felt in control over their time. For example, in her reflection for Essay 1, Dana wrote, “I shocked myself when I got it done earlier than expected and not at the last minute.” And Cassidy wrote for Essay 2, “I would work on the paper a few days before it was due in order to not feel rushed and have time to make revisions if possible. I felt like I had the project under my control the entire time.” Both of these students exemplify the typical reflection responses with regard to successfully managing their time. Furthermore, they connected their writing performance with their ability to manage their time. For example, Jay wrote, “I didn't feel rushed to complete anything and therefore I believe I completed a decently written essay.”

Just as students said they were satisfied when they controlled their time, others were unhappy or dissatisfied when they did not succeed in managing their time; these reflection entries showed some regret and disappointment in their time management
abilities. For example, Chase wrote about a job and other school assignments that were taking away from his writing time and he connected his poor writing performance to his inability to manage his time. He talked about writing an “amateur” essay and wrote, “I could’ve…managed my time better.” Similarly, Grace wrote that she did not follow through on her plan to start early, and ended up staying up very late the night before the essay was due. She added, “If I could do this all over again I would plan better.”

To some extent, a first-year student’s focus on time management seems perfectly reasonable, especially for a student like Chase who is holding down a job in addition to attending college. And discussing time management through the lens of the students’ novice status or controllability, as in Chapter 4, is helpful, as is an examination of time management through a self-efficacy lens, as I did in Chapter 5. However, as I began to review students’ EB reflections, I wondered if students’ close attention to time management could be also be understood looked at through a motivational lens. Bandura’s (1991) self-efficacy theory suggests that a sense of control, choice, and volition enhance a person’s motivation to do a task. So perhaps managing time is also a way for students to exhibit some kind of control in their lives but also to motivate themselves. Research shows that the ability to manage time is positively related to academic achievement (Kitsantas, Winsler, & Huie, 2008). Yet, even without yet knowing their grades, as they reflected students seemed to be referring to time management as not only a strategy but also a motivational tool. As shown throughout these results chapters, students were satisfied when they managed their time – thus they pursued opportunities to feel satisfied (and continued to manage their time). This
reciprocal relationship between satisfaction and time management is reminiscent of Bandura’s (1991) observation that people are most likely to take pride in their accomplishments when they ascribe their accomplishments to their own abilities and efforts. They create incentives for their behavior by anticipating affective reactions, thus they pursue avenues that produce (or they expect will produce) positive reactions.

One way to try to understand the motivational aspects of managing one’s time is to look at how students’ experiences with an SRL cycle informed their goals and plans for the next essay. The self-generated reflective feedback becomes a cyclical process in which students monitor the effectiveness of their learning methods or strategies and react to this self-feedback as they plan for the next task. As a result of their feedback, they might change their behavior or introduce a new learning strategy. Researchers assume that self-regulation depends on continuing feedback of learning effectiveness and students' responses to their self-oriented feedback (Zimmerman, 1990).

How did students respond to their time management self-feedback? Some students responded and reacted in a self-regulatory manner, considering their current situation and their prior experience as they generated goals and plans for the next essay. For example, Lee wrote in his reflection for Essay 2 that he was successful in managing his time and following his plan. For Essay 3, attentive to his self-feedback, his goals and plans as explained in his Essay 3 forethought entry were as follows:

My writing goals for the rhetorical bibliography is to get it done ahead of time so that I will be able to get multiple people to look over my paper. My plan for meeting my goals is creating a checklist for everything I need to do. Set the personal due date to 4 days before the actual due date. I feel like I do need to take extra steps to achieve my desired grade for my paper. Recently I have been receiving C’s which in my book are not
acceptable. (Lee, Essay 3, Forethought)

As evident in this example, Lee's reactions to his self-judgments on his time management ability seemed to compel him to create a more detailed plan to ensure he reached his goal. His goal was to finish the work early and his plan to achieve that goal was to stay organized and set early, personal due dates. This concrete time management plan could also be a motivator. It is specific and Lee (who has been getting unsatisfactory grades) seems motivated. And indeed, his reflection for Essay 3 indicates that he stuck to his plan and was satisfied with his project. He would have liked one more day for feedback, but overall, he was satisfied.

On the other hand, for Essay 1 Dana was “shocked” at getting her essay done earlier than expected. She judged her strategies to be very effective; therefore, if she was a self-regulated learner, this learning experience should inform the next learning experience. And indeed, in her next forethought entry, for Essay 2, Dana acknowledged the importance of managing her time and wrote, “time management is going to be huge…I learned a lot about myself from writing the observation essay…I'm just a little worried when it comes to balancing it.” Dana’s experience with time management for the first essay was extremely positive so she continued to focus on attaining that same resultant satisfaction. Unfortunately, she did not write a reflection entry for Essay 2; therefore it is unknown whether her adherence to the time management strategies worked for this second, more complex, essay assignment.

Similarly, Kayla’s EB reflection for the third essay indicated she was satisfied with her work for the third assignment, yet unsatisfied with her progress on the
assignment. She concluded that her plan to finish a week early was unrealistic: “I don't actually think having the whole week to edit my papers was realistic.” Even though Kayla was talking about her time management, she was at the same time critiquing her thought-process and identifying the precise part of the problem she could control, and therefore presumably feel more satisfied. Likewise, Juan, who was highlighted in a case study earlier in this chapter (Table 22) also reflected on his time management struggle as he submitted Essay 2. His forethought entry for Essay 3 was to “focus on staying on track” as well as to ask for help.

Even though many of these students were not quite successfully and consistently self-regulating their learning, and were experiencing ups and downs in their planning and academic successes, they seemed to be on the road to being self-regulated learners in terms of their time management. As I have mentioned earlier in these results discussions, it seemed that most of the participants needed to have a certain level of self-knowledge as well as college experience before they could fully become self-regulated learners. Thus, despite almost a year of college (the third essay was assigned late in the spring semester), some students like Kayla were continuing to come to terms with the intellectual and social situation, and the need to adapt to new challenges. This intervention then became an important learning experience in some unexpected ways.

Generally speaking, the sustained focus on time management likely has its roots in many areas: controllability, novice status, or perhaps motivation. Some students wrote about improvements in their ability to manage their time, but others did not seem to be able to successfully control their time. Furthermore, many did not evolve their strategic
planning beyond managing their time; they remained in a strategy “rut,” so to speak (like Dana, who is quoted above). As posited in earlier chapters, it is not clear whether these students were unwilling to add successful strategies or to modify unsuccessful ones, whether they considered trying new strategies too risky, or whether they just did not know what to do.

Self-regulating requires students to be autonomous learners—the emphasis is on students organizing and creating advantageous learning environments for themselves (Zimmerman, 1990). How they plan and the strategies they choose to use to achieve academic success is up to them as individual students. But their plans and strategy use are also contingent on their responsiveness to their self-feedback. Responding to the effectiveness of their learning strategies is one of the distinguishing characteristics of a self-regulated learner (Zimmerman, 1990). In this intervention, while students were shown various learning strategies and guided in their metacognitive reflections, they remained strongly focused on time management, possibly because they sought sure ways they could feel satisfied and successful.

**Theme: Students’ Acquisition of Self-Knowledge**

Learning about oneself requires a certain amount of metacognitive thinking. And as explained in Chapters 4 and 5, students wrote about being very interested in their own learning processes. This theme was especially apparent in the forethought entries but was mostly absent in their essay-based reflection entries. In fact, as students were reflecting for each essay, they said very little about what they had learned about themselves as
learners—even when their goals were specific to learning about themselves. Instead, their reflections were primarily about their work processes and strategies (as the prompt requested), and occasionally about writing concerns. There are some possible reasons why students did not reflect on what they had learned about themselves during the essay-writing experiences. First, perhaps the students were more focused on their grades since the reflections were written at the same time the essays were submitted for grading. And second, the prompt did not ask them to reflect on their learning goals specifically; rather, it simply asked whether they had achieved their goals generally.

Of the students highlighted in Chapter 4 who had written goals related to the theme of acquiring self-knowledge, none of them referred to this goal in their reflection entries. For example, in his forethought entry for Essay 1, Chase wrote, “I plan on learning and realizing how I live my life and really figure out what’s different about me than others,” yet in his reflection he did not return to evaluate his achievement toward this goal. His reflection for Essay 1 was largely about time management. Another student, Michael, wrote in his forethought entry for Essay 2, “I would like to see if I would be able to take any online classes and to see if I can focus for an hour without getting side-tracked.” Like Chase, he too did not refer again to this learning goal.

However, many students were thinking about their grade in their EB reflections. For example, after writing about her difficulties with the assignment, Sarah wrote, “I hope I get a good grade,” and Jay did not seem to have a lot of confidence in his grade. He wrote, “I am satisfied with my work on this project although when I get my grade back I am going to be frustrated with things I could have done better.” For Essay 3 Dani
wrote, “I truly feel as though I did the best I could and hopefully that shows in my grade.” These excerpts show that as students were submitting their work for a grade, their focus was not on what they had learned about themselves necessarily, but on how their strategies might impact their grades. Unfortunately, their focus on grades and not on the writing or learning that occurred through the assignment might also interfere with transfer. And indeed, as I will discuss later in this chapter, some students wrote of seeing no purpose in self-regulating their learning because it did not “produce” the grades they wanted.

By the time students were handing in their essays for grades and were reflecting on their process, they seemed to be more concerned with time management strategies and, sometimes, writing concerns. It is likely that these concerns overshadowed any kind of reflection on what they had learned about themselves through the essay process. It is also possible they did not know how to evaluate what they learned about themselves—it is, after all, for many of us an ongoing process and difficult to measure—and it is possible students had not ever previously been asked about how they were learning.

The second reason students may not have reflected on their acquisition of self-knowledge for the essay reflection phase of SRL was because the reflection prompt did not ask them to do so; this thematic description of the SRL intervention experience was unanticipated. The reflection prompt was meant to guide them to think strategically about their processes and to consider what they might do differently for the next essay. And, as expected, generally the students discussed their writing processes and strategies. Although students were initially asked in their forethought entries to establish learning
goals, the reflection prompt asked in a more general way whether students felt they had met their goals. Clearly, when it comes to reflection, students frequently wrote only what they were asked to write. And even though I always asked them to re-read their prior responses (so as to recall them), students did not reflect on their learning goals. In future SRL instructional situations using a diary methodology, I recommend creating a more specific prompt, as it seemed that students who are beginning to learn SRL may need more guidance in writing about their metacognitive self-awareness.

On the other hand, the descriptive theme "students’ acquisition of self-knowledge" was much more apparent in their LT reflections written at the end of the semester. These reflections asked students to reread the goals they wrote at the outset of the course, and as in the essay-based reflections, write about whether they had achieved their goals, and how they did so. Furthermore, this prompt specifically asked students, “What are the valuable things you learned about yourself and your academic behaviors,” and therefore, many students responded specifically about their new self-knowledge (which also shows another example of students writing only about what prompt requested). For example, Julie wrote, “I’ve learned that I am much more put together then I thought, always staying on task with things,” in reference to dispositional traits such as confidence and self-beliefs. Maggie on the other hand wrote more about her behavior: “if I want to succeed I should concentrate more and remove all distractions.” Table 23 below shows additional excerpts from the LT reflections supporting this theme.
Table 23

*Students’ acquisition of self-knowledge: LT reflection entries*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Julie</td>
<td><em>I’ve learned that I am much more put together then I thought, always staying on task with things</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben</td>
<td><em>[What] I found out about myself is when I feel like I am not doing well I set more goals for present situations to push me further</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td><em>I learned that I am able to write essays and complete my homework if I don’t give up and show some effort. I also learned that time management helps me do my work on time.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dani</td>
<td><em>I have learned a lot about myself and my writing skills through this course. I have also figured out how I learn which is very helpful. Setting goals had a positive impact on my writing. This was because I held myself accountable for what I wrote. If I wrote that I was supposed to finish something by a certain date I didn’t want to let myself down and put it off. Setting goals and monitoring my progress made the projects much easier. I tried to set goals for all of my courses</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie</td>
<td><em>I learned a lot about myself and the way I study. … I also learned that if I want to succeed I should concentrate more and remove all distractions when I need to finish an assignment or study for a test</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Some of these entries were more specific to SRL than others. For example, Ben wrote about using goals to push himself when things were not going well, seemingly showing a degree of understanding of how SRL could be helpful for academic achievement. Likewise, Dani also used goals to hold herself accountable. On the other hand, Emma's and Maggie's responses seemed more task/strategy oriented, and it is not clear whether they learned something new about themselves, or were confirming what they already knew and simply responding to a question. Regardless of how they responded, being prompted to reflect on one's thinking processes appears to promote
transfer of skills (Perkins & Salomon, 1992), and structured reflection can also make knowledge more readily accessible to transfer by raising it to a more conscious level (Brent, 2011). These LT reflection entries show students’ varying degrees of involvement with their own self-knowledge, and with the SRL intervention, and its impact on their metacognitive self-knowledge.

Interestingly, they also highlight the influence of “giving the teacher what she wants.” As I noted earlier in this section, students did not write about their self-knowledge learning in the EB prompts very likely because I did not ask for that specific information. And it seems like they did not make a connection between learning generally, and self-knowledge learning on their own. Instructors who wish to bring SRL into their courses should keep in mind that even though Brent (2011) tells us that reflection helps in making information accessible, it seems that students beginning to learn SRL might need specific prompting to bring that information forward.

**Theme: Students’ Development of College-Level Writing Skills**

In their essay-based reflections many students wrote about understanding the writing process more clearly and the individual parts of an essay that they found particularly challenging (e.g., the thesis, the conclusion) and how they handled those challenges. For example, Dana had trouble with the conclusion and a thesis, “but after peer review and reading the handout, I was able to write one with ease.” Like Dana, several other students also wrote of the value of peer review toward their understanding of their writing and the assignment. Other students wrote about the process of composing
and how after experiencing their first composition course they now had a better understanding of how to write for college. For example, in her EB reflection for Essay 1 Sarah wrote, “I would change the way the process of my paper went…If I had to redo it, I would probably do better on my first draft, so that I can say that my final draft is a better edited version of the way I first started.” She went on to say that she will take the first drafts more seriously. Luke also wrote similarly for Essay 3: “I was pretty happy with my final drafts considering how bad my rough drafts were.” Additional excerpts shown in Table 24 below, demonstrate that reflections about their writing were quite varied, yet were consistent with their concerns at the performance monitoring phase.

Table 24

Students’ development of college-level writing skills: EB reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essay</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>Reid</td>
<td>The only problem or difficulty that I ran into was that I can’t write too well. I used the sit down and go until I was finished strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>One adjustment I made was asking for help because I want to improve my writing. I had a difficult time with the length of my paper because I felt I said everything I needed to say but it wasn't that long.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>Patrick</td>
<td>The things I need to work on is Context &amp; one more quote &amp; reference list…This is my first time write a Rhetorical Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essay 3</td>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Overall, I'm surprised and feel accomplished that I actually completed this assignment. The process at first was a little confusing but after the first or second essay, I got the hang of things… I enjoyed this assignment towards the end, not only because I was finishing up but because I understand the rhetorical bibliography process.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
With most of the EB reflections about their writing, students saw both the positive and the negative in their writing processes and abilities, both successes and areas needing improvement. They wrote of concerns about length, technical issues (like quoting and citing), and the writing process. Perhaps none of these concerns would be a surprise to a composition instructor but they raise some pedagogical implications. For example, as discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, brainstorming with students to achieve more content for their essays might be time well spent. For instance, like Max who is excerpted in Table 24 above, Lee and Susan also struggled with attaining content and length in their essays. In addition, composition teachers specifically should spend more instructional time on writing in various genres (such as rhetorical analysis and rhetorical bibliographies). (Recall findings in the forethought discussion in Chapter 4, where no students created learning goals for the third assignment, possibly because they did not understand what a rhetorical bibliography was.) This is shown not only from the reflections of Patrick and Julie (in Table 24) but also in Mary’s journal entry for Essay 2. She too did not initially understand how to write a rhetorical analysis and in her performance monitoring entry for Essay 2 she wrote, “I’m going to have to do a lot more reading about what a rhetorical analysis essay is, so I can understand it more.”

In addition, students did not carry their EB writing insights into their next forethought entries, except, however, when they related to time management. For example, Max, excerpted in Table 24 above wrote about trouble achieving length for Essay 1. However, while he did not write a forethought entry for Essay 2, neither of his monitoring nor his EB reflection for the second essay reflected any concern or strategy to
acquire content. On the other hand, Sarah, who is discussed above, wrote about her writing process and how she “put it off too much” and thus did not have time to fully engage in the writing process. She continued, “If I had to redo it, I would probably do better on my first draft, so that I can say that my final draft is a better edited version of the way I first started…I would also change the seriousness I took with the first draft.” In her forethought entry for Essay 2 she referred to this time-and-writing process problem when she wrote, “I will definitely start early on this essay…I’m hoping my roommate will be able to peer review my essay…I’m hoping I can write a well-written essay.” Here I see reference to finishing a draft to make it available for peer review but to also composing a well-written essay.

In their LT reflections, students were again mostly positive about their progress on developing college-level writing skills and some made connections to the SRL experience. Some students like Aidan recognized that generally it is better to start essays early. Others acquired confidence in their writing, like Alexis, who wrote, “I never thought that I would be able to write as much in the amount of time that I did, and now I don’t find writing large papers hard at all. I will take this into account next semester and hopefully don’t get as stressed out about papers.” Still others wrote about the writing process and what the course and the SRL intervention showed them. For example, Jay appreciated the experience because he learned to seek help from his professor, something he admitted he had never done. He too developed in confidence, both in his writing ability and in deploying new learning strategies. The additional excerpts in Table 25 continue to show the variety of ways students felt they had developed as writers over the
semester and the ways the SRL intervention had an impact. Most students, like Andrew and Alexis (excerpted in Table 25 below), if they commented on their writing development at all, wrote of the positive impact that certain aspects of SRL had had on their development as writers.

Table 25

Students’ development of college-level writing skills: LT reflections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Excerpt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alexis</td>
<td>... I feel as though I have improved a lot in my writing this semester. I learned that I am able to write a lot more than I thought I could ... now I don't find writing large papers hard at all. I will take this into account next semester and hopefully don't get as stressed out about papers. Writing down my goals affected my writing process because I was forced to create a plan ... I also had to analyze my work and the steps I took to complete it, which made me think about how I could change my process to make it better.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>The valuable things I learned about myself this semester was that I always thought I was a terrible writer, but near the end of the semester I feel my writing skills have improved tremendously. I feel like the goal setting process and writing about the progress has helped me evaluate myself after certain assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>I learned that I am able to write essays and complete my homework if I don't give up and show some effort. I also learned that time management helps me do my work on time. Setting goals and writing about my progress did help me to do my work and spend time on it. It also helped me in other classes because I had to write multiple essays at once so the time I set up helped me work on two writings at once...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

By responding to the LT reflection prompt, students wrote about their thinking and their learning. They acquired insight into their own strengths and weaknesses as well as appropriate strategies for their personal situations. And, as I asked specifically if the
SRL intervention had an impact on their writing, students responded to that question. For example, Emma said that setting goals can be helpful, and also (not surprisingly) wrote about the importance of managing her time. These students also wrote about the impact of evaluating themselves at certain times in the writing process. As I discussed in Chapter 5, the act of formally monitoring their performance and their progress was a helpful process (even when they were not making progress) and students’ LT reflections again echoed the usefulness of this kind of interim evaluating. Some of the students spoke of SRL in terms of transfer (discussed next) and what they might do next semester in their next writing courses. These entries support research that suggests that metacognition is increasingly regarded as a facilitating factor of SRL as it helps people transfer skills, knowledge and strategies across contexts and situations.

**Theme: Students’ Experiences with Beginning to Transfer SRL**

When students were introduced to SRL at the beginning of the semester, it was explained as a framework for mastering anything they might want to learn—an academic subject, a sports skill, a new job skill. It was explained in broad terms as something they might find useful to gauge their progress toward a goal. Over the course of the semester, some students wrote that they were using SRL to manage work in other courses, to study for tests, or to manage multiple writing assignments. The essay-based reflection exercise as they handed in each assignment was intended as a deliberately metacognitive guided discussion of their process of attaining their goals, and the effectiveness of their strategies. As mentioned earlier, reflection can make knowledge more readily accessible
to transfer by raising it to a more conscious level (Brent 2011). Studies in learning transfer emphasize that long-term pedagogical experiences which are aimed at developing mental habits, or dispositions will enable students refer to those habits or dispositions in new situations (Brent, 2011). This kind of development depends on repeated and consistent exposure, which is why students were asked to reflect before, during, and after three essay assignments.

Because the purpose of reflection is to facilitate transfer, this theme has already been discussed to some extent throughout this chapter. At this point, I will look at transfer in two ways. First, it will be helpful to understand whether and how students transferred their SRL learning and insights from reflection on one essay to forethought for the next. This is the feedback loop Zimmerman often references as designating a self-regulated learner. The second way I will look at SRL transfer in this section is as a tool to take to other courses and into their future. What did students say about the usefulness or applicability of SRL in other contexts? Did they experience SRL transfer?

In Chapter 4, I looked at the SRL transfer experience in the forethought phase as how students carried their new understanding from one essay experience to the forethought entry to the next. I discussed Juan, whose forethought goals and strategies evolved during the semester based on his prior essay experience. To further explore transfer at the essay level, I hoped to learn whether students were building upon their essay experiences and taking their new knowledge to the very next essay assignment and the corresponding goal setting and planning. I hoped to see the feedback loop in action. Students who learn adaptive forms of forethought will enhance the quality of their
strategic engagement as well as their skill in reflecting on their outcomes (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). In other words, students who can adapt to the new learning situation by building upon their previous experience will be more engaged and become more skilled in reflecting on their performance.

One example of a student actively engaging in the feedback loop is Aidan, specifically in his journal entries from Essay 1 reflection to Essay 2 forethought. When he submitted Essay 1, Aidan reflected that, “he could have set aside a little more time for certain assignments.” He determined that there was room for improvement in his study habits and decided to maintain a specific schedule for the future. That self-generated feedback directly informed his planning for Essay 2. In his forethought entry for Essay 2, Aidan created a specific schedule, a day-to-day plan for Saturday (morning and afternoon) and Sunday (morning and afternoon).

Likewise, Mary demonstrated the feedback loop between Essays 2 and 3. For her reflection upon submitting Essay 2, Mary wrote:

> When I set my goals and wrote the monitoring entries earlier, I didn't really feel as though I had the project under control. I went to the CTL in the beginning of my project, but towards the end I just had several people read it over and give me feedback. … This experience writing the rhetorical analysis taught me to manage my time wisely and to ask for help with I need it (Mary, Essay 2, Reflection)

Her reflection for Essay 2 showed some lack of confidence in her work and a sense that she did not have the essay under control. She felt she did not manage her time well enough and there also seemed to be some degree of anxiety or stress in her entry. This experience informed her goals and strategy for Essay 3. In her forethought entry for
Essay 3 (excerpted below), Mary seemed very stressed about the assignment. She felt “pressure to succeed and get a good grade.” To keep the assignment under control she decided to work on the project every day and take “baby steps.” She also planned to seek help, not from friends this time, but from the tutoring center and the librarian.

My goals right now are just to get everything in on time. I feel like this is a really demanding assignments and the due dates are already starting to overwhelm me. I'm going to make small goals and take baby steps day by day to do this project. I'm going to definitely start as soon as possible … I want to take advantage of all of the help recourses I can get. I'm going to manage my time well, maybe go to the CTL, and see Mrs. [ ] from the library (Mary, Essay 3, Forethought)

Mary and Aidan were typical of students who seemed to benefit from their self-evaluative feedback as they constructed plans for subsequent assignments. They and many others did indeed consider their prior experiences in creating goals and plans for the next assignment. Because Mary did not write a reflection for Essay 3, it is unknown whether she did go to the library, but she did show that she proactively anticipated problems, such as other assignments or stress, and selected strategies to cope with them and still try to write the best essay possible. A hallmark feature of an SRL-engaged student is consistently thinking in "the language of strategies" (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). Many students like Aidan and Mary did indeed show that they were thinking strategically as they planned and evaluated their efforts. However, as I have repeated throughout these results chapters, those plans did not always turn into actions.

The feedback loop functions as students engage in academic tasks in a “before, during, and after” manner, guiding planning, performance and evaluation (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2012). After finishing an activity, students who are highly SRL-engaged
will first compare self-monitored or externally provided feedback to some standard in order to judge their level of success. This process determines whether students perceive their learning efforts in favorable or unfavorable terms. An advantage of looking closely at the feedback loop is that it can serve as a foundation for developing future interventions. Closely looking at each phase of the model, as well as how students experienced it in its entirety, can help identify gaps or weaknesses in SRL instruction as well as strengths and interests in the students. In this minimal intervention, students seemed SRL-engaged to varying extents, yet many reported that they were carrying lessons learned from their strategy use in one essay to their planning for the next essay, showing that even a minimal, short-term intervention may have a place in student learning.

While many students seemed engaged in generating and using their feedback from essay to essay, the LT reflections showed a wider gap between students who acknowledged the usefulness of SRL and those who did not see its relevance. In the LT reflections many students reported learning about themselves or about their writing, yet others failed to find value in self-regulating their learning. Those who did not see the value typically did not seem to see the purpose of setting goals. For example, Julie was already self-motivated: “I have my own self-motivator in my head that helps me want to get things done.” And other students like Kayla and Sarah wrote that they forgot their goals.

Other students did see value in SRL but did not apply the concepts or practice to other courses. For example, Nate learned that “I love to procrastinate” and that “setting
goals helped,” but he did not try setting goals in other classes. He seemed unable or unwilling to transfer the SRL practice out of FYC. On the other hand, Andrew did report using some of the concepts in other classes. Table 26 below shows additional examples of students who transferred their SRL practice, or could envision transferring the practice, and those who did not.
Table 26

**SRL transfer: Students’ perceptions from their LT reflections**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LT reflection excerpts</th>
<th>Did not see transferability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saw transferability</td>
<td>Did not see transferability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Student</strong></td>
<td><strong>Excerpt</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reid</td>
<td>I do feel that I have attained my goals for this course. I learned that I need to stop procrastinating and start doing my work ahead of time... <em>My goals for the writing process definitely improved my writing abilities. It did for my psychology class and theology class seeing that I had to write papers for those classes too...</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>I feel like I did achieve most of my goals... The valuable things I learned about myself this semester was that I always thought I was a terrible writer, but near the end of the semester I feel my writing skills have improved tremendously. I feel like the goal setting process and writing about the progress has helped me evaluate myself after certain assignments. I did use this type of process for other classes as well and I think doing this helped me in that class as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Susan</td>
<td>I learned that I am capable of acquiring time management skills and I will definitely use that next semester. <em>Yes they had an impact because they allowed me to want to reach that goal that I set for myself, it had a good impact on my other classes</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Generally, those students who saw the value of SRL seemed to regard it as a way to keep themselves organized and on time with their work. For example, Susan wrote, “I
learned that I am capable of … time management skills and I will definitely use that next semester.” Even though she did not write explicitly about practicing SRL or specifically about anything but time management, Susan seemed to be anticipating a continuing strong focus on managing her time.

In order to transfer knowledge, learners must be willing to engage in mindful abstraction and put forth the mental effort to generalize from prior knowledge to new learning situations (Perkins & Salomon, 1992; Salomon & Perkins, 1989). Nate, excerpted above (in Table 26), did not seem willing to abstract or generalize the SRL practice to areas outside FYC. On the other hand, Reid was specific in describing his transfer of the SRL practice to other classes. In his LT reflection he wrote, “My goals for the writing process definitely improved my writing abilities. It did for my psychology class and theology class seeing that I had to write papers for those classes too.” His transfer to other writing assignments could be characterized as near-transfer because he is applying the SRL to other writing assignments. While he did not seem to see the applicability of SRL for other types of assignments or projects (i.e., studying for an exam), his reflection showed he is beginning the transfer process.

Transfer of SRL concepts and practices is important because researchers see SRL as important to academic engagement (Clearly & Zimmerman, 2012). SRL pays particular attention to the process by which students become strategically invested in their learning, both behaviorally and cognitively, as well as the motivational beliefs impacting this process. Transfer scholars are interested in how students process, store and transfer information through these very cognitive strategies and tactics and why they do not.
Students’ LT reflection entries provide some possible reasons why they did not transfer SRL: they are already self-motivated (Julie) or they are discouraged with the resultant grades (Kayla).

Another important factor in transferring SRL concerns the valuation of activities. If students do not value what they are learning or do not see how what they are learning will be useful to them, they will not engage in mindful abstraction (Driscoll & Wells, 2012). While the majority of the participants saw some value to the SRL intervention, Renee comes closest to exemplifying the kind of (non)valuing Driscoll and Wells are referencing as a barrier to transfer. In her LT reflection Renee wrote, “I didn't achieve all the goals I was hoping to achieve, but next semester will be different. I have a better understanding of my major next year and I'm excited. The courses I'm taking next year will motivate me to achieve new things.” Renee did not seem to value FYC, nor did she see value to learning to self-regulate—possibly because she did not find the course itself relevant to her major.

In interviews after final grades were posted, some students addressed the complications with transferring their self-regulating knowledge to other classes. For example, Juan felt the intervention was conducted in isolation—it wasn’t enough to create a habit of SRL—as Brent (2011) suggested is needed for transfer. Yet, Juan also did not set specific goals and said he used the monitoring prompts to jump-start his work (as opposed to checking in on his performance). Aidan, who seemed to be SRL-engaged by setting goals and creating detailed plans for his work, also said that he might use SRL in other writing courses, but he did not discuss the applicability to other areas of his life.
While some students were successful in trying SRL in other classes, as I will discuss in Chapter 7, failure to see connections across other courses or other areas could be attributed to a gap in teaching. That students were unable to see the broader implications of SRL is clearly something that should be addressed through pedagogy in future SRL interventions.

**Conclusion**

Whereas self-observation as practiced during the performance monitoring phase is a deliberate attention to one's behavior to inform or motivate change on the way toward a goal, self-judgment during the reflection phase involves comparing performance with one's goal. As I discussed in Chapter 4, students were not always consistent or successful at setting specific goals. Yet regardless of their goal characteristics, student reflections (even if they did not reference a goal) seemed overall to motivate thinking of making changes (although whether discussions of change became actions was also not always evident). Many students were accurate judges of their performance and progress, but for many, actually implementing a new strategy proved difficult. Self-regulation involves more than detailed knowledge of a skill; it involves the self-awareness, self-motivation and behavioral skill to implement that knowledge appropriately (Zimmerman, 2002). And as Bandura (1986) noted, neither intention nor desire to change has much effect if people lack the means for exercising control over their behavior. This implies that a more prominent SRL instruction might be called for in order to provide students “the means for exercising control over their behavior” (Bandura, 1986, p. 336). But one of the research questions behind the purpose of this study was whether a minimal intervention would
have an impact on students’ ability to learn how to self-regulate in the academic realm. As they wrote about their growing academic self-knowledge, students’ reflections showed that they were trying to make some progress in their ability to manage their myriad demands on their time, but as a result of that close attention to time management, they might have avoided or discounted other, useful learning strategies.
Chapter 7

Reflections and Implications

The purpose of this research was to examine the experiences of students in FYC using phenomenological practices and hermeneutical analysis. I was interested in determining whether and how first-year composition students interacted with SRL practices and how the practice impacted their experiences in the course. A review of the literature regarding SRL in a content course indicated that there were no qualitative semester-length studies looking at an SRL intervention using the journal entries from the students experiencing the intervention. Exploring the phenomenological experience of the students as they navigated through challenging writing assignments revealed how students handled the demands of a writing intensive FYC and at the same time provided me with a deeper understanding of how to meaningfully teach SRL to first-year composition students. While this study supported much of the research reported in Chapter 2, it is my hope that this study also extends the published research. The more educators understand SRL instruction and how it is experienced by those who participate in it, the better our chances to improve the teaching of SRL, or, at the least, ask useful research questions about it.

Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning of an experience. It attempts to gain insightful descriptions of a shared experience and draw
“plausible insights” (van Manen, 1990, p. 9) into the experience as it is lived. The purpose of this report was to describe the meaning and structures of the experience and to construct a possible interpretation into the essence of the experience. My aim was to “bring into nearness” (van Manen, 1990, p. 32) what it was like for first-year college students to encounter an SRL pedagogy. As the excerpts in Chapters 4, 5, and 6 have shown, meanings were multi-dimensional and multi-layered. My purpose was not to draw absolute conclusions about causes and effects, but rather I hope I have shown how students who were learning to self-regulate their learning experienced the phenomena.

In this chapter I will reflect upon and discuss the themes which seemed to me to describe the structure of the experience for the participants. These themes were (a) students’ concerns about time management matters; (b) students’ acquisition of self-knowledge; (c) students’ development of college-level writing skills; and (d) students’ experience with beginning to transfer SRL. The experiences documented through these structural themes are of interest to teachers and to scholars because they indicate that, at least for many of the college student participants, there was no straight line between teaching SRL, learning SRL, practicing SRL, and transferring SRL to new contexts. College students have other priorities (for many, their grades) and neither learning to self-regulate nor practicing a new learning strategy may have been a priority for some students. Furthermore, these themes suggest that a base of experience and self-knowledge is necessary before students can successfully regulate their learning, and that baseline takes not only time but meaningful course experiences (such as moving through a
specific task like composing an essay). These observations have been discussed in the previous three chapters and I will continue to elaborate on them here.

In this chapter, I will also continue to identify how the trends in my data support and diverge from the research reviewed in Chapter 2. In some cases, I found that students’ SRL behavior largely mirrored what was predicted or reported in other studies. For example, research on task value showed that students who value a task will spend more time and effort on the task (Hulleman et al., 2008; Wolters & Pintrich, 1998; Wolters et al., 1996). This research was mostly supported through the present study. However, I also found that when students did not value the task, their efforts to self-regulate their learning stalled. This was shown in Chapters 5: Lee did not value the exercise of writing longer essays, Emma did not value the experience of online learning, and Renee did not find FYC relevant to her major and thus did not derive benefit from SRL. Task value, therefore, is a strong component in motivating a student to self-regulate their learning.

In other cases, the present study contradicted published research. For example, the present study did not fully support findings that students who were taught SRL strategies in a 50-minute lecture were more likely to use those strategies (Cook et al., 2013). Cook, et al. (2013) also showed in their survey-based study that students who started using a learning strategy experienced greater understanding and success (both with the strategy and in the course), and were motivated to continue using it. Unlike the Cook study, however, the present study showed that even though students were taught about several learning strategies, they almost always seemed to prefer a time management learning
strategy, and only occasionally did students report actually implementing another strategy.

The experiential data gathered in this study allowed for a closer examination of how students interact with SRL in a content course. These nuanced experiences generally cannot be captured in a quantitative study. As a result, the kinds of data I gathered to inform my recommendations focus on how teachers can weave SRL instruction through their course, or improve upon or extend my method. The chapter concludes with recommendations for further study.

**Time Management Concerns and Other Learning Strategies**

The challenges facing first-year students cannot be underestimated and this study supported research indicating that time management concerns, in the context of assignments, is a major concern of students. As I have shown, in many of their journal responses students planned around time, anticipated problems with time, and noted successes and failures in their time management capabilities. Managing one's time is an important learning strategy and seemed to be students’ preferred and first-deployed learning strategy. Previous research into time management has indicated that while few students consider their colleges responsible for time management, many students feel that the university and their instructors could provide more help (Lowe & Cook, 2003; van der Meer, Jansen, & Torenbeek, 2010). The present study supports research suggesting that students do need (or want) help with time management—not only opportunities to practice—but also reminders of upcoming assignments, reminders of deadlines, and
reminders of the short time-frames for most assignments. The current study also supports research by Hafner, Stock, & Oberst (2015) which suggested that students who receive training in time management report significantly less stress—particularly in the areas of setting goals and managing tasks. Some students in the present study wrote of feeling more confident and in control after a semester of SRL practice in which they attended to time management. For example, Julie wrote, “I've learned that I am much more put together then I thought, always staying on task with things and my time management is much better than it used to be.”

At the conclusion of the present study, students generally reported that a semester-long training of self-regulating allowed them to practice and hone their time management abilities. Certainly the intervention introduced a variety of learning strategies, but for various reasons posited throughout the previous three chapters, students primarily discussed time management, which as I mentioned above, contradicted the findings of Cook et al. (2013). Cook offered a few reasons for their dramatic results. First, their Introduction to Chemistry students were very motivated to perform well because many of them were aspiring to be health professionals; they were ready to try new strategies because the strategies were presented based on cognitive science research. Second, the Chemistry students were taught Bloom’s taxonomy which helped them understand higher-order thinking. And third, as mentioned above, using the strategies actually helped students experience greater understanding of the strategies, thus they were more motivated to continue using them.
In the present study, as the semester continued and assignments became more challenging, students gradually reported using other learning strategies to complete their writing satisfactorily. For example, students reported seeking help from friends or the CTL [on-campus tutoring center], or finding a quiet place to work. However, some students did not write of actually deploying alternative strategies and very few students wrote about task-specific strategies such as reading strategies, research strategies and writing strategies such as outlining or revising.

I have discussed several reasons why students did not often write of using alternative strategies, but I have not yet considered my instruction. Perhaps my instruction and discussion of learning strategies was not convincing enough to compel students to try something new. The reluctance to try a wider variety of learning strategies supports Zimmerman's (1990) research which suggested that simply teaching students about strategies does not lead to improved self-regulating. At the same time, the present study contradicts Bransford et al. (1999) who referenced studies showing that students who know about different strategies for learning will be more likely to use them. The present study portrayed a more nuanced picture of the implementation of SRL learning strategies. I believe because the students were relatively new to college, new to first-year composition, and new to SRL their mastery of various learning and motivational strategies was going to at least take time, practice, and experience in the course—and perhaps also require additional direct instruction to try a task-specific strategy, for example.
An interesting component of this nuanced picture is that the present study showed that many students seemed to realize when more adaptive strategies (or extra steps) might be called for—yet they often did not act on this knowledge and take those extra steps. In these situations, specifically for the second and third essay assignments, many students knew that managing time was not going to be enough. This awareness, according to Pintrich (2002), requires a certain degree of self-knowledge, which students developed as the semester continued. The fact that a second major theme describing this experience was the acquisition of self-knowledge also suggests an important reason why students were not easily shifting to new learning strategies. Other possible reasons students did not easily deploy new strategies might be because they had not yet mastered new strategies, and therefore deploying a new strategy might be considered risky. Or, they simply were not motivated or interested in trying new learning strategies. The presence of apathy or disinterest will limit a student’s interactions with SRL (Zimmerman, 2000). This is because most effective self-regulatory techniques require concentration and effort. When a skill or outcome is not considered valuable, there is no incentive to self-regulate (Zimmerman, 2000). Depending on instructors’ time, or on what they value, certain interventions in a content course might have a stronger effect on students’ uptake of SRL. For example, creating scaffolded assignments which require students to try out a specific new learning strategy might help them become more comfortable with it and therefore more readily turn to the strategy when needed.

A feature of a self-regulating learning is choosing a particular strategy or response based on the situation. However, students need to put forth effort to initiate and follow
through on a strategy, and this takes preparation time, vigilance and effort (Zimmerman, 1990). Unless the outcomes of these efforts are sufficiently attractive, students may not be motivated to do so. Another way to encourage alternative strategy use may be through intermediate goal setting. Schunk (1993, 2001) argued that intermediate goal setting may help students perceive their learning process more readily, and this in turn will increase their self-efficacy—both in their work, and in their ability to regulate their learning.

Many students did set sub-goals for their work by breaking the assignments into manageable pieces, yet most of the students who created a strategy based on short-term goals, did so with regard to their time. For example, Aidan planned to “set up my own deadlines according to my schedule” and Mary wrote, “I’m going to make small goals and take baby steps…definitely start as soon as possible.”

Perhaps surprisingly, students rarely reported trying to motivate themselves by using self-incentives. Zimmerman (2000) regarded self-rewards as an important strategy to motivate a person and characterized it as one of the factors that distinguishes people who succeed in regulating their motivation and behavior (Zimmerman, 1989). Based on research that showed it to be an effective motivating strategy, students were introduced to the idea of self-rewards early in the semester. Yet despite the research discussing its effectiveness, very few students reported using self-rewards. It is possible that this strategy was uninteresting or perhaps too hard to enforce. And in fact, research showed that it is individuals who are already self-regulated who are more likely to use strategies like delay of gratification (self-rewards) as a motivational tool (Bembenutty, 2009). The current project supported this research as very few of the students could be considered
already self-regulated learners and thus were unlikely to be easily motivated by self-incentivizing.

There seemed to be a distinction between low-threshold SRL strategies (such as time management) and those strategies which require more self-knowledge, practice, or self-discipline. While there is little research on college students’ preference for lower-level learning strategies, instructors and college administrators should consider this as they create SRL learning opportunities for students. SRL does require systematic attention and responsiveness by the student, and a semester-length, hands-off intervention may not have been enough time to develop and practice other learning strategies with confidence. In addition to the suggestions mentioned above (i.e., intermediate goal setting, providing low-stakes opportunities for trying out new strategies) which may help a student acquire some experience and success with self-regulating, one more instructor strategy for encouraging student strategy use is modeling. Most important task skills are initially acquired by observing, yet students do need to actually use the skill personally in order to incorporate them into their toolkit of strategies (Zimmerman, 2000).

Furthermore, because time management is so important to students, instructors of both college success courses and content courses should spend more time discussing time management, prioritizing tasks, setting deadlines, keeping daily logs, and perhaps providing examples of their own time management strategies. Major assignments can often be divided into smaller parts with separate deadlines, a practice that may help students allocate their time. Research has suggested that teaching students how to have control over their time could possibly reduce drop-out rates and at the same time,

In addition, continuing to teach and model task specific learning strategies might eventually encourage a doubtful student to trying something new. This study revealed that in terms of trying new learning strategies, students reported mixed results; some reportedly tried new strategies, while others did not either report on new strategies or try new strategies. This implies that students beginning to learn to self-regulate their learning proceed at different paces, depending on their prior experiences and individual learning situations and preferences, which should be considered as instructors teach task specific learning strategies. Even though students focused largely on time management, many wrote of a growing awareness of the effectiveness or utility value of managing their time and an awareness that simply managing time was not enough. In my view, this necessary awareness of the need to try new strategies (which many arrived at slowly and incrementally) will hopefully give students the confidence to try something new in another course. And for even this seemingly slight gain, I would encourage instructors to implement SRL practices, including discussions of relevant learning strategies, into their courses. Becoming aware of appropriate learning strategies is best done in the early years of college; as the years continue, the course work only gets more rigorous, and equipping students with even a small degree of new self-knowledge about their learning processes will only help them going forward.
Acquisition of Self-knowledge and Metacognition

At the beginning of the semester, when students were asked to reflect on their past learning experiences and set goals for the course, many students, as prompted, wrote about their habits and their motivations. For example, Max motivated himself by thinking about “how proud my parents will be if I earn a high GPA.” He wrote that this strategy has been somewhat successful, but he believed he needs to keep improving. Both Maddie and Nate reported their awareness that they had a tendency to leave things to the last minute. Maddie hoped to rectify her tendency to procrastinate and she wrote, “I procrastinate and…I tend to run away from the overwhelming feeling of stress of actually sitting and working.” Reid wrote of using a checklist strategy to get work done, sometimes motivating himself with snacks, yet he too was somewhat contradictory in terms of his satisfaction with his work process, writing, “my strategies are normally successful. Although sometimes I am unsatisfied with my final work product.”

While these students seemed to have some degree of self-knowledge, at the same time they also reported being somewhat unsatisfied with their learning. And like most of the participants, they used the SRL intervention to learn about themselves and how they should learn in college. Self-knowledge is an important aspect of metacognitive knowledge, and the accuracy of self-knowledge seems to be crucial for learners (Pintrich, 2002). This sense of self-knowledge and knowledge about how to learn seemed to be the pieces that students sensed were missing (or they were not yet fully cognizant of). Because students were in a new college learning environment (yet also perhaps because
they had one semester of experience under their belts), they understood that their self-knowledge and what they knew about their learning was not quite sufficient.

Research has shown that self-knowledge as well as metacognitive knowledge of strategies and tasks is linked to how students will perform and learn in the classroom (Pintrich, 2002). Students who know their own strengths and weaknesses can adjust their own behavior and thinking to be more adaptive to tasks and thus facilitate learning (Pintrich, 2002). If, for example, a student becomes aware that she does not know very much about a topic, she might pay more attention to this topic while reading, and use different strategies to make sure she understands the topic. In the present study, while there were a handful of students who did seem to exemplify precisely what Pintrich (2002) was suggesting, a majority of the students did not report easily adjusting their behavior—in practice, adjusting one’s behavior is more complicated. Pintrich (2002) offered suggestions as to why students might not adjust their behavior: a lack of self-knowledge, a lack of knowledge of strategies, or an uncertainty as to their strengths and weaknesses. This last idea is perhaps especially relevant in FYC when students do not initially have a standard against which to measure themselves. Any of these reasons could be found in the students’ journal entries, in addition to the limitations of their self-efficacy beliefs, value perceptions and interest.

Pintrich’s (2002) theory is clearly shown in the adaptability of Mary as she monitored her learning for the second essay. She wrote, “I think that a rhetorical analysis sounds a little tricky to write. I’m going to have to do a lot more reading about what a rhetorical analysis essay is, so I can understand it more.” Here a student is
metacognitively “talking” through a specific weakness, and presenting the steps she will take to remedy that situation. Another student who wrote about her emerging self-knowledge was Dana. As she reflected on her goals for Essay 2, Dana wrote, “I learned a lot about myself from writing [the first essay] so I’m hoping to do the same with this.”

Metacognitive reflection involves becoming aware of one’s thinking and understanding processes, asking questions and being strategic about how to take the thinking and learning forward (Granville & Dison, 2009). To do this, a learner must experiment with and observe the effects of various emotions, behaviors, environments, and cognitive processes and decide which ones help and which hinder learning. At the end of the semester several students wrote about the self-knowledge they had acquired through the intervention. For example, Max wrote, “I have learned that it takes hard work to earn the grade you want. Also I learned how to become an active learner and how important it can be.” Some students like Alexis learned that risky strategies are not worth it. She waited too long to begin her essay and wrote in her reflection for Essay 1, “I used the strategy of trying to make the best first draft I could…it could have ended up badly.”

Many of the researchers I have referenced throughout this report cite the importance of metacognitive reflection and self-knowledge for learning. Metacognitive awareness helps students know how to adapt their strategic choices to a task, and why (Negretti, 2012). One of the ways the present study supported research suggesting the need for teachers to teach metacognition explicitly is in tracing this descriptive theme. Research also suggests the need to explicitly teach metacognition. For example, Zimmerman’s (1990) model of SRL requires learners to develop metacognitive
awareness of strategy use. Likewise, Huff and Nietfeld (2009) recommended metacognitive training for confidence and accuracy in self-evaluating and strategy use. Other scholars such as Brent (2011) and Perkins and Salomon (1992) discussed teaching metacognitive skills for purposes of transfer. Despite the minimal nature of this intervention and my instructional focus on learning strategies, many of the student participants reflected not only on their processes but also on how they were handling their unique learning situations. Student athletes described their time commitments and students with long commutes had different experiences and challenges. Even students living in the residence halls described problems such as noise or distractions, and had to figure out strategies to deal with those issues. Dana wrote, “One of the best ways that I can get my work done is locking my door, so that no one can come into my room including my roommate.” Students were navigating through their first year at college and still learning about the ways they learn best.

Many students come to college with very little metacognitive knowledge, and they particularly have little accurate knowledge about themselves (Hofer, Yu, & Pintrich, 1998); teachers cannot assume that students can acquire metacognitive knowledge without help. While it is not practical to teach for metacognitive and self-knowledge in “units,” there are ways instructors can imbed strategies for thinking and learning in content driven courses. For example, in a course with considerable reading the instructor and small groups can practice reading strategies and explicitly label this kind of thinking about learning and thinking as a metacognitive activity. Instructors can also make the discussion of metacognitive knowledge part of the discourse in the everyday classroom.
and thereby encourage students acquire a language to discuss their own thinking and learning and increase self-awareness in these areas. As the present study has shown, learning is ongoing and sometimes erratic or uneven; therefore, creating or integrating metacognitive experiences as often as possible will help move students to thinking about how they learn. At its heart, SRL is a metacognitive practice; therefore asking students to set goals for various projects and assignments, monitor their performance, and reflect can also begin to raise students’ awareness about themselves and their learning.

Self-knowledge is a critically important component of metacognitive knowledge. And because metacognitive knowledge in general is positively linked to student learning, explicitly teaching metacognitive knowledge to facilitate its development is needed (Pintrich, 2002). In theory, as students become more aware of their own thinking as well as more knowledgeable about their behavior, they act on that awareness and tend to learn better (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). However, as shown by the present research, acting on that awareness does not come easily. The present study has shown that unlike the short-term bursts captured by surveys or questionnaires when students do make changes in their learning strategies, over the long term, for many students, implementing change is more complex. I believe this is partially due to the novice status of the students in the course. Metacognitive knowledge not only includes knowledge of strategies, but also knowledge of the conditions under which these strategies will be effective (Pintrich, Wolters, & Baxter, 2000). Therefore, not only should instructors teach for metacognitive knowledge but instructors should also be aware that the development of this knowledge
takes time and experience to develop; instruction will need to be ongoing – as the present study has shown, perhaps even a semester is not enough time.

**Development of College Level Writing Skills and Writing Confidence**

At the beginning of the semester, many of the participants wrote of wanting to improve their writing. As examined in Chapter 4, some students were more specific than others in stating their writing goals, or exactly how (or what) they wanted to improve. Yet in their essay-based reflections, students did not often reflect on how they had progressed, or refer again to those writing goals, in their essay based reflections. One reason for this may be because their “improve my writing” kinds of goals were too vague to monitor and self-assess. Flower and Hayes (1981) defined goals as the “keystone” of the writing process, yet also noted that novice writers rarely set goals (p. 377). Research shows that specific goals are more likely to raise performance because they suggest the amount of effort required for success. Furthermore, they boost self-efficacy because they provide a clear standard against which to measure progress (Locke & Lantham, 2002). Moreover, research has shown that students who set specific goals to guide their writing produced more text and wrote more effectively (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 2007). In this study, results showed that students did not regularly create writing goals for the essay assignments, or if they did, they often lacked specificity. Implications for this are lost opportunities for developing confidence as writers.

For example, as shown in Table 6 in Chapter 4, Susan wrote for Essay 1, “My goals… to get a good grade and express all of my thoughts and ideas in an organized way
so it will make sense and be considered correct.” On the surface this seems like a reasonable goal, but when considered in terms of monitorability and attainment, it does not provide a clear enough standard against which to measure progress. A student who sets this kind of goal might not attain this goal, and therefore misses an opportunity to build writing confidence as suggested by Locke and Lantham (1990). On the other hand, for Essay 3 Juan wrote that his writing goal was to “proofread more often.” This seems a somewhat more measurable goal, and it seems likely that by Essay 3, Juan would understand how much effort he would need to mobilize to “proofread more often.”

Based on the students’ experiences with goal setting and the necessity of setting specific goals particularly for writing confidence and effectiveness, I would recommend instructors integrating SRL into their courses initially provide feedback on students’ goals to ensure they are specific and therefore monitorable. As students work on a writing task, their self-evaluations of their progress toward their goals strengthens self-efficacy and sustains motivation. Ultimately, goal attainment builds self-efficacy (Schunk, 2001). The present study showed that many students improved in their ability to set specific goals over time; however, they might have derived earlier writing-related benefits of goal setting if I had provided feedback on their goals. To help students create attainable writing goals, instructors could ask students to consider their course learning outcomes statements or their assignment outcomes, and discuss or model how those can be transformed into individual attainable goals. In addition to goal-setting benefits, an exercise such as this requires a student to think about thinking and learning, which is a metacognitive activity. Understanding that students seem to need a foundation of self-
knowledge and experience in order to begin to set specific goals, providing lower-stakes opportunities for goal setting and feedback experiences might become the building blocks for students to begin to think more specifically about writing goals.

A carry-over effect of setting non-specific writing goals was that students rarely reflected on their writing goals in their EB reflections. For example, Susan, who is discussed above, created a goal to “express all my thoughts and ideas in an organized way” and did not refer again to this writing goal in her reflection for Essay 1. Instead she wrote about troubles pacing herself (time management) and difficulty with reaching four pages—illustrating precisely what Zimmerman and Kitsantas (2007) were referring when they noted that students who set specific goals to guide their writing produced more text and wrote more effectively. Juan’s goal was to proofread more often. In his EB reflection for Essay 3 he discussed the large amount of time he spent on the assignment, but did not refer specifically to proofreading. And his concluding remarks mention a desire for more peer review of his work. These reflections seem to suggest that he might not have attained his goal to proofread more often.

As just mentioned, goal setting is important not only for moving a composition forward (Flower & Hayes, 1981) but also for building confidence. Research has shown that students with a strong sense of self-efficacy wrote better essays than students with weak sense of self-efficacy (McCarthy et al., 1985). Students with a weaker sense of self-efficacy do not see themselves as being capable of writing anything complex; therefore they use limited strategies. Strategies such as brainstorming ideas, learning efficient ways to conduct research, and guiding students through revisions could help students gain
more confidence as college writers and at the same time allow students to experience various learning strategies to determine what works best for them. The present study supports research which suggested that instruction in self-regulatory strategies increases both writing skills and self-efficacy (Schunk & Swartz, 1993) as many students responded at the end of the semester (in their LT reflections) that they felt more confident and competent by the end of the semester—particularly in relation to the concrete, familiar goal of time management. However, in the short term, students might not derive those self-efficacy boosts if they are not setting specific, attainable goals.

For example, at the end of the semester (in their LT reflections), as they reflected on the course and their writing experiences, students seemed satisfied with their learning experience and their development into college-level writers. Although most students did not achieve the grade goal they set for themselves at the beginning of the semester (most students wanted to achieve an A in the course), many wrote about feeling more confident about writing as they headed into their next semester. While some students experienced a fair amount of stress during the semester, as they finally reflected on their performance in the course, most were satisfied, in a general way, with their writing progress. For example, Alexis wrote in her LT reflection

I feel as though I have improved a lot in my writing this semester. I learned that I am able to write a lot more than I thought I could at the beginning of the semester. I never thought that I would be able to write as much in the amount of time that I did, and now I don't find writing large papers hard at all. I will take this into account next semester and hopefully don't get as stressed out about papers.

Other students like Julie, wrote about their new confidence with their writing. In her LT reflection Julie wrote, “I definitely feel much stronger in my area of writing. I have
broadened my knowledge of the types of writing, such as summarizing and analyzing.” However, it was sometimes unclear whether this new confidence was due to learning to self-regulate their or due simply to experiencing the course.

A handful of students referred to the SRL process generally as a helpful framework for accessing their writing progress, and thus supported the worthwhile pedagogy of integrating an SRL pedagogy into a writing course. For example, Andrew wrote, “I feel like the goal setting process and writing about the progress has helped me evaluate myself after certain assignments.” And likewise, Alexis referred to the SRL process specifically when she reflected: “Writing down my goals affected my writing process because I was forced to create a plan and that helped me stay more organized. I also had to analyze my work and the steps I took to complete it, which made me think about how I could change my process to make it better.” While these reflections are centered on their writing as a process, and not specifically on writing accomplishments as a whole, the SRL practice ultimately seemed to have a positive effect on some students' development of writing processes, and as important, their writing confidence.

**Transfer of SRL Knowledge and of Writing Knowledge**

The last major phenomenological theme emerging from this experience is related to students’ ability to transfer their self-regulatory knowledge and practice to other essays and to other contexts. As the previous chapters have shown, many students did begin to transfer their SRL practice and writing experiences from one assignment to the next – some students seemed to transfer slowly, in small increments; others to transfer more
consciously and directly. During the semester I occasionally discussed the transferability of the practice and some students wrote about applying the concepts, or some features of the practice, to other situations. For example, in her LT reflection Mary wrote, “Setting goals really helped me with the writing process...I've used what I've learned in this course and have applied it in all my other classes” and Patrick wrote, “setting goals and writing about my progress did help me to do my work and spend time on it. It also helped me in other classes because I had to write multiple essays at one so the time I set up helped me work on two writings at once.” These examples are typical of responses when students wrote that they had transferred some aspects of the SRL practice to their other assignments or courses. However, without explicit prompting it is unclear whether students would have been aware that the SRL practice was a transferrable practice. Brent (2011) for example suggested that explicitly cuing for transfer might encourage transfer. And Perkins and Salomon (1988, 1992) discussed this cuing in terms of hugging and bridging. Bridging is when a teacher helps the student understand the learning context from one situation to another. Hugging is teaching in a context that actually resembles the situation to which transfer is desired. This is often done in business classes where students present reports dressed in suits, as they might in a real business situation. Regardless of the terminology, research and the results of this study showed that teachers need to teach for transfer.

Aside from being cued to see the applicability, another possible reason students were beginning to see the applicability of SRL outside their composition class was because of the metacognitive knowledge they had begun to acquire. Research indicates
that metacognitive knowledge of different learning strategies seems to be related to the transfer of learning (Bransford et al., 2000; Pintrich, 2002). When students face new tasks that require knowledge and skills they have not yet learned, they cannot rely solely on their prior knowledge or skills to help them. They need to learn different general strategies for learning and thinking about new or challenging tasks. The SRL intervention provided students with opportunities to use familiar strategies such as managing their time, and to try new or unfamiliar strategies, such as research strategies, with each new assignment, thus adding to their experiences. Furthermore, students had opportunities to pay attention, formally and repeatedly, to how they were using these strategies. Practicing a skill in a variety of somewhat related and expanding contexts "will force the cognitive element in question to adapt in subtle ways…yielding an incrementally broadening ability" (Perkins & Solomon, 1989, p.120). A key feature of the present intervention was the repetition of reflective journal writing which was designed to help support near transfer, and at the same time might have helped students with the overall concept of farther transfer of these concepts.

Many students did not initially seem to see SRL as a tool to enable greater academic achievement. Rather, they used the SRL intervention for other purposes such as learning about themselves, learning how to effectively manage and organize their time, and exploring their development as college writers. Although most students seemed to experience SRL transfer from assignment to assignment, others wrote explicitly of transferring their SRL practices to other courses or other writing assignments. However, not all students wrote explicitly about transferring their learning experiences. It is
possible that because they were just learning how to self-regulate their learning perhaps they did not understand, or were unable to write about, how the practice was transferrable. A good example of this is Susan. In her LT reflection she wrote, “I feel like I attained most of these goals I just wish that [SRL] made my grade become higher. I learned that I am capable of acquiring time management skills and I will definitely use that next semester.” In this response Susan was focused on (a) her grade, and (b) her time management skills. Even though she wrote that she will use her time management skills next semester, she may not have fully grasped how to be a self-regulated learner and its role in academic achievement. For example, by maintaining a focus on time management, Susan has limited her strategy use despite the increasingly challenging course work of the semester which seemingly would have required more adaptive strategies. Zimmerman (2002) characterized a novice learner as one who typically attributes causation to ability deficiencies, which in turn, produces low satisfaction and promotes defensive reactions. In contrast, an expert learner would identify strategy causations (instead of ability causations) which would lead to efforts to improve strategy use and eventually, greater personal satisfaction (Zimmerman, 2002). Despite a semester of practice, Susan would still be considered a novice with regard to regulating her learning. Perhaps a longer immersion in SRL would have helped Susan become more comfortable with other learning strategies, or as I have mentioned, lower-stakes opportunities to practice learning strategies might have helped. Content instructors who wish to incorporate SRL into their courses will likely need to provide long-term
instruction and both low- and high-stakes opportunities for practice for students like Susan.

Other students, however, did seem to understand how practicing SRL for writing could help manage other writing assignments, (typically characterized as “near transfer”). For example, Reid reported setting goals for the essays he had to write for his psychology and theology courses. And Andrew wrote that “writing about the progress has helped evaluate myself after certain assignments. I did use this type of process for other classes as well and I think doing so helped me in that class as well.” These two students seemed to be carrying their knowledge to other situations, intentionally and deliberatively. Furthermore, they found the SRL practice helpful in those situations; they reported an understanding of their own cognitive processes and a willingness and ability to connect their experiences in the FYC to other writing situations.

The range of experiences and abilities in all aspects of SRL would not surprise practitioners, but this range seems to get lost in the quantitative research which comprises the bulk of the research in the self-regulated learning field. This study shows the complexity of learning to self-regulate (including resistance to the practice) and the implications of this are analyzed throughout these last four chapters. Teaching and learning SRL cannot happen as a result of a 50-minute lecture, once a semester (Cook, Kennedy, & McGuire, 2013), nor should it be limited to a single class period (as seen in the college success course for the university at which the present study was conducted). Rather, teaching SRL must be sustained, repetitious, and sprinkled with cues connecting the practice to other learning situations and future job situations.
Transfer scholars have suggested that teachers must not only teach to encourage transfer, but must also teach students how to learn for transfer (Beaufort, 2007; Brent, 2011; Perkins & Salomon, 1988). Brent (2011) further recommended that instructional experiences aim at “enculturating students into the long-standing mental habits, or dispositions, that will enable them to use that expertise in new situations” (p. 411). I hoped that by writing reflective journal entries “in the moment,” in a repetitious cycle, students would come to understand what their long standing habits and dispositions were (both helpful and unhelpful) and learn how to maximize their learning. Because there was evidence that students were transferring their SRL practice, I believe the intervention was a meaningful and helpful experience for them, particularly in aspects of self-knowledge. This intervention has shown that even a semester-length, “hands-off” intervention has a place in student learning.

Conclusion

At the start of the study, none of the students claimed they had ever heard of self-regulated learning, but the end of the semester, even though most of the students were not fully self-regulated as per the definitions of the term, their comments showed that many were on their way—albeit, some more specifically and richly, and others more vaguely and partially. They seemed to be understanding their processes and habits more clearly and engaging with their new self-knowledge as they attempted to take control of not only their learning, but their time, their environment, and their behavior. Yet at the same time, they also seemed to struggle with trying new learning strategies. While there is some
assumption that students can actively self-regulate their motivation, behavior and cognition, many students do not become self-regulated learners and there is not a lot of research explaining how self-regulated learning develops, or about the effects of formal interventions to increase it (Hofer & Yu, 2003; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994). While studies on college success courses indicate that SRL is an important factor for retention, persistence, and academic achievement (Ahuna, Tinnesz, & VanZile-Tamsen, 2011; Cho & Karp, 2013; Hofer & Yu, 2003; Karp et al., 2012; Patterson, Ahuna, Tinnesz, & Vanzile-Tamsen, 2014; Reeves & Stitch, 2011), a research question posed by this study was about how to teach SRL in a content course. The method used (journal reflections) allowed me to see that learning to self-regulate is complicated by dispositional traits (some students did not seem to value into the practice), other priorities (such as a grade), and experience in the course. It is my hope that this project helped explain some of the dynamics in teaching first-year college students to self-regulate their learning in order to expand an understanding of how to best teach it in a content course. While I recognized that two or three of the students were already self-regulated learners before beginning the course, the majority of the participants gradually picked up some or most of the ideas. But without long-term follow up it is difficult to know whether their introduction to SRL had a lasting impact.

Does that mean this intervention was valueless? Not exactly. Educators now know that teaching SRL is messy—perhaps messier than originally thought—and the yield of a short-term, semester-length intervention might be slight. But more importantly, even a semester-length, hands-off intervention (I provided no feedback on the journal entries),
which took a minimum of classroom and instructor time, still reaped benefits for the students. Their responses showed them routinely engaging in metacognitive activities and considering ways to maximize their learning. Research shows the benefits, indeed the necessity, of learning to regulate one’s learning, yet many students arrive in college having never been exposed to the concepts of setting goals, monitoring performance and reflection. Students wrote about the self-knowledge they were almost hungry for, as they navigated their first year of college. Just as important, students learned that they had to do more than simply manage their time; that strategy, while critically important, was not going to be sufficient for more complex work. The study also clarified that students beginning to self-regulate may not be all that interested in other learning strategies yet because their time management concerns are so dominant.

As I discussed in Chapter 2, most of the research on SRL and college students is survey-based, using pre-post types of questionnaires. This kind of research can teach us much about selected, or narrow, aspects of student learning over a short time span. However, the present research revealed that learning to self-regulate one's learning is not only chaotic, but incremental, and complicated. Some students resisted the experience entirely. This does not mean that the research was a failure. Rather what it shows is that teaching college students to self-regulate their learning is not as straightforward as the literature would suggest and many students do not pick it up easily, or willingly. Neither is it a short-term kind of learning opportunity. The present study showed that some students were only beginning to gain control over their time, their learning goals, and their projects just as the semester was ending.
SRL offers a framework which considers individual differences in student learning and allows students to make changes which reflect their individual needs (Cassidy 2011). This intervention showed that students considered their individual situations and seemed most often to work on what they considered important (i.e., time management, self-knowledge) as the framework intends. However, many did not come around to understanding how SRL could boost their academic achievement. The participants were more interested in other aspects of the intervention; this focus seemed to be related to needing a foundational level of self-knowledge, experience, and practice before they could apply the concepts to focus on their learning and cognition. That need supports Zimmerman’s (2000) observation that a lack of social learning experiences might limit a person’s ability to become a more proactive learner.

**Recommendations for Future Research and Analysis of Policy Implications**

The following recommendations, and those I have discussed throughout the last four chapters, are based on my close analysis of the student journals and on the insight I gained by teaching this minimal intervention. My recommendations are divided into pedagogical recommendations designed for near term interventions and for long-term, cross-curriculum inquiries.

**Recommendations for research.** First, it would be good pedagogical practice to help students focus on their goals, especially on goal specificity. As my study has shown, without specific goals, students have nothing against which to gauge their performance and therefore, have little sense of whether their strategies or actions are effective. Future research should then test this practice explicitly to further corroborate or disprove my
theory. Second, and also pedagogically related, I would recommend that instructors phrase their monitoring and reflection prompts more specifically than the ones used in this study to prompt and capture goal-oriented thinking (and then test this practice). One way to do this might be to ask students to restate their goals and plans as they write the monitoring and reflection prompts, so that students keep their goals in the forefront of their reflections on their performance. This suggestion would also allow students to improve their articulation of learning goals. While performance goals can exert powerful motivational effects, learning goals are especially effective in enhancing self-efficacy and self-regulation (Schunk, 1995, 2001).

Last, one of the limitations of this study was the tapering off of SRL instruction. As the semester progressed, I gradually spent less instructional time on SRL and relied on the students to intentionally strategize for themselves and report on their experience through the guided journal entries. Upon reflection however, I believe that continuing the instruction, especially in the areas of refining goals and planning strategically, as well as practicing task-oriented learning strategies, might have created a stronger impact on the students’ experience. I would recommend not only that future teachers continue SRL strategy and theoretical instruction, but that instructors should also incorporate task-specific learning strategies into their SRL curriculum.

Longer-term inquiries into how students learn to self-regulate in a content course should extend interventions either across two semesters, or through several first-year courses, across the curriculum. This type of extended study would yield interesting and helpful knowledge as to how students learn to self-regulate, and these interventions
would likely have a stronger impact on students’ abilities to self-regulate their learning. Research has shown that covering time management and SRL in a college success type of course is not sufficient practice for students. A deeper, longer, or consistent practice across the curriculum might help students pick up the concepts and the practice.

While SRL is known to have a positive impact on academic achievement, this study was not able to fully explore the retention effects of a minimal SRL intervention in a single composition course. A longer study, spanning four or six years, with SRL integrated into more courses, might help educators more fully understand the retention effect of practicing SRL, which is an area needing further study.

**Policy implications.** I have noted throughout this report, and particularly in this last chapter, the implications of the current research on individual instructors’ practice and scholars’ future research. Yet the results of this research suggest that there are also some policy implications both at the university level and at the K-12 level involving both faculty and administrators. The ways students responded to the SRL practice were not strictly composition specific—rather, any teacher, at any level, could address the issues that were raised by the students in this study. Although these implications are limited in their generalizability, the students’ experiences suggest several avenues for policy, particularly in the area of teacher training at all levels, and in corresponding classroom support.

First, at the K-12 level, while there is some movement toward bringing SRL into elementary, middle and high school classrooms, it happens in isolated situations and is largely dependent on the teacher’s interest or ability to teach SRL. While most teachers
can identify the student who is already self-regulated, in most cases, teachers are not yet equipped to turn other students into self-regulated learners (Boekaerts, 1997). Teachers are still largely steering and guiding the learning process, a situation which does not allow students to use or develop self-regulatory skills. In a recent study, researchers found that while teachers in the K-12 levels had positive beliefs about SRL, many demonstrated gaps in knowledge particularly around goal setting for a task and evaluation after a learning task (Spruce & Bol, 2014). This research resonated with my findings. None of the students in the present study claimed to have been exposed to any aspect of SRL during their K-12 education. My research suggests that at the K-12 level, teachers should receive training in SRL and participate in continuing education workshops that address SRL concepts and practices. The scant research on teacher SRL training suggests that training appears to improve teachers’ SRL knowledge and skills as well as those of their students (Perels, Merget-Kullman, Wende, Schmitz, & Buchbinder, 2009). Moreover, training aspiring teachers when they themselves are in their student teaching situations seemed to show promising results as these teachers were designing tasks and engaging in practices that supported development and engagement in SRL (Perry, 2007). This research shows that training teachers on how to develop self-regulated learners will have an impact on whether and how teachers integrate SRL into their lessons.

In terms of writing instruction, beyond the high school situation writing is a more solitary endeavor, requiring immense amounts of self-regulation and motivation. Therefore, K-12 teachers and administrators should be building self-regulatory practices into the writing curriculums for all subjects requiring writing. Understanding that K-12
teachers are teaching writing for the purposes of passing standardized tests and are under immense time constraints, they should still be trained and encouraged to teach writing skills that will carry students through their first year of college writing (CWPA, NCTE, & NWP, 2011). Ultimately, this may help with the transitional problems many students experience (and which can contribute to the high failure rates in the FYC sequence).

Likewise, at the post-secondary level, university faculty should be encouraged to attend workshops and training showing them how to incorporate SRL practices into their courses; either individual departments or teaching and learning centers should support this training. As faculty become more involved in conversations around retention, especially with regard to first-year students who are the most likely to leave college (Powell, 2009), a framework such as SRL is a helpful process that faculty can utilize as students attempt to manage their learning. Faculty cannot assume that students arriving on campus know how to self-regulate their learning, yet research shows that an ability to self-regulate is an important 21st-century competency (van der Heijde, 2014; Wolters, 2010; Zimmerman, 2002). Interventions to increase teacher instruction and possibly practice of self-regulation should be designed to show post secondary teachers how to teach, share and support self-regulatory knowledge in their classrooms. Ongoing training and professional development should be a component of this model.

Many colleges and universities are imposing a writing course requirement on students. Writing across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing Intensive (WI) courses are becoming the required norm in higher education. For example, at the university at which the present study occurred, in addition to a full year of composition, students are required
to take at least three upper-level writing intensive courses before they graduate; many students end up taking more than that. And at George Mason University there is a similar requirement for writing: two WI English courses and at least one WI course in the major. Clearly, writing is a valued activity at the university level. To support these writing efforts, SRL, which is an easily understood framework (yet not easy to master), could be integrated into any writing course, in any department. My study supports research suggesting that students need more opportunities to practice SRL in content courses (Karp et al., 2012; Kitsantas, Winsler, & Huie, 2008). At the policy level, that may mean intentionally incorporating SRL into those writing intensive courses giving students repeated exposure to the practice. The more practice students get at self-regulating their writing learning, the better they become (Zimmerman, 2002).

Moreover, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) in collaboration with other national writing organizations has published guidelines for success in postsecondary writing (2011) which are helpful in identifying aspects of SRL that also support writing success. These guidelines, aimed at instructors who teach or include writing in their classes, all levels and all subjects, provide some direction for preparing students for success in terms of 21st-century skills with particular attention to “habits of mind.” Many of these habits of mind will promote self-regulation in an engaged learner. For example, responsibility (taking ownership of one’s actions), persistence (sustaining interest and attention in projects), flexibility (adapting), and metacognition (reflecting on one’s own thinking and learning processes), are just a few of the habits of mind which are important for writing courses to cultivate (CWPA, NCTE, &
NWP, 2011). The Framework published by the CWPA offers specific guidance in how to promote these habits of mind, and their intentional incorporation into a written course, in conjunction with an SRL program, might help college students’ uptake of all of these habits and better prepare student for their learning both in college and beyond. Students’ experiences in the present study suggested that more opportunities and more fully integrated SRL experiences might help them become more attentive to their own functioning and learning and K-12 and university level administrators have the opportunity to make an impact.

Changes like these to K-12 and post-secondary education might help students become self-regulated learners and give them the tools and habits that could go a long way toward easing transitions from high school to college to job. More diverse SRL interventions, such as the present study, with first-year college students would help educators and administrators alike in understanding how to create self-regulated learners and prepare students for their futures. Students need to acquire experience with the kinds of skills and attitudes necessary for 21st century employment if they are to be effective workers. These skills and attitudes include not only content knowledge but also character traits such as initiation, self-direction, and self-responsibility—traits which not only distinguish self-regulated learners, but will also be necessary for complex work environments. Other self-regulatory skills such as an ability to adapt to new situations, to take on new roles and responsibilities, or to work effectively within ambiguous situations will be necessary for the kinds of jobs for which educators are preparing students.
It is clearly possible to teach SRL and research supports this (Zimmerman, 2002). Yet this study has helped to clarify the complexity of learning to self-regulate. It has shown that even something as seemingly straightforward as creating a goal, is actually a learning experience for most first-year students. The many examples described in this report provide researchers with a new foundation of knowledge and understanding of how SRL instruction is experienced by those who participate in it, and hopefully provide realistic options for teaching and further researching this vital skill.
Appendix A

PowerPoint Presentations
Self-regulated Learning: Become an Active Learner

PowerPoint presentation shown to students introducing them to the study and the concepts.

As a student: college requires you to do a considerable amount of learning on your own. You'll need to take charge.

As a future employee: this continues in most jobs. Employees who need lots of guidance in learning new things aren't nearly as valuable as self-starters. So one of the most important skills you want to foster early in your college career is the ability to learn on your own.

Three simple steps for self-regulation
- Make a plan
- Keep track of the plan
- Reflect

Make a plan
- What are the demands on your time?
- Other courses
- Job
- Sports team
- Family, friends, leisure
- Schedule your work into your day
- Consider your motivations
Keep track of progress: Monitor

- Monitor your progress – how is your plan working for you? Do you need to adjust the plan? Or move other things around?
- Strategies to make sure you stay on track:
  - Seek help when you need it
  - Send an email
  - Visit the professor
  - Call in the C.I.T.
  - Ask a friend
  - Be proactive (with everyone – boss, prof, coaches, employees, family, etc.)

Reflect

- This is one of the most important components because when you think about your plan and how it’s going, you are paying attention. Think about what went well, what went poorly and to take what you’ve discovered, to your next plan.
- Reflecting on your plan
- Reflecting on your progress, ability to stick to your plan, or to make changes and adapt to changes.

Characteristics of Passive learners

- Often blame others for the poor quality of their work
- Or, for their lack of motivation
- Or, for their time management problems
- Or, for any other difficulties
- Although some learners will often seek help or some point, often it is too little, too late.

Characteristics of Active learners

- Realize early on when they need help, and go seek it
- Are engaged in class, take notes
- Come to class prepared
- Understand that they are responsible for their learning, they are the ones who are in charge.
- Typically analyze their weak performance (if it occurs) and change the way they study.
Setting Goals

PowerPoint presented when students were asked to create goals.

- Goals can motivate you
- Goals allow you to set a standard by which you can measure your performance
- Goals can help you focus your attention
- Goals can help you keep organized - both with your time and your resources

Some Distinctions
- Goals can be near-term: “My goal is to run 5 miles today” OR “I want to have perfect attendance in my anatomy class”
- Goals can be long-term: Related to your career, your education, your attitude. “I want to be a physical therapist”

For Now...
- Set some goals for yourself for this essay (grade goal, learning goal)
- Create a plan to meeting your goal - what is your strategy (what is your plan) to make sure you meet your goal?
- Read it before posting.
Monitoring Performance

PowerPoint presented when students were asked to monitor their performance.
Reflection

PowerPoint presented when students were asked to reflect on their process.

- Your self-evaluations and self-judgements will play a role as you create your plan the next time you need to do a similar task.
- These reflections will help you stay on track - they inform everything you do next time around.
  - By reflecting you'll understand cause and effect relationships between your actions and the outcomes.

- This self-awareness is the mark of a learner who is in control of his or her learning.
- You will become adaptive rather than reactive learners - you'll understand ahead of time what you need to do to complete the task to your own standard.
- You will understand the conditions you need (both environmentally and personally) to reach your goal.

- As you reflect on your process to write the essay, think about what you may do differently for the next essay.
- Think too about what worked for you and what strategies helped you move closer to your goal.
- Last, think about your personal satisfaction with your work. Do you like your essay? If not, what can you do next time so that you like the work you produced?
Appendix B

Course Syllabus (excerpted): Day-to-Day Outline of Reading and Writing Assignments

This appendix includes only the day-to-day schedule of the course. Course policies and outcomes as well as university statements on administrative matters are not included.

Week 1  Jan 13 – Jan 17
13/14  Introduction to the course
      Diagnostic “Is Teaching to learning styles a bogus idea?”
16/17  “Education Slowdown Threatens US”
      “Is Google Making Us Stupid?”
      Summary (how to)

Week 2  Jan 20 – Jan 24
Jan 20  No Class. Jaschik: “Academically Adrift”
Jan 21  Jaschik: “Academically Adrift”
      “Why Focusing too Narrowly in college could backfire”
23/24  Shellman: “To Stop procrastination…”
      Graham: “Good and Bad procrastination”
      Summary Peer Review
      Assign Observation Essay

Week 3  Jan 27 – Jan 31
27/28  DUE: Summary One
      Reading TBA
30/31  Malcolm X “Homemade Education”
      Look at Georgetown Center on Workforce Dev. Reports (BB)

Week 4  Feb 3 – Feb 7
3/4   DUE: Draft Observation Essay (peer review)
      Thesis Workshop
6/7   DUE: Observation Essay
      Assign: Rhetorical Analysis- Online course
Feb 7  Last day to withdraw from a class without academic record

Week 5  Feb 10 – Feb 14
10/11  DUE: Summary Two
   Read all articles in the Online Learning folder (under Contents)
   The Single Most Important Experiment in HE
   Measuring the MOOC dropout rate
   The big idea that can revolutionize HE
   Watching the Ivory Tower topple

13/14  Online learning (cont)
   MOOCs missing pieces
   MOOCs Inflated expectations, early disappointments
   Online Education Individualist fallacy

   Academic Integrity at [university] (complete plagiarism tutorial)

Week 6  Feb 17 - 21
17/18  No Class. Conferences on Rhetorical Analysis
   Employers often distrust online degrees
   Online courses look for a business model
   College degree, no class time required
20/21  DUE: Draft Rhetorical Analysis (peer review)
   Thesis Workshop, Midterm review

Week 7  Feb 24 - 28
24/25  MidTerm exam
27/28  DUE: Rhetorical Analysis
   Assign Annotated Bibliography Project/Public Project
   Practice an annotated bibliography entry

Week 8  Mar 3 – Mar 7
3/4  “Degrees of Value: Making College Pay off”
6/7  Library Research

Week 9  Mar 10 - Mar 14
   No Class!  Spring Break!

Week 10  Mar 17 – Mar 21
17/18  Citing Sources
20/21  Library Research
21  Last day to withdraw from a class with a grade of W

Week 11  Mar 24 – Mar 28
Week 12  Mar 31 – Apr 4
31/1 TBA
3/4 Annotated bibliography  Peer Review (bring 3 completed entries)

Week 13  Apr 7 – Apr 11
7/8 DUE: Individual Annotated Bibliographies
   Reading TBA
10/11 Thesis workshop for Public writing paper

Week 14  Apr 14 – Apr 18
14/15 Reading TBA
17/18 No Class: Easter Break

Week 15  Apr 21 – Apr 25
21 No class: Easter break
22 Monday class meets; no Tuesday classes
   Citing workshop (Peer Review: Bring a 3-4 pg draft of final paper to class)
24/25 Conferences (optional)

Week 16  Apr 28 – May 2
28/29 Presentations: Final position
   DUE: Final position paper
1/2 Presentations: Final position, Final exam review

Final exam: Saturday, May 3rd, 10a.m.–12:30p.m
Appendix C

Three Essay Assignments

Essay 1: Observation Essay

For this essay you will write about yourself and your writing and learning processes. You will observe yourself for a brief period of time, and turn those observations into an essay about your learning and/or writing process. To prepare for the essay, and to generate material on yourself, you are required to keep a daily log for 10 days beginning Jan 27 or 28 (depending on when your class meets). Your final entry will be after the essay draft has been peer reviewed. Essentially, you are writing about your writing and thinking process. You are analyzing your work habits, strengths and weaknesses. This is called metacognition – thinking about thinking!

To support this essay, we will be reading about issues in higher education and some of the issues that complicate students lives and concerns with graduation rates. We will cover aspects of higher education that we will also connect to learning and college success. You can use any of these ideas generated in class discussions in your own essay.

1. Print or download the log from BB. Write in it every day. You may write in list format, or paragraphs – whatever you are comfortable with. You may write by hand, or keep the log online in a word file. I will be checking the logs periodically over the next ten days. Keeping the log up to date is part of the grade requirement for the essay.

2. You are keeping track of yourself - how are you spending your time (both for this class, and for your other classes). Monitor the amount of time you spend reading for class, studying, writing, etc. Also keep track of the time you spend on other activities such as your sports and exercise, socializing, time online (social media), job, commutes, etc. Anything that impacts your school work should be monitored.

Be honest. This assignment only works if you are truthful.

3. As your log builds you are generating material for the four page paper you will write. I will check the logs each class during this essay cycle. Logs will be turned in along with the final essay.

Requirements
Creating a thesis: The thesis is the point you will be making about your working habits – or study skills, or learning strategies or college success, or….. Your thesis will then “drive” the essay – all paragraphs will connect to support your thesis. You may learn something new about yourself, or you may resolve to change something, or you may try a new strategy and learn if it works for you.

The shape of the essay
Your introduction (which could be 1-2 paragraphs) could introduce us to who you are as a student, give us a sense of your goals and expectations, and state your thesis for the essay.

Your body could be organized in many ways – you could chunk the essay into time blocks (morning, day, night) and discuss challenges. Or you could organize the essay by challenges, or you could organize the essay by past/present (what were your expectations of yourself before you came to college and what’s new or different?). You could organize the essay by activity (reading, studying, writing, participating in class) or by characteristics such as motivation, ability to concentrate, beliefs about learning.

Some other questions to consider:
1. Why do graduation rates matter? What does it mean for you?
2. How do you define college success?
3. What is most important to you about college? How actively do you participate in acquiring knowledge (are you a passive learner – prof transmits knowledge? Or an active learner – speak up and participate in the creation of knowledge and perspectives?)
   a. If something other than learning is more important to you, what is that? And how do you engage with it?
4. How do you spend the bulk of your time? What implications does that have for learning?
5. Consider how you used to work (in high school) – what adjustments have you had to make in college? – connect your past with the present
6. Did you feel at any point during the last few weeks that you were not in control of your time?
7. What motivates you to stay on top of your school work? What do you do when you fall behind?
8. How comfortable/willing are you about going to see a professor about an assignment?
9. How have your strategies worked during the first semester? What was your GPA? What changes might you have to make this semester to do even better?
10. Have you noticed any patterns in your ability to do school work?
11. Conclude the essay strongly (a call to change, a recommendation for you or someone else, a look into the future)
12. **Self-evaluate**

**Observation Log**

Here you will record not only how you spend your time, but also your thinking and planning. For example, in this class, you have a draft summary essay due on Jan 27/28. Write about the reading, drafting and writing process and how well it’s going. Or, if you have a test in another class, write about your study strategies and how well you expect them to work for you. Ultimately, you will connect your strategies with the outcomes you achieve – and evaluate the effectiveness of your work.

The more specific you are, the more material you will generate, and the easier this essay will be to write. Your essay will not be a day-to-day narration of your week. Rather it will be an analysis of how you spend your time. Keeping track of your thinking here will help with this.

This log will be turned in along with the final version of your essay.

**Week 1**

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**Week 2**

| Monday Feb 3: Draft due – peer review |
| Tuesday Feb 4: Draft due – peer review |
| Wed Feb 6 |
| Thurs Feb 7/Fri Feb 8: Final essay due |
Essay 2: Rhetorical Analysis of an Online Class

The goal of a rhetorical analysis is to understand how a particular act of writing or speaking influences particular people at a particular time.
Blackboard – 20%
Essay – 80%

For this project you will select an online course from one of the colleges listed below and analyze why certain choices are made in the production of this video. In preparation for this assignment, you will analyze shorter articles about online courses, read a chapter from *DIY U*, write a summary and write a rhetorical analysis.

Select a course from
[http://www.virtualprofessors.com/length/course](http://www.virtualprofessors.com/length/course)

Select a true course. There are lots of single lectures here, but select a topic with a selection of lectures. You will take ONE lecture from the course – do not take the first lecture. And then analyze yourself, your reaction, the course, while thinking about the context - some of the larger issues in higher education.

Like critical reading, critical viewing requires you to reflect in depth on what you see. Use the following strategies to help write a rhetorical analysis (from the Marymount Handbook p. 5)

**Preview:**
- Who created this video?
- Why was it created?
- Who is the intended audience?
- When did it first appear?
- What media are used?
- What has been written about the video? (or about the idea in general) (Are there comments, or feedback associated with the video?)

**Respond**
- What was my first impression of the video?
- After thinking about it, or viewing it again, how have I changed or expanded my first impression?
- Would I take an online course based on my experience with this video?

**Analyze**
- How is the video framed or composed?
- Where do my eyes go first?
- How does the video appeal to the values of the audience?
- Could it serve another purpose other than the intended one?
What is my impression of online courses after viewing and analyzing this one? Why?

**Interim Deadlines:**
*** Failure to participate in peer review will result in a loss of points ***

Feb 10/11 DUE: Summary of an article, Post link to online class
   Read the following:
   The Single Most Important Experiment in HE
   Measuring the MOOC dropout rate
   The big idea that can revolutionize HE
   Watching the Ivory Tower topple

Feb 13/14 Read the following:
   MOOCs missing pieces
   MOOCs Inflated expectations, early disappointments
   Online Education Individualist fallacy

Feb 17/18 Read the following:
   Employers often distrust online degrees
   Online courses look for a business model
   College degree, no class time required

Feb 20/21 Two pg draft due in class (workshop drafts)
   Midterm review

Feb 24/25 Midterm

Feb 27/28 Four pg draft due in class (peer review)

Mar 3/4 Final Rhet Analysis due in class
   Rhet bibliography assigned

Mar 6/7 Library session

**Required:**
   ☐ Meeting all interim deadlines for drafts
   ☐ MLA format for heading, quotes and works cited
   ☐ Relevant Title
   ☐ Three –four pages in length
Essay 3: Rhetorical Bibliography Project

This project is worth 20% of your final grade.

******For this project there is no re-write option******

Each student will compile a bibliography of 4 sources. These sources should be chosen for how they help the student understand the chosen topic and the problems associated with the topic. For example, if a student chose procrastination, s/he might have an rhetorical bibliography that includes Washington Post articles, and an Inside Higher ED op-ed on the problems with procrastination, Newsweek articles on some strategies to help, and an interview with an educator.

A rhetorical bibliography of a source accurately describes the context of its publication (who published it, the purpose of this publishing venue and the biases or slants that might be connected to this purpose, and the audience of this publication), the conversations in which the source is engaged, the author(s) and purpose of the source, and its stylistic and genre conventions. These bibliographies will be graded on how well the students describes the source, how substantial the sources are (in length and perspective for a feature article or in breadth or depth of research for a government report); how reliable they are (published by a disinterested, relatively unbiased publisher; vetted in some way; recent); and how closely they relate to the same narrow topic. The bibliography will also contain an explanation of how each source helps the student understand the topic and its associated problems in all of their complexity. There will be two library sessions in support of this project. The first will focus on pre-research strategies and on finding and evaluating internet sources and the second on using the general library databases to find articles and commentaries in newspapers and magazines.

Use Chapter 8 in your MU handbook to help you evaluate sources.

The individual bibliography you submit is worth 20% of your final grade for the course. Part of this grade will be the blackboard work assigned for this project, conferences and peer review:

What is a rhetorical bibliography?
A rhetorical bibliography is a list of citations for your sources. A rhetorical bib includes a brief summary and a rhetorical analysis of each source. The rhetorical analysis contains a brief explanation of how the source helps you understand the topic and its associated problems in all of their complexity.

What is the Topic?
The topic for this assignment is academic success in college. This topic is informed by not only your other essays, but also by the reading you’ve done for this course. Think about your concerns with regard to succeeding in college and develop a topic that you
would like to research. I will need to approve your topic before you begin your research (you will post to discussion board)

**What kinds of things should you include in a rhetorical bibliography?**

**Overview:**
- Author’s background or credentials (if applicable)
- Context: Where the article first appear? Was it republished? Where?
- Brief summary of the source

**Analysis:**
- What’s the purpose of the source?
- Who is the intended audience?
- What point of view, structure/organization, types of evidence, and tone does the author employ?
- Is the source reliable? Is it biased or objective? Is the argument fair? Why (not)? Does the author leave unanswered questions?
- Does the author use logos/ethos/pathos?

**Assessment:**
- How the work compares with your other sources
- How the work is relevant to your research: How does it shape your understanding of your topic? How does it relate to your focus and why do you think this source is a good one to include? How might you use the source if you were to write a research paper?
You may not be able to include information about ALL of these questions for all your sources. You will have to decide what is most important to include about your source.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Each entry for the rhetorical bibliography consists of three parts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) MLA citation for your source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Brief summary of the article (a paragraph)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Rhetorical Analysis of the source (3-4 paragraphs)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Outcomes for Research Project**
- Develop a pre-research and research strategy that focuses the scope of a research project
- Become familiar with library databases
- Effectively gather internet research, identifying the author and publisher of online material and evaluating the hosting site of that material as well as the material itself
- Collect, evaluate, interpret, and synthesize information from a variety of valid and relevant sources, which can include field research
- Adequately paraphrase and quote source material while documenting all research accurately using MLA citation style

**Interim Deadlines**  
(subject to change)

**Week 8**
March 3/4 assign project
In class work on finding topics/group work

March 6/7 –

**Week 9**  
Spring Break!!!

**Week 10**  
Mar 17/18  Library session, Post topic by class time  
Mar 20/21  Library Session  
March 21  Last day to withdraw from a class with a grade of W

**Week 11**  
Mar 24/25  Citing sources workshop, writing a rhet. bibliography  
Mar 27/28  Post one complete rhet. Bib entry to BB by 11:59 pm  
March 27/28  Writing a rhet. Bibliography entry

**Week 12**  
Mar 31/Apr 1  No class: conferences (Butler G 124) Bring two entries and all articles (printed) to our meeting  
April 3/4  No class: conferences (Butler G 124) Bring two entries and all articles (printed) to our meeting

**Week 13**  
April 7/8  Rhetorical Bib peer review  
Bring two completed entries to class  
April 10/11  DUE: Rhetorical Bibliography  
Thesis workshop for Public Writing project  
Analyzing editorials. Developing the essay. Reading TBA.

**Week 14**  
April 14/15  Conferences (optional on public writing assignment)  
April 17/18  No Class Easter break

**Week 15**  
Apr 21  No class: Easter break  
Apr 22  Monday class meets; no Tuesday classes  
TBA  
Apr 24/25  Citing workshop (Peer Review: Bring a 3-4 pg draft of final paper to class)  
Final exam review

**Week 16**  
April 28/29  **DUE: Public writing project (due online)**  
Presentations
Grading Rubric for each entry (each entry is worth 25 points)

Entry #1
Type of source:
Web page  newspaper  magazine  scholarly article  other

Cite
___ The citation uses correct MLA format.

Source
___ The source is on the same narrowed topic as the other sources.
___ The source adds a particular dimension to our knowledge/perspective.
___ The source is substantial in length, perspective, breadth, and/or depth.
___ The source is credible. It is published by a trustworthy organization, timely in its discussion, and fair in its argument.
(Or, if the source is not substantial or reliable, is there some other reason to justify its presence in the bibliography?)
___ The source is annotated.

Summary
___ Summarized in a few sentences. The thesis and all one or two of the main points are included. Remember to paraphrase accurately and ethically.

Rhetorical Analysis
___ Identifies the purpose and context of the source.
___ Analyzes the rhetorical strategies of the source, looking at some of the following:
   • Publication: source of the publication, purpose of the article, audience (of the publication), author,
   • Article: structure, tone, reliability
   • Rhetoric: types of evidence, opposing views, unanswered questions, unfair arguments, logos/ethos/pathos, and bias.
You will have to determine which strategies are most important to discuss for each source.
___ The article is related the source to the other sources in the bibliography and the project as a whole.
Appendix D

Reflective Journal Prompts

Reflective journal questions
Throughout the semester students were asked to respond to various writing prompts in a journal entry format. These questions were designed to immerse students in the SRL experience. The prompts are differentiated between those meant to encourage short-term goals and those meant to elicit long-term goals.

The prompts were created in the private journaling module of Blackboard.

Short Term learning goals
After each essay was assigned students were asked to respond to the following prompt:
Goals: What are your personal goals for this essay – both learning and writing goals?
What grade do you hope to earn on this assignment? What is your plan for meeting all interim deadlines? Please list at least three strategies you could use to meet your goals. What problems (or concerns) do you foresee in completing this essay assignment?

As the students were writing the essay (and about a week after the essay was assigned), they were asked to respond to the following prompt:
Monitoring: As of today, what have you done so far on the essay? Explain what parts of your progress satisfy you. What learning strategies have you used so far on this project? What problems do you foresee in completing this essay?

For Essays 2 and 3, because there was more time built into the assignments, students responded to a second monitoring prompt:

Monitoring (2): Review your goals for this assignment and your first monitoring post. Today a four-page draft was due in class. How confident are you that your work is fulfilling the requirements of the assignment? Are you happy with the way you have progressed with this paper? How effective was the peer review you received today? What about the help you gave... will your work as a reviewer assist your classmate? What is your plan for finishing up the essay for next Tuesday? What problems do you foresee in sticking to your plan?
After the essay was submitted, but before receiving a grade, students were asked to respond to the following prompt:

Reflection: After reading through your goals and monitoring statements, how closely did you stick to your plan to complete this project? What adjustments (if any) did you make to complete the assignment? Where did you run into difficulty in completing the essay? What additional strategies did you have to use to finish the essay? Do you feel that you’ve met your goals? What will you do differently for the next assignment?

The prompts remained largely the same through each essay assignment. Occasionally, wording was changed only to refer to the assignment more specifically.

**Long-term learning goals**

Near the beginning of the semester students were asked to respond to the following prompt. This prompt was designed to “prompt” student thinking in a targeted direction.

Learning strategies: What strategies have you used in the past to get your work done? What strategies have you used to motivate yourself? Are these strategies generally successful? Or do they leave you unsatisfied with your final work product (or test grade, etc.).

Goals: What are your personal goals for this course? What grade are you working for? What do you want to learn about writing, or become better at, as a writer? What are some of the other demands on your time which may cut into your learning goals for this course? How do you plan to juggle these other demands?

Toward the end of the semester students were asked to respond to the following prompt reflecting on their goals and outcomes for the course:

Reflection: Read your long term goals for the course. Do you feel you attained these goals? What are the valuable things you learned about yourself and your academic behaviors that you will consider as you move into your next semester?

Did setting goals and writing about your progress have any impact on how you worked (your writing process?) Did it have an impact on any other class? For example, did you monitor progress as you studied for an exam? Did you seek help from a professor in another course? Did you set goals for other assignments?
Appendix E

Interview Questions

The following questions were asked in each interview.

**Short-term goals**
1. What were some problems you had (if any) with the assignments this semester (motivation, interest, falling behind? other?)
2. Describe two or three of the short-term goals you set for writing essays in this course, either in terms of what to learn or how to manage your writing for that essay.
3. Did setting short term goals affect how you approached the assignment? Explain?
4. Did monitoring your progress make a difference in your work on the assignment?
5. Did you make adjustments based on your monitoring? Can you give an example?
6. What impact did reflecting on your performance on one essay have on how you performed for the following essay assignment. Can you give an example?

**Long term goals**
1. Describe one or two of the long-term goals you set for this course. Did setting long-term goals affect how you worked on assignments in this class?
2. Did setting long-term goals affect your attitude about working on assignments in this class?
3. Half-way through the semester you were asked to look at your personal goals and reflect on your progress. What effect did this half-way through reflection have on your work for the remainder of the semester?
4. Toward the end of the semester you were asked to reflect on your work for the course. What did this reflection show you about yourself in terms of
- your work style and preferences,
- your ability to set realistic goals and reach them,
- your ability to motivate yourself to complete the work to your satisfaction

5. Did you apply any of these strategies (setting goals, monitoring progress, thinking about how it’s going) to other courses? If yes, explain how you applied them.

6. Can you envision using these strategies in other courses? If yes, how would you do so? If no, what makes them not seem appropriate or transferrable?
Appendix F

Nvivo Node Tree

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>References</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>References</th>
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</table>
References


learning: From teaching to self-reflective practice (pp. 57-85). New York, Guilford.


Biography

Jennifer Nardacci earned her Master’s of Arts in English from George Mason University in 2004. While she has been earning her doctorate, she has been employed as a part-time writing professor at Northern Virginia Community College and Marymount University.