

FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION AND WRITING CENTER USAGE

---

A Thesis presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School  
at the University of Missouri-Columbia

---

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts

---

by  
AARON A.HARMS

Dr. Martha Townsend, Thesis Supervisor

December 2007

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the thesis entitled

FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION AND WRITING CENTER USAGE

presented by Aaron A. Harms,

a candidate for the degree of master of arts,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

---

Professor Martha Townsend

---

Professor Dana Kinnison

---

Professor Jessica Summers

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Townsend and Dr. Summers for their unwavering confidence and dedication to this project. I would also like to thank Dr. Kinnison and Dr. Hocks, without whom I wouldn't have had the experiences that prompted this research. And to the rest of you who pushed me along, either through conversation, action, assignments, or papers, thank you.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES .....	iv
ABSTRACT .....	v
Chapter	
1. INTRODUCTION .....	1
2. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
Student Motivation	
Prior Assessments	
The Composition Program	
The Writing Lab	
3. METHOD.....	16
4. RESULTS .....	19
Quantitative Data Analysis	
Interviews	
5. DISCUSSION .....	31
Help Seeking & Peer Learning	
Conclusion	
REFERENCES .....	40
APPENDIX	
A. PARTICIPANT LETTER.....	44
B. STUDENT SURVEY .....	45
C. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS .....	47

## LIST OF TABLES

Figure	Page
1. Intercorrelations for Writing Lab Visits and 7 MSLQ Scales.....	20

## ABSTRACT

This study began with some initial questions about the interaction between the Composition Program and the Writing Lab at the University of Missouri-Columbia, with the first-year composition student's navigation of that interaction as the point of inquiry. What were the motivations that students *had* as they began their coursework? Could those motivations change throughout the course of a semester and, if so, could the Writing Lab be seen as a catalyst for those changes? An adapted version of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) was made available to the students who were enrolled in English 1000 during the Fall semester of 2005. The students were asked to complete this survey at the beginning and end of the semester, and the campus Writing Lab's data on student usage was then matched with the results from each survey. The study was amended though, due to a lack of matched data sets. Sixty-six students completed the MSLQ survey for the pre-test, while only 42 completed the post-test. Only ten of the respondents were found to have utilized the Writing Lab as well as having participated in both the pre-test and post-test. Because of this small sample size, a "student centered" set of questions was developed, in order to collect more data from the individuals who had completed all parts of the initial method. Three of the students further articulated their experiences in and out of class through these sets of interview questions. While there were no statistically significant correlations between Writing Lab usage and the student responses to the MSLQ, both the quantitative data and the additional qualitative responses serve to point in particular directions for further research in Composition, such as student understanding of the services provided for them, as well as the requirements and demands for their courses in conjunction with those services.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction

Every semester, tens of thousands of college students enroll in “introductory” composition courses at campuses across the United States. While these courses are known by many different names, depending on the institution, they are typically filled with freshmen level students, either in their first or second semesters. This is of course not representative of the entire population in these courses; there are always reasons why one student or another has not yet taken the course by his or her sophomore, junior, or even senior year, but the typical students are the new-to-college freshmen, taking one of their first courses as an undergraduate. This first-year composition course is typically a required one at most institutions that have a general education policy. Again, generally speaking, instructors in these courses can perhaps expect their students to approach with some hesitancy, due to the course being required rather than elective. It further seems plausible that forcing students to enroll in courses might bring with it a lack of interest, and possibly a lack of motivation. In order to motivate these students to both perform and succeed, instructors, advisors, and other parties should be very interested in the ways that this student population navigates the course, as well as the help seeking behaviors employed when that navigation is impeded. In order to examine both the navigation and one of the possible help seeking outlets—the campus Writing Lab—I conducted an examination of the Fall 2005 English 1000 course at the University of Missouri-Columbia. Originally begun as a way to understand the way the Composition Program, housed in the English department, and the Writing Lab, where students are tutored in

writing, worked together, I was hoping to identify the ways that they currently interact, as well as to perhaps find new avenues of cooperation between the two, in order to better serve the student population if needed. My goal was to explore that navigation through the use of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ), and to correlate the collected responses with their Writing Lab usage. I offered the questionnaire to students at the beginning and end of their semester in English 1000, gathering 74 responses to the pre-test and 42 to the post-test. However, after pairing the pre- and post-test data, and adding the matching Writing Lab data, I was only able to complete 10 cases. 10 cases from an enrollment per semester of over 2,000 students was not statistically significant enough to offer generalizable correlations about the population I was seeking to understand. After performing some correlations with the initial responses, I found that only 66 of the 74 respondents had complete data, that is, they answered all questions. The main correlation that I was expecting, high levels of self-reported help seeking behaviors concurrent with Writing Lab visits, was still not significant. With such limited data, I later added interviews with three of the students who had responded, to be treated as case studies, in order to get a first person response as to how they described their individual courses and Writing Lab usage. While this study does not provide many concrete conclusions, it does pose many questions about the students and their interactions in and out of class, in the hope that further research may draw some of the conclusions that I was pursuing.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

#### *Student Motivation*

There is an extensive body of literature on motivation, yet very little of the available research is directly connected to composition studies. Most publications occur in the journals from the areas of Education and Educational Psychology, as well as Testing and Measurement. One of the foremost names in the field is the late Paul Pintrich, who designed the MSLQ. While he writes that the field of motivational science expressly calls for the inclusion of multiple fields of study (2003, p. 667), it is certainly not the norm to find these sorts of articles on reading lists for courses outside of the fields of Education and Psychology. However, it is vital to my current research to understand the ways that help seeking, as well as the broader issues of self regulation and motivation are defined by the existing literature. For the MSLQ, help seeking falls under the broad definition of “seeking help from peers or instructors when needed” (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005, p. 120). Help seeking is just one part of the subset of behaviors that the MSLQ addresses under the more general self regulation heading. These behaviors are “strategies for controlling resources other than [the students’ own] cognition” (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005, p. 120), and also include time and study management, regulation of effort, and peer learning. Accordingly, it is also of great importance to know what motivational research does and the reasoning behind it.

At the most basic level, motivational research, according to Pintrich, “should be striving for both goals of contributing to basic scientific understanding of motivation as well as developing useful ideas and design principles to improve motivation in educational and other teaching and learning settings” (2003, p. 669). That is, it should be applicable to the academic knowledge base as well as useful in pragmatic, classroom-based ways. One of Pintrich’s major contributions was to foreground the idea of context, in conjunction with a social-cognitive model of learning as a way of understanding how students learn (Duncan & McKeachie, 2005, p. 117). The MSLQ was developed using this view, with the student as the nexus of instruction and context. The understanding of how motivation occurs at this nexus is paramount if teachers are to more actively engage them, and so it behooves educators interested in better practices to take note.

Certain assumptions must be made in order to conduct any inquiry into the way that students self regulate, as well as their motivations for doing so. Students must be assumed to be able to define their own goals, considering input from both their external environment, in this case the Composition classroom, and their internal environment (Pintrich, 2004, p. 387). One of the goals, therefore, is for the students to have an understanding of the requirements for a given assignment, and how those requirements need to be met in order to receive a given grade. This idea of “making the grade” is connected to their extrinsic motivation. In addition to this understanding, there may be personal goals, such as the minimum, yet still passing, grade, or the best possible outcome. These factors are rooted in each student’s intrinsic motivations. The MSLQ has subscales in these two areas, along with the value that the student connects to the tasks they are being asked to complete. Further, and perhaps more obvious, it must be assumed

that the student has some control over regulation of behaviors to achieve either or both of those goals.

Pintrich is quick to note in his work on student regulated learning that “This assumption does not mean that individuals will or can monitor and control their cognition, motivation, or behavior at all times or in all contexts, rather just that some monitoring, control, and regulation is possible” (2004, p. 387). While these assumptions do put the students partially in charge of their own learning, there is still a wide range of social and cultural possibilities for an uncontrolled lack of regulation. As part of this ability to self regulate, each student then has at the very least, access to a range of help-seeking behaviors, including approaching peers for aid.

To further contextualize my work here as part of the existing literature, the idea of help seeking behaviors, their definition, and their outcomes must be explored and understood. Students have, when faced with “ambiguity or difficulty in their schoolwork” (Ryan et al., 1998, p. 528), a set of resources that they can utilize in order to make the assignment more accessible. The utilizing of these resources has been termed help-seeking behavior, and might include any level of resource for virtually any level of help. Motivation researcher, Stuart A. Karabenick (2004, p. 569) makes a distinction between the student who seeks help for self improvement versus the student who uses the service for success. He also notes differences in these same categories as to what level of help is sought. While these differences will be important at a later date, my current research is only dealing with whether or not the students actively sought out help, rather than what their expected outcomes were.

The help seeking behavior I am most interested in is their use of the Writing Lab's tutoring services. This behavior should connect directly to their work in the Composition classroom. In order to recognize the way the Writing Lab and the Composition Program work together, it is important to have an understanding of the goals and processes that each of them has individually.

### *Prior Assessments*

The Composition Program and the Writing Lab perform their own assessments, of course, according to their own needs and resources. Generally, the Writing Lab conducts exit interviews with students during the later months of a given semester. Along the same lines, the Composition Program uses the University evaluation system for all of its instructors, and was part of a department-wide assessment this year as well. Because of the inherent complexity of writing, it has historically been both important and problematic to assess either the Writing Lab or the Composition Program.

The English department at the University of Missouri has just undergone what Witte and Faigley call the "expert-opinion approach" (1983, p. 5), where program reviewers from outside the University are asked to visit, observe, and make recommendations regarding the English department. While this sort of review is helpful, and will include the Composition Program, it will not necessarily be as focused on that part of English studies, any more than it might focus on Literature, Folklore, or Linguistics, all of which are housed in the same department. Neither would such a study focus on student writing, or student behaviors. What may not happen, because of the breadth of the departmental review, is a prioritizing of the student in composition, which I have set out to do in this project. Alan C. Purves, in his "Foreward" to Lauer and

Asher's *Composition Research*, notes that educational research with a student focus has been dominated by the psychologist and anthropologist (1998, p. vi). Those fields, which might focus more clearly on the student component bring with them a large selection of possible methods of research. Lauer and Asher later write that "rhetorical and empirical modes of research appear to have fundamental similarities and only minor differences" (1988, p. 4). In connection with this multimodal approach to research, this study began in an empirical mode, but later turned in a rhetorical direction, in order to incorporate multiple forms of data. This multimodality has great advantages, in that it does not privilege either the researcher involved in observation and interviews or the empirical instruments involved in surveys and testing. The attraction to such a model is obvious, as the "[r]hetorical theory guides empirical research, which in turn helps to verify theory" (Lauer & Asher, 1998, p. 6). However, the pitfalls of this method are obvious as well, particularly in this project. In the same way that I am putting together composition research and motivation research, the two modalities demand an understanding of the differences between the empirical and the rhetorical, and the effects that those models have on the research.

Writing labs, or centers, or tutorials, although at times hard to name, have been in place since the early 1930's in American higher education. In Steven North's seminal article "The Idea of the Writing Center," (1984) he bemoans the misguided views connected to both the goals and the work that writing labs do. His work has been the starting point for much of what happens at writing labs across the country, as well as the one located on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus. The Writing Lab there also subscribes to the idea that "the work of the writing center tutor is to engage the student

writer in an intellectual process that will result in more fully developed and carefully crafted writing in general.” (Liu & Mandes, 2005, p. 87) It is the “intellectual process,” rather than “an error-free paper” that tends to be the sticking point for both the students who use the service and the instructors who recommend it, though. Liu and Mandes, advocating for the addition of tutors, not just in the lab, but in classrooms as well, further state that “a particular paper is not the focus—but rather the writer’s processes and strategies for producing and crafting any piece of writing” (2005, p. 88). However, if two of the main goals of the Writing Lab are to promote intellectual growth and facilitate better strategies for later writing, how are they to evaluate their success at those goals?

Writing lab research has had a long history of qualitative inquiry, and while most centers do collect quantitative data regarding who utilizes their service and how often, quantitative studies are less widespread. Lerner espouses that we should “Share resources, investigate the presence of the writing center as a factor in retention, in students’ longer-term academic progress...and in student satisfaction with their larger college experience” (2001, p. 4). Kalikoff cites a “history of failed evaluation” and therefore turns to a “mosaic approach” (2001, p. 5). This approach is only one of the many names for multimodal studies, but the idea of mixing methods is very prevalent in the literature on writing centers. Cushman and his group of researchers present their view of focus groups in addition to statistical measures as another version of mixed methods (2005, p. 2). Enders believes firmly in longitudinal studies, looking at papers written for first-year composition at the beginning and end of a semester (2005, p. 8). He also notes that the processes needed to complete such a study are very time-consuming. All of the contributors are clearly on the side of more research, but position themselves against any

direct relationship to grades or standardized test scores. What they do advocate is a mixed methods approach, using quantitative and qualitative data; mixing anecdotes and statistics. Niiler phrases it best: “Using numbers alone can be misleading; I would suggest that quantitative forms of analysis be used within a richer framework of qualitative analysis” (2005, p. 13). While there is certainly a need for continued evaluation, if only to assess whether the Writing Lab’s own goals are being met, it seems that there is a wide range of choices as to how that assessment might be conducted. With these discourses as a backdrop, I attempted to connect the ideas about student-centered research in composition to my own institution and my experiences there.

### *The Composition Program*

The Composition Program at the University of Missouri-Columbia enrolls, roughly, 2,000 students per semester in English 1000. As noted before, they may not all be freshmen, and this may not be their first semester of college, as many transfer students take the course as well. During enrollment, students have a minimal number of choices as to the type of composition course they are offered. Under the general heading of “English 1000”, course types are further broken down into the following categories. The “regular” course, which is the subject of my study, includes virtually all non-international students with ACT scores in English above 18, who are not enrolled in the Honors College. If they do not fill one or more of these categories, they are offered the “International” version, the “stretch” version, which includes an added tutorial lab, or the “General Honors” version. No matter which course they take, though, they must receive a grade of C- or better in order to both pass, as well as enroll in later Writing Intensive (WI) courses. These two WI courses, one within the student’s major and one outside, are housed within

the University's Campus Writing Program (CWP). The three courses make up the general education requirement and are required for graduation in all degrees. Although there are cases where a student may take a WI course concurrently with English 1000, this is not the norm. In most cases, though, it is very hard for them to put the course off for too long, as English 1000 is a prerequisite for WI courses.

Each section of the regular course is capped at twenty students, leaving the instructors in control of the choice to approve overrides. There are of course instances where more or less students end up in a single course, but the number typically settles between eighteen and twenty-one. There are also, as in most enrollment cases, outlying numbers as well. Particularly in the department's "late starter" sections, an instructor can end up with less than the maximum number, even as low as fifteen. These sections are included in the "regular" sections, but actually start after the traditional add/drop period.

Most sections of English 1000 are taught by graduate students and adjunct instructors, who formulate their own readings lists, syllabi, and assignments. While this allows for an impressive amount of freedom for those instructors, it can also limit what content a given student encounters in the classroom. This limitation is also present when the students enroll, as the courses are all listed identically during enrollment. What the enrolling student encounters, when looking at the online course listing, is a list of almost 100 sections, at varying times across the day and week, which may or may not have instructor's names attached to them. This seems to support the idea that students typically enroll in the course because of the way it fits into their schedule rather than for other reasons. Obviously, they have very little else to base their decisions on. As with any course, past students tend to recommend (or denigrate) the courses they have had to their

peers, but it is still hard for those students to actually *find* a recommended instructor's sections and enroll (or know not to). More important though, is that the students do not know what the actual content of the course will be until they attend class and receive course materials. Because this thematic content may range from contemporary novels to political views to traumatic events to *The Simpsons*, the students seem to have little choice in what they will write about. Given this wide spread, the department holds several sections open until the first week of class (the aforementioned "late starter" sections), which students, if they have serious reservations concerning their current section, may transfer to. These syllabi are available at the time of enrollment, and allow the student to at least have some say as to the subjects about which they will write, an important factor in student interest and motivation, although not in writing instruction itself, according to the philosophy of this program.

There is a more intensive instructor training program at this University than at many other colleges. Whereas teaching assistant preparation might only include a brief (two days to a week) "workshop" where the new instructors are provided with materials and limited guidance, the period of training at the University of Missouri-Columbia is actually two full semesters. New Master's degree students spend their first two semesters tutoring in the Writing Lab on campus. During the second semester of tutoring they are also required to enroll (if they plan on teaching) in English 8010, Theory and Practice of Composition. This course, taught by a member of the Rhetoric and Composition faculty, is meant to prepare them to teach, as well as grant some oversight by the department for course preparation. With these experiences behind them, the MA candidates typically teach two sections of English 1000 in their third and fourth semesters.

The aforementioned MA candidates are not the only instructors that students may encounter. Many of the PhD candidates in the department also teach English 1000, and typically take the 8010 course concurrently. To facilitate this, they are provided with their first assignment and five-week schedule, and then formulate the rest as part of the 8010 course. These graduate instructors have usually, though not always, had classroom experience in the past, and are assumed to need less preparation for teaching English 1000. The other group of instructors for the course are adjunct instructors, of which the department generally has between ten and twenty on hand for a given semester. These instructors are non-tenure track faculty in most cases, are either ABD or have their PhDs, and usually teach more sections than the MA and PhD candidates.

In order to both monitor, as well as provide feedback for all of these sections, the department has set up a Composition Committee, as well as a mentorship program for incoming and continuing instructors. During their time at the Writing Lab, new MA candidates are paired with a currently teaching instructor, and serve as that particular section's primary tutor. The tutor provides specific hours which are set aside for the students in that section, and also attends classes, getting a feel for the students and instructor, as well as what it's like to actually be in the classroom.

During their time as instructors, all teachers of English 1000 are assigned to a member of the Composition Committee, who serves as their mentor for teaching in the program. This mentorship involves syllabus and assignment reviews, as well as a course observation at least once a semester. Some instructors, of course, more than others, take further advantage of this relationship, via weekly meetings or email correspondence. The

mentorship is not prescribed in this way, but is presented as a resource to be used at any time.

Given both the amount of possible instructors, as well as the variance of their possible levels of experience, the students have many possibilities for the content of their coursework, even though they are getting the same credit. They are also supposed to be learning the same skills as well, regardless of course content. The departmental instructor's guide reads,

We believe there is a range of successful ways in which to teach English 1000, and we encourage thoughtful experimentation as teachers find and develop their own pedagogical strengths. We see the diversity of teaching approaches as variations on a set of central themes that all sections of the course must share” (Instructor Guide).

The department also envisions a “writing coach” role for the instructors of this course, and hopes for an “active cooperation between the teacher and the student” in order to facilitate a “focus[ed] instruction on areas where instruction is genuinely necessary” (A Note to Students). The key point, however, as found in the note to students, is the admonition to Composition students that they “must ask for help whenever some part of a project seems overwhelming” (A Note to Students). Whether students in the English 1000 course actually consult this online note is not clear. The same *may* be said for instructors as well. There is, however, the aforementioned mentorship and oversight from the Composition Committee that tends to inform and “regularize” the instruction to a point. So, while the instructors have multiple levels of communication that they can access for aid, students, too, can seek out help at multiple levels, starting with the instructors themselves, but also including the Writing Lab, which is the second focal point of my study.

### *The Writing Lab*

Typically, if English instructors are seeing student issues that cannot be addressed in class and/or office hours they refer students to the Writing Lab. As part of the Learning Center, the Lab offers students free fifty-minute appointments with writing tutors, and can be accessed online as well in person, by appointment or on a walk-in basis. The tutors are mainly graduate students in English, who either will be teaching English 1000 or already have and are returning hires. According to the Lab's online public message,

Currently, the Writing Lab alone serves approximately 2,500 students a year, and assistants work with students from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds with varying levels of writing experience. Most of the students who visit the lab are good writers trying to learn academic discourse, but some need help with basic skills as well (Hocks, 2006).

The student population is not limited to freshmen from the English 1000 course, however. Appointments are open to all students, including graduates, who have some sort of writing assignment to discuss. Part of the mission of the service, then, "is not just to improve writing but to help writers become more competent and skilled at all forms of writing and writing technology during their undergraduate careers at the University of Missouri" (Hocks, 2006). There is a direct focus on the students in the English department, however.

Several outreach programs are in place at the Writing Lab in order to attract students from the Composition course, in the hopes that they, finding the service useful early in their academic careers, will continue to use it throughout the rest of their time at the University. Early in each semester, tutors at the lab are encouraged to visit or contact instructors of the English 1000 course and solicit a class visit either to or from the

Writing Lab for each section of the course. Some instructors prefer to bring their classes to the Lab, as it illustrates to the students how the process works, and others prefer an in-class visit from a tutor, to share information with the students. Also, some instructors offer extra credit for Writing Lab visits, and others require their students to attend a tutorial as part of the course. The two units then, have several points of intersection, and although perhaps not always successful, they do seek to serve the same population of students. Because of this common population, it seems vital to both the Composition Program's and the Writing Lab's progress to identify that population, and where, if any, changes need to be made in order to better serve the students.

## Chapter 3

### Method

With the students' navigation of both units as the central focus, the following research project was developed and implemented. My initial goal was to attempt, through the use of an adapted version of the Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire (MSLQ) to identify the levels and types of motivation that the students in first-year composition typically exhibit.

The MSLQ was originally formulated in order to assess the connections between motivation and cognition in classroom settings. The full questionnaire contains 15 scales, divided into motivation and learning strategy sections. From these scales, I chose the ones that seemed most applicable to my study, as well as to the composition classroom.

The subsets that I chose from the MSLQ included Extrinsic and Intrinsic Goal Orientation, Task Value, Control of Learning Beliefs, Self Efficacy, Peer Learning, and Help Seeking. Of greatest value are the scales related to Peer Learning and Help Seeking, of course, but the ways in which the students rate themselves on the other scales could be helpful in further deducing why the other behaviors are occurring and how best to address the students' needs as a whole.

A survey was made available to all of the students enrolled in English 1000 during the Fall semester of 2005. The students received an email soliciting their participation (Appendix A), which included a link to a secure survey (Appendix B) where they responded to the questions via a seven-choice Likert-style interface. For this process, they provided general demographic information, and then responded to each question of

the represented subscales using a 1 (not at all true of me) to 7 (very true of me). The instructors of the regular sections of English 1000 also received emails soliciting their help in contacting the students, but were explicitly told not to offer extra credit or other reinforcement for participation. The students were given most of the semester to participate. As the end of the semester neared, a second round of emails was sent, asking for participation in the “post-test” version of the survey. This particular design was implemented in the hopes of tracking changes across the sixteen-week semester. After these results were collected, contact was made with the Writing Lab to add their data to the survey results. The Lab keeps track of all students who receive tutorials, and I had hoped that by comparing the beginning and end of semester surveys with the students who attended tutorials, a connection might be established as to how much effect the writing center might have had on the motivations and help seeking behaviors of the student population.

Several issues arose during the data collection that required the research method to be amended. The MSLQ is a reliable and valid survey for measuring student motivation (Pintrich, *Reliability*), but without a significant number of matched cases, the outcomes from the survey could not be presented with any significance. While the initial response was actually quite encouraging—seventy-four students responded, with sixty-six answering all the questions—the participation at the end of the semester dwindled. Forty-two surveys were collected from the post-test, and while that in itself was not cause for concern, the number of matching cases was quite problematic. Without the ability to compare matching cases, any extra data was effectively rendered useless under the current research plan. My method called for pre- and post-test data from each student,

which would then be compared to each student's attendance at the Writing Lab. After comparing the two sets of survey responses, only ten sets of matching data were compiled, and upon the addition of Writing Lab attendance the total number of complete cases had been whittled to three. So, while there were complete cases to work with, there simply were not enough to make any generalizable claims regarding the actual population.

The Writing Lab had records of the ten students who I had identified as having complete cases. After submitting and receiving clearance for an IRB addendum to the project, I contacted the Writing Lab for access to those records. I then asked for further participation from those ten students via email. Three of the ten responded that they would continue their participation, although only one of them could meet with me in person. I sent the other two a set of questions via email (Appendix C), which they responded to and sent back. The other student met with me on campus, where we spent approximately an hour collecting his answers to the same set of questions.

## Chapter 4

### Results

#### *Quantitative Data Analysis*

In order to salvage the usable data, I made attempts to correlate some of the scores that I had. The first was a correlation of each student's scores on the initial response. While there was some directional data, indicating that certain types of motivation were seemingly connected to other types, the fact that there were only sixty-six cases to assess still held the analysis back from any statistically significant results. Further, I would expect that the different scales would be significant when correlated to each other, as the MSLQ can be used in both full and abridged forms. (Duncan & McKeachie, 2004, p 114).

Table 1.1

Intercorrelations for Writing Lab Visits and Seven MSLQ Scales

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	N	M	SD	Alpha
1. Intrinsic Goal Orientation	1								66	4.57	1.1	0.77
2. Task Value	0.6**	1							66	4.84	1.17	0.85
3. Self Efficacy for Learning and Performance	0.5**	0.45**	1						66	4.92	1.1	0.93
4. Extrinsic Goal Orientation	0.51**	0.19	0.25*	1					66	5.44	1.04	0.71
5. Control of Learning Beliefs	0.31*	0.41**	0.71**	0.07	1				66	4.87	1.41	0.69
6. Peer Learning	0.33**	0.34**	0.13	0.27*	0.08	1			66	3.02	1.41	0.79
7. Help Seeking	0.25*	0.37**	0.06	0.13	0.06	0.68**	1		66	4.14	1.09	0.57
8. Writing Lab Visits	0.1	0.11	0.01	0.01	-0.08	0.01	0.22	1	66			

Note. \*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). \* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Although not statistically significant, the table does illustrate a *directional* correlation. This directional data can make a case for later studies, as, perhaps with a larger sample size, these sorts of “nods” toward correlation could be more powerful, and possibly significant to the population. The correlation values in the table indicate the level to which each scale is related, that is, they would be found occurring together, to the others. Again, because it is a reliable and valid measurement tool, the asterisks that denote significant correlations are expected between the MSLQ scales. However, while the connection between Writing Lab visits and the MSLQ scales does show positive correlation values in all cases but one measure, the scores are all below statistically significant values.

At that point, I supplemented the quantitative data with qualitative interviews from as many of the matching cases as possible. After receiving confirmation that this was indeed possible from the Campus IRB, those students were then contacted via email in order to schedule interviews the following semester (Winter 2006). Of the ten initial matching cases, there were only three who responded positively, and only one of them actually attended the interview in person, the other two responded to a set of interview questions via email. While this case study format can only show what these three students encountered and how they felt about it, it may still prove helpful to the involved parties to consider their responses and perhaps delve further into this sort of data collection. Prior research in the field supports such consideration, “as the questions of human behavior are inherently complex and multifaceted” (Pintrich, 2003 p. 668) and thus any and all research may prove useful, as long as it is held to certain standards, prevalent in the literature. Lauer and Asher, when summarizing the usefulness of the case study, promote

an analysis of interview data where relationships are identified, and “extensive descriptions, conclusions, hypotheses, and questions for future research” (1998, p. 34) are utilized to describe a small sample of a population. While the three interviews cannot be directly connected to the quantitative dataset, they can and do provide more context and specific responses from students who have completed the English 1000 course.

### *Interviews*

Again, while I cannot make the claim that these students are in any way representative of any other students, they still provide very important insights into the way our programs are seen. All three cases responded to the same set of questions (Appendix C) with varying degrees of specificity. The students have been randomly named June, Johnny, and Graham for the discussion of the following findings.

“June”

June answered the questionnaire via email. She expresses her thoughts clearly in text, but unfortunately had only visited the Writing Lab once during her time in English 1000. She had also not visited a tutor since then. This lack of attendance may be attributed to her goal statement, though. She writes, “My goal was to brush up on basic paper writing skills, grammar, and how to write a good paper.” She was also satisfied with the grade she received for the course, although was not asked to share it, and did not offer the information. Also in conjunction with her first statement, she “like[s] English classes and writing so it didn’t bother [her] to write papers and revise them.” However, she did utilize the service once, when she was “having trouble trying to pick a side...for a persuasive paper.” And while she does admit that the tutor “did give [her] good points to

work with,” she also maintains that she “eventually just went to [her] English teacher.” There are multiple issues at work here, illustrated through her short responses.

When June was faced with a difficulty she did seek outside help, indicating that she both knew of the service and was motivated enough to use it. She also seems to have a high level of control of her learning beliefs, and attributes her difficulty to “the misunderstanding...of directions...on [her] part,” rather than any fault of the tutor or instructor. The ambiguity regarding whether she truly believes this or simply phrased it this way for the response is possibly a function of the email medium that might have been clearer in a personal interview. It also seems clear that she is comfortable with her ability to navigate most of the course, as the Writing Lab offers aid for each step of the writing process, but June only visited once for pre-writing, in a sixteen-week semester. Another clear suggestion that she sees writing as *her* task rather than a shared responsibility for which she can ask for help, is her response “I worked hard on my papers, and I received good grades on them.” She very clearly *owns* both the work and the outcome, suggesting that, again, her control over her own learning beliefs is very strong.

In addition to the issue of her only visiting once, June’s response to this single pre-writing appointment is problematic in a different way as well. When prompted as to what she learned at the Writing Lab, her response was, “it was to help [me] start a paper, so [I] didn’t really learn anything.” There are obvious misconceptions at work here. Either June did not make the connection that prewriting skills *can* be learned behaviors, or the tutorial was not actually helpful in that way. One of the many areas of help available at the Writing Lab *is* the prewriting stage, but if those processes are not being presented in ways that add to a student’s repertoire of skills, there must be a disjunct

somewhere in the process. That June, in retrospect, feels like she did not learn anything is troubling. She left the meeting with ideas that helped her start the paper she had initially asked for help with, but has not yet made the connection that she could have learned more than just a beginning for that paper. There should have been some contextualizing of the actual skills that were discussed in the tutorial, and their applicability to other assignments. Whether this occurred and June did not retain it, or was not addressed at all, is unknown, as her responses do not mention the actual discourse of the tutorial.

Not knowing the actual discussion that occurs in a given tutorial may be an important issue in this case. However, it is not feasible for tutoring to be regulated in a “say this,” “don’t say this” sort of way. What makes tutoring (and teaching) composition infinitely useful and applicable to multiple students and environments is the nearly infinite set of ways that a given issue may be addressed. While this is one of the greatest boons to composition, it can also be seen as inherently flawed. June’s case is an example. If the tutor in the session had addressed her prewriting issue in a different manner, perhaps she would have responded differently, and made more (or even less) connections. While we cannot guarantee this outcome, there *are* multiple tutors available at the Writing Center for this type of research. Much like the connection between teaching and learning styles, the connection between tutoring and learning styles is vital to the process of actual learning to take place. Whether we blame tutor or student though, we have to ask ourselves *why* she left the tutorial feeling like she had not “learned.” Where exactly does her disjunct occur, and how can we, as tutors, teachers, and administrators of programs and services, make sure that these disjuncts occur with less frequency?

This should not be taken as an admonition for a regularization of either tutoring or teaching. The malleability of the tutoring session, and the creativity it fosters for both the tutor and the student should not be sacrificed. However, it seems very important to focus on the connection between the tutorial session itself and what the student actively walks away knowing or not knowing. June's brief synopsis of her visit allows for several lines of inquiry, and the other respondents in the study are no less interesting, offering other questions for later research to answer.

“Johnny”

The second respondent, Johnny, also responded via email, and is brief, yet explicit regarding both his goals and the outcomes he accomplished. His goal was “to get an A in the class and hopefully learn a little more about writing good papers for the rest of [his] college career.” He later states that he received that “A.” He also writes that he never attended a tutorial at the Writing Lab. His only lengthy comment regarding his English 1000 experience notes that his section seemed better than his peers' sections, but that there was still the need to “Pick some better material that is more relatable for the students because it was pretty dry and boring for most of the papers.” Johnny seems to illustrate a lack of engagement with the material, but was still successful at achieving his goals for the course. Thus it could be argued that he is highly intrinsically motivated, as the extrinsic values from the course material were obviously not as valuable as he might have liked. Again, possibly due to the medium of communication, his answers provide more lines of inquiry and further needs for revision of the research method.

One avenue of further research is his view of the English 1000 course. When asked about his section of the course in comparison to other sections which he may have

heard about from students, he responds that, “Mine apparently was way better than anyone else that I have talked to, simply for the fact that my TA was really cool and it didn't feel like it was a real class.” This idea of a “real class” may be disconcerting to instructors and administrators alike, but Johnny is likely not the only student that feels this way. In some way, he has made the connection that a “real class” cannot be “cool.” What, then, is the makeup of a “real class,” and how has this section failed to meet the requirements necessary to denote it as such? Unfortunately, with the data available, this only provides more assumptions and questions, as opposed to answers of a more empirical nature.

If, for example, English is compared to other freshmen level courses, which could be assumed to be seen as “real classes,” there are salient differences. In Math 1100, the freshmen algebra course designed for students who intend to take calculus courses as well, the student will find a relatively small class size (28) and have twenty sections to choose from for enrollment. This is actually fairly comparable to the community of English 1000, as the enrollment cap is set at twenty students. As noted earlier, there are also close to one hundred different sections to choose from. For the student who does not intend to pursue calculus courses, twenty more sections of Math 1120 are offered in a given semester. All three of these courses are taken by virtually every student. There are, of course, circumstances that allow for gifted students to “test out,” as well as transfers from other institutions, but the fact remains that these courses are full every semester. Without a significant difference in enrollments then, where does the “real”-ness lie? There should be no argument that content for these courses is very different. While composition can be objectively viewed up to a certain point, it is not particularly taxing to

see that math can be viewed under a much clearer lens, when it comes to objectivity. If the students are viewing their composition classes in this way, ie. English is not “real” but math and science are, it would account for Johnny’s response regarding his particular section.

Johnny also claims, “my TA was really cool” as his reasoning for why the class felt like it did. There may be an authority issue, then, at the heart of his argument. Whether his use of “cool” means “unprofessional,” “easy-going,” “approachable,” or any other number of general usages, it does provoke thought. While there may be some who subscribe to a rapport-based classroom, where the students are motivated by their general liking for the professor or instructor, it remains to be seen whether said classroom actually impresses upon the students the importance of the coursework. If this “cool” factor actually detracted from Johnny seeing the course as important, if that is what he means by “real,” then motivated or not, the goals of the course are not being met as administrators might like them to be. Again, this is supposition. It could just as likely be that the course seemed “real” enough to other students, and Johnny is simply not at a developmental place to have that happen. While both Johnny and June express a certain level of success with the course, as well as a general appreciation for composition, my third interviewee had slightly different views.

“Graham”

Graham, the third interviewee, completed a face-to-face interview and was very forthcoming regarding his experience in English 1000. He was very clear that he “never liked English” but knew he had to “get it over with.” This feeling of reticence is fairly common in the English 1000 classroom, and part of the higher education experience

would seem to be finding ways for the students to get past these sorts of ideas. Although Graham claims to have never used the Writing Lab, during the interview he is quite forthcoming regarding his reasoning behind his decision, and very honest about his desire to do so in the future. Hopefully, his responses can show some possible reasons for a lack of student usage, and with those reasons in mind, perhaps outreach programs can be better implemented to reach students in his same position.

Graham cites his own pride as the major reasoning behind not visiting the Writing Center for help with his papers in English 1000. He defends himself by saying, “I didn’t want [them] to think I was a failure.” This sort of thinking is clearly something that needs to be overcome by the interested parties, if both programs are to continue to flourish and serve their populations in the best possible ways. Seeing the Writing Lab, and perhaps consequently *any* outside assistance as a remedial service for failed writers is clearly not a helpful enterprise for students, but time and again, instructors get this response from students whom they refer to the Writing Lab for needed assistance. This connotation of tutoring being a remedial service shows up at the heart of Graham’s interview. While tutors and instructors see it as a helpful service which, yes, can be an aid to remedial writers, this is by no means the primary type of student that visits the Writing Lab. Typically, it is the students with high help seeking behaviors that we would expect to see utilizing the service, which is why it was a part of the initial goal of this study. For students like Graham, the expectation would be a low set of scores among help seeking questions, as his verbal responses are focusing on his pride being a stumbling block in asking for aid.

However, he also turns an introspective corner during the interview as well, and while it might come too little, too late for his English 1000 course, it may serve him better in the future. He continues to talk about what he learned in the course, and how when he writes now, he does not “feel ashamed about writing” and actively plans his papers for other courses, rather than procrastinating. He also brings up the subject of his upcoming semester and his first Writing Intensive course, where he does plan to utilize the tutoring supports in place as part of that program. Why the change in his beliefs? There is no particular point which highlights this, but he mentions that, “once you get over your pride” the tutoring seems much more useful and approachable. What actually “got him over” the issue, though, is still unclear. If, in later studies, this question could be pursued, it could be of great help to the Writing Lab and the First-year composition Program to help facilitate the process for other students like Graham.

Another startling moment in the interview came when Graham was asked about his preparedness for the aforementioned Writing Intensive course. When asked if he felt that English 1000 (and his section in particular) had prepared him for the WI courses, his immediate response was “not yet.” However, when asked if English 1000 was a successful course (again, for his section), he responded just as quickly in the affirmative. In order to highlight how important (and strange) this pair of responses is, it must be noted that the English 1000 course is the *only* pre-requisite that students *must* complete before they are allowed to enroll in WI courses. It should follow that the English 1000 course *actively prepares* students for the work they will do in the two WI courses which they must pass to complete the University’s writing requirement. How then, can Graham assert, with no obvious doubts, that his course was successful, if he is enrolling in his WI

courses unprepared? It seems that his view of a successful course may be at odds with the program's views.

This may become more clear when Graham mentions that the class (students) could "take over the course," directing discussion in ways that they saw fit. This highlights a possible issue which may affect both the Writing Lab and the Composition Program, that of instructor preparation and pedagogy. While this may or may not have an effect on Writing Lab attendance, it does provide more insight into the experiences of a composition student on this campus. Not being able to see the instructor as an authority puts both the particular instructor as well as the programs involved at a disadvantage, which in turn puts students, especially those that could use the extra help, even further distanced from the aid they need.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

One of the main drawbacks to this study, even after the move to a multimodal approach, was that I had no way to connect the suppositions from the interviews with the quantitative MSLQ findings. While I submitted the student numbers that I had on file to the Writing Lab, I only received email addresses back, as it was clear in the IRB addendum that the students should still remain as anonymous as possible. In retrospect, this was an important drawback that should have been better considered.

Strictly looking at the quantitative data, I expected that the Help Seeking scores would be related to the number of Writing Lab visits in fairly direct ways. That is, those students who reported higher scores on the Help Seeking scale would also be the students visiting the Writing Lab more often. However, Writing Lab visits as a construct for this study are not significantly correlated with any of the MSLQ scales. Its highest correlation, though, at 0.22, *is* with the Help Seeking scale. With more participants, I am confident that this directional data could have been found to be statistically significant, in that even with minimal participants, I still was able to find at least positive levels of correlation.

While the number of cases is clearly an issue, it could also be that the measure (the MSLQ) is perhaps not the instrument best suited for this type of research. However, in that Duncan and McKeachie list eighteen countries that it has been used in, as well as the fact it is both designed for specific course level research and is able to be adapted to most classroom settings, from high school through higher education levels (2004), it

seems far more likely that more cases would have garnered better results, as opposed to a different set of questions.

In terms of the reliability of the questions that were included on the abridged form in this study, the alpha coefficients are quite comparable to those that have been compiled for the MSLQ. The coefficient alpha represents the reliability between the questions on a given scale, that is, whether the four individual questions within the Help Seeking scale can be relied upon to produce the same answers from a single student. In the case of this study, my coefficients are very close to those included with the MSLQ, further supporting that the test was measuring the right traits, but there simply were not enough cases to produce significant findings. Even within the Help Seeking variable, the comparable coefficient is 0.52, whereas mine is 0.57. This 0.05 difference is common across the measures that I used, except for Extrinsic Goal Orientation, which showed a 0.09 difference, although still higher than the reliability listed for the MSLQ. The only scales where my coefficients were not above the desired levels were in Task Value, 0.85 as opposed to 0.90, and Self Efficacy, which met the desired value at 0.93. What this reliability analysis is able to show is that the measure itself appears to be the right one for this group of students. Obviously, though, more data is necessary for further studies to produce significant findings.

### *Help Seeking and Peer Learning*

The focus of the project was to understand how the students felt about getting assistance from the Writing Lab tutors, and then whether they actually did use the service or not. In connection with this usage, though, the idea that they may see the tutors as peers, rather than authorities is also a possibility. Most sections of the English 1000

course also use a peer review process in conjunction with instructor comments. However, this could predispose towards seeing the tutorials as peer reviews, if the communication is not particularly clear. As instructors, particularly at the MA level, it can be at times hard for the student to have clear boundaries as to who the authority is as well.

The English department expects such issues to rise with the students they serve, and prepares their instructors accordingly. Again, in their Instructor's Guide, a section entitled "Problems of Authority Created by this View of Composition" reads,

Students uneasily balanced between adolescence and adulthood become uneasy when a teacher, sometimes one only five years older than they are, criticizes not only the formal correctness of their writing, but its persuasiveness and tone. Some accept the teacher's authority reluctantly, some challenge it directly, some snipe. Experience tells us that the friction between oppositional students and general education instructors is a predictable part of the drama of intellectual development on a college campus (p. 1-3).

In this same, way, if students goes to seek help from someone they accept as a peer, their peer learning scores should be higher. But, if they visit the Writing Lab, expecting "professional" help, they might instead have higher help seeking scores. The issue here, I think, is whether or not they actually view those tutors as peers or as professionals. If, in English 1000, the teacher's authority is sometimes being challenged, it may very well be possible that the same thing could happen in the Writing Lab. Furthermore, if the authority of the tutor is not recognized, and that authority is what the student is looking for, it makes sense that the student may not continue to use the service.

It was my goal to collect this data in order to answer these sorts of questions. If the data showed students with high help seeking or peer learning behaviors, accompanied by high or low numbers of return visits, it could present an opportunity for changes in the

way the Writing Lab approaches marketing itself. For instance, if students are scoring themselves as high in help seeking, yet low in peer learning, and then have multiple visits to the Writing Lab as well, it would be somewhat indicative of Writing Lab success. That is, the students value outside help, and see the Lab as a place where that help can be accessed. However, if the same high help seeking scores were present on the MSLQ, and we were to see little to no return visits, or no visits altogether, there are multiple lines of inquiry that could be followed to address that disconnect. It could be, for instance, that the students simply are not getting exposed to the Lab's services. It could also be that they see the tutors as peers, which, according to their self-analysis, are not as valuable to them as help from more seemingly professional outlets. In the same way, by including some of the other subsets in the analysis, it is possible that, simply, students are less motivated to succeed in the course. If this were the case, pedagogical changes could be implemented in the instructor training courses to focus on such issues. The biggest issues that this study presents for me, though, are that all of these ideas land squarely in the "what if?" category. Because of the low level of responses, correlations cannot be stated here with any significance, however, after a revision of methods, perhaps this sort of data could be more helpful, as it could provide concrete directions for better service to the student population at the University of Missouri-Columbia.

### *Conclusion*

With so many possible lines of inquiry to explore further, it seems that more research of this nature could offer both the Composition Program and the Writing Lab ways to more effectively engage students. And while these three cases serve to highlight some misunderstandings that students may have concerning both programs, there is of

course a population that is affected in very positive ways through the efforts of the Composition Program and the Writing Lab. However, even with these positive outcomes for some students there are myriad issues and limitations imposed upon both units. In that they serve a student population that may not be interested in general education classes, the Composition Program has, at the very least, to deal with students who are disinterested in the course. The Writing Lab has perhaps more of these sorts of issues, as it is a service that the students willingly choose to utilize. No matter how successful tutorials are, they students have to actually attend before learning can occur. These issues, though, seem to point towards further research into the motivations that students have, and perhaps how they feel they are best motivated to succeed. This study of motivation, as well as other learning issues can come from the social sciences. Merging the concepts from such fields as Educational Psychology, Sociology, and Psychology with the field of Composition should bring a greater focus on student learning in our classrooms, as well as give us new ways to explain such student-centered issues when they arise.

However, this addition of new sciences to our theories of composition comes with it's own problems. The concepts and terminology connected with the social sciences must be made clear to those without backgrounds in those fields. Also, as the social sciences traditionally make use of quantitative data and statistical calculations, these findings and processes must be made clear, even translated in some cases, so that the audience in the field of Composition can make use of them. Generally then, those in the field of Composition must make an effort to become more interdisciplinary than we already are. While writing crosses all disciplinary boundaries, perhaps so should the

teachers and theorists of writing. This is no small task, though, but the outcomes, for both students and teachers alike, should be well worth the effort.

With my roots in Educational Psychology and English Composition, as well as a multi-semester experience at the Writing Lab as a tutor and with the English department as an English 1000 instructor, the interactions between programs and the navigation of those programs by students is integral to my progress as an educator and researcher. However, I do not feel that this project clearly represents what needed to be done to examine the relationship that it was designed to. This interaction between the Composition Program and the Writing Lab is a very important one, and should be examined in more depth than this study could have, even if it had been more successful. In that the Writing Lab is also the “training ground” for MA instructors, it seems even more appropriate for them to understand how their time as tutors prepares them for teaching, and how the work they do relates to the composition students. On the other side, the instructors need to have an understanding of the best practices for the achievement of motivation in their students, and how it is possible to boost that achievement by utilizing certain other services, such as the Writing Lab, and further, how to overcome the processes which may be hindering students from the usage of that service. The idea of understanding is key in this enterprise. If we as educators understand our students, as well as the ways we can facilitate their learning, it can only benefit us as instructors in the future, which in turn benefits our students as well.

My understanding has also been one of the keys here. Part of any research project is where the research should go next. I would like to, as a way of both synthesizing what I

have learned from this project, as well as preparing for later ones, outline some guidelines for continued research in this area.

While I started the process attempting to quantify the behaviors of the student population, it seems like this sort of study demands closer, and perhaps more subjective attention. I still believe that some human behaviors, including motivation, can be quantified, but in this case, actively talking to students over time seems to be the best-case scenario. Were I to pursue the study again, I would target a particular cohort, rather than the entire population in English 1000, perhaps two to five classes worth of students. I would also enlist the aid of the instructors, as opposed to simply asking them to mention the study in class. This would allow for between forty and one hundred students, all of whom I might have multiple contacts with within a semester. The instructors would be helpful as well, where I could become clearer about what was being asked of the students in class. With this information at my disposal, interviews with the students could become more salient, as I would be able to ask questions regarding individual happenings within particular classrooms, as opposed to being limited to broad questions about their experience.

The ideal situation would also include having the students and instructor sign on as part of the study, rather than simply responding to unsolicited emails. I believe that if the students understand that it is something that they have “signed up for,” I can expect them take more responsibility in taking part in the requirements. I also would like to be present for the actual classes, thus building a relationship with the people in the study, in order to facilitate better information gathering. While I refer to this as the ideal situation, I still think it is easily achievable, with some preparatory planning. Leaving out the online

survey, and instead meeting students on their own terms, both in class and out, could be very rewarding in terms of fostering a greater knowledge base, particularly given some of the themes that have come out of this research.

Besides the themes for future research in these areas, this study has also served to define what areas are important to me within composition as well. My interests in student navigation have come further into focus as I have come into contact with more sources, theories, and research projects. In particular, and increasingly salient in composition, are the theories regarding social networks, which are directly in line with Pintrich's initial claims about student motivation. What this study has done for me—in retrospect—is to highlight a part of a network, where our students find themselves at the nexus. I have said at multiple times throughout this process, that I was interested in their navigation, the navigation of the network that is their college experience. While compositionists and rhetoricians are turning towards networks as a way to educate students, to understand behaviors, to produce writing, and to generally better understand the environment that we, in our many roles (writers, teachers, scholars, humans) live in (Edbauer, 2005, Phelps, 1998, Shaviro, 2003), educational studies are highlighting networks as critical to student success (Bain, 2004, Light, 2001, McKeachie & Svinicki, 2006, Kuh et al, 2005). Again, in retrospect, Pintrich's claim that context, including social and cultural forces, should be considered when looking at student motivation mirrors what composition theory is moving toward. At the beginning of this study, I only saw my desk in the Writing Lab, and later my classrooms, where this fluctuating population of students came and went, and I wondered how successfully they were able to make their transitions through later courses. These preliminary ideas led to a research project that seems to have

led to more questions. At this point, I see the time that it took to complete this study, as well as the stumbles, trips, and falls that occurred along the way as stepping stones, rather than wasted time. While this was never meant to be a longitudinal study, I believe that research like this, in order to be truly successful, needs to be longitudinal. It also still needs to be focused on the students' navigation—perhaps over their college careers, from their initial day in First-year composition, through their Writing Lab usage, through their WI courses, and finally, as they enter the job markets in their chosen degrees. This sort of longitudinal research is currently being done at other institutions, such as the Harvard Study for Undergraduate Writing, where Nancy Sommers is currently preparing two books on the findings of a cohort of 400 matriculating students (Longitudinal). When these books are published, it seems that they could serve as a template for the sort of longitudinal work that I would like to implement. While my current project has served to highlight further research areas, what it has truly accomplished for me is to point me in the direction of better sources, of better methods, of better and longer study, and of better motivating factors, which, in the end, was what I set out to look for in the beginning.

## References

- A Note to Students. (2007). Retrieved Spring 2007, from University of Missouri-Columbia. Department of English Web site:  
<http://english.missouri.edu/english1000/anote.php>
- Bain, K. (2004). *What the best college teachers do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Cushman, T., Marx, L., Brower, C., Holahan, K., Boquet, E. (2005). Using focus groups to assess writing center effectiveness. *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, 29, 1-5.
- Duncan, T. G. & McKeachie, W. J. (2004). The making of the motivated strategies for learning questionnaire. *Educational Psychologist*, 40, 117-128.
- Edbauer, J. (2005). Unframing models of public distribution: From rhetorical situation to rhetorical ecologies. *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*, 35, 5-24.
- Enders, D. (2005). Assessing the writing center: A qualitative tale of a quantitative study. *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, 29, 6-9.
- Hocks, E. (2006). About the writing lab: History of the writing lab. Retrieved August 29, 2006, from <http://learningcenter.missouri.edu/writinglab/writinglababoutus.shtml>
- Instructor's Guide. (2007). Retrieved Spring 2007, from University of Missouri-Columbia. Department of English Web site:  
[http://english.missouri.edu/english1000/instructor\\_guide1.php](http://english.missouri.edu/english1000/instructor_guide1.php)
- Kalikoff, B. (2001). From coercion to collaboration: A mosaic approach to writing center assessment. *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, 26, 5-7.
- Karabenick, S. A. (2004). Perceived achievement goal structure and college student help seeking. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 96, 569-581.

- Karabenick, S. A. & Knapp, J. R. (1991). Relationship of academic help seeking to the use of learning strategies and other instrumental achievement behavior in college students. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 83, 221-230.
- Karabenick, S. A. & Knapp, J. R. (1988). Help seeking and the need for academic assistance. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80, 406-408.
- Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J. and Associates (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Lauer, J. M., & William, A. J. (1988). *Composition research: Empirical designs*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lerner, N. (2001). Choosing beans wisely. *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, 26, 1-5.
- Light, R. J. (2001). *Making the most of college: Students speak their minds*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Liu, B. L., & Mandes, H. (2005). The idea of a writing center meets classroom-based tutoring. In C. Spigelman and L. Grobaman (Eds.), *On location: Theory and practice in classroom-based writing tutoring* (pp. 87-100). Logan: Utah State University Press.
- Longitudinal Study Highlights Importance of Writing (Fall 1999). Retrieved Summer 2007, from Harvard University Web site:  
<http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~expos/index.cgi?section=archive&version=longitudinal>
- McKeachie, W. J., & Svinicki, M. D. (2006). *McKeachie's teaching tips* (12th ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

- Niiler, L. (2005). The numbers speak again: A continued statistical analysis of writing center outcomes. *The Writing Lab Newsletter*, 29, 13-15.
- North, S. M. (1984). The idea of the writing center. *College English*, 46, 443-446.
- Phelps, L. W. (1988). *Composition as a Human Science*. Oxford UP: New York.
- Pintrich, P. R. (2003). A motivational science perspective on the role of student motivation in learning and teaching context. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95, 667-686.
- Pintrich, P. R. (2004). A conceptual framework for assessing motivation and self-regulated learning in college students. *Educational Psychology Review*, 16, 385–407.
- Pintrich, P. R. & Smith, D. A. F. (1993). Reliability and predictive validity of the motivated strategies for learning questionnaire (MSLQ). *Educational & Psychological Measurement*, 53, 801-814.
- Ryan, A. M., Gheen, M. H., & Midgley, C. (1998). Why do some students avoid asking for help? An examination of the interplay among students' academic efficacy, teachers' social-emotional role and the classroom goal structure. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 528-535.
- Shaviro, S. (2003). *Connected, or, what it means to live in the network society*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis.
- Wallace, R., Jackson, A., & Wallace, S. L. (2000). *Reforming college composition: Writing the wrongs*. Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group.
- Wentzel, K. R., & Wigfield, A. (1998). Academic and social motivational influences on students' academic performance. *Educational Psychology Review*, 10, 155-175.

Wolters, C. A. (1998). Self-regulated learning and college students' regulation of motivation. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 90, 224-235.

Witte, S. P. and Faigley, L. (1983). *Evaluating writing programs*. Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale.

## Appendix A

### Letter for Participant Solicitation

Dear Potential Study Participants,

During the past Fall semester, you responded to two online surveys as part of an English 1000 motivation study. Due to a low amount of responses to those surveys, I am asking for more information from those that did participate.

If possible, I would like to set up an interview with you to ask you some questions about your experience in English 1000 and with the Campus Writing Center, as well as your progress in your writing courses this semester.

As before, all identifying information will be removed, and only your responses will be considered in my final report. Your responses to these questions will have no effect on your class standing, grades, present or future association with the University of Missouri-Columbia, or status on an athletic team.

If you choose to offer your participation, our interview may take up to an hour, depending on your responses. If there are questions that you feel uncomfortable with, you may choose not to answer them. Also, you may choose to stop responding all together at any time. If you have any questions, please direct them to Aaron Harms ([aahz67@mizzou.edu](mailto:aahz67@mizzou.edu)) or Professor Martha A. Townsend ([TownsendM@missouri.edu](mailto:TownsendM@missouri.edu)) and we will be happy to address your concerns. You may also contact the University of Missouri-Columbia Campus Institutional Review Board at 573-882-9585. You may keep a copy of this letter for your records.

Thank you for your participation,

Aaron Harms  
MA candidate  
English Department  
University of Missouri-Columbia

## Appendix B

### Student Survey

The questions below are listed by subtest (scale) of the MSLQ. For the purposes of the actual online survey, the questions will of course be randomly ordered. The actual survey can be found online at:

<http://bengal.missouri.edu/~aahz67/survey>

#### General Information

Gender  
Class Rank  
Section  
Age  
Student Number

#### The MSLQ Items

##### Intrinsic Goal Orientation

1. In a class like this, I prefer material that really challenges me so I can learn new things.
2. In a class like this, I prefer course material that arouses my curiosity, even if it is difficult to learn.
3. The most satisfying thing for me in this course is trying to understand the content as thoroughly as possible.
4. When I have an opportunity in this class, I choose course assignments that I can learn from even if they don't guarantee a good grade.

##### Extrinsic Goal Orientation

1. Getting a good grade in this class is the most satisfying thing for me right now.
2. The most important thing for me right now is improving my overall grade point average, so my main concern in this class is getting a good grade.
3. If I can, I want to get better grades in this class than most of the other students.
4. I want to do well in this class because it is important to show my ability to my family, friends, employer, or others.

##### Task Value

1. I think I will be able to use what I learn in this course in other courses.
2. It is important for me to learn the course material in this class
3. I am very interested in the content area of this course.

4. I think the course material in this class is useful for me to learn.
5. I like the subject matter of this course.
6. Understanding the subject matter of this course is very important to me.

#### Control of Learning Beliefs

1. If I study in appropriate ways, then I will be able to learn the material in this course.
2. It is my own fault if I don't learn the course material in this class.
3. If I try hard enough, then I will understand the course material.
4. If I don't understand the course material, it is because I didn't try hard enough.

#### Self-Efficacy for Learning & Performance

1. I believe I will receive an excellent grade in this class.
2. I'm certain I can understand the most difficult material presented in the readings for this course.
3. I'm confident I can learn the basic concepts taught in this course.
4. I'm confident I can understand the most complex material presented by the instructor in this course.
5. I'm confident I can do an excellent job on the assignments and tests in this course.
6. I expect to do well in this class.
7. I'm certain I can master the skills being taught in this class.
8. Considering the difficulty of this course, the teacher, and my skills, I think I will do well in this course.

#### Peer Learning

1. When studying for this course, I often try to explain the material to a classmate or friend.
2. I try to work with other students from this class to complete the course assignments.
3. When studying for this course, I often set aside time to discuss course material with a group of students from the class.

#### Help Seeking

1. Even if I have trouble learning the material in this class, I try to do the work on my own, without help from anyone.
2. I ask the instructor to clarify concepts I don't understand well.
3. When I can't understand the material in this course, I ask another student in this class for help.
4. I try to identify students in this class whom I can ask for help if necessary.

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions

The following questions were included for all interviews. Students were allowed to ignore any questions they chose.

- What was your goal in English 1000? Are you satisfied with the grade you received in English 1000?
- If you were not satisfied with your grade, why didn't you visit the Writing Center more often?
- What are the things you enjoyed most about English 1000?
- Name some important things that you learned in your English 1000 class.
- What did you learn at the writing center?
- Have you visited the writing center since then?
- How are you using the things that you learned in the English 1000 this semester/now?
- Do you feel like your English 1000 experience prepared you for WI courses?
- Do you feel like you were successful in your English 1000 course?
- How do you feel like your English 1000 section compare to others' that you know about?
- Why did you choose to visit the WC?
- Have you used the WI tutors? Why/What for?
- What did you go to a tutor for?
- What suggestions do you have to make English 1000 better, more successful, etc?
- What advice do you have for others taking English 1000 now/in the future?
- What should English 1000 teach? Does it?
- What was your experience at the WC?
- Did it help in your English 1000 class?
- Were there any mishaps, differences of opinion or advice between tutors and instructors? (such as?)