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The Effects of Digital Technology on Basic Writing

Leslie Denise Norris
Old Dominion University

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THE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ON BASIC WRITING

by

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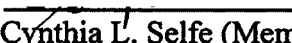
May 2012

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY ON BASIC WRITING

Leslie Denise Norris
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At this study's research site—a small, Virginia community college—faculty, staff and students use digital technology to share information daily, which could cause a problem for some students: students may need digital literacy instruction before the college requires those courses. Another potential problem is that scholars (Stephens, Houser, and Cowan) indicate that some instructors across the academy treat students negatively if students do not demonstrate digital, rhetorical dexterity when communicating—particular digital skills that some students lack.

For this study, I surveyed basic writing (BW) instructors and students at the research site to learn more about their digital experiences. The surveys yielded results that complicate BW. For example, many students have some digital skills, but may also want simultaneous digital and word literacy instruction in their course. And, most students and instructors value digital technology. Also, instructors have digital experience but may be reluctant to teach digital, rhetorical dexterity despite their potential ability to do so.

I conclude that the site needs a hybrid BW (HBW) course. In the HBW course that I propose, instructors and students share digital experiences; instructors help students build digital and word literacy simultaneously; and students' assignments help them practice and develop digital, rhetorical dexterity.

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This dissertation is dedicated to my mother and father, Virginia W. Norris and Harry R. Norris; thanks for everything—especially for always listening and being supportive.

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I also thank my fellow English faculty members and 2009 basic writing students at the site for answering my research questions and allowing me to learn more about their digital experiences.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

If higher education is to serve students' educational needs, higher education should address the demands of the prevailing culture inside and outside of its walls. Speaking as a doctoral student and full-time English professor in 2011, to be able to have a career after college, many students must attend college for one particular purpose: to obtain the skills we need to be marketable and employable. The days of attending college just to fulfill intellectual curiosity may be long since over for most people; most students want their education to lead to a well-paying, meaningful career. Through the Higher Education Research Institute¹ (HERI) study, 72% of the students at four-year institutions indicate that "the chief benefit of a college education is that it increases one's earning power" (Pryor, et al. 31). And, in the HERI study, 84.7% of the students indicate that when deciding to go to college "to be able to get a better job" is "very important" in their decision making process. The HERI results clearly indicate the reasons why many students attend college today. However, with even the best education, some students may find that starting a meaningful career or just a paying job may be nearly impossible. The July 2011 U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics report indicates that nearly 10% of the U.S. population is unemployed ("The Employment Situation"). The Bureau of Labor Statistics data suggests that people who do not have

¹ The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2010 report is created through HERI at the University of California, Los Angeles. Through the survey, HERI gathers information on a variety of topics from over 200,000 freshman students at 279 four-year colleges (Pryor, et al. 5). The survey "results...reflect the characteristics, behavior, or attitudes of roughly 15,000 first-year students nationally."

the skills that the dominant culture seems to value could have extreme difficulty finding meaningful employment. To be responsive to students' need to prepare for a life outside the academy, the academy should demonstrate its concern for students' well-being by making certain students build the necessary skills that the dominant culture values. In his September 2009 remarks to Hudson Valley Community College, President Barack Obama suggests that economic growth and innovation in the U.S. will depend on the ability of the U.S. educational system—particularly community colleges—to teach students necessary skills. When junior, or community, colleges began in the U.S. in the early twentieth century, they were designed to provide students with both a general education equal to what was provided at four-year schools as well as vocational or occupational training (Cohen and Brawer 4). Responsive vocational or occupational training today should provide students with the kinds of marketable skills that President Obama suggests will be important to our country's success.

It appears that computer-related skills training will help students respond to the exigencies of twenty-first century culture. In his address, President Obama mentions that “another key to strengthening education, entrepreneurship, and innovation in communities...is to harness the full power of the Internet.” President Obama's remarks suggest that the U.S. educational systems should allow students multiple opportunities to build their digital technology skills. President Obama's predictions are also supported by statistical data. For example, the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2003 “Computer and Internet Use at Work Summary” says that “in October 2003, 77 million persons used a computer at work...workers [that] accounted for 55.5

percent of total employment.” In the workplace, computers have become increasingly important because there has been a “move away from craft and assembly manufacturing toward computer-mediated processes...” (Ryan 10). And, employers expect workers to have the proper education. Specifically, there are “new requirements for education and the ability to manage complexity...” There has also been a “redesign of many jobs to include computer-based work...” suggesting that computer skills have become invaluable in the workplace. But, computers are not only important at work; they are also becoming an important part of our personal lives. According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s report “Internet Use in the United States: October 2009,” over 70% of the U.S. households have internet access. Smith and Caruso report in *The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2010*² that “90% of respondent students use social networking Web sites and 87% are on Facebook” (21). And, computer skills are becoming increasingly valuable within the academy. In their 2008 position statement on twenty-first century literacies, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)³ suggests that students need to have digital literacy. Colleges are disseminating information about their schools and programs (Smith and Caruso; Madge et al), managing students’ course work (Millward; Smith and Caruso), and communicating with students (Millward; Stephens, Houser and Cowan; Sturgeon

² Smith and Caruso created *The ECAR Study of Undergraduate Students and Information Technology, 2010* report for the EDCAUSE Center for Applied Research. EDUCAUSE has educators and administrators from four-year and two-year colleges and other groups interested in educational technology as members. EDUCAUSE reports that their organization’s mission is “to foster better decision making by conducting and disseminating research and analysis about the role and implications of information technology in higher education” (2).

³ The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) is the premiere membership organization for English teachers and instructors and related program administrators from K-12 and higher education institutions.

and Walker) all via computer-related technology. The growth in computer use in the workplace, at home, and in school suggests that computers and related technologies are an influential part of our culture that will impact our ability to achieve our individual definition for success in yet unknown ways. Because computers and related technologies appear to be so important, and the use of computers is growing exponentially, computer skills training should take place in every higher education course that can prove that it can make use of digital technology. If students have multiple opportunities to learn a discipline's digital technology-related skills and preferences, students will have more opportunities to build digital literacy that will help them function effectively inside the academy and beyond.

One area of postsecondary composition in English studies impacted by digital technology is basic writing (BW). College-level BW is usually made up of freshman students whose placement test scores indicate that they are not ready for college-level composition course work. Often, BW students are barred from entering certain credit-bearing college courses until they complete their basic course work because their test scores suggest that they will not do well in many freshman-level courses, such as first-year composition (FYC). BW became the focus of my dissertation study because BW has been the focus of my research and pedagogy and a part of my teaching responsibilities for much of my nearly seven years as a community college English professor.

I designed my study because I wanted to examine the issues I have discussed thus far, others I will discuss in this introduction, and to address the following research question:

In what ways might BW professors' and their students' interaction with computers and digital technology inside and outside of the academy complicate the BW curriculum in the twenty-first century?

The purpose of my study was to:

- Examine BW professors' and students' opinions about digital competency and skill training within a writing class,
- Assess BW professors' and students' interactions with digital technology inside and outside of the academy,
- Determine what skills and competencies BW students need to be considered digitally literate, and
- Contribute to the debate about the content of the BW curriculum.

Many people in the academy seem to believe that digital literacy development should be kept strictly within the walls of computer classes, but educators have taken interdisciplinary approaches to course work and research in the past to help students; composition studies needs an interdisciplinary approach as well. Scholars have drawn from a variety of interdisciplinary topics, such as technology (Selfe *Technology*), literacy (Tyner; Selfe et al.), multiliteracies (Cope and Kalantzis), and new media (Selfe "Students"; Wysocki et al.) to determine what students need to know to be successful communicators. The field of rhetoric and composition has also been multimodal and interdisciplinary (Lauer 106) and is the field that I draw from when I refer to rhetorical communication throughout this document. Digital literacy training belongs in composition-related courses because composition introduces students to the

formal communication skills students will need across disciplines. Because writing, rhetoric and effective communication have all been within English studies' domain, and much of our written communication is taking place via digital technology, teaching effective, rhetorical communication via digital technology should also be important within English studies. In fact, other departments in the academy are looking to the English department to help students develop rhetorical, digital communications skills. When a nursing instructor cornered me at one of my employer college's social functions nearly six years ago complaining that she was "sick of" receiving email messages that contained poor grammar and punctuation and inappropriate language from her students and "sick of" receiving complaints from potential employers about the language in the student nurses' emails, the nursing instructor was assuming that my department—the college's English department—should be teaching students how to communicate rhetorically via digital technology. During the conversation with the nursing instructor, I realized that students needed something that was not being provided consistently at my college where pedagogical walls between the computer department and English department were not being torn down fast enough; the students needed to learn rhetorical, digital writing skills. The nursing instructor was looking to my English department and me to address students' rhetorical digital communications training because the English department taught writing and rhetoric; however, training in rhetorical situation assessment in digital environments was not a course that the college's administrators had suggested for my department. I realized that addressing how students performed rhetorically via digital technology, such as the style and tone of their email messages, required more than

teaching students grammar and punctuation rules or rhetorical modes. I had noticed that often students' poor email writing was the result of students not understanding when to shift from such informal acts as using abbreviations in text messages or emails to friends to writing formal emails in standard English⁴ to instructors. Students did not understand that the digital rhetorical situation required a shift from an informal to a formal style of writing or when to make that shift. Students did not understand the socio-cultural implications of the digital, communications texts they were creating and the technology that they were using. I posit that someone needs to teach students how to analyze the rhetorical situation in relationship to digital technology and help students consider the socio-cultural aspects of that form of communication while helping them apply proper composition rules to address those situations. I posit that that someone teaching students digital rhetorical communication should be composition or writing instructors because we encourage our students to assess the rhetorical situation of their communications efforts and respond to it appropriately—activities that now must be performed in digital technology-based discourse.

But, the phrase “digital technology” is not a simple phrase and, perhaps, must be defined and redefined when discussed to determine which technology should be a part of English studies. Within English Studies, scholars' use of the terms “technology,” “digital,” and “computers” tend to overlap. My research focuses on digital technology, which I define as computer-based technology and supporting

⁴ There has been much debate about what is considered standard English (Bex and Watts). Some researchers want to divide standard English between written English and spoken English. This study focuses on written English as defined in most writing handbooks.

computer-based infrastructure primarily used for communication in school, at work and in social situations.

Because of its significance inside and outside of the academy, digital technology has redefined literacy beyond a focus on words (Kress; Cope and Kalantzis) and has led to phrases such as “digital literacy” or “digital literacies” (Lankshear and Knobel) and the much broader “technological literacy” (Selfe, *Technology*)—all of which have made some educators’ solitary focus on word literacy obsolete. It’s our dependency inside and outside of the academy on digital technology for communication that has complicated literacy instruction because educators must determine what it means to be “literate,” such as where digital technology fits within the literacy debate, before we can develop a curriculum or specific course that successfully advances students’ literacy development. I posit that the academy’s attempt to build students’ literacy will not be successful if the academy is not providing the kind and amount of literacy development that students need to be successful communicators inside and outside of the academy. Research suggests that twenty-first century students need rhetorical, digital and word literacy training simultaneously to communicate effectively via digital technology.

I became intrigued with the role digital technology should play within BW classes when I was hired to be a full-time instructor in fall 2004 to teach BW (known as developmental writing), developmental reading, and FYC on one campus of the research site. My previous positions for other organizations in print, digital and Web-based communications and publishing as well as my work in undergraduate- and graduate-level college English courses had enabled me to learn a great deal about

computer-based communication. While working for previous employers, I had acted as a corporate trainer training supervisors and colleagues in how to use digital technology for various communications efforts. My previous experiences with digital technology had proven to me that digital technology had and would continue to play a major role in academic, business and personal communications. Specifically, I had come to believe that the more we use digital technology to facilitate communication, the more we would come to rely on and expect digital technology-use in our society's communications efforts. Because of my views on and experiences with digital technology, I asked that all of the writing courses assigned to me at the research site take place in computer labs so that I could help students build their digital and word literacy simultaneously to ensure that digital technology would be a natural part of their communications and composition efforts if it wasn't already. My first semester teaching at the research site, I accepted handwritten or printed assignments from students, but I soon realized that submitting the assignments digitally through Blackboard—the digital course management system (CMS)—and using other digital technology to support academic instruction provided advantages. The CMS provided the student and me with an automatic, online backup for the students' work accessible from any location that had an Internet connection; the students and I could record our comments about the students' work using Microsoft Word's comments or track changes features and post those comments to the CMS; and exposure to Microsoft Word's and Blackboard's features gave students several opportunities to build or enhance their digital technology skills. I knew that some students would embrace the digital technology because they were already using it, and some students would resist

the digital technology. I tried to make certain that there were lots of digital options for students who were interested in the digital technology, and I was flexible with the students who resisted the digital technology. But, experience had shown me that allowing students to completely and permanently resist digital technology in their educational and communications activities would mean enabling those students to exclude themselves from an important part of our learning and communications efforts today. I now require all of my students to submit their work through Blackboard and to use digital technology to complete their course work, and I teach the students the digital technology skills that they need to perform in my courses.

In 2004, I applied to the Old Dominion University (ODU) English doctoral program and chose the professional writing and new media track because that track most closely related to my career and research experiences and interests, and I thought that it would best support my career and research goals as an English professor. Specifically, I had noticed that most of my students—developmental English and FYC—seemed comfortable with the computer, but their computer skills and experiences were just as diverse as their reading and writing abilities. I also noticed that most students seemed to struggle more with improving their reading and writing skills than they seemed to struggle with improving their computer skills. My newly found experience with teaching college-level writing students along with my previous experiences with digital technology pushed me to want to research the effects of digital technology in writing classes. Also, because my BW students seemed so far behind their FYC peers in reading and writing skills, but often equal to their FYC peers in digital technology skills, I wanted to figure out how digital technology could

enable BW students to bring their standard English skills up to the level of their digital technology skills and if such *literacy* development was warranted. My campus dean while I was conducting my research in 2009 had often mentioned to me that digital technology instruction was not important in an English course. But, I was having difficulty understanding why teaching digital technology and reading and writing had to be separate activities relegated to separate classes when all appeared to be used simultaneously to facilitate most communications efforts inside and outside the academy. At the same time, I began to wonder if teaching digital technology simultaneously with writing was causing unnecessary stress for my BW students.

One reason why I designed my study was because I wanted to learn how to be the *best teacher* that I could be by making certain that my students received the *best* education from my course and me. And, I wanted to know how to define the word “best” in regards to becoming the *best* teacher and providing the *best* education for my students. I asked myself what I had to teach my students to make certain that they were receiving the *best* education possible within my writing classes. Within the academy, BW courses primarily help academically underprepared students build their word literacy to facilitate effective communication and prepare those students for the rigors of higher education. I had to ask myself if I was covering all of the topics that BW students needed me to cover to prepare them for communicating beyond BW, such as FYC, other college courses, at work, and in their social communities. My experience had taught me that I might have to go beyond the course description to give the students what they needed. BW program administrators and professors across the academy have never been able to proclaim that their curriculums were fully meeting

their students' communications or literacy development needs (Rose, *Lives*). The growing popularity of digital technology and the significance of digital literacy have further complicated BW administrators' and professors' efforts to help BW students build necessary literacies because educators are still unsure about the place digital technology should have in BW students' literacy development.

Over the decades, some research has been conducted to address digital technology and BW students. A snapshot of that research indicates that researchers have studied the use of word processing with BW students (Cross; Etchison), students' use of electronic tools (MacArthur, "Overcoming," MacArthur, "Using Technology;" "Writing;" Meem), issues of basic writers as "digital natives"⁵ using Web 2.0 technologies (Klages and Clark; Stine, "The Best"), and issues related to digital access from a variety of perspectives (Smith and Caruso 20; Stine, "The Best" 51; Young, A31 "Better"). But, despite the interest in BW and digital technology, not enough research has been conducted to assess BW students' existing digital literacies and help BW students build *necessary* digital literacies to prepare them for the demands of twenty-first century communications inside and outside of the academy. To inform my research into digital literacy and BW, I began by reviewing the history of BW from Open Admissions policies instituted in the 1960s and 1970s—events that led to the development of BW within post-secondary education (Horner, "The Birth;" Otte; Shaughnessy, *Errors*). To better understand the history of BW in the academy, I considered researchers' profiles of BW students and descriptions of those students'

⁵ The term "digital natives" was coined by Marc Prensky in his 2001 seminal work "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants." When describing "digital natives," Prensky explains that "students today are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet" (1).

educational needs (Gray-Rosendale; Rose, *Lives*; Shaugnessy, “Diving,” Shaugnessy, *Errors*). To understand BW students as a group, I examined the methods BW instructors have used to teach writing and to consider what was missing from that instruction. I also reviewed research (Selfe, *Multimodal*) regarding the impacts of digital technology on writing and composition instruction. To learn more about how computer technology had been used in writing courses thus far, I reviewed discussions about literacy (Cope and Kalantzis; Hawisher et al; Hawisher and Selfe, Introduction; Kress; Selfe, *Technology*). To help me define literacy, and its place in writing courses, I reviewed research regarding digital literacy (Lankshear and Knobel) and students’ use of digital technology (Smith and Caruso).

My research into the topics I listed above has led to certain conclusions. First, my research indicates that all students are being exposed to digital technology inside and outside of the academy increasingly, and they are using digital technology daily to communicate in a variety of situations. Second, some within the academy *do not* believe that the writing class is the place for digital literacy instruction and some believe that computers in writing classes *can be* beneficial to students—all of which creates a frustrating, educational dichotomy for students and instructors in BW. Third, researchers (Selfe, *Multimodal*) report that some educators do not believe that students can successfully build word literacy and digital literacy simultaneously within their writing class despite the fact that a great deal of word-based communication now takes place in digital environments. Fourth, despite the multitude of research about BW students and digital technology, few have asked BW students themselves how they use digital technology, if digital literacy can and should be addressed within a BW class,

or—most importantly—what BW students want from their BW classes in regards to digital technology. Fifth, there is much debate inside and outside of the academy about what it means to be digitally literate. Sixth, student use of digital technology seems to be increasing (Smith and Caruso); therefore, BW students are likely to arrive at school with digital skills suggesting that some form of digital literacy has become important in their lives. In fact, many college freshmen have better digital equipment than the college they attend and know a great deal about how to use digital technology (“Freshmen Arrive” A30). Many college freshmen have digital technology skills and own digital, multimedia gadgets, such as smart phones, ipods and laptops (Canevale, A32; Carlson A32; Young, A31 “Better”). And, some students have used digital technology to create digital projects while in grade school (“Freshmen Arrive” A30) and arrive at college expecting to have access to and see use of digital technology (Young, A31 “Better”; Smith and Caruso 20). Therefore, it would not be wise to assume that only college students outside of BW are using computers daily for a variety of informal and formal activities without testing that hypothesis and further testing related theories. Finally, I realized that the digital literacy needs of students within English studies is a very broad, complex topic because digital technology has complicated English studies, which means that those situations have probably impacted BW—usually the domain of English studies—as well.

This study works to complement the field of BW and to examine certain aspects of digital literacy in BW by providing research about BW students’ digital literacy primarily from the research participants’ perspectives. Specifically, through surveys of two BW professors and two semesters of BW students at a small rural,

eastern Virginia community college, this study examines the digital technology and related literacies that some BW students and BW instructors possess, asks BW students and BW professors their opinions about addressing digital literacy within a writing class, and compares the BW professors' and BW students' uses of, and views on, digital technology at the research site. Although the group within the study is small, the findings gathered through this study can be added to those gathered from similar studies to consider digital literacy instruction more generally.

The community college research site uses assessment processes similar to those at other community and junior colleges. At the research site, the college's instructors and staff use the writing portion of Compass Test placement scores to determine if a student needs developmental writing and the level of developmental writing that would best serve the student. The first level of developmental writing offered at the research site is Preparing for College Writing I, also known as English 01, and is described as follows in the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) Master Course File⁶:

Helps students discover and develop writing processes needed to bring their proficiency to the level necessary for entrance in to their respective curricula.

Guides students through the process of starting, composing, revising, and editing.

⁶ The VCCS governs all of the community colleges within the commonwealth of Virginia. The VCCS Master Course File provides a summary of the required subject matter for all courses taught in Virginia Community Colleges. Virginia community college administrators and professors refer to the VCCS Master Course File to help them make certain that their courses meet VCCS content requirements.

The second and final level of developmental writing offered at the research site is Preparing for College Writing II, also known as English 03, and is described as follows in the VCCS Master Course File:

Emphasizes strategies within the writing process to help students with specific writing situations. Develops techniques to improve clarity of writing and raise proficiency to the level necessary for entrance into particular curricula.

Basic or developmental writing courses at the research site are designed to help students improve their writing skills to prepare for FYC and general, college-level writing, but—as the course descriptions suggest—digital literacy development is not required in the courses even if students show signs of digital literacy or an interest in digital literacy instruction. Increasingly in recent years, the college has required all students to access at least some information through Blackboard, the college’s Web-based course CMS, as well as the college’s email system and Web portal, but there is no indication that the research site makes certain that entering students have any digital literacy. The research site’s course requirements for the two-year, Associate’s degree programs indicate that all students must complete one of the two computer courses: ITE 115, which focuses on “word processing, spreadsheets, database, and presentation software” (VCCS Master Course File), or ITE 119, which “presents the information literacy core competencies focusing on the use of information technology skills” such as those “developed in database searching, computer applications, information security and privacy, and intellectual property issues.” But, neither ITE 115 nor ITE 119 promise to provide students with the same kind of socio-cultural,

rhetorical communications training that English studies courses, such as BW, often provide and that my findings suggest that twenty-first century digital communication demands.

All of the writing courses at the research site take place in a computer lab⁷ so that professors and students have the *option* of using computers to facilitate writing, but recent renovations make lab space a scarce commodity. Quite often BW students at the site do choose to use computers. My experiences as a hometown resident within the site's service areas have taught me that despite geographical isolation in rural communities, the students' exposure to technology through various forms of communication media, such as television, film, print publications, and the Web, often has been comparable to other peoples' exposures to such technology across the U.S. My research indicates that the research site's BW students' use of, and interest in, popular digital technology, such as computers, smart phones, and the Web, to communicate is comparable to the use of, and interest in, such technologies exhibited by other college freshman across the U.S. Also, my research indicates that many of the site's BW students are daily users of digital technology for entertainment in the form of smart phones, GPS devices, video games and MP3 players. Although BW students may come to class with some digital abilities, those same students often lack the ability to think critically about digital texts (Klages and Clark 33). Klages and Clark

⁷ Computer labs at the research site consist of individual student work stations that include a monitor, keyboard, mouse, and hard drive. The instructor work station includes the same computer components as the students' computers, but also includes a document camera and connection to a video projector so that the instructor's computer screen and the document camera's images can be projected for the students. Instructor work stations also have a DVD/VCR player. All of the computers have popular software packages. The computer labs are also equipped with high speed Internet access. And, the entire site has wireless Internet.

explain that students must learn to write within multimodal environments to be able to communicate effectively today. Despite that some BW students may fit the definition for “digital natives,” research does not prove that BW students—as a whole—are any more digitally literate than they are word literate. And, some BW students may need more digital literacy development than others.

Little research has been conducted to determine how much digital literacy BW students have or how much society and the academy are requiring BW students to use computers and digital technology to manage their college-related activities. Few researchers are reporting how or if the need for skills development in computers and twenty-first century digital technologies is impacting BW students within the academy, the workplace and social environments. Few researchers are examining the digital technology and digital communications technology skills that BW students bring to the academy—competing with or perhaps out shining their FYC peers. Also, little research has been conducted to examine how BW professors’ digital technology experiences, skills and expectations compare to their students’ similar experiences, skills, and expectations to determine if there is a detrimental disconnect between the students and their instructors or between students and the academy. Little research exists that assesses BW students’ digital literacy, which makes it difficult for educators to determine how they might utilize BW students’ digital literacy. I am concerned that if BW educators ignore BW students’ digital experiences, those educators could miss valuable opportunities to make use of BW students’ untapped, digital potential.

The work of Rose (*Lives*; “Narrowing”) and Shaughnessy (*Errors*; “Diving”) helped to inform my research because they worked to understand BW students, develop conclusions about the students and to share the students’ experiences in the academy. Tyner’s research informed my overall study because of her contributions to the literacy debate. This study also recognizes the important lens crafted by Buckingham who argues that educators must acknowledge students’ digital experiences and help students to understand them (74). Buckingham posits that the convergence of media requires educators to integrate media education into the standard curriculum. And, finally, because BW students have been impacted by the academy’s past development initiatives but research does not indicate that BW student have had the power to influence curricular decisions, another foundational area for my research was the work of scholars in development communications (Learner and Wilkin, *Redeveloping*) and development support communications (Melkote, “Reinventing,” Melkote, *Theories*). Development support communications researchers examine the importance of participant decision-making to empower groups under development. Work related to BW, students’ digital experiences, writing instruction, and empowerment through development communication theories helps to inform my research because—combined—they suggest that educators should enable BW students to influence the BW curriculum.

To facilitate my study, I used a mixed methods research approach that included gathering information through closed-ended and open-ended surveys. The next step of my research was to compare the responses to the closed-ended questions with the results of digital technology statistical data (U.S. Census Bureau) and digital

technology/student-related studies (Jenkins; A. Smith; Smith and Caruso) and other related reports that address many of the same issues I addressed in my study. For example, about 12.3% of the responses in the Smith and Caruso study were from community college students; therefore, that study is important to my research because it includes data from other sites similar to the research site in my study. The next step was to use grounded theory methodology (GTM) to analyze the responses to my study's open-ended survey questions; I was able to code the respondents' answers to the open-ended questions using 11 categories that emerged from the data.

My analysis of the survey data led to several findings specific to the research site. First, many BW students do own and use digital technology and create digital texts. Second, while BW students wanted digital literacy development within BW courses, BW professors *may not* believe digital literacy development should take place within BW courses. Third, both BW professors and students may believe that digital literacy development *should occur* simultaneously with BW instruction. Fourth, BW professors and most students agree that digital literacy development in a writing course does not make learning to write too difficult. Fifth, the majority of the BW students may believe that digital technology facilitates valuable methods of communication, but BW professors may not agree about the value of such communication methods. Sixth, BW professors and students agree that computers are useful within a writing class. And, finally, BW professors and students are concerned about how digital literacy training in a BW class might impact BW students who had little to no experience with computers or access to computers outside of class. When comparing the results of my study with the results of other studies that cover related

issues, I found that digital technology is a significant part of most students' lives inside and outside of the academy. When reviewed through the lens of Buckingham's theories, my results indicate that the participants are being greatly impacted by the ubiquitousness of digital technology inside and outside of the academy and the importance of digital literacy within twenty-first century society; therefore, digital literacy development should take place as often as possible and as much as possible including in classes such as BW that can address writing students' unique rhetorical, educational needs.

This study assesses BW students' digital literacy rather than focusing on their word literacy, which has been the focus of most BW research. I do not believe that digital literacy or word literacy should make each other obsolete; I posit that people should possess as much literacy as possible or at least as necessary to achieve their definition for success and meet society's daily demands. Two of the benefits of literacy are being able to communicate and function within one's discourse community and being able to achieve one's definition for success.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses literature that informs this study of BW and digital literacy. The research question was the following:

In what ways might BW professors' and their students' interaction with computers and digital technology inside and outside of the academy complicate the BW curriculum in the twenty-first century?

To answer the research question, it was necessary to examine various issues related to BW and theories that could apply to BW. The first section of the literature review discusses the terminology related to digital technology to situate the study in the literature. The second section provides a historic perspective of BW in the academy. The third section discusses some of the methods educators have used to teach BW to determine what instructional topics may be lacking in BW. The fourth section reviews several foundational studies to examine the incorporation of digital technology into BW course work. The fifth section defines development communications theories and how applying such theories to BW helped shape this study and might benefit BW in future research efforts. And, the final section provides a discussion about the changes that the VCCS will make to its basic, or developmental, English program—changes that may reflect the dominant culture inside and outside the academy.

UNDERSTANDING TERMINOLOGY: TECHNOLOGY AND LITERACY

To examine BW students' digital literacy, I wanted to understand what it means to be digitally literate, which was difficult because of the confusion about

terminology. Specifically, scholars do not agree on the definitions for terms related to digital literacy; therefore, it was necessary to establish limitations and specific definitions for the terms and their variations to inform and guide this study. To help me develop a baseline for my definitions, I examined the denotative meanings for the word “digital” and related words. The *Oxford English Dictionary*’s (OED) definition for “digital,” as it most closely relates to computers and my research topics, limits it to “any piece of equipment with a digital display,” “senses relating to numerical digits and...their use in representing data in computing and electronics,” and “signals, information, or data: represented by a series of discrete values...typically for electronic storage or processing.” Other parts of the OED’s definition for digital that relate to the devices in my research include references to fingers and the hand, keyboards, and computers and computer-related devices to define the term. A focus on the dictionary meaning limits discussions to computer-based technology manipulated with the fingers, which creates limits much more specific than allowed by the term “technological”—a term often paired with literacy to address literacy related to computer technology. To understand a difference between “digital” and “technological,” I examined OED’s definition for “technological” that most closely related to my research. The OED broadly defines “technological” as “belonging to or according with the terminology, techniques, or methodology of a particular branch of knowledge, or...a particular technology; technical.” Through the OED’s definition, I found that the term “technological” could stretch beyond computers making it much too broad for my study. To determine if there were any differences worth considering, I examined the OED’s definition for “technology,” which was the following: “A

discourse or treatise on an art or arts...a treatise on a practical art or craft.” The definition for “technology” also seemed to stretch beyond computers or computer-related technology making the definition for “technology” also too broad for my research question. Because the definitions for “technology” and “technological” were too broad, I determined that I had to focus my research by using the phrase “digital technology” and develop a definition for that phrase for my study. Drawing from denotative definitions, being specific, I define “digital technology” as any computer-based, non-analogue texts and technology, such as computer software, the Web and related products, manipulated primarily by the general consumer with fingers and used to facilitate and manage human entertainment-, information- and communications-related activities.

After I created limitations and a working definition for “digital technology,” I also established definitions for related words that impact my research. For example, I define “computers” as desktop computers; variations of mobile computers, such as laptops, computerized notebooks, tablets, and netbooks; and other digital devices that have communication abilities, such as eReaders and similar computerized devices as well as the infrastructure used to manage communications-related, digital technology. After I created a definition for “digital technology,” I also wanted to establish definitions for variations of that phrase that influenced my research. For example, I define “digital communications technology” as any digital technology, including computers, PDAs, smart phones, and similar devices primarily created and used to manage communication via digital technology. Often, as the context will suggest, I include digital communications technology within my use of the phrase “digital

technology.” Film and television can be included within the definition for digital technology and digital communications technology as well.

Understanding the terminology related to technology and technological literacy, as well as the specific components of BW students’ technology-related literacy, is important to my study for a number of reasons. First, as I mentioned, technology-related terminology tends to overlap and be used interchangeably within discussions about technology and literacy. Second, I thought that it might be important to help readers understand the potential nuances among the existing technology-related terminology and create limitations to eliminate my audience’s confusion while they are reviewing my document. Finally, research suggests that the ubiquity of what I would describe as “digital technology” has blurred the definition for literacy—another-concept under examination within my study.

Defining Literacy

Because the ubiquity of digital technology in our culture has blurred the definition for literacy, it was necessary to examine and define the word “literacy” to guide this study. Scholars (Cope and Kalantzis; Kress; Hawisher et al.; Hawisher and Selfe, Introduction; Selfe, *Technology*) suggest that all students within English studies need literacy skills, but few agree with each other on how to define literacy or what it means to be literate. Literacy’s definition “has become increasingly fuzzy” (Reinking xiv). Research indicates that literacy is complex and “as a topic of interest and study has become decidedly cross-disciplinary and to a lesser extent interdisciplinary...”

To define literacy, it might be necessary to review the term in its basic form stripping away the complexities as much as possible. The OED does mention words

and literature in the definition for “literate,” but also includes the following:

“competent or knowledgeable in a particular area.” According to OED’s definition, someone with “competence” or “knowledge” in computers could be considered “computer literate.” And, for the word “literacy,” the OED again references *words*, but also broadly defines it to include “competence or knowledge in a particular area.”

Scholars, such as Kress (23), want to keep the definition for “literacy” pure and have it only relate to words. But, allowing the word “literate” to include “knowledge and skill” in a particular area has made it possible to relate the word “literacy” to having knowledge and skill in any particular area, such as “computer literacy” often to mean *knowledge of and skill with* computers. My research pairs the word “literacy” with “digital” because the term “literacy” so closely relates to my study’s examination of digital knowledge and skill.

Borrowing from scholars and OED, I also include having “competence” and “skill” (Carter 18) as well as “knowledge” (Kress 24) that is valued by the dominant social group at that time within my definition for literacy. Specifically, research suggests that literacy stresses “‘competence’ or ‘skill’ in a particular community...as...labeled and validated by other *members* of the community...” (Carter 18). In fact, “‘literacy’...seems to be something that exists because a social group has decided that it does...” (Kress 25). To be considered literate, a person may only have to have competence, skill and knowledge in a particular area that the dominant social group demonstrates is important. Also, the definition for the term “literacy” can change as situations change (Selfe, “Students” 49). For example, there is “functional literacy,” such as “reading, writing, and speaking” well enough to

perform within a given situation (Cohen and Brawer 274). To be considered literate in one culture or time in history might be something completely different at other times in history or other cultures (Selfe, “Students” 49). Throughout human history, “new forms of literacy don’t simply accumulate...they have life spans. In different social contexts—different portions of the larger cultural ecology—they emerge, accumulate, and sometimes compete with pre-existing forms of literacy...” Therefore, western composition instructors may be literate in standard English and the conventions of the English language, but they may still be considered illiterate within our culture if proof exists that our culture values digital literacy just as much as or more so than word literacy and the instructors do not have digital literacy as defined by society. In their position statement on twenty-first literacies, NCTE explains that “these literacies—from reading online newspapers to participating in virtual classrooms—are multiple, dynamic, and malleable. As in the past, they are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities and social trajectories of individuals and groups.” As NCTE’s position statement suggests, it is difficult to define literacy because the definition can change as the society and its people change and evolve and give value to or remove value from aspects of their culture.

Research regarding people’s dependence on digital technology suggests that having *digital* literacy may have become the social norm and social equalizer among people (Jenkins; Selfe, *Technology*; Smith and Caruso) in a variety of settings regardless of people’s *word* literacy. Because computers have become so important within western culture, digital literacy may also be required to be considered literate within western culture. Research (Smith and Caruso) also suggests that students are

being encouraged to utilize digital technology for their course work, which is making digital literacy important within the academy.

But, digital literacy is not just basic competence, skill and knowledge in digital technology. When I discuss digital literacy, I am also drawing from the definition that Lanshear and Knobel use, which is the following:

A shorthand for the myriad social practices and conceptions of engaging in meaning making mediated by texts that are produced, received, distributed, exchanged, etc., via digital codification...From a sociocultural perspective, these different ways of reading and writing and the “enculturation” that lead to becoming proficient in them are *literacies*. (5-7)

Digital literacy is more than just competence, skill and knowledge in digital texts and technologies, but also includes being able to address the socio-cultural implications of such texts and technologies. When considering Lanshear and Knobel’s definition for digital literacy, I can draw from their definition, but perhaps it fails to address specific considerations: the sources of the digital texts and intent of the texts’ producers. I add Buckingham’s considerations about digital literacy (78) to the Lanshear and Knobel definition for digital literacy (5-7) because Buckingham explains users of digital texts and technologies “need to be able to evaluate and use information critically if they are to transform it into knowledge” (78). While considering digital literacy’s socio-cultural implications, I cannot ignore the fact that there is also “technological literacy,” which is often used interchangeably with “digital literacy” in the scholarship. Technological literacy, in general, also refers to computer skills and competencies and the broader cultural and situational implications of digital

technologies (Selfe, *Technology*). Although both technological literacy and digital literacy consider the socio-cultural implications associated with our use of computers and related digital technologies, as my previous review of related definitions suggests, technological literacy could be much broader than digital literacy. For example, a lead pencil can be considered technology, but it does not meet my criteria for digital technology. Selfe's technological literacy definition does address the socio-cultural implications of digital technology, but focuses on "technology," which could be stretched to mean any technology by definition rather than the more specific "digital technology" definition that I created for this study.

According to influential organizations, students who are digitally literate should be able to demonstrate those literacies in a variety of situations. For example, in their 2008 position statement on twenty-first century literacies, NCTE suggests that students need digital skills to be considered literate in the twenty-first century. According to NCTE, "because technology has increased the intensity and complexity of literate environments, the twenty-first century demands that a literate person possess a wide range of abilities and competencies, many literacies." In their 2000 and revised 2008 Outcomes Statement for FYC, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA)⁸ recommends that by the end of FYC students should have a variety of digital technology skills along with an understanding of writing topics, such as audience, purpose and genre among others. At the research site, BW prepares students for FYC, which could be interpreted to mean that BW should prepare those

⁸ According to their Web site, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (WPA) "is a national association of college and university faculty with professional responsibilities for (or interests in) directing writing programs."

students for all aspects of FYC including any digital skills that might be required in FYC. And, WPA recommends that FYC instructors have the *same* digital literacies as the literacies that WPA recommends for students so that instructors can help their students build necessary digital literacies. In his study of twenty-first century media and education, Jenkins argues that schools should teach media, or digital, literacy because not all students have access to digital participatory media, such as online social media, and students are not all learning the most effective ways to use today's (digital) media. Jenkins also suggests that students must be able to read and write, and they should have digital literacies so that they can participate in online social media, or participatory culture, and community involvement (19). Combining the conclusions of NCTE, WPA, and Jenkins could lead educators to the realization that students and the people who teach them should have a variety of literacies—including digital literacies—to be considered literate in the twenty-first century.

Scholars (Cope and Kalantzis; Kress; Selfe, *Technology*) suggest that today's literacy is not just about words. "Writing now plays one part in communicational ensembles, and no longer *the* part" (Kress 21). Cope and Kalantzis approach the literacy issues by stressing the importance of multiple literacies, or "multiliteracies," that include more than word literacy (5). Cope and Kalantzis explain that "a pedagogy of multiliteracies...focuses on modes of representation much broader than language alone." Multiliteracies theory suggests that people need literacy skills to facilitate communication across a variety of devices, such as computers, text-messaging devices, and video production technology; through use of a variety of modes, such as words, images and sound; and through use of a variety of media, such as research

papers, the Web and video. If students develop multiliteracies, they may be able to create multimodal texts that combine modes, such as digital video, words, sound, images, and related technologies to communicate. Multiliteracies are interesting and tangentially related to my research because of the term's relationship to the computer, but I did not further focus on multiliteracies because, like the term "technology," it can stretch beyond the kinds of technologies that are the focus of my study. Again, my research focuses on digital literacy as I have defined the phrase.

Literacy can also involve "rhetorical dexterity" that enables "writers to make use of an ideological model of literacy as they negotiate ever-changing rhetorical" environments (Carter 19). To be considered literate, Carter suggests that people must increasingly have the "ever-changing" rhetorical dexterity necessary to negotiate evolving socio-cultural communications landscapes.

Listing the specific skills and competencies for someone to be considered digitally literate is nearly impossible because digital technology is growing and evolving daily. Most likely, by the time that this dissertation is published, new digital communications technologies will emerge and encourage an expansion of any list of basic digital literacies that people should have to use that new technology and its technological spinoffs. Nonetheless, perhaps many educators need a concrete list of literacies to work from to be able to create a digital literacy curriculum for their students.

Several groups have attempted to delineate the requirements for a digital literacy program suggesting what it means to be digitally literate. For example, to help users become digitally literate, Microsoft attempts to "teach and assess basic computer

concepts and skills...” At the Web site, Microsoft explains that the reason for the digital literacy curriculum is “so that people can use computer technology in everyday life to develop new social and economic opportunities for themselves, their families, and their communities,” which suggests that only people who can use the computer in the ways that Microsoft lists are digitally literate. When addressing issues of technological literacy, Selfe recommends that “teachers pay attention to technology and literacy problems on a local level...to form a picture of technological literacy...within the American culture” (*Technology* 147). And, again, WPA suggests digital literacies that FYC students should have by the time that the students complete the course—the same digital literacies that their professors should have and share with their students.

Examining the various definitions for and components of literacy is important to my study. First, to address my research question’s examination of students’ and instructors’ engagement with digital technology, we must understand the literacies that they need to engage with digital technology. Next, we need to develop a definition for basic digital literacy for students in BW courses for this study because the myriad of definitions available for digital literacy are too broad to apply to every situation. Although other researchers have attempted to define literacy requirements for students, we need a clear definition that addresses digital literacy for BW students and their unique historical, social and skills challenges within the academy.

A HISTORY OF EDUCATING UNDERPREPARED WRITING STUDENTS

A snapshot of English programs over the decades indicates that poor writing abilities among students have always been a problem in higher education—including

at some of America's best postsecondary schools (Rose, *Lives*). In 1841, the president of Brown lamented his university students' poor understanding of grammar (Rose, *Lives* 5). In the 1870s, Harvard professor Adams Sherman Hill was quoted as describing the writing of his school's graduates as "manuscripts [that] would disgrace a boy of twelve." In 1898, the University of California developed the "Subject A examination" to assess students' skills. The first Subject A results indicated that over a third of the students had poor English skills (6). The poor writing performance of Brown's, Harvard's, and University of California's students—supposedly some of the country's best and brightest students—indicates that more than a hundred years of postsecondary curriculums have been unable to successfully help students build necessary word literacies. And, Rose reports that University of California's Subject A writing test results have not improved since the 19th century, which suggests that the literacy issues continue to plague U.S. English studies programs.

College-level administrators and educators have tried to address literacy problems among their students by designing courses to help students improve their skills. Wellesley offered the first remedial course in 1894 (Cross 24). Other college educators followed the Wellesley example, thinking it necessary to "bear some responsibility for helping students overcome weaknesses in academic backgrounds and skills." In the early twentieth century Stanford offered a "how-to-study course," which was mimicked by other schools that later also included "remedial reading" instruction in their courses to help low achieving students improve skills (Cross 25). What most researchers failed to record with any detail was what those poorly performing students thought of the various programs developed to help them or what

those students thought were the reasons for their poor performance—both of which were holes in the research examining the reasons why remedial-type writing programs might have been unsuccessful.

Eventually, some postsecondary administrators and educators grew frustrated with the students who were entering higher education unprepared. By the mid twentieth century, colleges began to question the inclusion of remedial courses because of a growing “lack of sympathy with the ‘undeserving’ (low-achieving) student who was taking space that might better be used by a more promising candidate” (Cross 26). Some colleges later implemented stricter admissions requirements to prevent students with poor skills from being admitted because those students were seen as a drain on the academy’s resources. But, other schools created programs to admit all students and tried to help students improve those skills leading to mixed results.

The CUNY Case: Examining the Academy’s Perceptions of BW Students

Some college systems attempted to integrate nontraditional students into their program, but not without turmoil. In 1970, City University of New York (CUNY) “adopted an admissions policy that guaranteed to every city resident with a high-school diploma a place in one of its eighteen tuition-free colleges...” (Shaughnessy, *Errors* 1). But, Open Admissions did not come to CUNY without problems. Many members of the CUNY community believed that open admissions programs were the administrators’ response to some local residents, politicians and CUNY administrators and students who believed that CUNY “had come to be seen as a bastion of white privilege in a largely black neighborhood.” The racial, economic, and social unrest in

the local CUNY community erupted, and there were rumors that militant minority groups and student groups demanding admittance to CUNY's programs burned a building at CUNY in protest, which forced the CUNY administration to institute open admission initiatives (Horner, "The Birth" 6; Otte 22). Open admissions programs were also problematic because they changed CUNY's student demographics (Shaughnessy, *Errors*; Horner, "The Basic;" Horner, "Discoursing" 202). Shaughnessy's profiles of the students who were admitted to CUNY through open admissions and other students attending CUNY at the time addresses the new *differences* open admissions created within the student body:

Academic winners and losers from the best and worst high school in the country, the children of the lettered and illiterate, the blue-collared, the white-collared, and the unemployed, some of who could barely afford the subway fare to school and a few who came in new cars their parents had given them as a reward for staying in New York to go to college; in short, the sons and daughters of New Yorkers, reflecting the city's intense, troubled version of America. (2)

Shaughnessy's profile suggests that open admissions initiatives and the admittance of potentially underprepared students created an extremely diverse student population that some believed recruited the *wrong* kinds of students. And, while some students admitted through open admissions were successful (Horner, "The Birth" 12), the entrance of potentially unprepared students through open admission prompted the need for academic institutions like CUNY to create basic skills programs and courses, such as BW courses, to help those students build skills (Shaughnessy, *Errors*).

The history of BW within the academy is important to my research because the unpopularity of Open Admissions and the turmoil that surrounded Open Admissions may have tarnished the reputation of programs born from those initiatives, such as BW. Also, research shows that the thoughts and opinions of the students admitted through Open Admissions and BW were rarely recorded to gather those students' perspectives on the programs and potential insights into the programs. BW students' perspectives and insights about the components of the BW curriculum could have helped administrators and professors find weaknesses in the programs and use those revelations to help them improve upon the programs. My study attempts to directly gather BW students' perspectives and insights about issues impacting their lives inside and outside of the academy.

If the controversy surrounding Open Admissions at CUNY is any indication, much of the academy never wanted open admissions programs and never wanted the students who entered the academy through those programs. In 1999, CUNY decision-makers eliminated the college's remedial programs within its four-year college (Tsao 469). What Tsao falls short of explicitly pointing out is that when CUNY's decision-makers eliminated open admissions-related initiatives, such as BW, they also rejected students who may have made tremendous contributions had those students been judged holistically and given an opportunity to develop their skills. The history of Open Admissions and basic studies courses at CUNY is important to my study because it points out the negative perceptions that have been built about basic studies students and suggests that those students may be held back from educational

opportunities because they are seen as a burden rather than a benefit to their schools—issues that have not been studied closely enough.

Who are Basic Writers?

Gray-Rosendale's descriptions of her BW students were very similar to CUNY Professor Mina Shaughnessy's descriptions of the BW students admitted through CUNY's open admissions program. Gray-Rosendale describes the BW students in the following way:

The students I tutored seemed to fall into two general groups: misplaced students whose superior writing abilities suggested that they did not really need to be there, and those whose writing abilities indicated that they did...the majority of the students...fell into the second group. These students, who were from rural towns and cities, diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as homogeneous ones actually struggled with real writing difficulties such as constructing an audience for their texts, minimizing circularity and repetition in thought, dealing with problems of ethos (inability to move beyond the personal narrative to argumentation and theorizing), and getting a handle on syntax and other sentence structure concerns. (1-2)

BW students are a diverse group who has special academic challenges. For example, Shaughnessy's profiles show that BW students are "those who had been left so far behind the others in their formal education that they appeared to have little chance of catching up" (*Errors* 2). In some cases, BW students' written English shows errors similar to those made by students who learned English as a second language or that they had attended schools "where even very modest standards of high-school literacy

had not been met.” CUNY professors describe many of the students in their first groups of BW students as “irremediable” (3).

BW students also often have other unique characteristics that may not be as common among traditional students. Stine explains that many BW students are older or returning students, have unstable home lives, have learning disabilities, and experience limited access to computer technology (“The Best” 51). Scholars’ profiles of BW students often do not discuss that many are also nontraditional students. In the report the “Condition of Education in 2002,” the U.S. Department of Education describes “nontraditional” students as the third of the U.S. undergraduate students who have nontraditional characteristics, such as being part-time students, full-time workers while attending college classes, and caregivers for dependents other than spouses (viii)—all potential distractions from the nontraditional students’ educational pursuits (37). Because they may be nontraditional, BW students have the added burden of personal issues that make overcoming educational obstacles much more difficult for them than for traditional students because nontraditional, BW students have additional distractions.

BW students may have obstacles to their learning, but they do not have inherent problems that make it impossible for them to learn new things (Rose, *Lives* 172). When discussing one of his BW students at his institution, Rose explains that “Suzette didn’t have a damaged sentence generator.” Rose also says that the BW students in his courses did not have a “neurological problem that prevented them from understanding the rules of writing,” and they weren’t bad students. Rose says that BW students, such as his student Suzette, often led their peers in other school-related

activities and had fairly complex roles outside of the academy. For example, Rose's Suzette helped her sister run a family business.

Rose found that Suzette had writing problems because she "didn't have...command of some of the stylistic maneuvers that would enable her to produce the sophisticated sentences she was reaching for." For BW students, "writing [was] a trap, not a way of saying something to someone" because the students were often aware of their writing problems but didn't "know what to do about it" (Shaughnessy, *Errors* 7).

In her study of remedial students, Lunsford says that "they are plagued by error, and that the strategies they use in their writing often work against them to compound their errors" ("What We Know" 51). Lunsford describes the BW students in her study as "poor readers and poor writers..." (What We Know" 51) who "might well perform a given task in a specific situation, but they have great difficulty abstracting from it or replicating it in another context," ("Cognitive" 38) which Lunsford attributes to the students' poor cognitive development.

Professors and researchers found that BW students were also struggling because "the discourse of academics is marked by terms and expressions that represent an elaborate set of shared concepts and orientations..." that freshman students do not understand right away (Rose, *Lives* 192). In other words, BW students not only have to overcome their problems with standard English, many may also simultaneously have to learn to participate in a new form of discourse—academic discourse—that might seem as confusing as a foreign language.

Understanding the unique challenges that BW students face, and reviewing profiles of BW students, is important to my study. Specifically, a history of weak reading and writing abilities as well as the previous turmoil surrounding open admissions policies may be negatively impacting BW students' reputations in the academy. Many administrators' and educators' decisions about the content of BW curriculums suggest that because BW students have weak writing and/or reading skills, and may have other challenges, BW students must have limitations in all aspects of their abilities. In other words, administrators' and educators' negative opinions of BW students' abilities may be the reason why digital technology is not a standard part of all BW curriculums. For example, my campus dean in 2009 during my research made comments to me that suggested that the developmental writing students could not handle digital technology instruction in their classes because such instruction might be too much for them. Some administrators and educators may think that because BW students have difficulty with word literacy instruction the students will also struggle with digital literacy instruction. But, before considering digital technology within the BW curriculum, I must examine the methods used to teach in BW courses.

METHODS FOR TEACHING BASIC WRITING STUDENTS

No research has determined the *one* obstacle that students who test into BW courses have that their FYC peers do not have other than difficulty with applying the rules for standard English effectively. Researchers (Gray-Rosendale; Rose, *Lives*; Shaughnessy, *Errors*; Shaughnessy "Diving") have listed a variety of personal and cognitive situations that appear to distinguish BW students from students who do not

need such courses. But, as Rose points out there is no one particular way that BW students learn or one particular obstacle that has one particular solution (“Narrowing the Mind”). Because there are no easy answers to questions regarding how best to help BW students, there have been many approaches to teaching them. When BW courses began, instructors focused on helping students correct errors and produce writing based on standard English (Shaughnessy, “Diving;” Shaughnessy, *Errors*). BW courses treated students as if they were a problem because there was a problem with their writing, and the course was designed to highlight and attack that problem (Shaughnessy, “Diving”). Students were treated also as if they were “empty vessels, ready to be filled with new knowledge” (Shaughnessy, “Diving” 235). Shaughnessy’s research, however, encourages educators to focus less on students’ errors and more on students’ abilities. Horner warns that Shaughnessy’s theory focuses more on “pedagogical techniques...rather than...questioning the legitimacy of such measures of educability or the possibility of political resistance to their imposition” (“The Basic” 210). Horner explains that the focus on technique in BW classes later made educators concerned that courses would, once again, focus more on correcting errors than understanding the writing process. The result of the confusion about how best to teach BW students led to a splintering of the field with a variety of techniques emerging. Moran describes a BW technique that encourages students to write personal essays, which encourage students to care about the writing because they are personally invested in the topic. Mc Beth describes BW course activities that require students to read about literacy issues, write about their own literacies and experiences, and create a final portfolio of their writing; Mc Beth does not stress error correction. Goen-Salter

describes a BW teaching method similar to Moran’s personal essay exercises, but Goen-Salter’s school integrates basic reading and basic writing into one course known as integrated reading and writing (IRW). The IRW course often requires students to read a text and reflect on it in writing (86). Research at Goen-Salter’s school led the faculty and staff to theorize that BW students would benefit from reading skills activities because good writers are often effective readers. BW courses and programs diversified and used a variety of techniques, but most of those techniques could be categorized probably because most of them drew from the same, limited research available to them. In January 1999, Lalicker conducted a survey via WPA to “identify their basic writing program structures according to five models” (3). Lalicker’s structure (see Table 2-1) consists of a baseline and five basic models, which include the following: prerequisite, stretch, studio, directed self-placement, intensive, and mainstreaming.

Model	Description
Baseline/Prerequisite	The coursework is very traditional focusing on handbook issues, such as grammar, and may “still rely on grammar-drill workbooks...writing to the paragraph level. Coursework may include “rhetorical theory...” (3).
1. Stretch	Over two semesters, students work on many of the same topics covered in FYC, but the course is usually non-credit bearing and often must be completed before FYC (4).
2. Studio	Students from FYC meet in small groups to work on issues related to the FYC, such as “grammatical and rhetorical issues from the composition course and do writing workshops to improve the essay drafts assigned in the standard course” (4).
3. Directed Self-Placement	Students choose to participate in the BW course. There was no description of the specific topics covered in the course (5).

Table 2-1: William B. Lalicker researched and published information regarding a baseline and five alternative structures that seemed to appear in basic writing programs across the U.S.

4. Intensive	The model is much like the studio model, except “students from several different sections of standard composition come together at random in the studio lab sections” (6).
5. Mainstreaming	Instead of registering for a BW class, the students register for FYC and use tutors or the school’s writing center to help them with their writing.

Table 2-1: Continued.

Lalicker’s baseline and five models each have advantages and disadvantages, and Lalicker does not describe any of the models as being the *perfect* model. Instead, Lalicker explains that “a greater understanding of the alternatives will help [administrators and educators] determine the answer most suited” for their school based on the “institution’s mission and resources, and most successful for meeting the literacy challenges of [their] basic writing students” (7). It was important for my study that I examine the methods that colleges have used to teach BW students without considering technology to help me determine if digital technology adds anything significant to the BW classroom. Next, I will examine how digital technology has impacted BW.

STUDIES OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY AND BASIC WRITING

Allowing students who are struggling to improve their writing, such as BW students, to use computers can produce mixed results. For example, Etchison’s study of computers in BW classes suggests that the quality of students’ writing is not influenced by computers (40). In their study, Batschelet and Woodson found that the BW students were either skipping prewriting and choosing to draft their writing on the computer or they were doing most of their prewriting by hand rather than on the

computers (9), which suggests that BW students had difficulty integrating computer technology into the writing process because they were choosing not to do all editing and writing on the computer. But, the researchers found that the students did have positive feelings about the computer in the writing process because while “using the computers, the students...felt more comfortable and believed that language was manipulable” (10). McAllister and Louth found that “revising on the word processor in a writing laboratory seems to have produced a significant effect on the overall quality of revision” (426). But, McAllister and Louth were not sure why the computers had an effect on the students’ writing. Early research suggests that a lack of access to computers outside of the classroom (Stine, “The Best” 50; Pavia) and distractions from instructors trying to help students with technology problems (Agostina and Varone qtd. in Pavia 5) may both make computers in the BW curriculum a problem for many. Jaggars also found that the few studies on community college students in online classes suggest that “technical difficulties, increased ‘social distance,’ ...a relative lack of structure inherent in online courses [and]...the fact that many student supports are built around a campus infrastructure” all contribute to students’ poor performance (1-2). Jaggars explains that many community college students are also underprepared, which suggests that BW students could have been a part of the researcher’s study. Jaggars and Xu’s 2004 Virginia Community College System (VCCS) commissioned study produced the following conclusions:

Students were more likely to fail or withdraw from online courses than from face-to-face courses; students who took remedial courses online were less likely to advance to subsequent gatekeeper courses; [and] students who took

online coursework in early semesters were slightly less likely to return to school in subsequent semesters...Overall, while online course taking and student remedial status each had main effects on course performance and subsequent outcomes...the two effects did not typically interact. One exception appeared in the 2004 analysis of English course completion, in that the online versus face-to-face gap was greater among underprepared students than it was among college-ready students. (24)

The results of the VCCS study that indicated that underprepared students who completed courses completely online had lower success rates was particularly important to my study because my study examines BW students' digital technology experiences. For example, BW students are concerned about how the lack of computer skills will impact students' success in writing courses that use computers (Jonaitis) as well as the "impersonal" communication that computers may create (119). The instructors and students in my study also expressed concern for students who lacked computer skills and those students' ability to keep up with the course if the course was assigned to a computer lab. Stine also found that a completely online BW course was overwhelming for some BW students because BW students are less likely to have computer access within their homes ("The Best" 50). In 2009, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that over 70% of U.S. households had internet access, but the statistics also suggests that nearly 30% of the households—potential BW students—do not have Internet access; therefore, issues related to access cannot be ignored at the research site or other institutions. Also, Selfe and Selfe are concerned that online students may be confronted by the dominant culture's language and images on the Web that "do

violence to and encourage the rejection of the languages of different races and the values of non-dominant cultural and gender groups” (494). But, online BW students are not the only students who might have problems with computers. Students working in the computer lab who lack typing skills might grow frustrated by the keyboard (Pavia 13), which could slow their progress. The problems that computers may cause could be numerous and the benefits may not be easily defined, but there are some benefits associated with using computers in a writing class.

One of the benefits associated with using computers in a writing class seems to be that digital technology provides the instructor and student with a variety of teaching and learning methods. When used correctly, research (MacArthur, “Using Technology” 344) indicates that word processing software can help students catch errors, quickly edit their work without having to recopy it, and avoid creating new errors, which enables students to focus on content rather than errors (MacArthur, “Overcoming” 173-174). Also, the student and teacher can view the student’s text on the screen simultaneously and work together on proofreading and editing (181).

Aside from the flexibility in editing efforts that computers provide, digital technology has also given students flexibility in where they study. Stine reports that online courses reduce “students’ commuting costs” often making education more affordable for students (“The Best” 50). Young reports that “91 percent of two-year [college] presidents said their institutions offered at least some online courses” (“College”), which suggests that colleges are seeing the benefits associated with online classes. Stine also found that online education may be the only viable option for BW students who have competing priorities, such as family obligations (“The Best”

56). Also, Stine explains that online BW students enjoy other benefits, such as opportunities to share their otherwise timid voices through email and discussion posts, which possibly gave students a sense of security that face-to-face meetings did not provide (55). Stine also suggests that the online environment gave students a sense of community among their online classmates, increased access to Web-based resources, and technology skills building through an online CMS, such as navigation through Blackboard (55-58).

Digital technology may also encourage students to work on weak skills. Jaggar and Xu explain that students who were either remedial—or basic—and working completely online performed poorly (24). Jaggar and Xu's research also suggest that BW students who need to complete courses online because of personal obligations that prevent them from attending class on campus need to develop digital literacy as early as possible in their academic careers so that they have the skills they need to function online. Stine points out that online instruction forces BW students to use their weakest skills—reading and writing—and requires students with weak technological skills to depend on those skills. ("Teaching Basic" 33). Stine's research also suggests that online instruction encourages students to improve reading and writing skills to improve their ability to function online.

One of the benefits of a CMS is that it allows for online and hybrid courses. Hybrid courses, or courses that combine traditional in class instruction with asynchronous, online instruction, enable students to meet on campus with professors and peers regularly to interact and trouble-shoot problems as well as the flexibility of completing assignments off campus when convenient rather than having to perform at

a specific time in a classroom. Considering the problems associated with using computers to complete school assignments, Stine suggests that a hybrid course may be the best choice for BW students so that students have opportunities to address particular issues in class during the semester with the instructor (“The Best” 60). In 2002, Stine’s employer, Lincoln University, instituted a hybrid BW course (59). Stine explains that the hybrid course at Lincoln had distinct components.

In general in-class meetings are used to introduce grammar and writing issues and describe assignments; in these sessions students also work in groups for idea generation and take all quizzes and exams. During the online weeks, students practice the grammar and composition issues discussed the previous week, respond to discussion topics, write and revise essays, and participate in online peer review. (60)

Stine explains that “we initially saw the hybrid version of the course simply as an interim step towards a totally online program, but our experiences with both the difficulties and the successes of online learning...led us to believe that it is the hybrid experience itself that offers our particular students the best of both pedagogical worlds” (59). Stine’s description of the hybrid course depicts a course that is primarily focused on basic English activities with technology solely as a support activity. Depending on how the technology is used, hybrid courses can also create new problems. In some cases, a hybrid BW course “can double the number of students who can use a school’s scarce computer laboratories,” potentially straining a school’s resources (Stine, “The Best” 50).

Computer-based courses, whether online or hybrid, can also create difficulties for instructors. Stine suggests that designing and managing an online course can be more time consuming than in class courses. Stine's research suggests that instructors may spend a great deal of time locating or creating the computer-based resources that they need to teach the course and assist students. Instructors may feel too removed from their students (Stine, "Teaching Basic" 34). When teaching online courses, I have felt removed from students because I did not have the opportunity to read their facial expressions and mannerisms—interpersonal communication cues that I use to help me figure out if students are comfortable with my explanations for the material. Stine also says that instructors may be underpaid for the huge number of students the college may push into the online sections ("Teaching Basic"). After working within the hybrid program at Lincoln, Stine reports in a study six years later that the writing program's technological issues were also significant concerns for instructors. The researcher now recommends that course designers for online courses plan how the instructor and students will communicate, how instructors will provide feedback, and how to provide students with necessary technological training and support (34-37). However, when reflecting on her experiences with online courses, Stine found that her work with online students was rewarding because new digital technologies provided her with new teaching opportunities. She also explains why she often felt closer to her hybrid students than her onsite students:

Although I am more separated from my students in the hybrid sections in that I see them only half as often, by the end of the semester I feel that I know them better than my onsite students as a result of having read their various kinds of

writing with particular care in order to make sure that my responses are as clear as possible, since we may not have the opportunity for a follow-up discussion. (38)

In Stine's case, compensating for the distance that technology caused seemed to have provided her with additional opportunities to help her students and become familiar with their work. Stine's thoughts about hybrid BW courses were very promising.

While computer-supported instruction, such as hybrid courses, seem like a viable option, research suggests that more research should be conducted and more student and instructor practice enabled to determine how best to make use of digital technology in the writing classroom. Nevertheless, research indicates that BW students need opportunities to grow and expand their digital literacies to be successful in college and beyond. Research regarding digital technology in BW courses is important to my study because my study examines BW students' and BW instructors' digital experiences within the academy.

DEVELOPMENT COMMUNICATIONS AND BASIC WRITING: A STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

One way to examine BW students' and instructors' digital experiences within the academy is to allow research participants a voice within the research. Buckingham argues that educators must consider the media experiences that students bring to the classroom if educators hope to use digital media, or digital technology, in their classroom successfully (74). One way to facilitate inclusion of students' and instructors' experiences, such as their digital technology experiences, into the development of the BW curriculum is through utilization of development

communications theory. Development theory was often applied to countries considered third-world countries to improve the quality of life for the people in those countries (Okigbo). Using Okigbo's reflections on the impacts of western society's development initiatives in Africa as an example, development—as it relates to communications-related theories—can be described as the following:

Development is the growth in income, productivity, good quality of life, and general state of well-being, which assure an acceptable standard of living for the people...Development requires attention to not just economic growth but also to a myriad of social and cultural issues, many of which involve the creation and management of knowledge, the establishment and maintenance of institutions, the propagation of appropriate public policies, and the energization of individual initiatives. (Okigbo 39)

Development *communications* is a field within the communications field.

Development communications theory can include using development communications initiatives to improve the quality of life for people in underdeveloped countries (Melkote “Reinventing”); however, there is much debate about “just what constitute improved living conditions and how they should be achieved” (Melkote, “Theories” 129). The act of development that Okigbo describes in Africa is very similar to much of what the academy does for, or with, students. For example, CUNY's implementation of Open Admissions policies could be looked upon as enabling students admitted through those programs an opportunity for students to obtain an advanced degree. After the open admissions-related students successfully completed their education, those students may have been able to use their advanced degrees to

find good jobs and reach their career goals. Students being enabled to reach their career goals as a result of an advanced degree might achieve the “general state of well-being” that Okigbo describes (39) when discussing development’s supposed impact on Africa. In development communications, a hegemonic group might use a communications initiative to facilitate a positive social change within a marginal community. Marginal communities are communities, such as third-world communities, whose social practices or conditions are deemed as less than acceptable by a dominant culture, such as the U.S. (Okigbo). The positive social change affected in that community through a development initiative might be improving “the living condition” for that community (Melkote, “Theories” 129). There are benefits associated with using development communications theory to facilitate a social change for a marginal community, but there are also inherent problems within development communications theory. Using development communications theory and certain variations of that theory to analyze the academy’s attempt at improving BW students’ word literacy highlights the benefits and problems associated with the academy’s activities and other possibilities.

Development communications theory can be applied to BW within the academy because BW students could be viewed as a marginal community within the academy. BW students’ less than acceptable social practice in the academy is their inability to produce acceptable academic writing. Also, BW students were not always well accepted into the academy because they were culturally different from the majority of the students in higher education (Gray-Rosendale; Rose, *Lives*; Shaughnessy, “Diving;” Shaughnessy, *Errors*). BW students who did not fit the norm

created a less than acceptable social condition. In my scenario, the academy was the hegemonic culture attempting to improve BW students' less than acceptable social practice and attempting to address the less than acceptable social condition that the students' presence caused for some people within the academy. Because the academy, the dominant culture, often perceived BW students' behavior and cultural differences as less than acceptable, BW students *became* a marginalized community within the academy.

The goal of communications initiatives in development communications theory is to facilitate a positive, social change within the marginalized community (Melkote, "Theories" 129-137) as perceived by the dominant culture. Melkote suggests that the positive, social change is that the marginalized community benefits from the communications initiative, but we could also interpret the social change to be a demonstration of the marginalized community starting to behave in a way that the dominant culture deems as acceptable. Enculturation could homogenize students eliminating any unacceptable social practices. BW students who learn to successfully apply the rules for standard English to their writing are much more likely to meet the academy's expectations, which are that the students demonstrate learning and success, and exhibit the positive, social change that the academy expects. The social change may benefit the marginalized community, but it may also enable the dominant culture to have feelings of self-satisfaction because they *helped* the less fortunate—activities that may not always be altruistic. For example, if the academy can reach its goals for successfully acculturating and educating BW students, the academy may also be able to maintain BW students as an income stream. Perhaps using development

communications theory to examine BW explains why BW exists. Specifically, Bartholomae suggests that the academy tries to maintain BW:

I think basic writing programs have become expressions of our desire to produce basic writers, to maintain the course, the argument, and the slot in the university community; to maintain the distinction (basic/normal) we have learned to think through and by. The basic writing program, then, can be seen simultaneously as an attempt to bridge AND preserve cultural differences, to enable students to enter the “normal” curriculum but to insure, at the same time, that there are basic writers. (174)

Bartholomae’s theory is disturbing because it suggests that while the academy claims to help BW students, the academy may also be creating obstacles for BW students by labeling the students and separating them from the mainstream within the academy. Bartholomae does not suggest the financial benefit that BW may provide to the academy, but there are thousands of BW students across the academy at any given time paying thousands of combined dollars for those courses. BW courses generate tuition dollars for the colleges at colleges where completion of the BW course is required or strongly encouraged before the student can move through his or her degree requirements. As a student studying the history of BW and comparing it to my own educational experiences, I had to wonder how much the academy’s practices and processes served the academy more than they helped students and if that potential narcissism within the academy was fair to students. Development communications theory enabled me to examine BW in the academy from a variety of perspectives to

highlight the potential driving factors behind the existence of BW curriculums as well as the potential ramifications of BW courses for students.

There are a host of benefits associated with applying certain development communications theories to the BW field, but there are limitations in development communications theory. In development communications theory, the dominant group makes decisions about the structure of the development initiatives. If all goes well, the marginalized community will benefit from the communications initiative. However, Wilkin's development communications theory falls short of considering how the participants in the development communications initiatives feel and think about those initiatives. Attempts at a social change are more likely to be successful if the community being acted upon is allowed to participate in the design of the communications initiative. Specifically, BW students in college are usually adults. Few adults in western culture enjoy being acted up without being allowed to provide their input. When discussing human societies, Dillon and Foucault posit that "no one wants to be commanded—thought very often, in a lot of situations, people accept it" (5). Over the decades since the establishment of remedial instruction in any form, the academy has acted upon those students who had to accept their place within the academy whether that place benefited the student or not. Enabling the group being acted upon to provide their individual input in the design and implementation of the communications initiative may lead to the production of an effective communications initiative because the group being acted upon can make the dominant group aware of issues that the dominant group had not previously considered. For example, if decision-makers at the research site are actively aware of how much BW students are

being required or strongly encouraged to use digital technology, the decision-makers could design BW courses that help students build their necessary digital literacies to prepare them for their interactions with digital technology inside the academy.

However, development communications theory does not allow for the inclusion of research participants' input. Some forms of development communications theory, such as development *support* communications theory, allows for the inclusion of research participants' experiences within the research that leads to the communications initiative.

In development *support* communications theory, the recipients of the benefits of the development initiatives—or the group being acted upon because of the communications initiative—are enabled to influence the initiative (Melkote, “Reinventing” 40-41). Melkote’s theory supports my desire to include my research respondents’—students and their instructors—voices in my research because I think that research is not accurate unless it considers the research participants’ thoughts and ideas. We can only theorize about the accuracy of our research when we do not include input or feedback from the people that we are theorizing about. Maybe we need the research participants’ perspectives so that we may analyze our conclusions and be certain that we have produced objective research that considers necessary possibilities. For example, in regards to BW students, Gray-Rosendale reminds us that “more often it should be what they [students] say and do that guides our curricular designs rather than strictly institutional or administrative definitions for them” (167).

Despite the positive impact that development support communications theory can have on a communications initiative, there are inherent problems. Melkote argues

that development support communications only works in theory (“Reinventing” 41). Melkote says that development support communications theory’s inclusion of research respondents’ thoughts and ideas never truly worked in practice because the development communications experts were not willing to give up their control in the development of initiatives. The academy may have been reluctant to give up control when determining BW’s direction. For example, maybe Open Admissions at CUNY was chaotic because those in power—administrators and instructors—were reluctant to give up their vision of and control, or power, over the direction of CUNY to enable a paradigm shift that benefited the Open Admissions students. Implementing an academic form of development support communications theory may be a proactive way to address the BW curriculum. Specifically, organizing the BW curriculum with input from development support communications theory could guide curriculum developers to consider BW students’ experiences, which may lead to a BW curriculum that thoroughly prepares BW students for twenty-first century communications inside and outside of the academy because it considers BW students’ interests and needs. For example, if curriculum designers at the research site learn that BW students are being required to write within digital environments that require them to examine their rhetorical situation—activities that often take place in BW—as soon as they enter the research site and before they complete the site’s required computer course, it might be best if BW students build digital literacy in their BW classes that are already taking place in a computer lab. Also, organizing the BW curriculum with input from development support communications theory would guide curriculum developers to consider BW instructors’ experiences and consider ways to help those instructors have

the skills that they need to thoroughly prepare their BW students for twenty-first century communications inside and outside of the academy.

Research suggests that it has been the “power” over the BW curriculum wielded by people outside of the BW classroom that has prevented such preparatory programs from being successful. When defining power, Michel Foucault says that “power is not something confined to armies and parliaments: it is, rather, a pervasive, intangible network of force which weaves itself into our slightest gestures and most intimate utterances” (Eagleton 7). Foucault explains that “in human societies one can't find political power without domination.” At the research site, BW students and instructors have had little power over the BW curriculum. However, considering BW students’ and BW instructors’ experiences and input, such as their digital experiences and thoughts about those experiences, in BW research might lead to the development of more successful programs.

When applying development communications theory to questions regarding BW and digital technology, helping BW students develop their communications skills with digital technology will create a social change for those students because those students could be taught to communicate within a variety of environments that can influence their lives. For example, students who learn effective, written rhetorical communication skills and are able to apply the rules for standard English to their writing are likely to be able to produce successful written communications. Successful written communications might be cover letters and résumés that will enable the writer to convince potential employers to interview her putting that student ahead of her peers, who may lack such writing skills, in a tight job market. And, students who can

produce their résumé documents on the computer will be able to reach employers using popular, digital methods used in today's business world, such as email and social networking. In development communications initiatives, the "development" can be achieved through a variety of means and can include "the enthusiastic use of new communication technologies in strategies for social change" (Wilkins, "International" 248). In some cases, "development interventions appropriate computer technologies to attempt to integrate marginal communities into the global market place" (Wilkins and Waters qtd. in Wilkins, "International" 249). I examined development communications because application of those theories may lead BW curriculum designers to aggressively help BW students in new and different ways.

Melkote says that "development" is "a process that should provide people with access to appropriate and sustainable opportunities to improve their lives..." ("Theories" 137). Introducing BW students to effective ways to use digital technology to communicate may provide those students with the "sustainable opportunities to improve their lives" that Melkote says should be a part of development communications initiatives.

Digital literacy training might also enable BW students to participate in social networking that can benefit students' lives. For example, the act of participating in society is important for people.

The need to think, express oneself, belong to a group, be recognized as a person, be appreciated and respected, and have some say in crucial decisions affecting one's life are as essential to the development of an individual as eating, drinking, and sleeping. (Díaz Bordenave qtd. in "Theories" 138).

In other words, research suggests that people need to participate in their culture to feel complete. In many cases, digital social networking is today's form of active participation in society for many people (Jenkins). Melkote explains that "participation efforts" should enable marginalized groups to become aware of their culture ("Theories" 138). Today, social networking is our modern, participation effort that enables people to learn about their culture and connect and communicate with each other globally (Jenkins). Jenkins also suggests that new media literacy, such as that related to participatory or social media, is a social skill and suggests that it is a significant part of a student's digital literacy development. Jenkins encourages the development of a participatory culture in which literacy is not just related to an individual but enables the individual to participate in a community. Comparing Melkote's and Jenkins' research regarding participatory culture may lead researchers to hypothesize that a BW student might need to have certain literacies, such as Web literacy, to participate in his or her community culture.

Aside from considering the kinds of communications initiatives that development communications theory can produce, Wilkins seems to believe that it is important that development communications research expand beyond a review of the potential initiatives:

Development communications research should extend from traditional studies of media effects, to include analysis of the structures and processes producing strategic communication, as well as the messages and modes of communicative texts. ("International" 245)

Wilkins says that researchers should examine development institutions, the driving forces and factors behind development communications programs and the modes used to communicate such activities. Wilkins seems to be concerned that “through their implementation of communication interventions, development institutions have the capacity to select and frame social conditions as problematic, and legitimize particular approaches toward their resolution.” Specifically, “those who have social power will legitimize their knowledge and techniques of knowledge generation as superior” (Melkote, “Theories” 139), which could be why the academy can enforce its demands on BW students and BW instructors. In the case of BW students, those students are relegated to those courses because the academy says the students should be in those courses, but there is no undeniable proof that the courses meet the students’ literacy or educational needs. Wilkin’s theory helped me to hypothesize that it may be unfair to relegate students to courses that may not be meeting the students’ needs while simultaneously excluding the students’ input from the design of the BW curriculum. Also, Wilkins’s theory about the influences that development institutions have on how social conditions (245) could be used to address how the academy’s treatment of underprepared students influences how those students are perceived within the academy. Scholars (Horner, “The Basic;” Otte; Rose, *Lives*; Shaughnessy, *Errors*) suggest that the academy has sometimes treated BW students as if they were a problem to be dealt with and did not belong in higher education. Examining Wilkin’s theories led me to hypothesize that to truly affect social change for BW students, we must give those students unique opportunities to demonstrate communication strengths aside from word literacy because research suggests that word literacy is not

the only important literacy inside or outside the academy. It may not just be the students who need to change to become successful students; the academy may need to change its ideology to facilitate the academy's definition for positive growth and development among all students.

Wilkins ("International;" *Redeveloping*) researched development communication techniques used to help marginalized cultural and ethnic communities, but she did not address how those theories could be applied to other kinds of potentially marginalized groups in the academy, such as BW students trying to fit into the academy's dominant culture. I applied Wilkins's development theories to BW students, the academy and literacy development because interdisciplinary research provides rich, useful perspectives that may not be considered without that research. For example, development communications theory and related research is important to my study because it serves as a foundation for the reasons why I attempted to include BW students' and instructors' voices in my study. To address my research question, I hypothesized that BW students and instructors had to be heard within my research along with the academy's dominant voices as expressed through educational scholarship. BW scholarship provides few comments from BW students and instructors about their thoughts on digital technology despite the ubiquitousness of digital technology inside and outside of the academy. An examination of development communications and development support communications as it relates to BW is important to my research because it helped me to determine that including both BW students and BW professors' thoughts in the BW curriculum debates could lead to a

BW curriculum that is more effective because it is more likely to be responsive to the research participants' needs.

VIRGINIA'S DEVELOPMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS: PLANS FOR CHANGE

Those in charge of shaping basic education appear to be making an effort to adjust the curriculum to serve students' needs better. In a task force report released in 2009, the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) announced a 2010 to 2015 strategic plan for redesigning the commonwealth's community college system's developmental, or basic, studies program. The developmental education program's strategic plan supports the commonwealth's larger 2009 to 2015 strategic plan to effect change across the entire community college system (The Turning Point 4).

Research indicating that Virginia's community college students were less successful than many college students in other countries prompted the changes to Virginia's developmental education program (10). Gonzalez reports that "half of all incoming students in the [Virginia community college] system need developmental education—and three-fourths of those students fail to graduate or transfer within four years." The Developmental Education Task Force (DETF), the group of VCCS administrators, English and math professors responsible for the developmental education program's strategic plan-related research and recommendations, explains that the plan's primary goals are to reduce a need for developmental courses and the time it takes for students to complete such courses, while increasing the number of developmental education students who graduate from community college or transfer to four-year college from 25% to 33% (5). To reach the goals, the DETF explains that

more Virginia students have to enter community college prepared and “complete their developmental education coursework in a timely manner” (4). The VCCS stresses that one of the community college’s “missions” is to “help underprepared students be successful in college work” and to “eliminate barriers” for those students. The report indicates that students who *do not* participate in developmental education are “twice as successful in completing an award as those requiring developmental education”— comments that suggest that the VCCS is reviewing its developmental studies program to determine how the program can be altered to improve students’ success.

The DETF recommends both general and specific changes to the VCCS developmental education programs. Some of the general changes that the DETF recommends include redesigning developmental math and English, requiring more support services for students, increasing accountability among administrators and educators, reviewing existing policies, enabling developmental instructors to be “highly effective in achieving the goals in developmental education,” and collaboration between high schools and community colleges. For students and the classroom, specific recommendations include developing “alternative structures for delivering developmental education” and “methods to integrate technology creatively into developmental education delivery” (14). For instructors, specific recommendations include “relevant professional development opportunities” for all developmental education instructors and instructors will be provided with relevant data about their students (16). The DETF also recommends that the community colleges track developmental education students’ progress through the community

college and beyond (17). The DETF recommends that the next steps should be for the VCCS and its colleges to address the DETF recommendations.

It is difficult to say if the DETF's recommendations will bring about the improvements the group says developmental education in Virginia needs. In their literature review of remedial education programs, Rutschow and Schneider found that "little rigorous research exists to demonstrate the effects of these [program] reforms on students' achievement" when they reviewed the literature discussing the reorganization of several developmental education programs other than those in Virginia. Rutschow's and Schneider's "literature review"⁹ identifies the most promising approaches for revising the structure, curriculum, or delivery of developmental education and suggests areas for future innovations in developmental education practice and research." Rutschow and Schneider found that the most "promising" developmental education programs included "technology-aided approaches, and improved alignment between secondary and postsecondary education"—all of which appears to be a part of the DETF's recommendations to the VCCS. Rutschow and Schneider note "curricular redesign that reconsiders the key skills that academically underprepared students will need in their careers," which does not appear to be a significant part of the DETF's recommendations but may be addressed indirectly by the inclusion of digital technology in the DETF's recommendations. In other words,

⁹ Rutschow and Schneider's literature review is posted to the MDRC Web site. According to the organization's Web site, MDRC was originally known as Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation, but in 2003 the organization's full name was changed and legally registered as the acronym MDRC. MDRC, an over 35 year old group that was the result of the Ford Foundation and several federal agencies' collaborative efforts, was charged with reviewing significant policies and programs including those in education.

even if they did not intend it, the DETF's recommendations address the increased use of digital technology in the work place that the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports. Rutschow's and Schneider's literature review also "flags two generic issues," which include "placement assessments and faculty support." Rutschow and Schneider indicate that the "two generic issues...will likely need to be addressed for community colleges to see large-scale changes in their developmental-level students' achievement." Both of the two generic issues Rutschow and Schneider highlight appear among the DETF's recommendations.

Although the DETF makes several other general and more specific recommendations that relate to Rutschow's and Schneider's recommendations for the direction that developmental education should take, the DETF does not provide insights into how the Virginia community colleges can or should make the changes happen. The DETF's recommendations appear to allow for vastly different approaches to the developmental studies programs at the individual Virginia community colleges. The DETF does recognize that increased enrollments and reduced budgets are creating a strain on community college resources. In 2009 when I conducted my study, enrollments at the research site seemed to be increasing. In recent years, seasoned faculty members have retired or resigned from the research site taking their insights with them. The research site's administration has tasked remaining administrative staff and faculty members with managing and implementing the DETF's recommended changes. Again, one of the DETF's recommendations is to reduce the need for developmental education; therefore, the people who are most likely going to be put in charge of implementing the DETF's recommendations at the individual colleges will

be tasked with finding ways to streamline their programs. Again, it is difficult to say how well the DETF's recommendations can be managed and implemented at the research site when it appears that such a limited amount of resources can be dedicated to facilitating the changes, but the research site's attempts to address the DETF recommendations are new and still changing.

Examining the DETF's recommendations is important in my study because the digital technology component of their recommendations demonstrates that those in charge of shaping the research site's BW program on a statewide-level are also aware of the influences of digital technology on students' literacy needs. Examining the DETF's recommendations is important to my study because without effective implementation of DETF's recommendations, BW programs at the research site will have less chances to help the students meet the twenty-first century literacy demands that scholars (Lankshear and Knobel; Jenkins; Selfe, *Technology*) suggest are important.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

This chapter provides a discussion of the study's methods and includes a discussion about the

- site and its history and general demographics,
- instructor-researcher,
- study's methodology, and
- research setting and participants

THE RESEARCH SITE

The site is an eastern, Virginia community college¹⁰. Currently, the college has two primary campuses and a regularly-used satellite campus based at a high school within the service area. Since it began operation in 1971, the college also has offered courses at several off-campus locations to make it easier for students to attend classes from across the college's vast service area. The college serves 12 rural counties. The college is one of 23 community colleges in the VCCS. Over 6,700 students have received degrees and certificates from the college since 1973. When the study began in 2009, there were approximately 4,400 to 4,500 students at the site.

Because I am very familiar with and grew up in the college's service area, I know that primary industries within the area include agriculture and fishing—the industries that many families in the region have worked for generations. Many students have told

¹⁰ The research site's name and exact location are purposely left out of the dissertation document at the request of certain contributors to protect the privacy of some people who contributed information to the study.

me that that they also have full- or part-time employment in other professions, such as medical care, food service, retail, or office support. And, many of my students have told me that they do not work. According to the college's demographic information¹¹, in the 2008-2009 school years, approximately 81% of the students attended school part-time, 84% worked, 38% were dual enrollment high school students pursuing college credit, and 26% were pursuing an Associates of Arts and Sciences degree to transfer to a four-year school after graduating from the site. Also, in regards to ethnicities in the 2008-2009 school years, 77% of the college's students were white, 19% were African American, and the remaining student populations represented Native American, Asian, Hispanic and other undetermined ethnic groups. The college's 2008-2009 demographic information also indicated that 65% of the college's students were female, and the majority of the students ranged in age from either 18 to 21 or 25 to 34; a small percentage of the students were also senior citizens.

The site's 2009 data posted to its Web site indicates that it offers a variety of courses and programs to meet the diverse needs of its student populations. For example, the college offers basic courses to help students build basic academic skills; career development training to help students move into or advance within the job market; freshman- and sophomore-level college courses to enable students to transfer to several, Virginia four-year colleges through a guaranteed admissions program; continuing education courses; and public service seminars and programs to enable students to study a variety of topics.

¹¹ The demographic information was gathered from various sources, such as the research site's annual report.

Also, to meet the needs of its diverse populations, the college offers degree and certificate programs. Aside from the Associate in Arts and Sciences Transfer degree, there is an Associate in Arts and Sciences Transfer degree, Business Administration Specialization, and an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree that is not transferable to most four-year institutions. The AAS degree covers certain areas, such as business management, engineering, nursing and protective services, and emergency medical services. The site also offers certificates in certain areas, such as administration support technology, accounting, general education, and others. The site also offers career studies certificates that—according to the Web site—“are developed and implemented as community needs are identified and institutional resources permit.” The career studies certificates provide training to be an administrative professional or in areas, such as autism, banking, culinary arts and others.

The college delivers its courses and programs through a variety of instructional formats, which include traditional on campus classroom instruction, classes at off campus satellite sites and course delivery through distance options that may occur asynchronously completely online or in a hybrid format—a combination of classroom-based instruction and asynchronous Web-based instruction. Currently, the college also offers courses through interactive video (IV)¹². The college has been renovated during

¹² The research site uses interactive video (IV, which is pronounced ī.v.) to broadcast class sessions live or in real time between campuses. Through IV, instructors can teach from one particular location but their image can be broadcast between campuses so that students can participate in the course on either of the two main campuses. A classroom equipped with IV usually has an instructor computer that controls the IV equipment, which includes a flat screen monitor to project images and speakers and microphones that transmit sound between the classroom locations. The instructors and students are supposed to be able to interact as they would if they were in one location as much as being in separate, physical locations will allow. Instructors usually spend a

the development of this dissertation; therefore, the exact availability of resources at the site is in flux. Some courses, such as computer skills training and English writing courses, take place in a computer lab. Some professors teaching subjects other than computer skills training or writing courses want computer lab space as well, but they have said that they have not been able to get their courses assigned to a computer lab because lab space is limited. Synchronous classes take place six days a week—available mornings, afternoons and evenings. All professors have a Blackboard site—the popular, online CMS—to support the various forms of instruction, the exchange of information between instructors and students and among students. The college administration requires professors to post certain course materials, such as the syllabus, to the course’s Blackboard site for students, but professors may post more information to Blackboard. For example, in 2009, all of the writing courses that I taught—FYC and BW—took place in a computer lab, and I used Blackboard regularly to provide students with course-related updates between class sessions or to regularly communicate in asynchronous online courses, to disseminate instructional information to all students, and to receive the majority of all of the students’ assignments—homework and class work. The college faculty and staff encourage students to access Blackboard as soon as the semester begins even though the students are not required to complete the only mandatory computer training—the ITE 115 or ITE 119 courses—at any particular time before they graduate. Students in distance courses depend on Blackboard for the majority of their instruction throughout the course and are only

certain portion of the semester journeying between campuses to teach the course so that the students have an opportunity to be physically in the classroom with the professor during certain class sessions.

required to complete two, proctored assignments on campus in the college's testing centers during the semester.

Student Placement

Students entering the college must complete the standardized college placement Compass Test. The college's counseling staff uses the Compass Test scores to determine if the student is ready to move directly into credit-bearing courses that count towards graduation requirements or into basic courses, which are credit-bearing courses that do not count towards graduation. Students whose placement test scores indicate a need for basic courses cannot register for certain credit-bearing courses that count towards graduation requirements, or be admitted into certain academic programs, until the student completes the basic courses or passes additional tests usually administered by the professors who teach the basic courses. I conducted my dissertation research within the college's developmental studies program, which I will refer to as basic studies for the purposes of this research.

Site's Basic Studies Program

The college provides several basic courses in English, math, chemistry, and biology that benefit students and place certain restrictions on them. Again, students' placement test scores help the college staff determine if students need basic courses. However, students may also voluntarily complete basic courses if they think that they need to review and practice basic academic skills before they enter credit-bearing courses that count towards graduation requirements or to prepare for certain activities, such as writing, within academic programs. Some students voluntarily complete basic courses to help them build skills for the workplace. Advisors recommend to students

who place into basic courses that they register for those courses within the first semester so that the students can quickly meet basic studies requirements and meet the prerequisites for certain credit-bearing courses that count towards graduation.

Low placement test scores in English help counselors determine if the students should be placed in both or one of the English department's basic studies courses: BW and basic reading. On the first day of class, BW instructors give the students a pretest created by the English department. The pretest has two parts: a multiple choice grammar and punctuation test and an essay test. The instructor will use the results to determine the student's proper placement. A student's score could determine if the student should remain at his or her present level of BW; move to the lower-level English 01, if the student originally placed in English 03; move to the upper-level English 03, if the student originally placed in English 01; or move to FYC, if the student's score indicates that he or she does not need a BW course. In other words, the pretests act as a way for faculty and students to be certain that the Compass Test provided a fair assessment of the students' skills.

Instruction for the BW courses is based out of specific textbooks. For English 03, professors use Pearson Prentice Hall's *Writing Talk: Paragraphs and Short Essays with Readings*. The book was the chosen textbook when I arrived at the college, and I saw no need to change it when I took on the responsibility of reviewing and approving textbook selections for the English department in spring 2011. Also, the current English 03 textbook does provide students with opportunities to address words and images as communications modes—two rhetoric-related, educational issues that my other research has suggested are important. Also, all of the BW courses take place in a

computer lab, and the book's activities can be easily converted into assignments that can be completed through digital technology.

As a precursor for this study, I reviewed 2005 to 2010 BW syllabi at the site to learn more about what was taught in those classes. The English 01 course syllabi indicated that English 01 may include a review of basic handbook rules, such as grammar, punctuation, and mechanics and sentence structure, and may be writing intensive. The English 03 course syllabi indicated that English 03 instruction may include a review of basic handbook rules, provide in-depth instruction in paragraph and essay structure, and focus on writing within rhetorical modes. BW course syllabi also showed that some professors at the site enabled the students to write using computers and word processing software. Basic, or developmental, writing courses at the site are designed to help students improve their writing skills to prepare for FYC and general, college-level writing, but—according to the syllabi that I have reviewed—digital literacy development is rarely required in the courses even if students show signs of digital literacy or an interest in digital literacy instruction.

Digital Technology Student Training at the Site

The college offers all students opportunities to build their computer skills, but those opportunities are often unstructured. For example, students pursuing an Associate of Arts and Sciences Transfer degree are required to complete ITE 115 or ITE 119 to fulfill the mandatory computer skills portion of the program requirements; however, students may complete that training at any time before they graduate. Millward found that only a small percentage of two-year colleges require students to meet technology literacy requirements (377). A section of computers in the college

library are designated as the Success Lab where students can receive basic computer instruction from library staff, but the staff are not required to cover any particular skills—only what students request. The college provides computer skills tutorials free of charge via Atomic Learning (AL)—an online computer skills tutorials Web site—for students who need additional computer skills training, but the online training is not tied to any particular part of the college’s curriculum. Also, AL requires users to have some computer and Web skills to function within AL’s online environment. Several college faculty members volunteer to tutor students in basic computer skills, but tutors are not always available when students need them. One way that students might receive structured, digital technology skills training is that many professors voluntarily teach the computer skills that the professor believes the students need to be successful in the course as the professor teaches the course; however, my informal conversations with professors revealed that digital technology instruction outside a formal computer course may vary from step-by-step to just informing the students about what software programs will be used in the course and providing a list of the on campus and online tutoring options.

Site Participants: Basic Writing Faculty

After several weeks of me aggressively pursuing input from faculty via email, phone calls, and in person for the study, only two developmental English faculty members participated in my dissertation study. Many refused to participate or allow their students to participate. Around the time of the study, the school was undergoing tremendous turmoil, such as unexpected faculty layoffs, resignations and retirements, which some among the approximately 23 full-time faculty say was very stressful for

them. Other distractions included demolition and construction to all of the faculty office space and about half of the academic areas across both campuses, which moved some classes into trailers away from certain computer-based resources. Professors said that the faculty changes, physical changes to work their environment and other sudden cultural upheavals made them resist getting involved or getting their students involved in any non-mandatory, potentially distracting research projects within the already stressful environment. And, some faculty members said that they would only consider participating in the study if the identity of the site and their identity would be kept anonymous for reasons that they would not discuss with me. I enabled the faculty members to participate in the survey anonymously to encourage participation, honesty and openness in their responses, which prompted two faculty members to participate; I do not have detailed data about the individual faculty who responded to the questions.

Digital Technology Instructor Training at the Site

Instructor's digital knowledge at the site may vary. For example, instructors, who do not teach computer sciences courses are not required to maintain a mandatory level of digital skill other than passing an annual tutorial and test that stresses digital security. However, during the school year, the site's technology support staff offer to instructors voluntary digital technology skills training courses, which are often designed based on survey results regarding faculty members' perceived training needs. The voluntary training courses often focus on the digital technologies that the site's design and culture dictate that professors use most often, such as Microsoft Office programs, email, Blackboard, digital video capture software, IV equipment and smart

boards¹³. Instructors may also request one-on-one digital technology skills training from the technology support staff as often as the instructor feels it necessary and is able to work the training around his or her other responsibilities; teaching loads and other responsibilities may prevent instructors from pursuing technology training. Many full-time instructors teach more than five sections of courses on various subject matters within their discipline as well as multiple sections of the college's student orientation courses. For example, in fall 2011, I taught seven different courses and over 180 students. Full-time instructors may also be assigned more than 200 advisees each semester. Most instructors at the site do not have teaching assistants or any other assistance with their teaching load. Because of the demands of their environment, instructors may not be receiving the digital technology professional development that they need in ways that they can utilize it or have sufficient time to integrate their digital knowledge into their daily processes effectively. Millward reports that only about a quarter of the two-year college instructors in her study are satisfied with the technology training they receive at their schools (384). But, more than half of the instructors in Millward's study were compensated for their technology training (384-385), which may encourage and enable instructors to participate. Little to no compensation for digital technology training is offered to instructors at the site. Full-time instructors are also required to participate on various committees with some committees, such as hiring committees, assigned unexpectedly, multiple times throughout a school year. In their 2005 report on technology and pedagogy, the Two-

¹³ The research site's smart boards are much like a digital chalkboard or dry erase board. Instructors can project their computer's image to the smart board to use it as a video monitor or write on the smart board using special markers that enable digital imagery.

Year College Association (TYCA) indicates that the professors would like to participate in more computer-related training, but teaching and administrative responsibilities took precedence (385-386). The site's technology department also often informs instructors about the availability of online digital technology skills training. The technology department's staff also provides a variety of instructions and helpful tips via email and the college Web portal to instructors; the technology instructions and tips usually focus on the technology that is available at the site. Instructors may also use the online AL technology training available to anyone in the site's community. Most of the time, instructors learn how to use the site's teaching technology, such as the IV classroom's technology and smart boards, through heuristic methods and informally from peers when time is available. The technology support staff attempts to provide emergency assistance to instructors, such as when technology does not function as expected in the midst of a class session, but that support is not always available when the instructors need it unexpectedly.

Role of the Instructor-Researcher

In this study, my role as instructor-researcher was very specific. I developed the proposed topic, obtained IRB approvals, created and administered the surveys, gathered the survey data, analyzed the data, and wrote and edited the dissertation. The remainder of this chapter discusses the research processes.

RESEARCH DESIGN

To collect data for the study, I used a mixed-methods approach that incorporated qualitative and quantitative techniques. I designed closed-ended multiple choice, multiple answer and agree/disagree questions to collect quantitative data

through an online survey tool that calculated response percentages. I presented open-ended questions at the end of the survey to collect qualitative data for analysis through grounded theory methodology (GTM). Using an online survey tool, I delivered the survey by emailing a link to my BW students and all of the English professors—full-time and adjunct faculty. I also showed and discussed with the students in class a printed version of the survey.

I used a mixed-methods approach for this study to increase my confidence in the outcomes. Multiple perspectives and theories can be generated by using both qualitative and quantitative data (Glaser and Strauss 18). Glaser and Strauss explain that neither form of data should be used to test the other form of data. Instead, qualitative and quantitative data should be “used as supplements, as mutual verification and...as different forms of data on the same subject that when compared will each generate theory,” which is how I used the two kinds of data in my mixed-methods approach.

Both the qualitative and quantitative data provide rich perspectives. Closed-ended questions generate “quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell 153). Drawing from Melkote’s development support communications theory (“Reinventing” 40-41), I used open-ended survey questions because they enabled me to gather the participants’ language and details about their experiences. Shaugnessy warns that “as we come to know these students better, we begin to see that the greatest barrier to our work with them is our ignorance of them...” (“Diving” 238). My intent was to learn more about the BW students and fellow faculty. I also wanted to empower the

participants by enabling their direct thoughts and comments to shape the outcome of the results and be heard within the academy's discussions when my study was later published or referred to. As MacNealy explains, open-ended questions "do not limit the possible answers that may be given" (162), which enables the participants' thoughts and ideas to be heard as accurately and clearly as possible. Also, a researcher's "good open-ended questions are based on what is known and unknown: in other words, they [the questions] are grounded in theory." I developed my closed-ended and open-ended questions based on what I knew about the population I was studying, what I wanted to know about the population that I was studying, and what I wanted my audience to know about my participants.

Research Participants

Time constraints, the students' availability to me, the cultural upheavals within the college during the time of my study and my interest in the educational needs and abilities of BW students all influenced my selection of participants. Only students enrolled in my BW courses participated because other professors said that they did not think that their students had time to participate. Students' participation in the study was voluntary, and those who participated received extra credit. I also offered equal opportunities for extra credit to students who chose not to participate in the study. There were 29 student participants in spring 2009 and 33 student participants in fall 2009.

The college's placement tests and later the BW course pretest scores determined that the student participants needed a BW course; therefore, I could

assume that all of the students entering my BW course had similar writing skills. This study does not compare students based on demographics.

I invited the college's BW professors to participate in the study as well so that I could compare and contrast the students' responses to the professors' responses. Two BW professors responded to the survey. Because I enabled the professors to respond anonymously, I have no way of knowing if they were full-time or adjuncts; I do not have any demographic data on the professors.

Survey Process Description and Rationale

I chose the survey method because scholars (Creswell 153; Glaser and Strauss 18; MacNealy 162) support such a method but also for other practical reasons. Surveys enabled the participants to provide anonymous input—a process that I posited would encourage honesty and openness. Surveys enabled me to quickly and succinctly collect data from the highly transient population of students as well as the busy professors. Because the survey was available online, participants could access them from anywhere that had Internet access, such as their mobile computers and smart phones. Over a third of North Americans own smart phones, and most of them use their smart phones daily to access the Web (A. Smith). The Web-accessible, mix of closed-ended and open-ended questions enabled me access to opinions about digital technology from the BW instructors and students despite their busy lifestyles and potential resistance to research.

The survey tool was reviewed by various experts and interested parties. Members of my dissertation committee reviewed my survey questions for clarity, fairness, thoroughness and effectiveness and suggested revisions. In spring 2009,

ODU's Institutional Research Board (IRB) also reviewed my research proposal and survey instrument, and requested minor changes to the questions, but gave the study exempt status and approved it. The VCCS's IRB also reviewed and approved my research proposal and survey instrument.

I wondered if surveying my students at different points of their course completion would produce different results. The spring 2009 students responded to the survey at the end of their semester because multiple IRB approvals delayed the start of the research. But, the spring 2009 survey process led me to question the timing of the surveys. Surveying students at the beginning of the semester would mean that I would have a group of students who had not completed my BW class in the computer lab. My thinking was that the input from students who had completed a college-level writing class in a computer lab, such as the spring 2009 students, might not be the same as input from students who had not yet completed a college-level writing course in a computer lab and that the different digital experiences between those two groups might generate interesting results. The spring 2009 students completed their surveys at the end of their semester; the fall 2009 students responded to the survey at the beginning of their semester. In addition, I used my experiences with and notes from conducting the survey with my spring 2009 students to make minor revisions to the survey instrument for the fall 2009 students and professors. I introduced the survey questions (See Appendix A and Appendix B) to my BW students during class. I also included a student research project cover letter (Appendix C) and a research project student release form (Appendix D) that explained the research in writing. The professors responded to their survey (Appendix E) during the fall 2009 semester.

The first part of the surveys consisted of 24 short-response, closed-ended questions that asked about the respondents' computer skills, computer ownership, communications and educational preferences, and computer-related experiences. The second part of the surveys consisted of two, open-ended questions that required the respondents to type their answers and provide their views on using computers in an English course. The student version of the surveys had a third, open-ended question that asked the students what they used computers to do outside of their English classes.

Procedures for Study Implementation

During a class session, I explained the study to the students. I provided a link to the online survey tool and showed students how to use it during class. I allowed the students to respond to the survey questions in class and from outside of class if they thought that they needed more time to consider their responses. It took students about 30 minutes to complete the online survey.

The professors responded to survey questions during the fall 2009 semester. I emailed an explanation of the study and a link to the online survey tool to the college's three full-time developmental English professors and five adjunct English professors requesting input from those who had taught BW within the three years prior to the study and were likely to teach BW courses in the near future.

DATA ANALYSIS

I used multiple methods for analyzing the study data. My chosen analysis methods met the needs of the study and provided the best analysis for the kind of data that I collected.

Quantitative Analysis

The online survey tool administered the questions and also calculated the percentage of responses for each question, which made it possible for me to notice patterns and trends and compare the data patterns from the students with the data patterns from the professors. I downloaded the data from the online site to an Excel spreadsheet to create charts and graphs to further analyze the data and illustrate my findings.

Qualitative Analysis

The participants typed their individual thoughts and perceptions when they responded to the final questions in the survey. I used GTM to analyze the textual data. Glaser and Strauss developed GTM to be a qualitative research method that was flexible, yet consistent. Charmaz explains that “essentially, Glaser and Strauss joined epistemological critique with practical guidelines for action” to generate theory based, or grounded, within the data (5).

Using GTM to analyze the qualitative data enabled me to address the central research question. For example, the participants’ responses to the open-ended survey question “what is good about using computers in an English class” enabled me to examine their views on computers in BW courses and, thus, address potential impacts on the BW curriculum. I referred to the course as English rather than BW in the survey because I was not convinced that the students saw a huge difference between BW, or developmental writing, and a traditional English course other than the fact that BW was the course certain students had to complete before the college’s required FYC course. But, most students seemed to be able to relate to the activities that occur in an

English class. I also rarely stress any significant difference between BW and other English classes beyond the first day of class when I discuss the topics we will cover so that I am not constantly reminding the students that they did not qualify for FYC. The quantitative data enabled me to examine the participants' skills, perceptions, and behaviors to obtain greater insights into their digital technology-related environments. The students' digital experiences suggest what should be taught within BW at the site.

I also relied on my teaching experiences with the students; my observations of the students; and my experiences as a writing professor, student, and former technology trainer to help me analyze the textual data. I used the textual analysis to search for trends and patterns in the responses. I coded and categorized the textual data as themes emerged. As Whithaus and Neff explain, when using GTM, "as researchers question, compare and hypothesize, they return repeatedly to the data set for confirming and disconfirming evidence" (437-438). Glaser and Strauss explain that in GTM researchers compare segments of data to other segments of data—returning to the data set to test their hypothesis (34); Whithaus and Neff suggest that that process is to discover "substantive or formal theory." I used Glaser and Strauss's GTM process and Whithaus and Neff's suggestions to analyze my textual data.

I used multiple coding methods to analyze the results of my open-ended survey questions. I created a two-column chart with numbered lines in Microsoft Word to help with coding the data as shown in Appendix F, Appendix G and Appendix H. I copied the participants' responses to the right column providing an individual response on each numbered line in the column. I coded each line of response on corresponding numbered lines in the left column. I used *in vivo* coding, which helped me generate

major themes and subthemes. Often data codes, or labels, are “in-vivo codes,” or words found within the participants’ language (Corbin and Strauss 82; Charmaz 55). Grounding the textual coding within the data through GTM processes brought forth complexity and richness from the textual data. Specifically, I used GTM to create codes to label the situations described in the students’ and professors’ responses. I created the codes by determining what appeared to be the purposes of either the computer-related actions discussed, or the purposes that computers seemed to serve, in the situations the participants discussed.

My decisions about how to label the responses were based not only on the respondents’ specific words, and what their words suggested, but also on my experiences related to the topics that the participants discussed and my interpretation of those experiences. Corbin and Strauss explain that “when we share a common culture with our research participants...even if we don’t share the same culture, we, as researchers, often have life experiences that are similar to those of our participants” (80). Many of my BW student participants and I shared cultural similarities: we were technology users; North Americans in the twenty-first century; students in the U.S. educational system; hometown residents of the site’s surrounding, rural counties; members of the site’s campus community; and former students from the public school systems in the site’s local area. The BW professors most likely shared many of the same cultural similarities that I shared with the students, but the BW professors and I were a part of other specific cultures: college graduates, educators in a community college, educators at the site, and BW professors. Corbin and Strauss also explain that when the researcher and the research participants share a common culture “it makes

sense, then, [for the researcher] to draw upon those experiences to obtain insight into what our participants are describing” (80). I drew upon my experiences within the various cultures that I had in common with my participants to analyze their responses.

Research Memos

I used research memos to record my thoughts about the participants’ responses and my thought processes while creating and administering codes. The memos also created a paper trail. Corbin and Strauss explain that memos “contain the products of our analyses” (117). In the memos, I discussed events that occurred during my coding process, such as decisions that I made about the words to use as codes, my thought processes as I arrived at conclusions about the definitions for each code, and the decisions that I made as I applied codes to the data. The information that I recorded within the memos enabled me to consider and redefine the definitions and criteria that I had created for each of my codes. Eventually, I had 27 codes with definitions that I used to label the events that I witnessed within the data.

DATA CODING

Using the contents of the memos, I found similarities among some of my codes’ definitions or properties. I merged the codes that had similar or related properties reducing the 27 codes down to 11 final categories with defined properties (see Table 3-1)—or explanations for the conditions that prompted me to use them—that guided the labeling of the participants’ responses. Because people perform activities for a variety of reasons, some of the participants’ responses could be labeled using more than one category.

Categories		Categories' Defining Properties
1	Chatting, Emailing and Messaging	Refers to using a computer or digital technology for chatting, emailing or messaging primarily; using computers or digital technology to facilitate chatting, emailing and messaging; mentioning the word “communication;” and mentioning performing chatting, emailing or messaging. The category includes social networking and brief communications via digital technology because chatting, emailing and messaging occurring in social networking. The “chatting, emailing, and messaging” category also included social networking sites, such as MySpace, which are also coded as “self-entertaining” using a different category.
2	Completing School-related Activities	Refers to using digital technology to complete homework assignments, using computers to complete school-related assignments, and mentioning school-related assignments in comments.
3	Coordinating Activities Digitally	Refers to using digital technology for coordinating or organizing academic work or personal obligations, but not necessarily completing such activities; mentioning that computers enable digital facilitation of activity coordination; and using digital technology to organize a variety of activities.
4	Learning Digital Technology	Refers to mentioning learning, or needing to learn, digital technology or facilitating learning digital technology; suggesting the need for digital technology skills training or that a lack of computer skills may cause users difficulties; and suggesting a fear of computers. The category was also used to label issues related to computer access.
5	Planning, Designing and Editing	Refers to mentioning any of the terms specifically; mentioning some kind of planning, designing or editing process that was facilitated or aided by the digital environment; and using digital technology for creating something new other than “words only” research papers.
6	Receiving Academic Instruction	Refers to computer-supported activities involving the student and instructor when the student’s primary purpose seemed to be receiving academic instruction from an instructor or an online resource, or the instructor’s primary purpose was to provide academic instruction to the student via digital technology. Also, refers to responses that suggested that computers enable someone to receive academic instruction, but not computer skills training; mentioning “academic instruction” or “learning” or “taking notes;” describing situations in which academic instruction occurred; and mentioning of some sort of learning event via a computer not specific to computer skills training.

Table 3-1: Final data coding categories and their defining properties.

7	Researching	Refers to using digital technology for conducting research; suggesting that computers facilitate research; writing the word “research;” suggesting an activity related to the act of “investigation” or discovery in a digital environment; and accessing the college’s online resources.
8	Self-entertaining	Refers to using digital technology for entertaining one’s self; mentioning “entertainment” or some variation on the word; and suggesting that computers facilitate self-entertainment. The “self-entertaining” category also included social networking sites that many people consider to be a source of entertainment, but are also coded as “chatting, emailing, and messaging” because those activities occur within social networking activities as well.
9	Working Quickly	Refers to digital technology helping the respondents work faster, more efficiently or perform “multi-tasking” or address multiple activities at once; mentioning the ability to work quickly; and using the computer for the purpose of working faster.
10	Writing	Refers to using digital technology for writing words or aiding users in the writing of words and when writing occurred, but the respondent did not mention a focus on school-related assignments.
11	N/A	Refers to comments that were nonsensical, did not seem to relate to any of the research questions or could not clearly be coded with any of the categories.

Table 3-1: Continued.

Below is a detailed discussion of each of the 11 categories and their defining properties. The discussion provides more detail about how the categories were developed and includes examples from the respondents’ comments, which also helped with category development.

Chatting, Emailing and Messaging

The “chatting, emailing and messaging” category refers to instances in which respondents discussed using a computer or digital technology for the purpose of chatting, emailing or messaging primarily. I used the “chatting, emailing and messaging” category when the participants suggested that computers or digital technology could facilitate chatting, emailing and messaging in the situations that they

discussed in their comments. The “chatting, emailing and messaging” category also covers instances in which respondents mentioned the word “communication,” because their communications efforts seemed to involve chatting, emailing or messaging, or described activities that suggested some type of digitally-supported interaction for the purpose of communicating in the form of chatting, emailing or messaging.

I also included social networking and brief communications between students and professors under the “chatting, emailing and messaging” category because each of the situations was performed primarily just to communicate, or network, with other people briefly using a computer or digital technology. Chatting, emailing and messaging activities occur within social networking activities. For example, I asked the following question: what is good about using computers in an English class? I interpreted a student participant’s response “helps to keep in contact with the teacher” to mean that he or she used email to facilitate that communication situation because the students at the site primarily used email to communicate with professors when they communicated via the computer. Also, because the question asked about computers, even if the respondent, such as the student mentioned above, was reflecting on a digital technology-related communications event that occurred in previous English classes, I coded the responses as chatting, emailing or messaging because those were the computer-based communications methods that I had observed students use or heard them discuss at the site most often. I used the “chatting, emailing, and messaging” category when respondents mentioned social networking sites, such as MySpace or Facebook, which is also coded as “self-entertaining” using a different category.

Completing School-related Assignments

The “completing school-related assignments” category refers to using digital technology when the purpose is to complete homework assignments, such as school-related writing activities, completing a test outside of class, or completing all other computer-based assignments outside of class, but not just the organization of such activities. I also used the “completing school-related assignments” category when respondents suggested that computers could serve the purpose of completing school-related assignments. I used the “completing school-related assignments” category when student participants made comments that mentioned school-related assignments. For example, in response to the question, what is good about using computers in an English class, one student explained that “more information is available and assignments are quicker to complete.” Also, I used the “completing school-related assignments” category when another student respondent wrote the following: “If [I] have any questions the teacher is there to answer them.” I assumed that the student was using a computer to complete school-related assignments because the question focuses on using computers in an English class. Also, I used the “completing school-related assignments” category when a student answered with the following: “I use the computers for writing essays, paragraph, homework, and looking up info.” I used the “completing school-related assignments” category because the student mentioned specific kinds of school-related assignments.

Coordinating Activities Digitally

The “coordinating activities digitally” category refers to instances in which respondents mentioned using digital technology for the purpose of coordinating or

organizing academic activities, work-related responsibilities, or personal obligations but not necessarily completing such activities. I also used the “coordinating activities digitally” category when respondents suggested that one purpose computers serve is the digital facilitation of activity coordination or management. For example, in response to the question, what do you use computers to do in classes or school-related activities other than English class, I coded the student’s response “for professional and educational use” as “coordinating activities digitally” because I interpreted the response to suggest computer-based organization or management of non-specific activities. I used the category “coordinating activities digitally” to label responses when respondents suggested that they used digital technology to organize a variety of activities. For example, one student gave the following response: “[coordinate] schedules of job or class goals in a [person’s] life. [Organize] specific information a particular user needs at the moment.” The student listed multiple activities he or she used computers to coordinate outside of English class.

Learning Digital Technology

The “learning digital technology” category refers to instances in which the respondent mentioned or suggested learning, or needing to learn, digital technology or that one purpose that the computer serves is to facilitate learning digital technology. One of the research questions asked the following: How might computers make English class more difficult? One of the student respondents mentioned the following: “If someone is not so sure about how to use them, if it's something new they might have trouble.” The response suggested that some type of digital technology education should take place or that a lack of computer skills may be causing the computer user’s

difficulties. Another student said, “If you do not have knowledge of computers it may make the class more difficult...,” which suggested a need to learn more about computers and how to use them. I also labeled issues related to computer access with the “learning digital technology” category because often a lack of access can prevent students from having computer skills. I also labeled responses with the “learning digital technology” category if a response suggested a fear of computers. For example, when asked how might computers make English class more difficult, one student said the following: “I do not have a lot of computer experience. It should have been explained to me that I needed to work with a computer.” The student’s response suggested that he or she needed to learn more about computers. The tone in the response suggested a fear of computer technology because the student might not have been concerned about being told that computer technology was a part of the course if he or she did not have a fear of computers. I could have also concluded that the student might have lacked access to computer technology.

Not Applicable (N/A)

The “N/A” category referred to instances in which respondents’ comments were nonsensical, did not seem to relate to any of the research questions and could not clearly be coded with any of the categories. For example, I asked the participants the following question: what is good about using computers in an English class? One student respondent said, “I do not like to use computers in English class for learning purposes, or any class for that matter. Therefore I do [not] have anything good to say about this subject.” The response did not answer the question directly; therefore, I labeled it with the N/A category. However, the student respondent’s comment is

important to the understanding of the study's basic research questions; therefore, I will address the response later in the dissertation.

Planning, Designing and Editing

The “planning, designing and editing” category refers to instances in the data in which respondents mentioned any of the terms specifically. I also used the “planning, designing and editing” category when the respondents suggested that the computer aided the planning, designing and editing process. Process writing theories suggest that writers perform “prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing” (Kearcher 93) during their writing and consider the writing process more than the final product. Process writing theories and participants' language helped me determine that I should include the word “editing” within my label. One of the questions asked the following: What is good about using computers in an English class? One student respondent answered the question by explaining that he or she could “type the information out in a neat and clear format,” which suggested some consideration for the “editing” portion of the planning, designing and editing category when the student mentioned a concern for producing information that is “neat and clear.” I also labeled instances “planning, designing and editing” whenever respondents suggested using digital technology to design something other than “word only” research papers.

Receiving Academic Instruction

The category “receiving academic instruction” refers specifically to computer-supported activities when the primary purpose seemed to be academic instruction via digital technology. Also, I used the “receiving academic instruction” category when the responses suggested that one purpose a computer served was to enable someone to

receive academic instruction, but not specific to computer skills training. Also, I used the category “receiving academic instruction” when the respondents specifically mentioned “academic instruction” or “learning” or “taking notes” in an academic environment. However, in this case “learning” refers to learning skills or information not related to learning how to use digital technology. I also used the category “receiving academic instruction” when respondents mentioned some sort of learning event that occurred via the transmission of information via computer. For example, one of the research questions asked the following: What is good about using computers in an English class? I labeled students’ responses such as “you have the teacher there to help you if you need it” and “to have different looks at what you are learning and not just in the book or on the blackboard” with the category “receiving academic instruction” because they both indicated opportunities for learning via digital technology, but not necessarily how to use digital technology.

Researching

The category “researching” refers to using digital technology for the purpose of conducting research, such as school-related and non-school-related research. I also used the category “researching” when the response suggested that one purpose a computer serves is the facilitation of research. The OED defines “research” as “the act of searching carefully for or pursuing a specified thing or person...” The category “researching” also refers to each time the respondent wrote the word “research” or suggested an activity related to the act of “investigation” or discovery in a digital environment, such as surfing the Web or accessing news and information online. One survey question asked the following: what is good about using computers in an

English class? One student respondent said that “the use of computers in an English class...helps the students research the different assignment.” The category “researching” also refers to instances in which respondents mentioned accessing college-wide, online resources, such as forms and grades, because I also interpreted the purpose of those acts to be “investigation.” For example, when asked what is good about using computers in English class, one student respondent said the following: “You can [receive] your grades [a lot] quicker.” My experience helped me conclude that the student was referring to accessing grades via Blackboard or transcripts via the Web portal.

Self-entertaining

The “self-entertaining” category refers to instances in which respondents mentioned using digital technology for entertaining themselves, such as playing video games or visiting their social networking page. For example, one research question asked the following: What do you use computers to do in classes or school-related activities other than English class? One student respondent explained that “sometime[s] [I] will go on [MySpace]...when [I] am in class.” In response to the same question, another respondent mentioned “something hands on that [I] get to do...other than just sitting in class, taking notes and listening to lectures,” which also suggested a form of entertainment. The “self-entertaining” category also refers to instances in which respondents mentioned the word “entertainment,” or some variation of the word. The “self-entertaining” category also included social networking as entertainment.

Working Quickly

The “working quickly” category referred to instances in which the respondents mentioned that digital technology helped them work faster, more efficiently, or perform “multi-tasking.” For example, one respondent simply said “more efficient” when asked the following question: what is good about using computer in an English class? The response to the question suggested that a purpose that the computer served was to facilitate working quickly.

Writing

The “writing” category refers to using digital technology for the purpose of writing words. I used the “writing” category when discussions about writing occurred, but the respondent did not mention a focus on school-related assignments. For example, I asked the following survey question: what is good about using computers in an English class? One student respondent said “standard letters typed, help eliminate penmanship that people often struggle with, but also allow them to concentrate on the subject matter that [they] are focusing to write about.” The student’s response suggested that the primary purpose for using the computer was to aid in writing, but the response did not say that he or she was writing to complete school-related assignments, which would have required me to use a different category.

Some respondents had multiple purposes for using computers, which prompted me to apply multiple categories to the responses. For example, in response to the question: what is good about using computers in an English class, one student wrote the following: “you learn new things about the computer and your class.” I coded the student’s response with two categories, “receiving academic instruction” and “learning

digital technology,” because the comment suggested that two of the purposes that computers can serve within the English course are to enable students to receive course-specific academic instruction as well as related digital technology instruction.

After I coded all of the data with categories, I counted the number of times that something within a participant’s response prompted me to use each category. Creswell explains that “a researcher may quantify the qualitative data. This involves creating codes and themes qualitatively, then counting the number of times they occur in the text data...” (220-221). Counting the number of times that I used certain categories to code the participants’ responses enabled me to spot trends within the responses and generate conclusions that I could use to address my study questions.

The next chapters provide the results of the quantitative and qualitative survey data. The quantitative data is spread across three chapters—Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6—and grouped in each chapter according to themes. The qualitative data—Chapter 7—is in a single chapter. Each of the survey results is followed by a discussion about its implications and relationship to similar research.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Originally, I had planned to survey a much larger group. As I mentioned, during the time of my study, unexpected events occurred, which created a stressful environment among the faculty that made collecting research data nearly impossible. Although I invited the three full-time English professors, aside from me, at the site and four adjunct English professors who had taught BW in the three years prior to complete the survey, only two professors were willing to respond. I attempted to contact other institutions in the VCCS to request that they participate in the study, but

I did not receive sufficient responses from other institutions either. By the time that final IRB approvals came through from ODU and the VCCS, I only had time to survey my spring 2009 students as they were leaving my course if I hoped to begin work on my dissertation research while I had access to BW students. Because there is no unequivocal research that proves that a research group must be a certain size to produce worthwhile results, I concluded that a reasonable study could be conducted with a small group of participants. Also, because I conducted my study with one section of my spring 2009 students at the end of their semester and with one section of my fall 2009 students at the beginning of their semester, I was concerned about incomparable results between the two groups. Pavia conducted her study with only the students in her class, which suggests that conducting research with only students in my classes was an acceptable practice. I also considered the fact that no two groups of participants is going to be exactly the same and may generate different results no matter how similar the groups may appear to be in a study. Because I feared that unrest within the school would cause some faculty and students to leave during the fall semester, I surveyed faculty and students at the start of the fall 2009 semester—rather than at the end as I had done in the spring—rather than lose an opportunity to gather more data. Again, as I mentioned, I thought that surveying the students at different times within their BW semester might produce interesting results.

I had originally planned to use a much larger survey tool and pool of results, but I had to change my plans. As seen on the original survey documents (Appendix D), I had planned to ask students to respond to a maximum of 50 closed-ended survey questions; write about five narrative paragraphs about their computer experiences;

write three, 300-word essays about their experiences with computer technology; and participate in group interview sessions. During informal conversations, students told me that their course demands would make it much too difficult for them to complete such an extensive research activity. I reduced the final research tool to 24 closed-ended questions and three open-ended questions—a format that several students told me seemed much more reasonable. I wanted the research to be student-driven as much as possible even if that meant editing my research design to fit my students' needs. Even though I launched a much shorter survey, students still skipped questions occasionally or gave very limited responses to the open-ended questions.

I had originally planned to present the results of all 24 of the original, spring 2009 closed-ended questions. However, after the spring 2009 students responded to the questions, I realized that many of the questions may have had confusing wording or failed to ask about specific details that I later realized I wanted to learn more about. I revised or deleted a few of the original questions when I presented the survey to the fall 2009 students. After comparing the data from the questions that had slightly different wording between the spring and fall semesters, I realized that the data was inconsistent and impossible to compare. Also, I did not include the results from some student survey questions because the wording of some of the questions seemed too repetitive. Another thing to consider was that there was some slightly different wording between the student and instructor surveys because the instructors were responding to the surveys from a very different perspective, but I believed that most of the instructor and student survey questions were worded closely enough to enable me to make comparisons. I included data from the spring 2009 student survey questions

so that I would have more viable data for the study. In other words, because I *did* have a small data pool, I didn't want to discard potentially interesting results from the spring 2009 student group and only focus on the fall 2009 student group; I saw issues that I wanted to explore when I compared the spring and fall student survey data from like questions. If I had had more time I would have presented the survey to my spring 2010 BW students. However, there was no guarantee that I would teach BW in spring 2010, or anytime in the future, or that I would be able to convince other instructors to participate in my study to enable me to collect additional data. Again, upheavals at the site made planning additional data collection impossible. In this dissertation, I present only the results of the questions that were identical between the spring and fall surveys.

My study was limited by a lack of complete responses from the students to all of the survey questions as well as the fact that only a few professors were willing to participate. In hindsight, I wish that I could have further edited questions or added new questions that generated more in-depth responses. For example, I would have asked students more open-ended questions about the digital demands within the academy outside my courses. I also wanted to know more about the instructors' opinions about the digital technology training they had received at the site to help me determine how they felt about digital preparedness, but—again—the anonymous faculty surveys prevented me from following up with those respondents.

The study's subject matter is important, but perhaps the timing was not ideal when I began the study because of the turmoil at the site. The administrators were not focused on developmental studies when I began the study. Had I begun after the

VCCS DETF later gathered its information about the state of developmental studies across the Virginia community colleges, the VCCS data would have been available to me for further analysis, and I could have used that data to prompt more support at the site and from other VCCS schools. Simply put, my research question was ahead of its time within the VCCS and at the site. However, beginning the study after the VCCS developmental studies project research was released—over a year after I began my dissertation research—would have made it impossible for me to complete my dissertation in a timely manner. Digital technology-related research is impacted by the advent of new digital technology, which appears to be occurring daily if the numerous commercials for new and different technology are any indication. Because of the speed at which digital technology seems to be expanding and evolving, there is always the potential limitation that results may be outdated.

ADDRESSING THE STUDY'S LIMITATIONS: USING GUERRILLA RESEARCH

Because the study had so many limitations, I had to make a choice: discontinue the study or continue with the study and find creative ways to gather data and draw conclusions. I continued with the study because I thought that despite the limitations and problems, the BW digital literacy issues at the site needed examination. Also, the academy-wide issues regarding digital literacy and BW needs more research input so that educators can determine how digital technology impacts BW. I determined that just because a research project was difficult or challenging, I should not disregard it in search of an *easier* project. I think that it is the imperfect environment that often needs attention from researchers. In some cases, it is best to make an imperfect attempt, learn from it and use the results as a catalyst for future research rather than toss out a

research idea because the project will not be perfect. Instead, I practiced “guerilla research.”

According to the OED, “guerilla warfare” was “an irregular war carried on by small bodies of men acting independently.” My guerilla research approach enabled me to work independently to address a complex topic in an irregular environment through limited resources. My guerilla research method enabled me to examine the environment that I thought needed examination, use the participants and resources that were available, and gather the data that I could under the circumstances—all within an unpredictable environment. Specifically, because of the problems within the research environment, I had to make certain adjustments to my research plan. Originally, I had planned to include participants from other VCCS schools in my study. But, when other schools did not respond to my requests for input, I limited my participants to my colleagues at the site. When my colleagues resisted involving their students in my study, I decided to conduct research within my classes only. When students could not complete the components of the original, in-depth research tool, I created a slimmed down tool to fit students’ needs rather than risk losing students. After participants told me that they had limited time to participate in my study, I created survey questions that I thought my participants could respond to quickly and deployed the questions through an online survey tool that students and instructors could access from any location that had Internet access.

As I reflected on my study, I concluded that my study probably would have produced much more acceptable results had I attempted ethnographic or case study research. Pavia conducted her research among a small group of students just as I had,

but she performed case study research rather than using surveys. Although surveys enable a researcher to gather data quickly and succinctly, surveys gather limited data. Ethnographic research or case studies probably would have provided more depth. But, case studies and ethnographic research require long-term relationships with participants. The transient, somewhat chaotic environment at the site in 2009 made it impossible to follow up with participants who quickly moved on and were unreachable for follow up or unwilling to participate in follow up. The nature of the research made surveys a better option than ethnographic research or case studies despite the benefits of long-term, in-depth research. Also, with ethnographic or case study research, I would have been required to draw conclusions based on the long-term behavior of just a few people. Pavia's claims about students—although useful in some ways—also frustrated me because it included only a few students who did not demographically match the students at the site. I found Smith and Caruso's survey method much more useful than Pavia's case study method because Smith and Caruso's participants were much more like the students at the site, and Smith and Caruso gathered the kind and amount of quantifiable data that I hoped to gather at the site; therefore, I tried to mimic their survey method.

My research questions probably needed additional revising, editing and crafting to make them gather just the right kinds of data, but it was impossible for me to determine what data I needed until after I gathered what I could and analyzed it. Piloting the research questions might have showed me where there were flaws in my questions. Unfortunately, digital technology—the focus of my research—moves so

quickly and the site was so unpredictable that by the time that I crafted the perfect questions, many of the questions might have been useless or outdated at the site.

To give my study more depth, I think it would be good to conduct ethnographic research in the future with other BW students and instructors in the VCCS—if BW continues to exist in a comparable format after the VCCS developmental studies redesign. At this point, my study does not allow me to make broad claims about digital literacy in the BW field. Instead, my study provides a snapshot of the digital literacy and BW issues at one site. My next steps will be to enhance my results with more in-depth, ethnographic or case study research over a longer period to collect more research about how digital technology is complicating writing instruction in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER 4

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ABOUT BASIC WRITING STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR COMPUTER OWNERSHIP AND USAGE

My study's question is the following: In what ways might BW professors' and their students' interaction with computers and digital technology inside and outside of the academy complicate the BW curriculum in the twenty-first century? I posit that BW students' use of digital technology at the site is comparable to students' use of digital technology across the academy in many cases. And, I posit that BW students' use of digital technology at the site is comparable to their instructors' use of digital technology at the site. There is research that tells us how instructors are using digital technology in BW courses, but there is very little research to tell us how much BW students are using digital technology inside and outside of class. To help answer my research question, I determined that I needed to know more about my respondents' Internet, digital technology, and software usage and activities. This chapter will discuss the results of the closed-ended questions about the respondents' computer ownership as well as Internet, digital technology, and software usage. Also, I will compare my results with similar results, and I will discuss the implications of any similarities or differences.

COMPUTER OWNERSHIP: RESULTS

To determine computer ownership among the respondents, I posed the following question: If you own a computer, how old is your computer? Figure 4-1 shows that of the 25 students who responded to the question, 40% (N=10) of the

spring 2009 BW students responded that they own a computer that is one to three years old. Figure 4-1 also shows that only 16% (N=4) of the spring 2009 students did not own a computer. Figure 4-2 shows that of the 33 students who responded to the question, 30.3% (N=10) of the fall 2009 BW students responded that they own a computer that was less than six months old; and, 30.3% also answered that they owned a computer that was one to three years old. Figure 4-2 also shows that only 9.1% (N=3) of the fall 2009 students did not own a computer. As depicted in Figure 4-3, both (N=2) of the BW professors responded that they own a computer that is one to three years old.

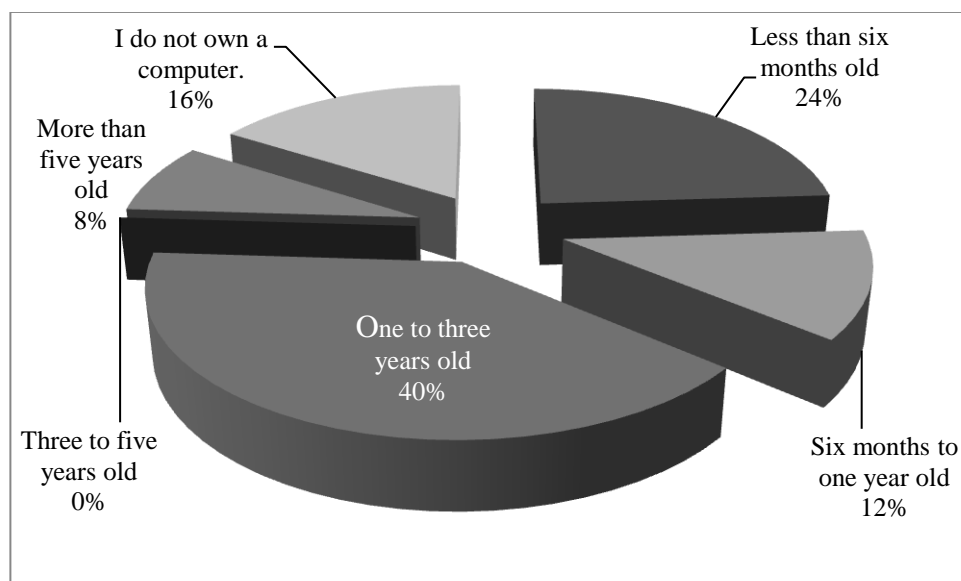


Figure 4-1: Spring 2009 Student Responses: If you own a computer, how old is your computer?

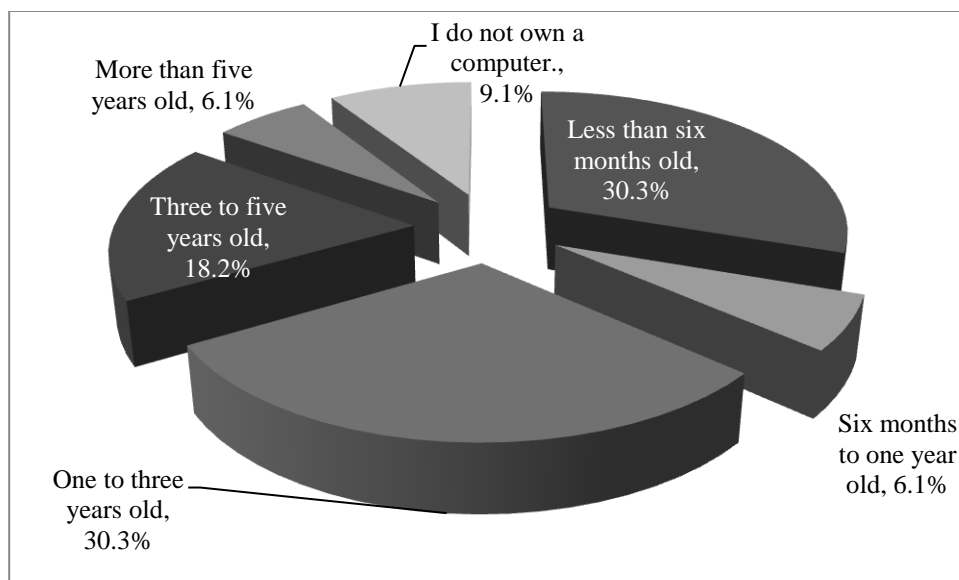


Figure 4-2: Fall 2009 Student Responses: If you own a computer, how old is your computer?

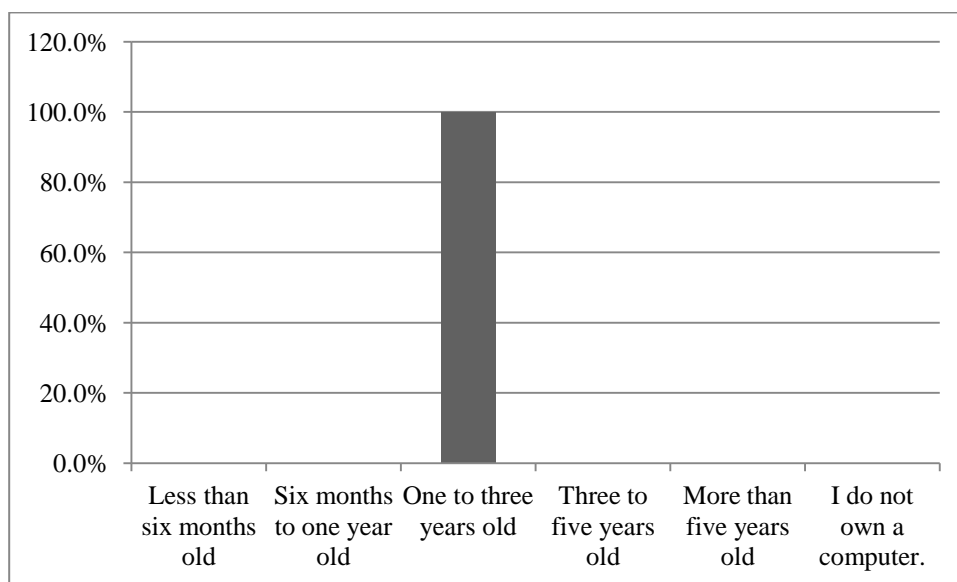


Figure 4-3: Instructor Responses: If you own a computer, how old is your computer?

COMPUTER OWNERSHIP: DISCUSSION

Researchers (Anson; DeBell and Chapman; Jaggars; Pavia; Selfe, *Technology*)

suggest that educators should be concerned about students' access to computers. Comparing my results with other study's results concerning computer ownership helped me draw some conclusions.

While it is true that not every household in the U.S. owns a computer, computer ownership is definitely increasing in the U.S. The U.S. Census Bureau¹⁴ reports that "70 million American households, or 62 percent, had one or more computers, up from 56 percent in 2001" (1). Of the 58 students in my study who answered the computer ownership questions, 51 or 88% owned a computer, which suggests that a large percentage of BW students at the site own a computer. And, over 35% (N=21) of the students in my study owned computers that were newer than the computers that belong to the instructors in the study, which suggests that students at the site may own better digital technology than their professors.

My study's computer ownership results seem to be in line with the computer ownership data from other studies. In the study conducted by David et al., 86% of the developmental, or basic, English students own a computer (17). In Smith and Caruso's 2010 study of students in two-year and four-year colleges, 99% of the students own at least one computer (37). In Smith and Caruso's earlier 2004 study, the researchers report that 93.4% of the students own a computer (43). Smith and Caruso also say that

¹⁴ According to the U.S. Census Bureau's "Households with a Computer and Internet Use: 1984 to 2009" report, "beginning in 2007, respondents were not asked any questions about computer access or ownership;" therefore, such data collection ended two years prior to my research. In addition, "question wording regarding both computer use and Internet access have [differed] from year to year." According to the U.S. Census Bureau's "Households with a Computer and Internet Use: 1984 to 2009" report, the most recent U.S. Census data—prior to 2011—regarding computers within people's households and Internet use within people's households was gathered in 2003.

more than half of the students' computers are one-year old or less in age in their studies. In my study, 36% (N=21) of the students owned a computer that was one-year old or less. Research indicates that computer ownership is on the rise among all students. In fact, freshman students are likely to arrive at college with better computer technology than the college has to offer ("Freshmen Arrive" A30). And, some colleges, such as Clayton College and State University, Rose-Hulman Institute, University of Minnesota at Crookston, and Wake Forest University, require students to own a computer (Project Eagle).

Despite the fact that research suggests that computer ownership is on the rise, a lack of computer ownership is still an issue for many students. In fact, "computer and Internet use are divided along demographic and socioeconomic lines" (DeBell and Chapman iv). According to DeBell and Chapman's results, computer access is lower among minorities, but computer access is higher among children who live with caretakers who have college degrees and high income. But, a lack of computer access among students should not prevent educators from using digital technology. DeBell and Chapman explains that school may be the only place that some students have an opportunity to build their digital literacy. Tyner reminds us that "the discussion of technology's place in education must proceed beyond the access issue" (89). Some colleges provide computers to students or financial support so that the students can purchase computers ("Student Computer Ownership"); to my knowledge, computer financing or free computers are not available to students at the site.

While owning a computer makes access more convenient, computer ownership is not necessary for access. Today, computers are available for public use free of

charge in local, public libraries, such as the site's library. Internet access is available at coffee shops, fast-food establishments, and other places that offer Web access at a low cost or free of charge. Rather than focusing on technology access when considering computers in the classroom, Tyner suggests that we work to prepare students to use those technologies when they do have access to them (90).

Although the students in my study may own computers, they may not prefer to use them. When conducting research among students and faculty at Northern Virginia Community College (NVCC), a school within the same system as my site, Carlson found that many people own laptops, but few of them use their laptops on campus because they access the Web through their cell phones. Carlson's respondents say that laptops are too bulky and Internet access via computers in their suburban area is unreliable. NVCC provides a variety of computer labs and on campus computer options for students and so does my site. When comparing Carlson's findings to my study, I reached the conclusion that the site should continue to provide computer access to students on campus to fill the need of students who do not own computers as well as students who do not wish to bring their computers to school.

INTERNET USAGE: RESULTS

To determine the frequency of Internet usage among the participants in my study, I presented the following question: How often do you search for information on the Internet? For both the spring and fall students, the most popular response to the question was daily. Figure 4-4 shows that of the 27 students who responded to the question, 55.6% (N=15) of the spring 2009 BW students who responded to the statement selected "daily." Figure 4-5 shows that of the 33 students who responded to

the question, 60.6% (N=20) of the fall 2009 BW students selected “daily.” As depicted in Figure 4-6, both (N=2) of the BW professors responded that they searched the Web daily for information.

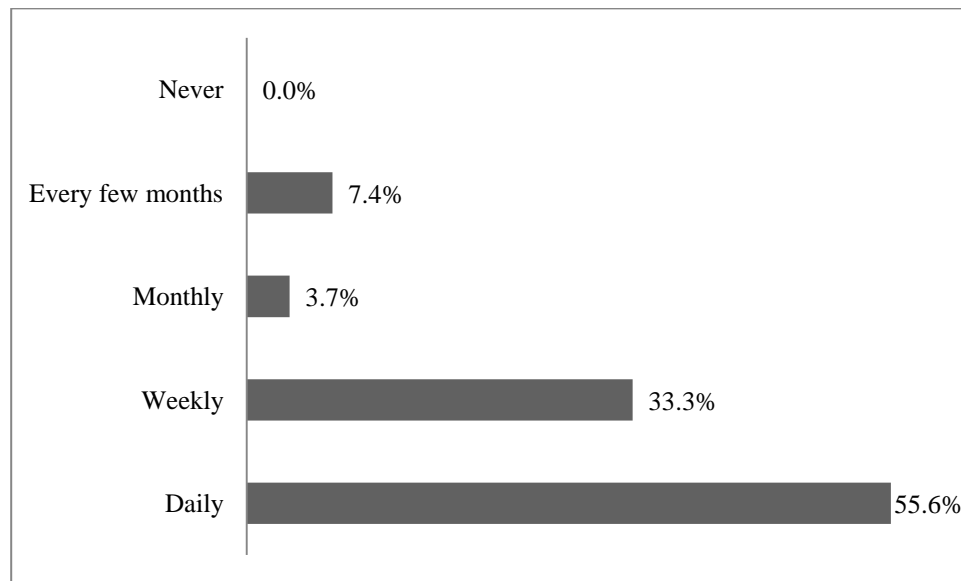


Figure 4-4: Spring 2009 Student Responses: How often do you search for information on the Internet?

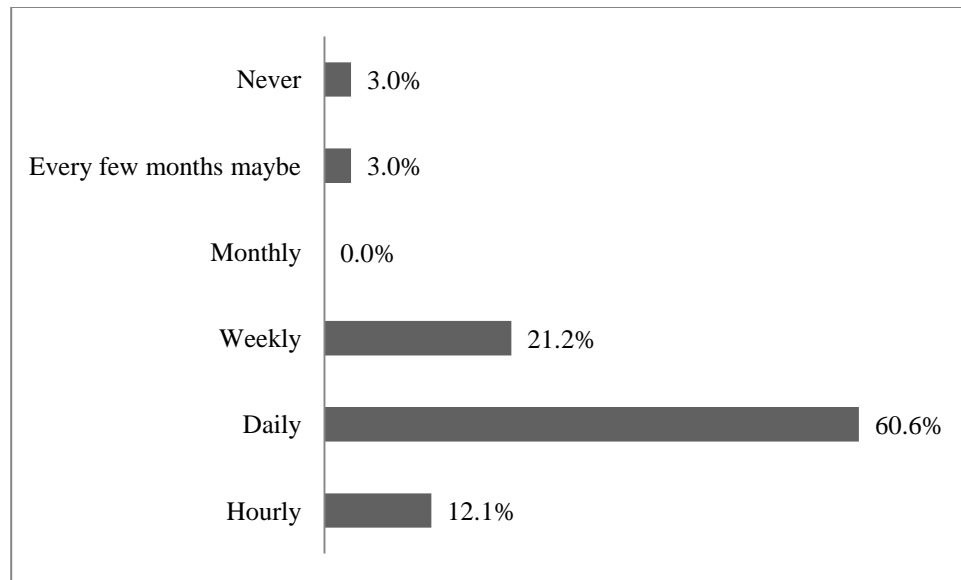


Figure 4-5: Fall 2009 Student Responses: How often do you search for information on the Internet?

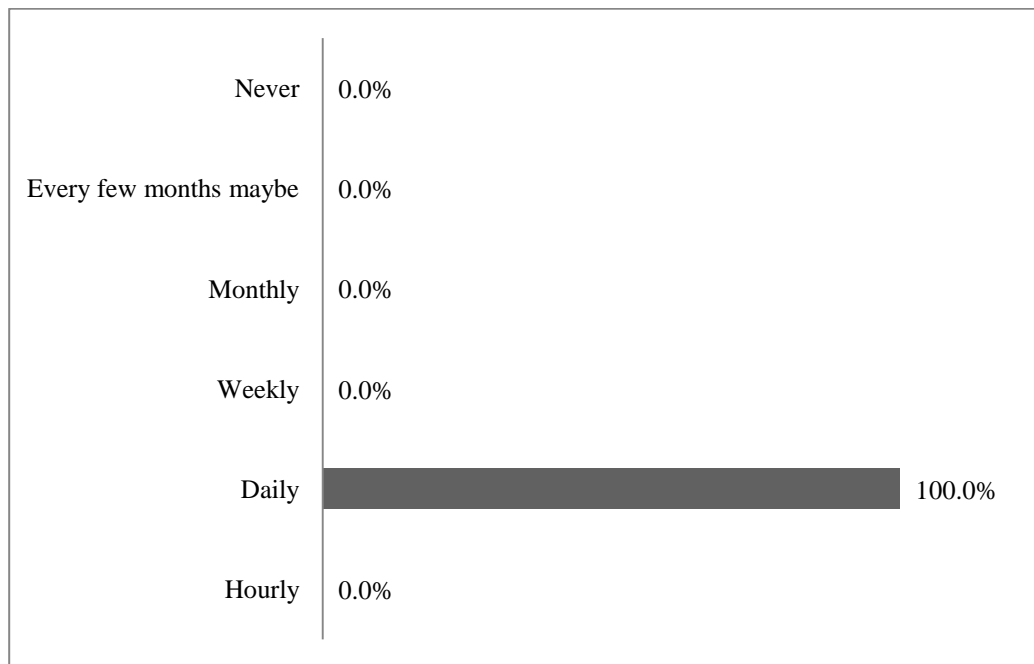


Figure 4-6: Instructor Responses: How often do you search for information on the Internet?

INTERNET USAGE: DISCUSSION

My results suggest that BW instructors and students at the site use the Web frequently. BW students may be using the Web often because the culture inside and outside the academy is pushing them to use the Web. For example, at the site, a large amount of the information, such as course schedules, course registration, and course management, are all managed through the college's Web portal quite often. Faculty advisors at the site receive regular messages from the school's administrators encouraging us to encourage the students to use the college Web portal to access the college's information and online tools. In fact, the college site rarely prints the college catalogue choosing often to only offer an online version of the catalogue; printed versions of the catalogue were often outdated by the time that they were ready for release to the college community. My results regarding BW instructors' and students' Web usage at the site is comparable to other study's results regarding students' and general consumers' Internet usage.

The majority of the students and both of the instructors in my study indicated that they searched for information on the Internet daily. In the study conducted by David et al., 81% of the developmental, or basic, English students have "Internet access at home" (17). In their study, Smith and Caruso report that "eight out of 10 students rate themselves as very skilled or expert at using the Internet to effectively and efficiently search for information" (55). In the Smith and Caruso study, over 94% of the students report using their college's library Web site daily, 90% of the students report using the Internet daily for social networking activities, and over 49% of the students indicate accessing the Web from handheld devices, such as digital tablets and

smart phones. Through the Pew Internet and American Life Project¹⁵, Aaron Smith reports that 35% of all adults own a smart phone and “87% of smart phone owners access the internet or email on their handheld, including two-thirds (68%) who do so on a typical day.” Pryor, et al. report that 81.3% of the students at four-year colleges across the U.S. “used the Internet for research or homework” (25), which is slightly lower than the Smith and Caruso data and suggests that Internet use might be higher among research groups that include students at two-year institutions.

Comparing the results of my study at one site with digital literacy in two-year colleges and Internet-usage data inside and outside the academy led me to posit that the BW students at the site are most likely using the Web just as often as other students across the academy and adults outside the academy. As researchers (Smith and Caruso; A. Smith) suggest, adults’ Internet use is increasing; therefore, most BW students may be using the Web more often than we realize. Because BW students are being pushed to use the Web to access important school-related information at the site, the site should support students’ Web literacy development by giving all students additional opportunities to build their Web literacy in as many courses as possible—including BW.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY USAGE: RESULTS

To determine how the participants were using digital technology, I presented the following question: What tasks do you use a digital technology (computer, cell

¹⁵ The Pew Internet and American Life Project is the product of the Pew Research Center. According to their Web site, “the Pew Research Center is a nonpartisan ‘fact tank’ that provides information on the issues, attitudes and trends shaping America and the world.” The Pew Research Center collects its survey data using a variety of methods, such as random calling to U.S. households.

phone, MP3 player, text-messaging device, PDA, or digital television) to perform daily? Although the most popular past time was to listen to music, Table 4-1 shows that among the 27 students who responded to the question, the second most popular task that the spring 2009 students (N=20) used digital technology to perform daily was to complete homework assignments. Once again, although the most popular past time was to listen to music, Table 4-2 shows that among 33 students who responded to the question, the second most popular task that the fall 2009 students (N=27) also used digital technology to perform daily was to complete homework assignments. For the “other” category, one of the fall 2009 students indicated that he or she also used digital technology daily for “taking notes in school ([o]r placing my written notes into my computer for quick [reference]),” which also appears to be related to homework assignments. Table 4-3 shows that the most popular task that the two instructors used digital technology to perform daily were to perform social networking tasks, conduct research and to perform work-related activities. For the “other” category, one of the instructors indicated that he or she also used digital technology daily to “text-message with students via phone for conferencing and assignment clarification,” which also appears to be related to work-related activities.

Listen to music	85.2%
Watch films	63.0%
Complete homework assignments	74.1%
Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)	51.9%
Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)	44.4%

Table 4-1: Spring 2009 Student Responses: What tasks do you use a digital technology to perform daily?

Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)	33.3%
Play games	51.9%
Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)	33.3%
Read news and gather information	44.4%
Perform job-related tasks	22.2%
Shop	48.1%
Pay bills	44.4%
Organize your calendar and/or schedule	18.5%

Table 4-1: Continued.

Listen to music	84.8%
Watch films	69.7%
Complete homework assignments	81.8%
Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)	69.7%
Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)	63.6%
Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)	63.6%
Play games	66.7%
Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)	42.4%
Read news and gather information	69.7%
Perform job-related tasks	33.3%
Shop	51.5%
Pay bills	39.4%
Organize your calendar and/or schedule	33.3%
Other: If you use digital technology for a task that is not on this list, please click "other" and list those additional tasks below.	6.1%

Table 4-2: Fall 2009 Student Responses: What tasks do you use a digital technology to perform daily?

Listen to music	66.7%
Watch films	66.7%
Complete homework assignments	33.3%
Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)	100.0%

Table 4-3: Instructor Responses: What tasks do you use digital technology to perform daily?

Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)	100.0%
Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)	33.3%
Play games	0.0%
Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)	0.0%
Read news and gather information	100.0%
Perform job-related tasks	100.0%
Shop	66.7%
Pay bills	33.3%
Organize your calendar and/or schedule	66.7%
Other: If you use digital technology for a task that is not on this list, please click "other" and list those additional tasks below.	33.3%

Table 4-3: Continued.

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY USAGE: DISCUSSION

When comparing how the students and the professors in my study used digital technology daily, the students used digital technology most often to listen to music and to complete homework assignments, but the professors used the technology most often to maintain relationships—personal and work-related—to perform research, and to manage other work-related activities. The BW instructors' and students' digital technology usage at the site is often similar to what researchers have found among other populations, and the increases in digital technology usage create interesting issues within educational environments.

DeBell and Chapman's 2003 report indicates that using the computer is not a new concept for young students.

About two-thirds of children in nursery school and 80 percent of kindergartners use computers, and 97 percent of students in grades 9–12 do so.

About 23 percent of children in nursery school use the Internet, and this number rises to 50 percent by grade 3 and to 79 percent in grades 9–12. (iv)

DeBell and Chapman also found that 69% of the grade school students in their study used their computers to complete school assignments (21) and “about 46 percent of students use the Internet to complete school assignments” (vi).

Computer usage is popular among college students. Smith and Caruso also report that over 90% of the college students in their study use digital technology for school related activities. David et al. report that 77% of the developmental or basic, English students in their study use a word processing program (17).

Although my study’s survey results indicated that the ways in which the students and the professors used digital technology often varied, both the students and the professors were using digital technology quite often to maintain relationships—personal and professional. Smith and Caruso found that over 90% of the students in their study use digital technology for text messaging and over 90% of the students use digital technology for social networking daily (57). A number of the BW students in my study indicated that they participated in social networking activities.

It is important that we acknowledge BW students’ Web-related activities. Specifically, Hawisher et al. say that educators tend to overlook the composing that their students do on the Web and may “face the danger of teaching in ways that ignore the considerable strengths in technological literacies that some students bring to our classes” (676). For example, a number of BW students in my study indicated that they are using the Web and digital technology in a variety of ways and thus have some digital literacy that BW instructors can utilize in students’ learning activities. Cheryl

Smith points out that the Web, such as blogs, can be a valuable teaching tool for BW students:

By giving participants equal access to a public voice in a forum that is familiar to many young people, blogs create a safe place for risk-taking and error, making it less likely that students will disengage in the face of the challenging transition into college expectations...As flexible, familiar platforms, blogs lend power to the author and may especially empower inexperienced writers who often feel uncomfortable with academic discourse but more at home with internet writing. (38-40)

Cheryl Smith later points out that “evolutions in writing demand evolutions in pedagogy, and the new, alternative writing spaces like blogs encourage us to evolve” (57). Cheryl Smith mentions that blogs give BW students a place to speak and interact. Educators can use blogs to “expose the varied and often unanticipated rhetorical moves that students make, shaping the contexts for literacy instruction today.”

At the same time, we may find that digital texts, such as blogs, can help students and faculty find common ground:

Faculty see blogs—if they see them at all—as (yet) an-other site for learning, typically in school; students see blogs as a means of organizing social action, a place for geographically far-flung friends to gather, a site for poets and musicians to plan a jam. But our experiences are the same in one key way: most faculty and students alike all have learned these genres on our own, outside of school. (Yancey 302)

The self-motivated authorship that Yancey describes is prompting students and their instructors to want to create texts—experiences that a BW student and his or her instructor can share and use to examine the student’s writing and writing obstacles. Yancey goes on to say that “given this extracurricular writing curriculum and its success, I have to wonder out loud if in some pretty important ways and within the relatively short space of not quite ten years, we may already have become anachronistic.” I posit that students and their instructors still have those moments in time as shared experiences that impact us. We must consider that all students’ interaction with digital technology, such as the Web, may be impacting the way that those students communicate (C. Smith 36)—impacts that we may need to consider as we determine how best to help them develop their literacies. By failing to examine and utilize BW students’ digital literacies, we are missing an opportunity to learn about those students’ values and society’s demands on those students; therefore, we cannot always assume that we know what is best for them if we do not know their needs. Cheryl Smith makes the following observation:

Basic writers are as likely as their peers to come to college with a determining Web 2.0 fluency, along with well-honed hyper attention. Thus, in one important respect—in relation to technology and its impact on writing—the differences between students’ language use and learning styles can matter less than the differences between our students and ourselves.

Some of our BW students lack digital literacy or exposure to digital texts regularly, but some BW students may have more digital literacies than their instructors, which may be impacting our ability to communicate with, influence, and teach our students

effectively. Prensky reminds us that many of our students are “digital natives,” or born into a digital culture (1) and, therefore, teaching them may mean “going faster, less step-by step, more in parallel, with more random access, among other things,” (4) which are activities that can be achieved easily through digital technology.

Because managing school work and performing social activities were popular, daily tasks among the students in Smith and Caruso’s study and my study, I posit that the BW students in my study were capable of using digital technology in much the same ways as other college students across the academy and, in some cases, may be better technology users than their instructors. And, because the students and the professors in my study both used digital technology for social activities, the professors at the site should make *exchanging* digital communications techniques and communicating with the BW students via digital technology a priority in the BW courses because we can learn from each other. We, as educators, can help students transition their digital skills into academic situations, and our students—at all levels—can help us learn how digital technology is impacting their lives. The professors at the site should not assume that students in basic studies courses do not use, or are incapable of using, digital technology. It was also interesting that the fall 2009 students, who were surveyed at the beginning of their semester, used digital technology to maintain professional relationships more often than their spring 2009 counterparts although the spring 2009 students were surveyed after spending an entire semester in a BW course that included digital literacy training; unfortunately, I did not have an opportunity to learn more about why there was a discrepancy between the two groups. But, it was impressive to see that some of students who had not spent a

semester in a computer-based BW course still came to class with some digital technology skills.

SOFTWARE KNOWLEDGE AND USAGE: RESULTS

To determine the participants' familiarity with software, I posed the following question: Which of the following software programs or packages¹⁶ do you know how to use? Table 4-4 shows that of the 25 spring 2009 students who responded to the question, 72% (N=18) selected Blackboard and Microsoft Office (N=18) more often than any of the other software programs. Table 4-5 shows that of the 33 fall 2009 students who responded to the question, over 90% (N=30) selected Blackboard more often than any other software. Table 4-6 shows that both of the instructors selected Adobe Acrobat, Blackboard, Gmail, Microsoft Office programs, and Word Perfect.

Adobe Acrobat	40.0%
Adobe Pagemaker	8.0%
Adobe Photoshop	20.0%
Audacity	0.0%
Blackboard	72.0%
Camtasia	0.0%

Table 4-4: Spring 2009 Student Responses: Which of the following software programs or packages do you know how to use?

¹⁶ I created the list of software programs and packages in the survey document by listing the kinds of programs and packages that I had seen on many of the students' laptop computers, I had encountered during my career, I had studied in my doctoral program—assuming that the doctoral program used and taught popular software programs—and by checking to see which programs were available on many of the computers at the research site. Also, the technology support staff at the research site had taught professional development courses for many of the programs on the list for faculty and staff, which suggested that the research site's technology support people had endorsed those programs. I considered including programs available for free on the Web, but I was unable to verify the reliability of such programs; I was concerned that students reviewing the survey document might think of the list of programs and packages as an endorsement for those programs and packages.

Dreamweaver	4.0%
Filemaker Pro	4.0%
Front Page	8.0%
Gmail	68.0%
iMovie	16.0%
Lotus	0.0%
Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Outlook, Power Point, Publisher, and Word 2007)	72.0%
Microsoft Producer	12.0%
Microsoft Visio	16.0%
Microsoft Works	52.0%
Movie Maker	0.0%
Photo Deluxe	8.0%
QuarkXpress	0.0%
Snag It	0.0%
Word Perfect	28.0%

Table 4-4: Continued.

Adobe Acrobat	33.3%
Adobe Pagemaker	9.1%
Adobe Photoshop	21.2%
Audacity	3.0%
Blackboard	90.9%
Camtasia	0.0%
Dreamweaver	9.1%
Filemaker Pro	9.1%
Front Page	12.1%
Gmail	81.8%
iMovie	6.1%
Lotus	0.0%
Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Outlook, Power Point, Publisher, and Word 2007)	75.8%
Microsoft Producer	3.0%
Microsoft Visio	3.0%
Microsoft Works	54.5%
Movie Maker	24.2%
Photo Deluxe	27.3%
QuarkXpress	0.0%

Table 4-5: Fall 2009 Student Responses: Which of the following software programs or packages do you know how to use?

Snag It	0.0%
Word Perfect	36.4%
I don't know how to use any of the software programs or packages listed above.	3.0%

Table 4-5: Continued.

Adobe Acrobat	100.0%
Adobe Pagemaker	0.0%
Adobe Photoshop	0.0%
Audacity	0.0%
Blackboard	100.0%
Camtasia	50.0%
Dreamweaver	50.0%
Filemaker Pro	0.0%
Front Page	50.0%
Gmail	100.0%
iMovie	0.0%
Lotus	0.0%
Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Outlook, Power Point, Publisher, and Word 2007)	100.0%
Microsoft Producer	0.0%
Microsoft Visio	0.0%
Microsoft Works	50.0%
Movie Maker	0.0%
Photo Deluxe	50.0%
QuarkXpress	0.0%
Snag It	0.0%
Word Perfect	100.0%
I don't know how to use any of the software programs or packages listed above.	0.0%

Table 4-6: Instructor Responses: Which of the following software programs or packages do you know how to use?

SOFTWARE KNOWLEDGE AND USAGE: DISCUSSION

Analyzing software knowledge and usage separate from other digital technology usage enables researchers to obtain another perspective on how people use

digital technology. Within the academy and at the site, certain software has become very popular, which may impact BW at the site.

Among the students' and the instructors' responses to the question about software usage, Blackboard was a common, popular selection. The popularity of Blackboard among the students' responses in my study shows that they are using Blackboard. The college requires all of the professors to use Blackboard to disseminate basic, course information, which encourages all of the students to access Blackboard. Because Blackboard appears to be a popular tool used among the BW students at the site, the professors at the site should give the students ample time to build their Blackboard skills. Smith and Caruso's study indicates that over 90% of the students in their study used a "course or learning management system," such as Blackboard (57), which indicates that the BW students' use of such programs are similar to that of other students. Gmail was also a highly popular selection among the students and professors in my study indicating once again that the students and the professors at the site are using digital technology for communications purposes. DeBell and Chapman found that 56% of the high school students in their study also used email. According to the site's demographic information, at least some of the students in my study were likely to be close to the age of the students in DeBell and Chapman's study. The "Microsoft Office" category was also a highly popular selection among the students and instructors in my study, which indicated that both the BW students and professors were familiar with one or more of the software programs and suggests that the students would not need a great deal of training in those programs. Smith and Caruso found that over 92% of the students had used

“presentation software,” such as Power Point, and over 85% had used a spreadsheet program, such as Excel (57). Both Power Point and Excel are a part of the Microsoft Office package available on the computers at the site as well.

The results of the software and knowledge usage question suggest that many of the BW students at the site have experience with a variety of software programs and packages. In fact, at the site, many of the BW students’ digital experience are not unlike the experiences of college students across the academy, which suggests that not all BW students completely lack digital literacy or the ability to learn digital technology. As Rose’s (*Lives*; “Narrowing”) research suggests, BW students are not incapable of learning complex skills; therefore, BW curriculum developers should not fear that BW students lack the ability to develop word and digital literacy simultaneously.

CHAPTER 5

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ABOUT BASIC WRITING STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR ATTITUDES ABOUT TECHNOLOGY

My study's research question is the following: In what ways might BW professors' and their students' interaction with computers and digital technology inside and outside of the academy complicate the BW curriculum in the twenty-first century? To address the question, I determined that it was important that I learn more about participants' attitudes about computers. I presented the participants with a mixture of questions and statements that examine their views on mandatory computer skills training, life advantages related to computer skills, the value of information on the Web and Web-based communication skills, and the benefits associated with having computer skills in the work place.

RECEIVING MANDATORY COMPUTER SKILLS TRAINING: RESULTS

To determine views on computer skills training among the respondents, I posed the following question: Do you wish your college required you to complete a basic computing skill (turning on the computer, using common programs [Microsoft Office and Vista], and fixing common computer problems) course within your first semester of college? Figure 5-1 shows that of the 25 students who responded to the question, 72% (N=18) of the spring 2009 BW students indicated that they do wish that the college required them to complete the kind of basic computing skills course that my survey question described within their first semester of college. Figure 5-2 shows that of the 33 students who responded to the question, 51.5% (N=17) of the fall 2009

BW students indicated that they *do not* wish that the college required them to complete the kind of basic computing skills course that my survey question described within their first semester of college. The question was slightly reworded when presented to the instructors: Do you wish that the college required students to complete a basic computing skills (turning on the computer, using common programs [Microsoft Office and Vista], and fixing common computer problems) course within the students' first semester of college? As depicted in Table 5-1, both (N=2) of the BW professors indicated that they do wish that the college required the students to complete the kind of basic computing skills course that my survey question described within the students' first semester of college.

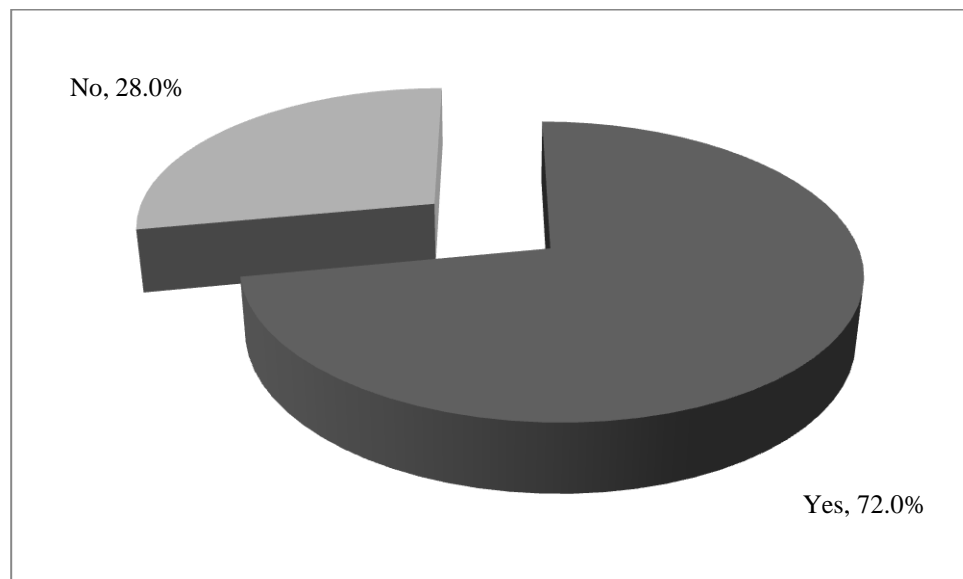


Figure 5-1: Spring 2009 Student Responses: Do you wish your college required you to complete a basic computing skills course within your first semester of college?

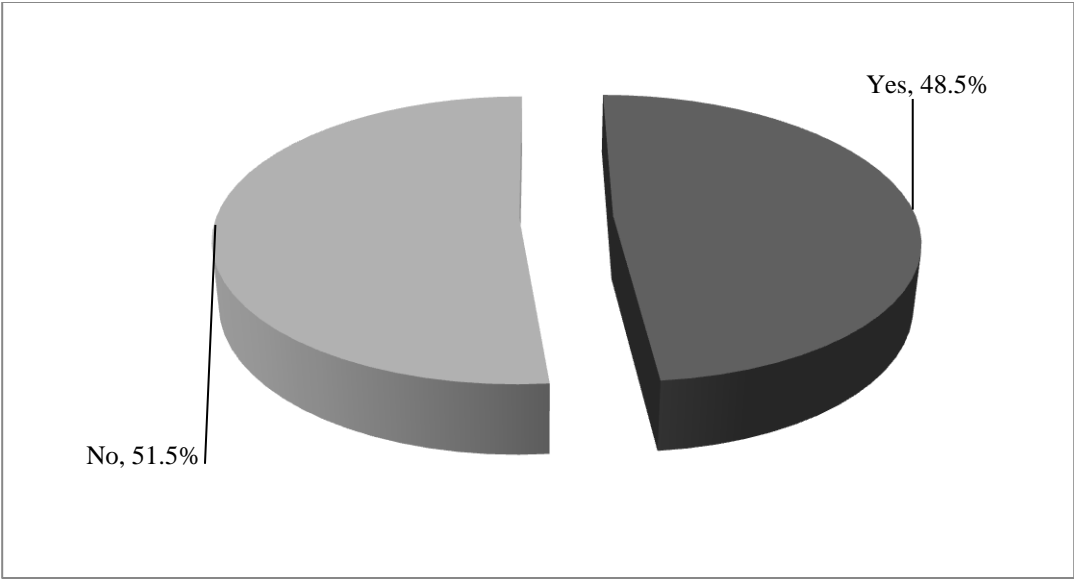


Figure 5-2: Fall 2009 Student Responses: Do you wish your college required you to complete a basic computing skills course within your first semester of college?

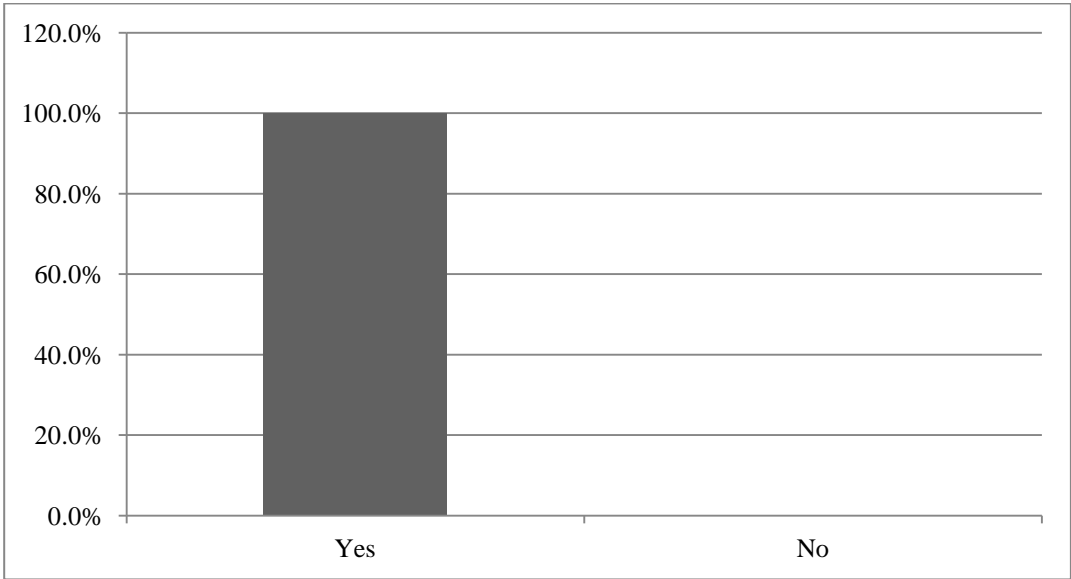


Table 5-1: Instructor Responses: Do you wish the college required students to complete a basic computing skills course within their first semester of college?

RECEIVING MANDATORY COMPUTER SKILLS TRAINING: DISCUSSION

Although students are using digital technology, there is no indication that students do not need computer skills training. Some education-focused organizations, some of the BW students, and both BW instructors in my study think that students should have computer skills training, but not everyone sees a need for mandatory computer skills training.

The participants in my study had very mixed opinions about whether or not students should be required to complete a basic computing skills course within students' first semester of college. The majority of the spring 2009 students and both of the professors indicate that they thought that students should complete the computer skills course within students' first semester of college. However, the majority of the fall 2009 students *did not* agree that students should be required to complete the computing skills course within the first semester of college. I posit that perhaps the majority of the spring 2009 students were in favor of having a basic computing skills course because they had spent an entire semester in courses or other college-related academic situations that required computer use and had come to believe that the computing skills training would have been beneficial to them. Unfortunately, I did not design a survey question that could lead me to a theory related to this questions; I only had informal conversations with students that suggested my hypothesis.

The site does require the students to complete a computer course before graduation, but the students may complete that course at any time. WPA recommends that by the end of FYC students should have a variety of digital technology skills, such as using digital technologies in multiple phases of the writing process, locating

resources in digital environments, and managing rhetorical communication within electronic environments. When defining digital literacies, NCTE says that people should be proficient in a variety of digital texts and technologies and be able to exchange ideas across cultures and through a variety of digital platforms. NCTE's suggestion, Microsoft's digital literacy curriculum and Selfe's (*Technology*) text suggest that people build the digital literacies that they need to be effective within their local environment. Microsoft and Selfe's recommendations seem to encourage the BW students in my study to receive digital technology training as early as possible in their academic pursuits because the BW students seem to be using digital technology—whether that use is mandatory or voluntary—quite often in their local environments. Despite the fact that some of the BW students in my study were against mandatory computer skills training, mandatory computer skills training for BW students might prepare those students to develop the kinds of FYC digital technology skills that prominent researchers, such as NCTE and WPA, recommend to the academy.

COMPUTER SKILLS AND LIFE ADVANTAGES: RESULTS

I posited that BW students believed that computer skills would give them an advantage in life. To help me determine how much BW students valued computer skills, and how those perceptions potentially compared with their instructors' beliefs, I presented the following statement within the survey: People who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills. Figure 5-3 shows that of the 24 students who responded to the statement, 79.2% (N=19) of the spring 2009 BW students indicated that they believe that people who have computer

skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills. Figure 5-4 shows that of the 33 students who responded to the statement, 87.9% (N=29) of the fall 2009 BW students indicated that they believe that people who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills. As depicted in Figure 5-5, both (N=2) of the BW professors indicated that they believe that people who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills.

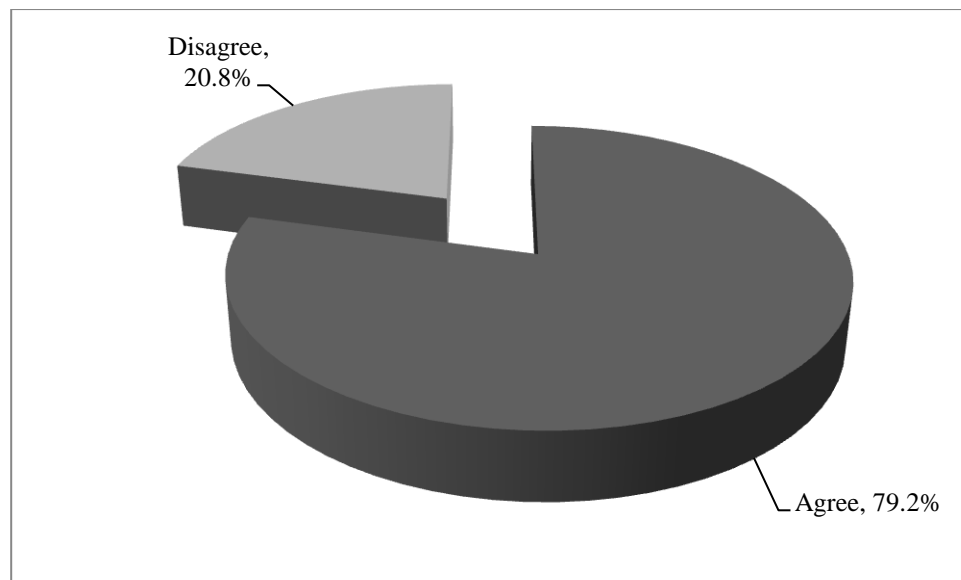


Figure 5-3: Spring 2009 Student Responses: People who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills.

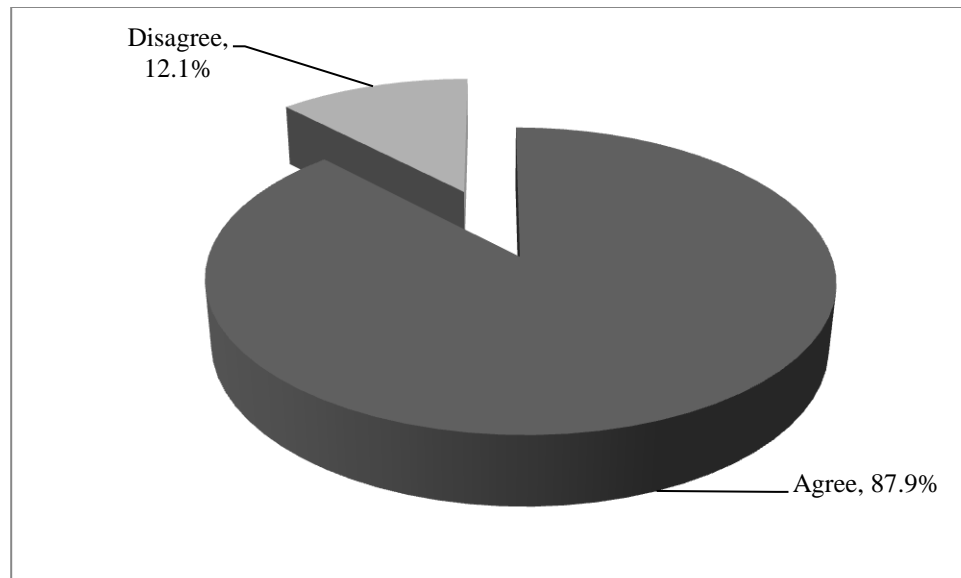


Figure 5-4: Fall 2009 Student Responses: People who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills.

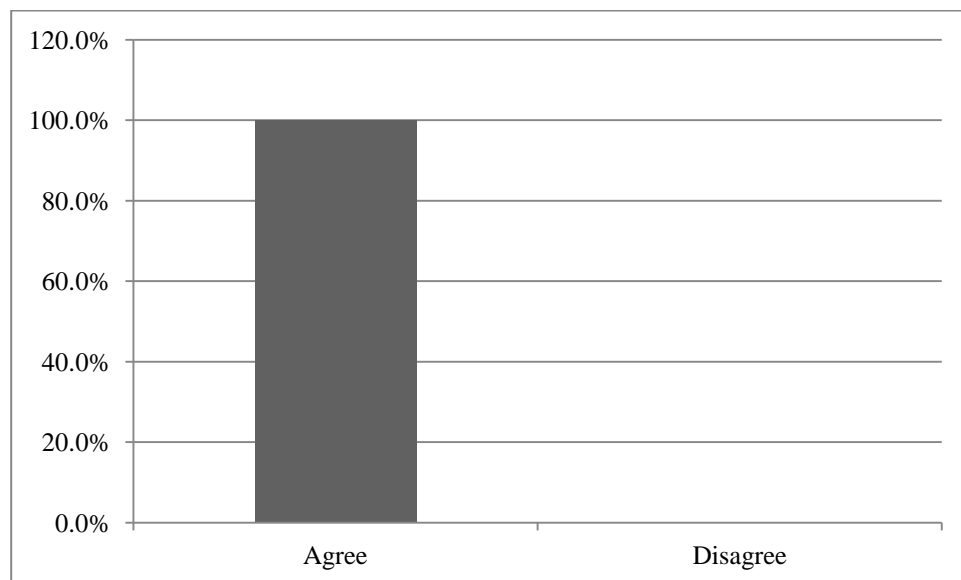


Figure 5-5: Instructor Responses: People who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills.

COMPUTER SKILLS AND LIFE ADVANTAGES: DISCUSSION

Computers have become an important part of modern culture. Some might even say that people who have computer skills have certain advantages over people who do not have computer skills. Most of the participants in my study and most the participants in other studies seem to agree that computer skills do enable certain life advantages.

According to my survey results, the majority of my participants agree that people who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills. Pavia says that the students in her study had mixed opinions about computers, but ultimately value computers perhaps because society values computers (12-13). For example, the Partnership for 21st Century Skills organization's internal collaborations suggest that leaders in the U.S., government, industry and education, view technology, such as digital technology, as an important aspect of U.S. culture and the future success of the U.S. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education collaborated with leaders in the computer industry, such as Dell Computers, Microsoft Corporation, and Apple Computer, Inc., as well as other organizations with a vested interest in education to form the Partnership for 21st Century Skills organization. The mission of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills organization is to help K – 12 educators make certain students have necessary twenty-first century literacies (Partnership).

Many people in our culture seem to value computer skills and think that the growth of such skills among people benefits our society. Because many people seem

to think that computers allow for certain life advantages within our society, BW students at the site should have ample opportunities to build their computer skills.

COMPUTER SKILLS AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES: RESULTS

I wanted to determine if my participants believed that computer skills could impact their opportunities beyond college. I presented the participants with the following statement: People with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills. Figure 5-6 shows that of the 24 students who responded to the statement, 75% (N=18) of the spring 2009 BW students indicated that they believe that people with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills. Figure 5-7 shows that of the 33 students who responded to the statement, 84.8% (N=28) of the fall 2009 BW students indicated that they believe that people with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills. As depicted in Figure 5-8, both (N=2) of the BW professors indicated that they believe that people with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills.

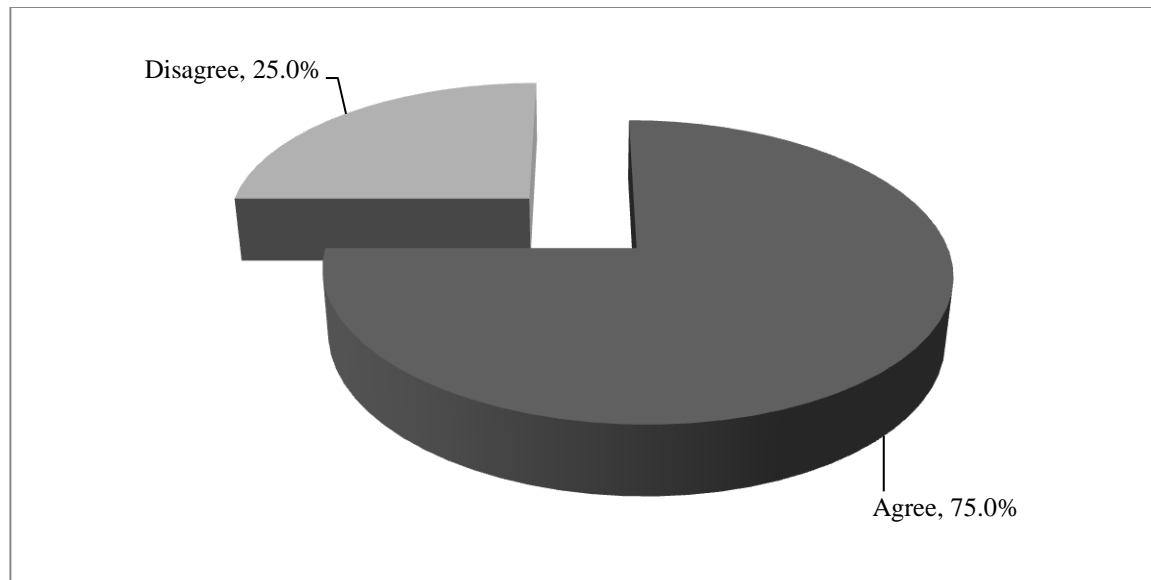


Figure 5-6: Spring 2009 Student Responses: People with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills.

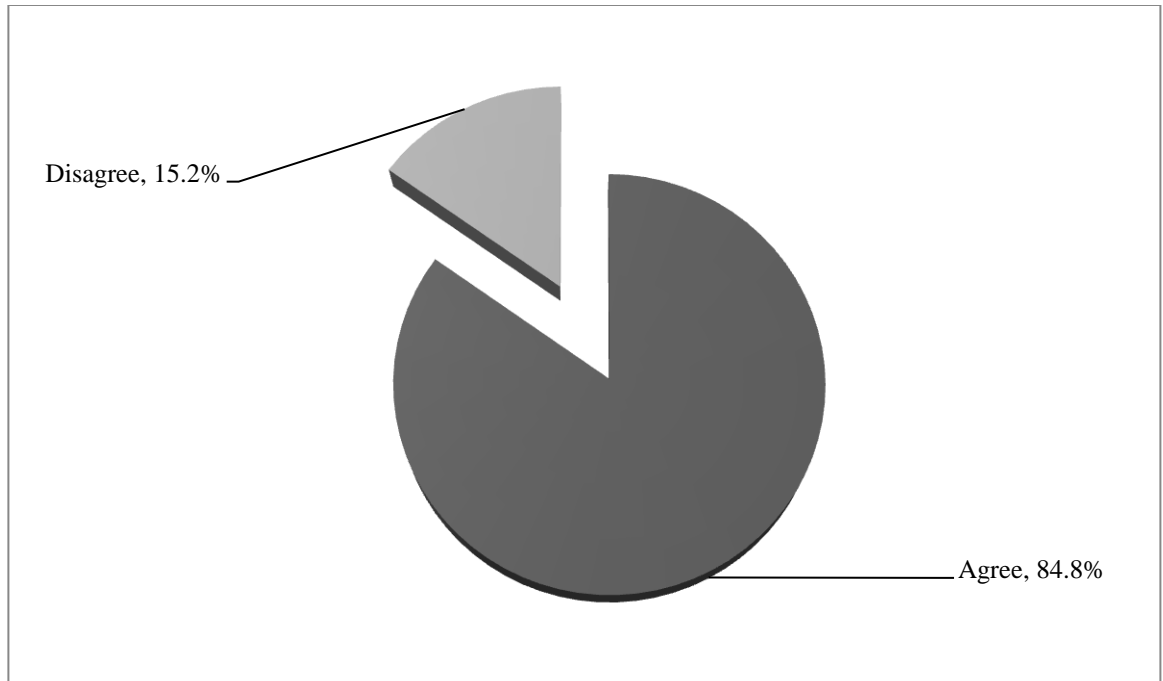


Figure 5-7: Fall 2009 Student Responses: People with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills.

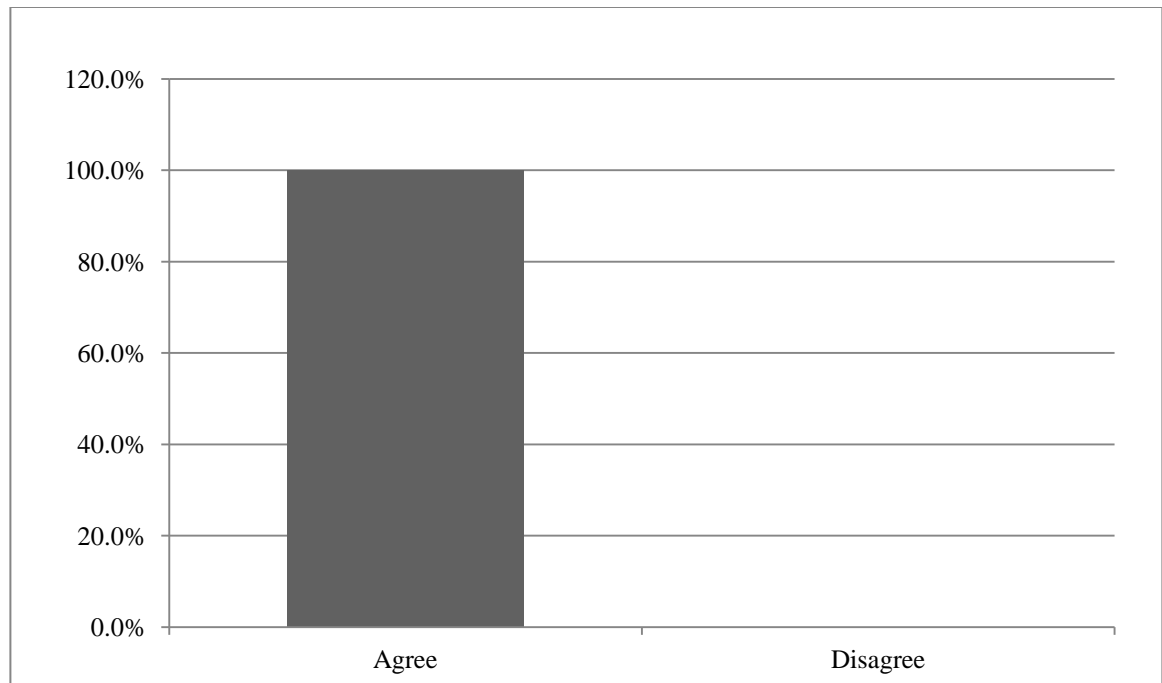


Figure 5-8: Instructor Responses: People with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills.

COMPUTER SKILLS AND JOB OPPORTUNITIES: DISCUSSION

Influential groups, such as the DOL, have conducted research that indicates that computer skills are important in the workplace for a variety of reasons. My participants seem to have views that are comparable to the results of prominent studies regarding computer skills and the workplace.

The survey results of my study indicate that the majority of my participants agreed that people with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills. The participants' beliefs about the value of computer skills in the work place parallel other outcomes. Researchers (Hawisher et al. 672) agree that computers have become important in the workplace. The DOL's 2005 report also states that "about 2 of every 5 employed individuals connected to the

Internet or used e-mail while on the job,” which the DOL report indicates was an increase since the group’s September 2001 report. The DOL statistics suggest that tomorrow’s workers, such as today’s BW students, will need computer-based communications skills to function effectively in many careers.

The majority of the participants at the site agree that people with computer skills have more job opportunities—a truism that echoes in the DOL statistics. Because so many people seem to value digital literacies, and the U.S. job market seems to crave workers that have digital literacies, it makes sense to teach digital literacies in every course in which students can make use of such skills—including BW.

THE VALUE OF INFORMATION ON THE WEB: RESULTS

To develop my conclusions regarding my participants’ experiences with digital technology, I thought it necessary to ascertain my participants’ opinions about Web skills. I presented the following statement to the participants: People who don’t have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web. Figure 5-9 shows that of the 24 students who responded to the statement, 66.7% (N=16) of the spring 2009 BW students indicated that they believe that people who don’t have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web. Figure 5-10 shows that of the 33 students who responded to the statement, 66.7% (N=22) of the fall 2009 BW students indicated that they believe that people who don’t have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web. As depicted in Figure 5-11, both (N=2) of the BW professors indicated that they believe that people who don’t have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web.

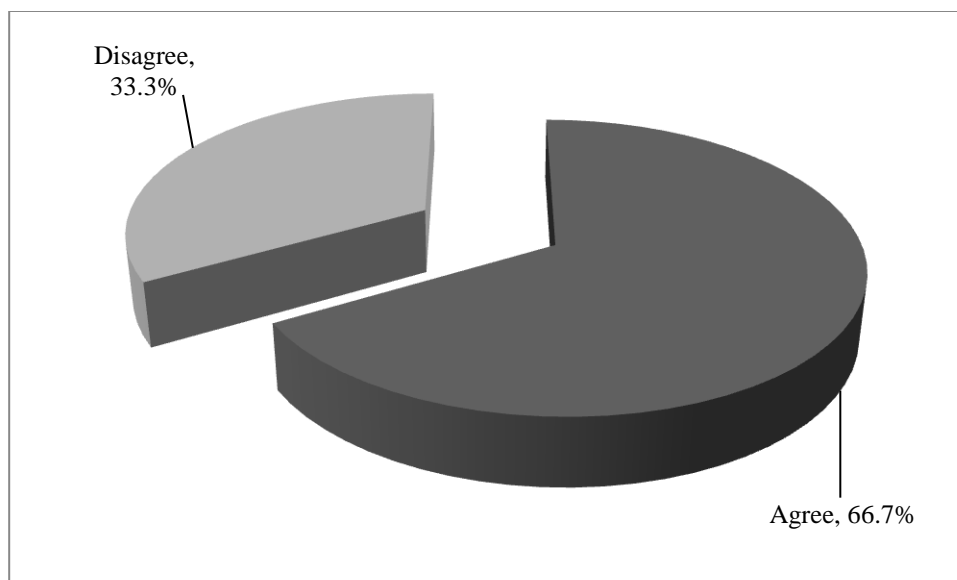


Figure 5-9: Spring 2009 Student Responses: People who don't have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web.

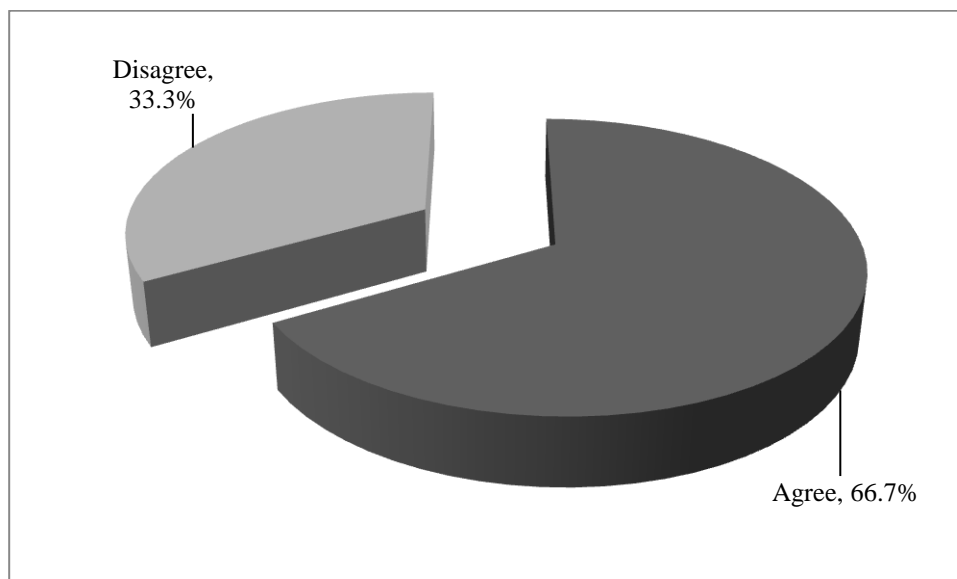


Figure 5-10: Fall 2009 Student Responses: People who don't have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web.

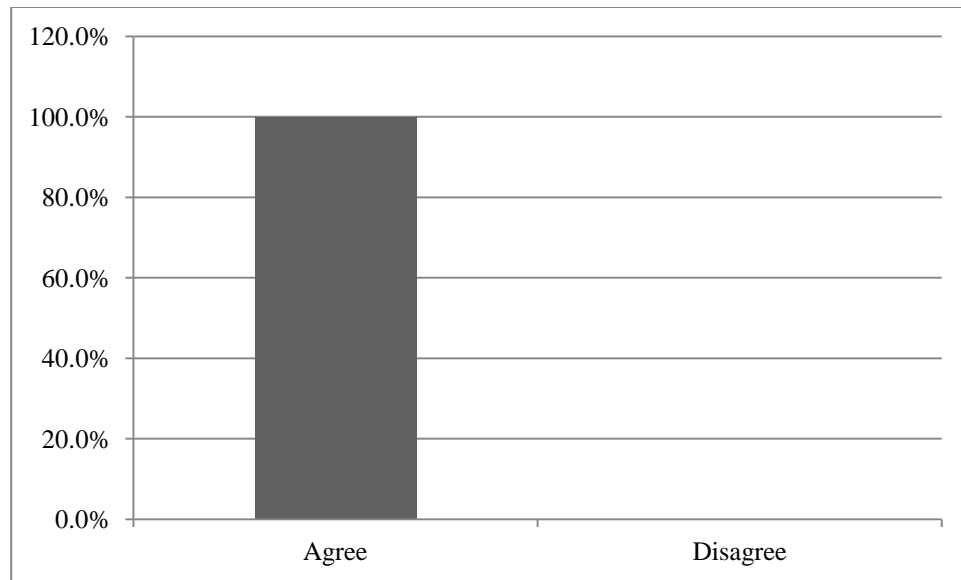


Figure 5-11: Instructor Responses: People who don't have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web.

THE VALUE OF INFORMATION ON THE WEB: DISCUSSION

According to my outcomes, the participants at the site value the information on the Web. In fact, many of my participants use the Web daily. My participants' views regarding the Web are comparable to other participants' views on the Web in other studies.

The majority of the participants at my site agreed that people who don't have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web. Researchers (Rhoads et al. 108; Smith and Caruso) report that the majority of college students are using the Web now more than in the past. However, students have mixed emotions about the value of the information on the Web. Nearly a third of the spring 2009 and fall 2009 students in my study indicated that they did not think that people who don't have computer skills were missing valuable information on the Web. In her study, Pavia's student mentions that computer-based research was convenient (11). Perhaps the students in my study

share the attitudes of students from across the academy studying within various disciplines who participated in other studies that examine students' opinions about Web information:

Interestingly, while respondents indicated the Internet was easy to understand, important, beneficial, believable, and accurate, their overall mean for these items was only slightly positive, indicating that while the Internet is a tool used in their everyday lives, these subjects were still cognizant that not everything presented to them is necessarily accurate, credible, or unbiased. (Rhoades et al. 115)

Researchers (Rhoades et al.) suggest that students *like* the Internet well enough to use it, but they may not understand its purpose; the Web is not always accurate.

Schiff points out that people have complained about the inaccuracies of online tools, such as Wikipedia (6). However, when comparing Wikipedia entries, *Nature* magazine reports that Wikipedia “had four errors for every three of Britannica's, a result that, oddly, was hailed as a triumph for the upstart...” (Schiff 6). Schiff's research reminds audiences that errors are common in Wikis because the information can be edited by practically anyone. Schiff describes Wikipedia as “a lumpy work in progress.” Schiff further explains that “the entries can read as though they had been written by a seventh grader: clarity and concision are lacking; the facts may be sturdy, but the connective tissue is either anemic or absent; and citation is hit or miss.”

Rhoades et al. recommend that instructors help students figure out how to assess online information.

Typically, BW courses at the site do not teach research writing; therefore, it may not be necessary to include in-depth information about how to assess Web-based research. However, discussions about the Web should not be banned from BW. General discussions about the credibility of certain kinds of sites, such as wikis versus electronic journals, may help prepare BW students for FYC where they will most likely conduct research.

THE VALUE OF ONLINE COMMUNICATION: RESULTS

I wanted to determine how much my participants might value Web-based communication. I presented the participants with the following statement: People who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact (email, text messaging, sharing information, talking through a cell phone, etc.) with other people. Figure 5-12 shows that of the 24 students who responded to the statement, 73.9% (N=17) of the spring 2009 BW students indicated that they believed that people who don't have computer skills miss valuable opportunities to interact on the Web. Figure 5-13 shows that of the 33 students who responded to the statement, 97% (N=32) of the fall 2009 BW students indicated that they believed that people who don't have computer skills miss valuable opportunities to interact on the Web. As depicted in Figure 5-14, one of the two BW professors indicated that he or she believed that people who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact on the Web, but the other professor did not agree with the statement.

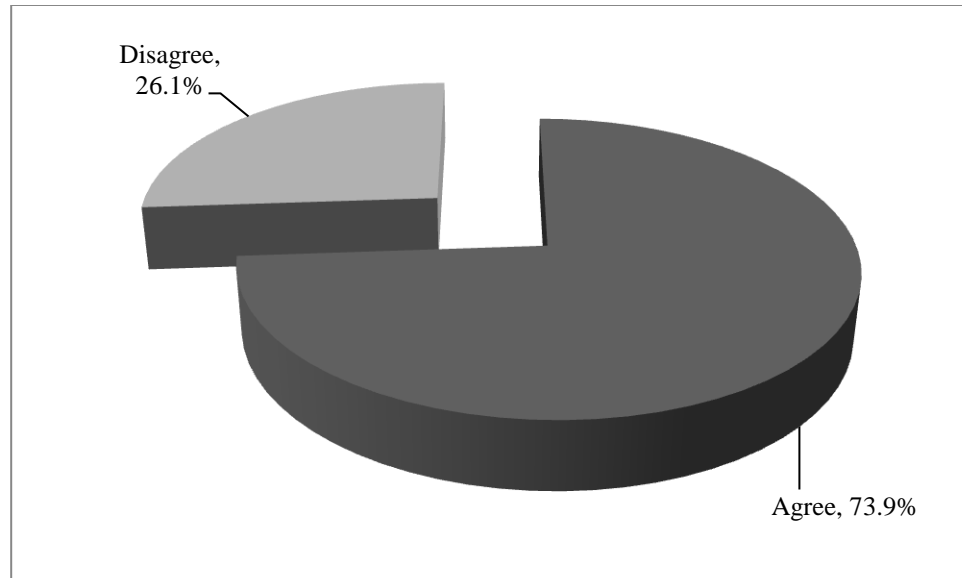


Figure 5-12: Spring 2009 Student Responses: People who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact with other people.

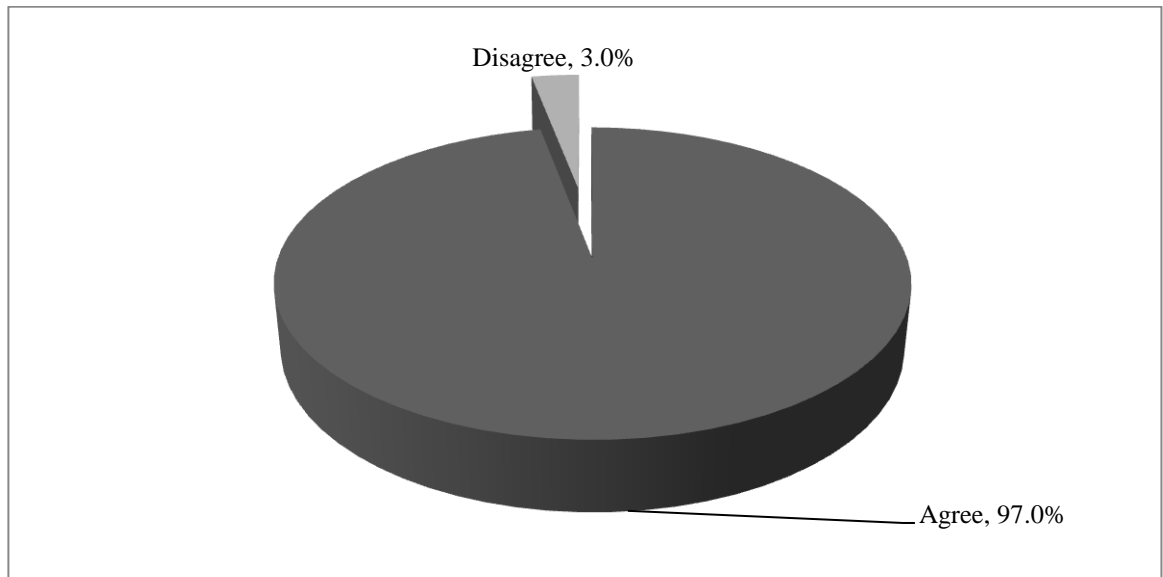


Figure 5-13: Fall 2009 Student Responses: People who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact with other people.

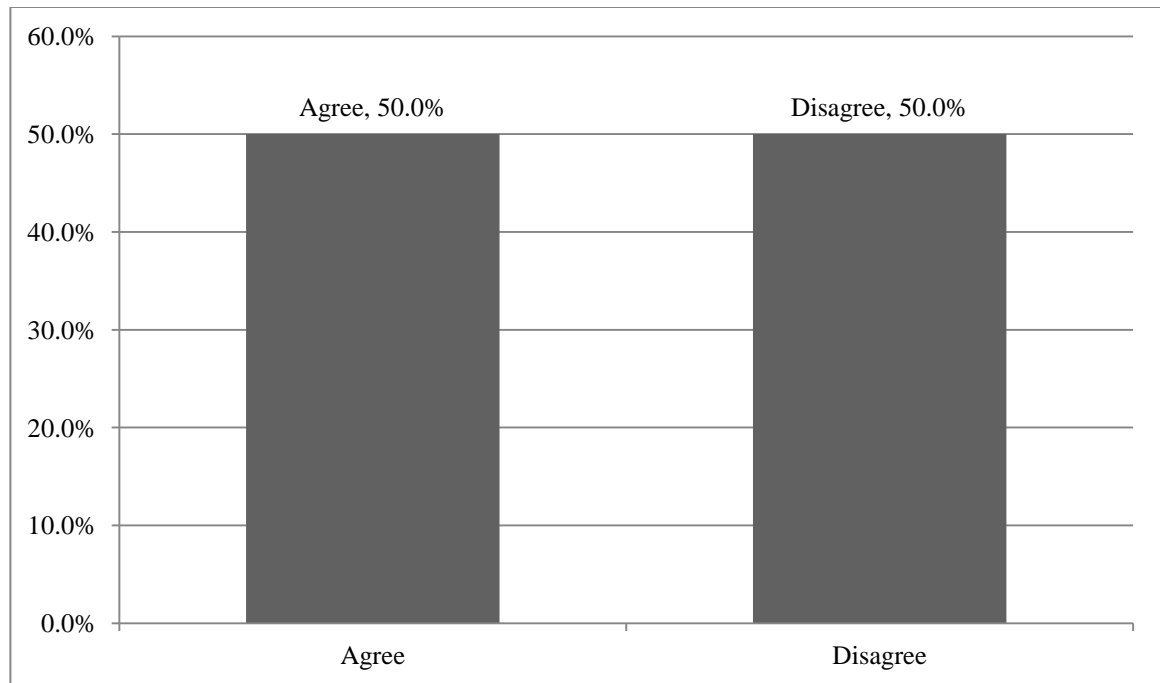


Figure 5-14: Instructor Responses: People who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact with other people.

THE VALUE OF ONLINE COMMUNICATION: DISCUSSION

While the instructors in my study were split on their feelings about the value of online communication, responses from the students indicate that most of the students agreed that people who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact with other people. Research indicates that many people are using the Web to communicate, but they may not know how best to use it.

Research indicates that others have found online communications methods to be valuable. Boyd and Ellison report that "since their introduction, social network sites (SNSs) such as MySpace, Facebook, Cyworld, and Bebo have attracted millions of users, many of whom have integrated these sites into their daily practices" (210). Boyd

and Ellison's research shows that SNSs—one form of online communication—have become an integral part of communication within our culture:

Most sites support the maintenance of preexisting social networks, but others help strangers connect based on shared interests, political views, or activities. Some sites cater to diverse audiences, while others attract people based on common language or shared racial, sexual, religious, or nationality-based identities. Sites also vary in the extent to which they incorporate new information and communication tools, such as mobile connectivity, blogging, and photo/video-sharing.

Boyd and Ellison's research also shows that we, as a culture, are spending a great deal of time and energy in SNSs—and students are no different. Smith and Caruso report that over 90% of the students in their study engage in social networking on a daily basis indicating that those students value online communication. Jenkins reports that social media is a valuable part of participatory culture in western culture. Over 50% of both of the student groups in my study use the Web to maintain personal relationships. And, over 44% of the students in the spring 2009 and 63% of the fall 2009 students in my study were using the Web to maintain professional relationships. The 2011 report, "The Community College Survey of Student Engagement¹⁷," indicates that "over half (58%) of students have used e-mail to communicate with an instructor often or very often, compared with only 10% of students that have never done so," which indicates

¹⁷ As discussed at the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) Web site, the CCSSE survey tool "asks questions that assess institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated highly with student learning and student retention." The Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin created the survey in 2001.

that the college environment may be encouraging all students to use online communications regularly. Using the Web to communicate is not a new concept for students. DeBell and Chapman found that among grade school students, “36 percent use the Internet for e-mail or instant messaging and 38 percent use it to play games” (vi).

Despite the fact that people are using the Web more, they do not seem to understand how to use it for specific purposes. For example, Millward’s study of technology in two-year colleges indicates that faculty teaching online courses may be spending more than 25% of their time helping students with “technology literacy” (378), which suggests a need for online, digital literacy development among a large percentage of community college students like those in my study. The site does not have demonstration of digital literacy as a prerequisite for courses that have an online component, but the students are expected to perform within those environments. Most students appear to be teaching themselves how to use digital technology from outside the academy. Social networking is an activity that the people around the world have in common. In their Australia-based study, Mathews and Cameron report that “81 percent of adults aged 31 to 50 years and 56 percent of adults over 50” indicate that they participate in social networking; however, the researchers did not indicate that the Web users had completed any type of formal digital literacy course.

Many of the students and both of the instructors in my study indicated using the Web for social networking. Because so many people around the world are using the Web for communication, and most of the BW students in my study seem to value Web-based communication, BW students at the site should receive ample

opportunities within their BW course to address social networking and related communications methods.

CHAPTER 6

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ABOUT BASIC WRITING STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY IN THE CLASSROOM

Although there has been a great deal of research (Agostina and Varone qtd. in Pavia 5; Batschelet and Woodson; Etchison 40; MacArthur, “Overcoming” 173-174; McAllister and Louth 426) over the decades regarding how digital technology has been used in BW courses, there is very little research that expresses BW students’ and their instructors’ views on digital technology in their classroom. My study’s research question is the following: In what ways might BW professors’ and their students’ interaction with computers and digital technology inside and outside of the academy complicate the BW curriculum in the twenty-first century? I posit that to understand how BW professors’ and their students’ interaction with computers and digital technology inside the academy complicate the BW curriculum in the twenty-first century, I needed to know more about those groups’ thoughts about digital technology in their classrooms. The following results from my study and discussions provide the participants’ views on digital technology in their classroom.

VIEWS ON LEARNING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY WHILE IN ENGLISH CLASS: RESULTS

To determine my participants’ thoughts about computer skills training and the relationship to English courses, I presented the following statement: If students must complete computer training, students should be taught how to use the computer in

their English classes so that they can learn how to use the computer to write as they receive writing instruction. Figure 6-1 shows that of the 24 students who responded to the statement, 79.2% (N=19) of the spring 2009 BW students agreed with the statement. And, Figure 6-2 shows that of the 33 students who responded to the statement, 81.8% (N=27) of the fall 2009 BW students agreed with the statement. As depicted in Figure 6-3, both (N=2) of the BW professors disagreed with the statement.

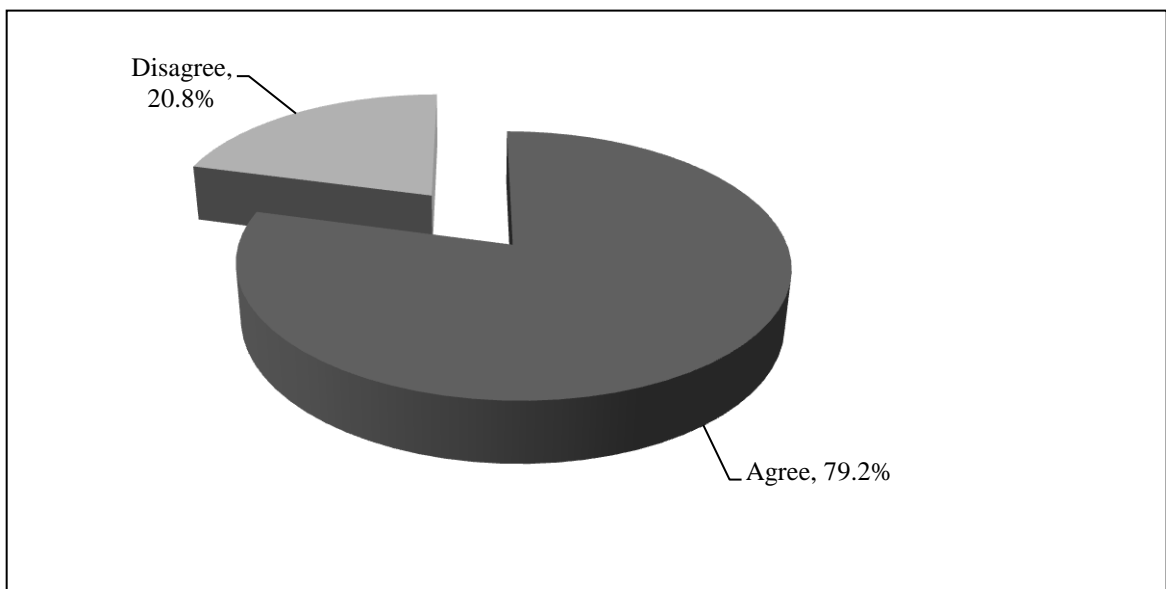


Figure 6-1: Spring 2009 Student Responses: If students must complete computer training, students should be taught how to use the computer in their English classes so that they can learn how to use the computer to write as they receive writing instruction.

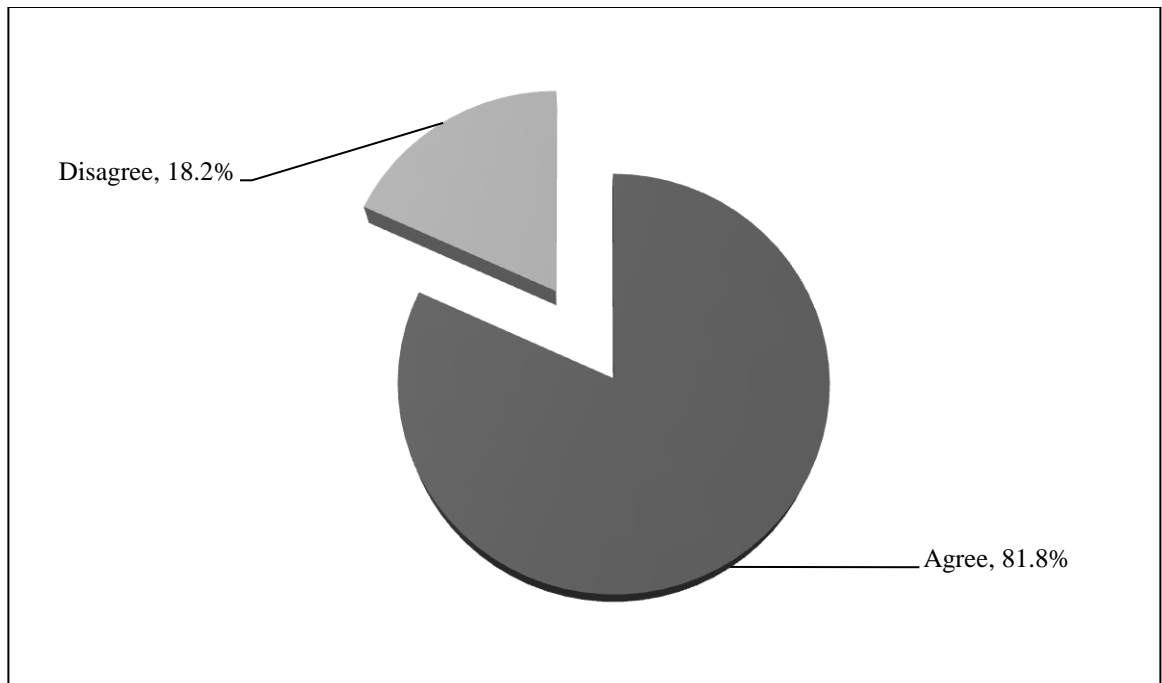


Figure 6-2: Fall 2009 Student Responses: If students must complete computer training, students should be taught how to use the computer in their English classes so that they can learn how to use the computer to write as they receive writing instruction.

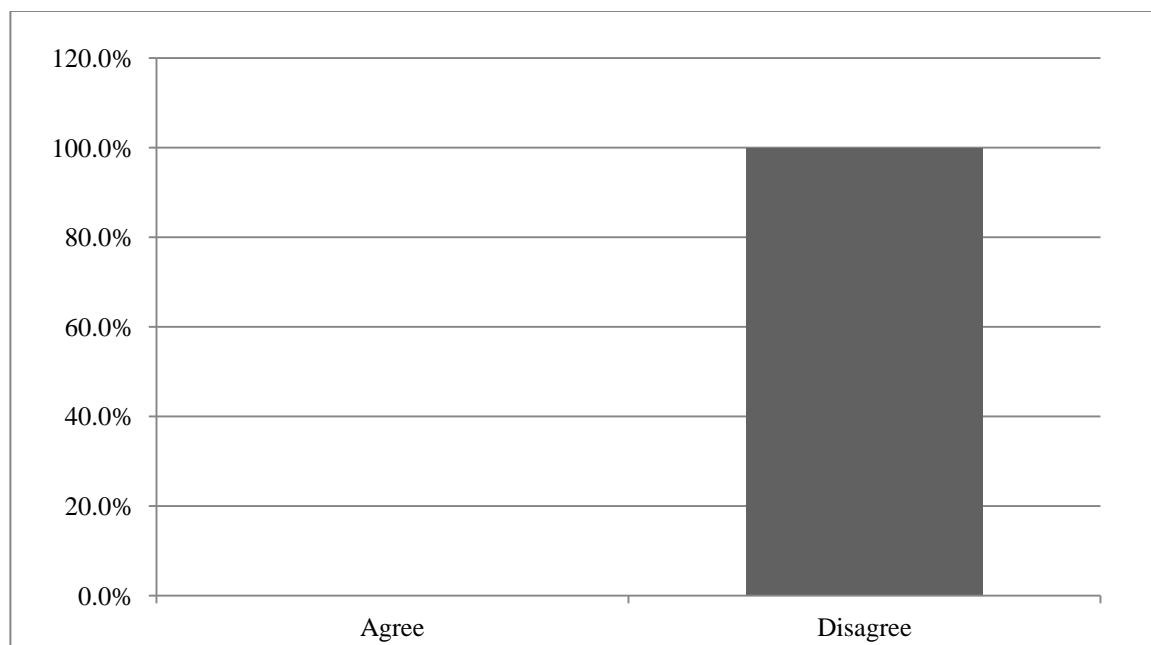


Figure 6-3: Instructor Responses: If students must complete computer training, students should be taught how to use the computer in their English classes so that they can learn how to use the computer to write as they receive writing instruction.

VIEW ON LEARNING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY WHILE IN ENGLISH CLASS:

DISCUSSION

Using computers in a writing class is not a new concept. Most of the participants in my study seem to value computers in the writing class. However, there are mixed opinions about whether or not digital training should occur within a writing class, which creates a dilemma for BW at the site.

The majority of the students in my study agreed with the following statement: If students must complete computer training, students should be taught how to use the computer in their English classes so that they can learn how to use the computer to write as they receive writing instruction. However, both of the instructors disagreed with the statement, which suggests that they do not believe that students should be

taught how to use computers in their English class. Although I did not ask the instructors why they were against students being taught computer skills in their English classes, other researchers suggest reasons why some English professors may be against students learning computer skills in their English classes. For example, Millward reports that only about a quarter of the two-year college instructors in her study report being satisfied with the technology training the instructors receive at their employer colleges (384). Tyner explains that when computers were brought into the classroom, “the computers forced changes in teaching and learning that were not always within the comfort zone of educators” (90). When considering Tyner’s and Millward’s research, it is possible to conclude that BW instructors may be apprehensive about teaching computer skills to their BW students because the instructors do not think that BW instructors receive sufficient digital literacy professional development from their employer colleges. But, digital literacy training may have to become a component of BW at the site because the students need digital literacy training.

I see BW at the site as a type of pre-composition course because it is designed to prepare the students for FYC by teaching them many of the basic rules related to composition, such as rhetorical modes; rhetoric is the focus of the second semester of FYC at the site. At the site, all on campus FYC courses take place in a computer lab, which means that the students can benefit from some digital literacy development before they enter FYC if they have not developed those skills outside of school. The fact that on campus FYC classes take place in a computer lab at the site coincides with the requirements that scholars (NCTE; WPA) suggest for FYC. For example, Selfe

recommends digital technology in FYC because digital technology enables students to have more composing options (*Multimodal* 8).

And, BW instructors at the site may be the perfect candidates to teach digital literacy to their students and may be more skilled than they think. Selfe explains that English composition teachers should not feel as though they have to be skilled in all aspects of digital composition, but they should bring digital texts and technology into the composition class because they are uniquely equipped to do so:

The changing nature of communication does suggest...that teaching of rhetorically based strategies of composition—the responsibility of introducing students to all available means of communicating effectively and productively, including words, images sound—remain the purview of composition teachers.

(8-9)

In other words, Selfe seems to be saying that writing teachers, who usually teach rhetoric when they teach writing, are in the unique position of teaching rhetorical, digital literacy, which is often needed in today's computer-based communication environment. Just as Selfe suggests, Cooper also encourages instructors to teach digital literacies in their classes because students need those literacies. Cooper explains that “digital literacies are social practices through which we define meanings and values,” (186) such as when we create rhetorical texts. Cooper explains that digital literacies are important for students because such literacies will “enable them [students] not only to survive in this world, but to create better worlds for themselves and others.” It is possible to say that students who engage in social, rhetorical texts, such as creating a blog or social networking page, are creating a better world by

engaging audiences in social discourse that can lead to important discoveries. Cooper suggests that English instructors need to get pass their reservations about teaching digital literacies because students need the unique perspective that writing instructors bring to digital communication texts and technologies.

The BW classes at the site do take place in a computer lab. The majority of the students in my study want digital technology within the BW class. The two instructors in the study did not want digital technology training to take place in the computer lab. More research should be conducted to determine exactly why the BW instructors at the site resist teaching digital technology skills in their courses, but research suggests that BW instructors should provide rhetorical, digital technology training to their students, which may require some basic digital literacy training from those instructors as well.

COMPUTERS MAKE LEARNING TO WRITE TOO DIFFICULT: RESULTS

Often, the campus dean at the site in 2009 had told me that computers made my students' BW classes too difficult and regularly suggested that instead of being a useful, important part of the course, computers were at best something *extra* and at worst an unnecessary distraction. To determine if my participants thought that computers made their writing classes too difficult, I presented the following statement: Using a computer in a writing class makes learning to write too difficult. Figure 6-4 shows that of the 24 students who responded to the statement, 87.5% (N=21) of the spring 2009 BW disagreed with the statement. And, Figure 6-5 shows that of the 33 students who responded to the statement, 87.9% (N=29) of the fall 2009 BW students

disagreed with the statement. As depicted in Figure 6-6, both (N=2) of the BW professors disagreed with the statement.

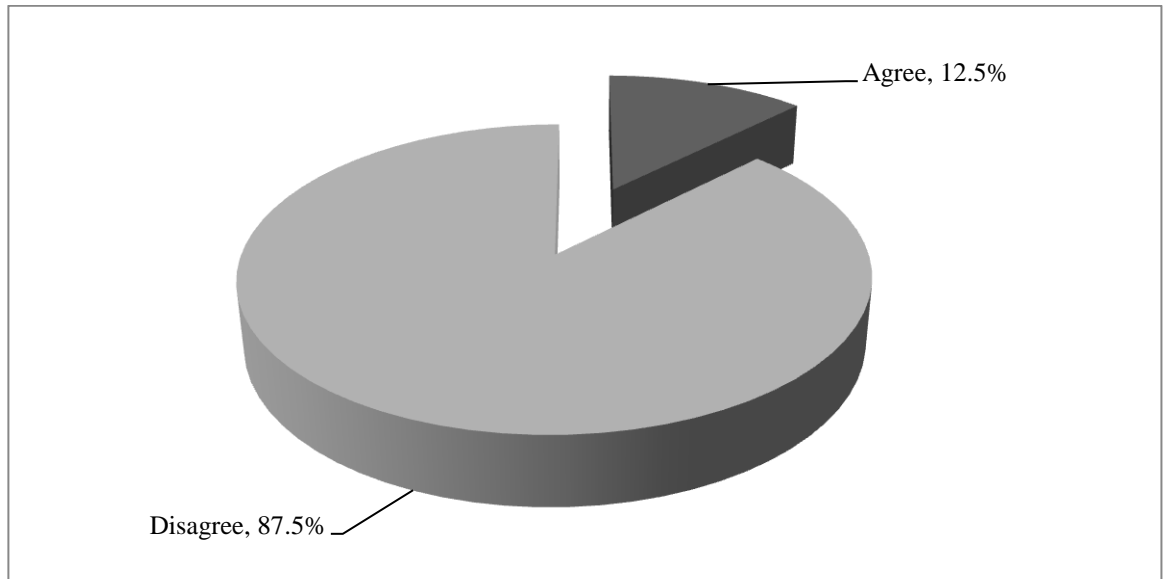


Figure 6-4: Spring 2009 Student Responses: Using a computer in a writing class makes learning to write too difficult.

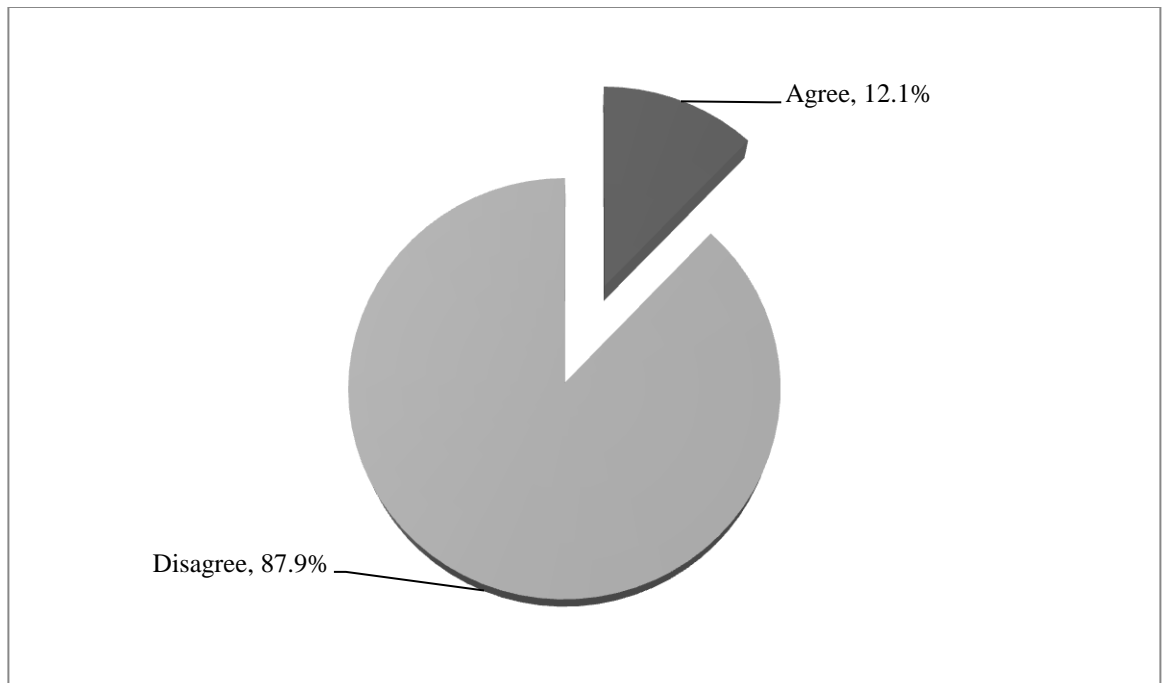


Figure 6-5: Fall 2009 Student Responses: Using a computer in a writing class makes learning to write too difficult.

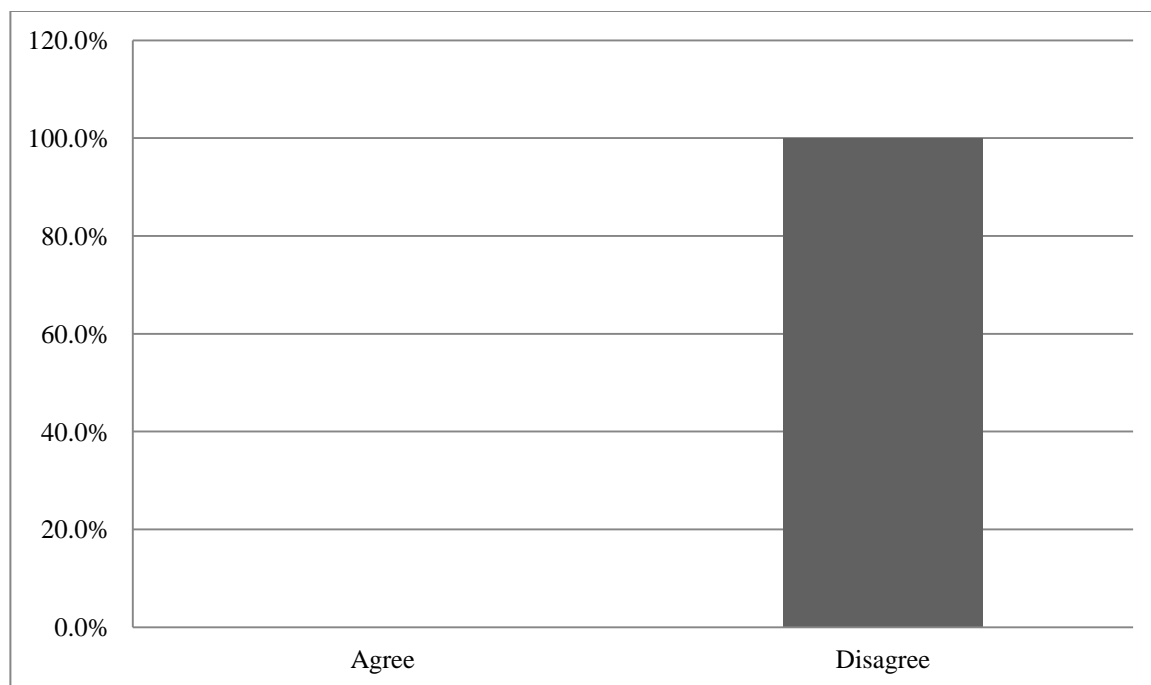


Figure 6-6: Instructor Responses: Using a computer in a writing class makes learning to write too difficult.

COMPUTERS MAKE LEARNING TO WRITE TOO DIFFICULT: DISCUSSION

Again, computers are not a new idea in writing classes. However, just as my campus dean suggested to me in 2009, some people believe that BW students may not gain valuable skills development from simultaneous digital and word literacy training. My research outcomes and other researchers' results suggest that BW students may not be overwhelmed by simultaneous digital and word literacy training within their BW course and may benefit from such training; however, we cannot ignore students who may have reservations about digital technology.

The majority of the students and both of the instructors in my study disagreed with the statement that using a computer in a writing class makes learning to write too difficult. Other researchers had mixed results when studying BW students' computer

use in BW classrooms. Etchison reports the results of a 1986 pilot study in which one group of BW students used word processing software to write and one group wrote with pen and paper. In Etchison's study, the students writing with computers wrote more words than the students who wrote with pen and paper (37), but the quality of the writing was the same between the two groups (39). Etchison explains that it was unwise to generalize about all BW students based on the performance of the 20 students in the pilot study, but "the word processing software seemed to encourage the production of text to an even greater degree among these basic writers than it did among the large population of college writers" that Etchison had examined in an earlier study. Etchison could not draw any conclusions about why the quality of the writing between the two groups was the same. Later, in 1991, Batschelet and Woodson conducted a study between six sections of BW students who used the computer 50% of the time to write and six sections that did not use computers. Batschelet and Woodson's study results indicate that students using the computers have "positive attitudes towards writing papers on a computer," and "students felt that their writing had been positively influenced by using computers" (1). Pavia reports having mixed feelings about using computers in her BW courses:

I could discuss many positive aspects of teaching in a computer classroom, among which are pedagogical variety, student interest, expanded audiences, a broader definition of "writing," and so forth. But I also need to consider individually the students in my classes who struggle with the computers. (6)

Pavia's research suggests that although computers may produce positive attitudes among students and benefits for professors, we cannot ignore the problems associated

with computers in the BW classroom. For example, I cannot ignore the fact that in my study 12.5% of the spring 2009 students and 12.1% of the fall 2009 students *agreed* with the survey statement that using a computer in a writing class makes learning to write too difficult. During informal conversations with students during the study, a few students expressed concerns about their lack of computer experience and access and feeling envious of their peers who had strong typing skills. In Pavia's study, one student indicates concerns about a lack of typing skills (9), but he likes using the computers in the classroom because the classroom had fewer distractions than his home (10). Pavia reports that the students in her study and the majority of the students in similar studies, overall, report that they like using computers in their BW classes. However, at the conclusion of her study, Pavia decided to provide both assignments that require computers and assignments that do not require computers (18). Pavia also chose to exclude previous Web-authoring assignments from her BW courses (19). Pavia provides the following warning to BW instructors regarding computers in their classes:

Above all, as basic writing teachers, we need to avoid making assumptions about our students' computer knowledge and about the effects of computers in our classrooms and instead make active inquiries into these issues... We also need to carefully consider our goals for our students' learning and make decisions regarding the use of technology in our classrooms based on these goals. (19-20)

Pavia's final comments mimic my thoughts as well about the site and other BW students: We need to inquire among the students to find out what the students

need and what is best for them. We should also bring digital technologies into the BW classroom that aid students' learning and support both the instructors' and students' goals as we—as educators and researchers—allow our research to help us determine what is best for our students.

VALUE OF SIMULTANEOUS FIRST SEMESTER COMPUTER AND WRITING SKILLS TRAINING: RESULTS

At the site, students are required to complete a computer skills training course before they graduate, but there is no rule stipulating *when* students must complete the computer skills course. To determine if my participants might think that simultaneous computer and writing skills training should occur within the same semester, I presented the following statement: If I must complete a computer class, I would rather receive computer instruction within the same semester as my first English class. Figure 6-7 shows that of the 24 students who responded to the statement, 83.3% (N=20) of the spring 2009 BW agreed with the statement. And, Figure 6-8 shows that of the 33 students who responded to the statement, 75.8% (N=25) of the fall 2009 BW students agreed with the statement. The instructors' question was worded as follows: If students must complete a computer class, students should receive computer instruction within the same semester as their first English class. As depicted in Figure 6-9, both (N=2) of the BW professors agreed with the statement.

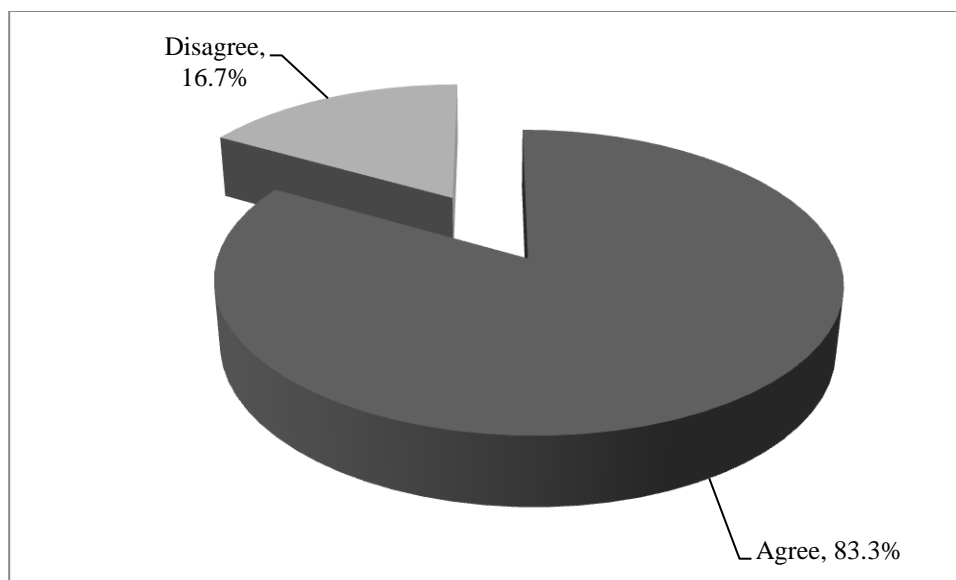


Figure 6-7: Spring 2009 Student Responses: If I must complete a computer class, I would rather receive computer instruction within the same semester as my first English class.

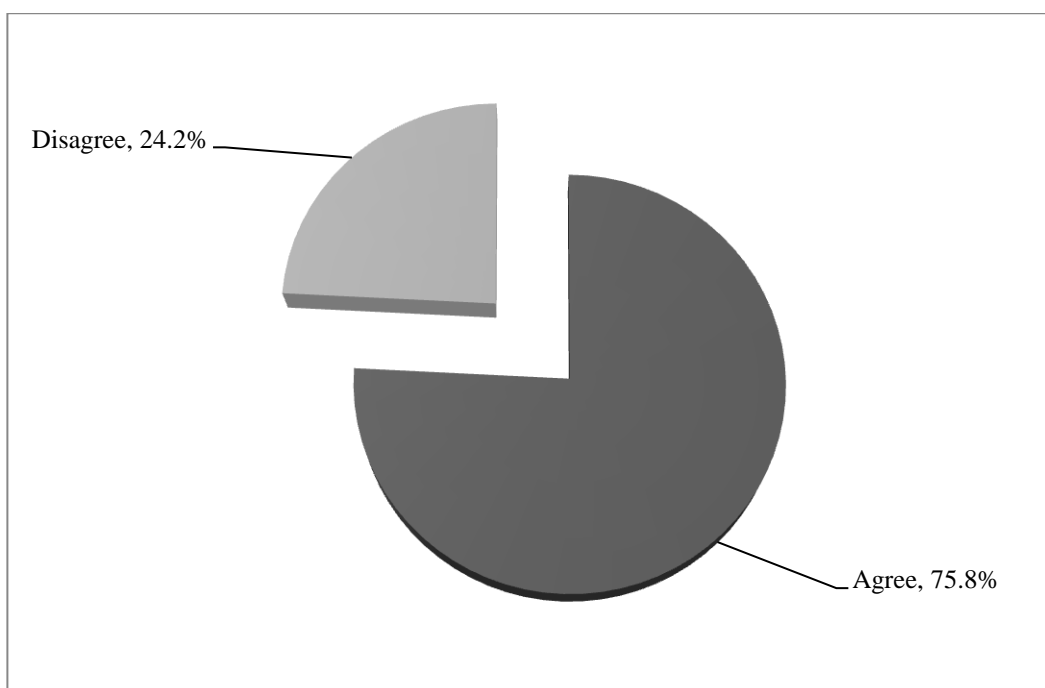


Figure 6-8: Fall 2009 Student Responses: If I must complete a computer class, I would rather receive computer instruction within the same semester as my first English class.

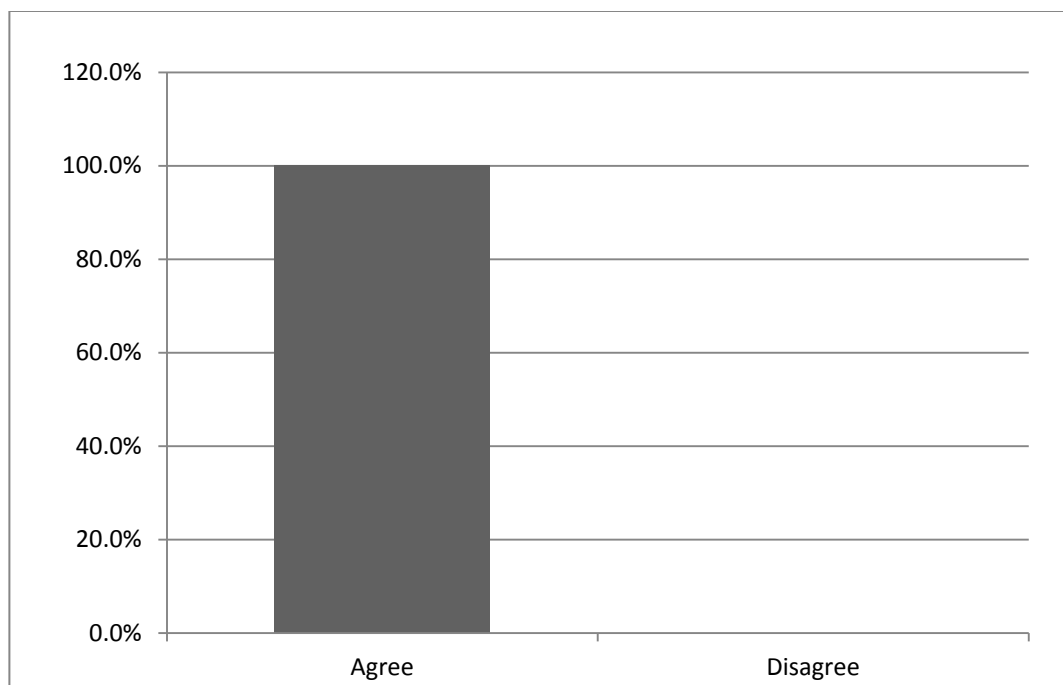


Figure 6-9: Instructor Responses: If students must complete a computer class, students should receive computer instruction within the same semester as their first English class.

VALUE OF SIMULTANEOUS FIRST SEMESTER COMPUTER AND WRITING SKILLS TRAINING: DISCUSSION

Responses from my participants suggest that the majority of the BW students and at least some of the BW instructors believe that BW students would benefit from receiving computer skills instruction as they receive writing instruction. However, the site does not require any of the students to receive computer skills training at any particular time during their studies so long as the students complete the required computer skills course before they graduate. The lack of a requirement for when, or if, students complete computer skills training is not unusual.

Millward's study provides data about the technology literacy requirement in two-year colleges: "only 23 colleges (8 percent) offer a requirement, nearly half (151

colleges) offer an advisory, and 135 have no recommendations or requirements” for digital technology literacy development (377). Millward explains that in regards to enrollment in online courses, some educators were concerned that requirements related to digital literacy training worked against the school’s open enrollment policy suggesting that educators were afraid that students might not register for courses if the students had to meet an online, digital literacy skills requirement. At the site, policies had not been put into place that made the computer skills course a pre-requisite for many courses that used digital technology because administrators feared the restriction would discourage too many students from registering for classes.

I recommend that future researchers across BW ask BW students once again if they would prefer simultaneous writing instruction and computer skills training and more about the reasons for the students’ responses. But, the results of my study indicate that the BW instructors and the majority of the BW students agree that the BW students would benefit from same type of computer skills training while completing their first semester of course work—usually when the students complete courses to meet any basic studies requirements.

CHAPTER 7

QUALITATIVE RESULTS AND DISCUSSION ABOUT BASIC WRITING STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTOR COMMENTS ABOUT TECHNOLOGY EXPERIENCES

The second part of the survey consisted of the following questions that required the respondents to type their answers and provide their views:

- What is good about using computers in an English class?
- How might computers make English class more difficult?

The student version of the survey had the following third question:

- What do you use computers to do in classes or school-related activities other than English class?

As I mentioned in Chapter 2, I used development support communications theory to guide my research. Development support communications theory encourages researchers to consider the direct input of research participants (Melkote, “Reinventing” 40-41). Because of the lack of BW students’ voices in BW research, I posited that my study should include both BW instructors’ and students’ direct comments. I also determined that it was necessary to compare and contrast BW instructors’ comments to their students’ comments. Comparing students’ and instructors’ comments provides insights into how the respondents’ digital technology experiences relate as well as an opportunity to consider how those experiences impact BW.

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, I used grounded theory methodology (GTM) to analyze the respondents' comments. GTM (Corbin and Strauss; Glaser and Strauss) guides researchers to create and use codes that emerge from the data to analyze the data. Specifically, the respondents' words, what their words suggested, my experiences related to the topics mentioned in the respondents' comments, and my interpretation of those experiences helped me create 11 coding categories with defined properties. Next, I used the coding categories to label the respondents' comments. Following Creswell's scholarship (220-221), I counted the number of times that I used each code to label the participants' responses, which enabled me to spot trends within the responses and generate conclusions that I could use to address my study questions. This chapter provides my coding results and discussions about the coding results.

USING COMPUTERS IN AN ENGLISH CLASS: RESULTS

The first open-ended question asked the following: What is good about using computers in an English class? There were fifty-eight responses (N=58)—students and professors combined. Figure 7-1 shows the number of times that I used each category to code the responses for Group A, which was the 56 student responses, and Figure 7-2 shows the number of times that I used each category to code the responses for Group B—the two professors' responses. I used the "receiving academic instruction" category (N=22) to code the students' responses more than any other category. In contrast, both of the professors' responses prompted me to use the "Planning, Designing, and Editing" category most often.

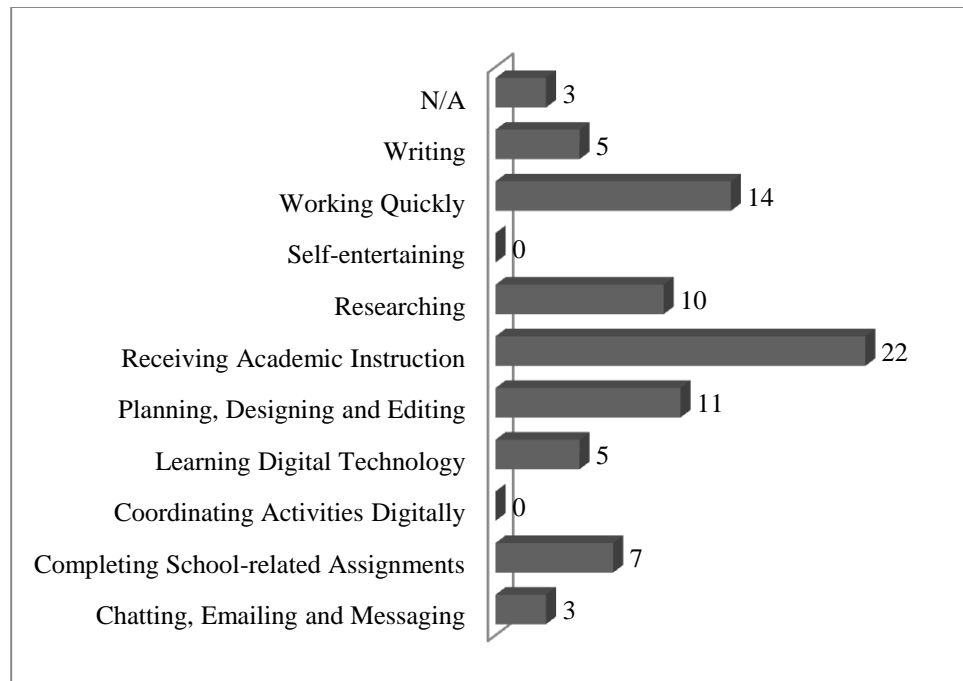


Figure 7-1: Category Occurrences/Students' Responses to the following question:
What is good about using computers in an English class?

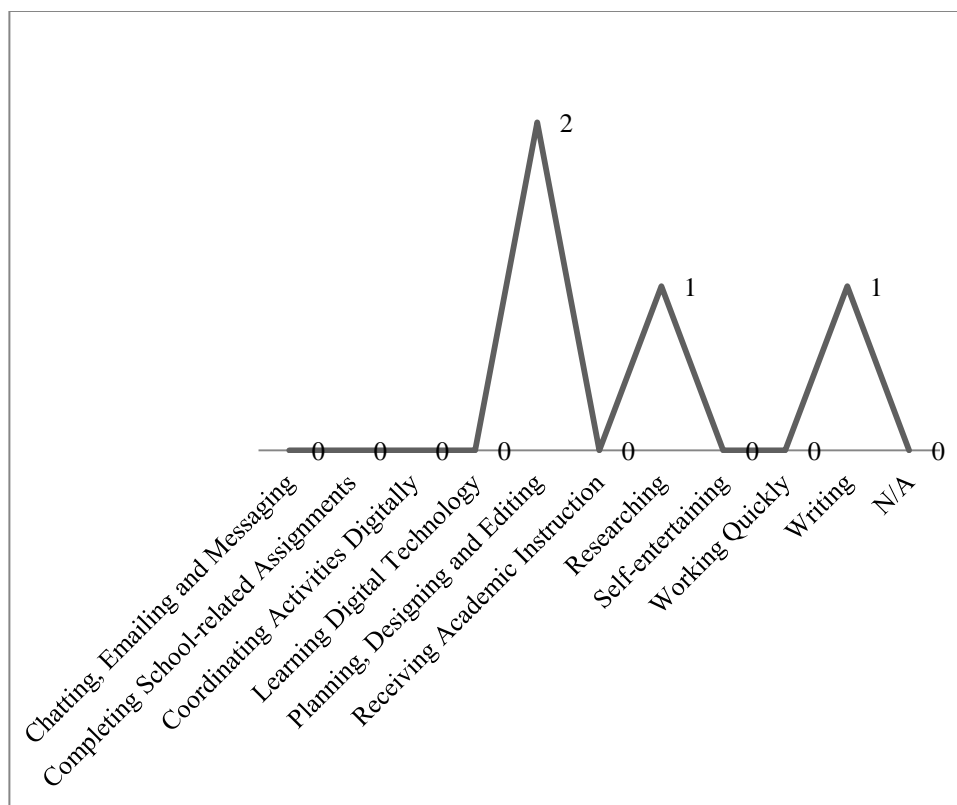


Figure 7-2: Category Occurrences/Professors' Responses to the following question: What is good about using computers in an English class?

USING COMPUTERS IN AN ENGLISH CLASS: DISCUSSION

The closed-ended questions enabled me to gather some input from my participants regarding the benefits associated with using computers in an English class. However, my open-ended question that asked participants directly about their views regarding using computers in an English class gave me an opportunity to learn more about the participants' opinions and compare that data with other studies' outcomes.

Because I used the "receiving academic instruction" category to code the students' comments most often, I concluded that students thought that the best thing

about using computers in an English class was the potential for professors to use the computer as an instructional device to teach writing. For example, when responding to the open-ended question that asked what is good about using computers in an English class, one of my fall 2009 BW student participants wrote that “using computers in [English] class makes it easier to have more visuals for students to look at...” The student could have thought computer-generated visuals were interesting or at least memorable instructional tools. Researchers have found that computers aid writing instruction. For example, Vinall-Cox concludes that bringing the computer into the writing classroom enables her “to teach basic design, layout and font choices, as part of teaching writing” (3); therefore, a computer in writing class enables Vinall-Cox to teach students to be composers—not just writers.

Next, because I used the “working quickly” (N=14) category second most often to code students’ responses to the question, I concluded that BW students’ need to complete assignments quickly should be thoroughly considered within the academy. Because many BW students are often nontraditional students with competing priorities and busy lifestyles, I concluded that the speed and efficiency afforded by computers when used by users that have at least some digital literacy cannot be ignored. BW students’ responses suggested that they need digital literacies to enable them to work quickly or maybe to juggle multiple tasks that include obligations in their personal, work and academic environments. Some BW students already depend on the speed of digital technology. When describing her students’ freewriting activities, Vinall-Cox explains that “they are used to writing quickly...the compose and send style of messaging, or ‘chatting,’ requires quick text-input...” (5). Vinall-Cox’s comment is in

line with my research indicating that the speed of chatting, emailing, and messaging abilities are popular among students.

I used the “planning, designing, and editing” category (N=2) most often to label professors’ responses to the following question: what is good about using computers in an English class? One of the BW professors wrote the following response to the open-ended question: “The use of computers helps to take away some of the writing issues students have as it gives them more confidence with the use of Spell Check and Grammar Check.” The part of the instructor’s response that mentions tools for correcting spelling and editing prompted me to use the “planning, designing, and editing” label because it covers editing or error correction. The professor also mentioned “writing issues,” which also prompted me to use the “writing” code. Suggesting a need for error correction and “writing issues” also seemed to relate to writing process theories—theories that helped me develop my code. When asked what is good about using computers in an English class, the second BW professor wrote the following: “Computers provide access to Spell Check Grammar Check, and online resources.” Once again, the professor suggested a need to attend to errors, which prompted me to use the “planning, designing and editing” category to label the second BW professor’s comments.

It was no surprise that the professors mentioned that the computer could be used in the writing process to attend to errors because both error correction and process writing are familiar themes in many of the English textbooks at the site, such as the book, *Writing Talk: Paragraphs and Short Essay with Readings*—the required developmental, or BW, book that was given to me when I arrived at the college.

Writing Talk dedicates entire chapters to writing processes and has one chapter called “The 20 Most Common Sentence Errors,” which focuses on reviewing specific handbook rules to correct and avoid making common writing errors.

I labeled three students’ responses with N/A because the students’ responses did not respond to the question. For example, when asked what was good about using computers in an English class, one student respondent said the following: “I do not like to use computers in English class for learning purposes, or any class for that matter. Therefore I do [not] have anything good to say about this subject.” I considered the student’s response interesting because it demonstrated the student’s thoughts about computers in general, which does speak to the study’s research question by providing a student’s views on computers. Unfortunately, the survey instrument did not enable students to provide overall thoughts about computers. The anonymity of the survey instrument did not allow me to further inquire about the impetus for the student’s potentially negative feelings about computers. However, because such a small number of students had a potentially negative opinion about computers, I still have to conclude that the majority of the BW students found computers to be beneficial in an English class.

The students and instructors in my study have somewhat different opinions about the benefits associated with using computers in an English class. Both the students and instructors could see the potential for computers to be used in an educational environment but for different reasons. BW instructors at the site should inquire more about and compare their students’ opinions about the benefits of using

computers in an English class to determine if there are other opportunities that the computer might afford that are not being utilized.

COMPUTERS MAKING ENGLISH CLASS MORE DIFFICULT: RESULTS

The second open-ended question asked the following: How might computers make English class more difficult? There were 59 responses. Figure 7-3 shows the results of the 57 student responses, and Figure 7-4 shows the results of the two professors' responses. Among the students' responses, I labeled responses with the "learning digital technology" category (N=42) more than with any other category. When coding the professors' responses, the "learning digital technology" category (N=2) was the only category their responses prompted me to use.

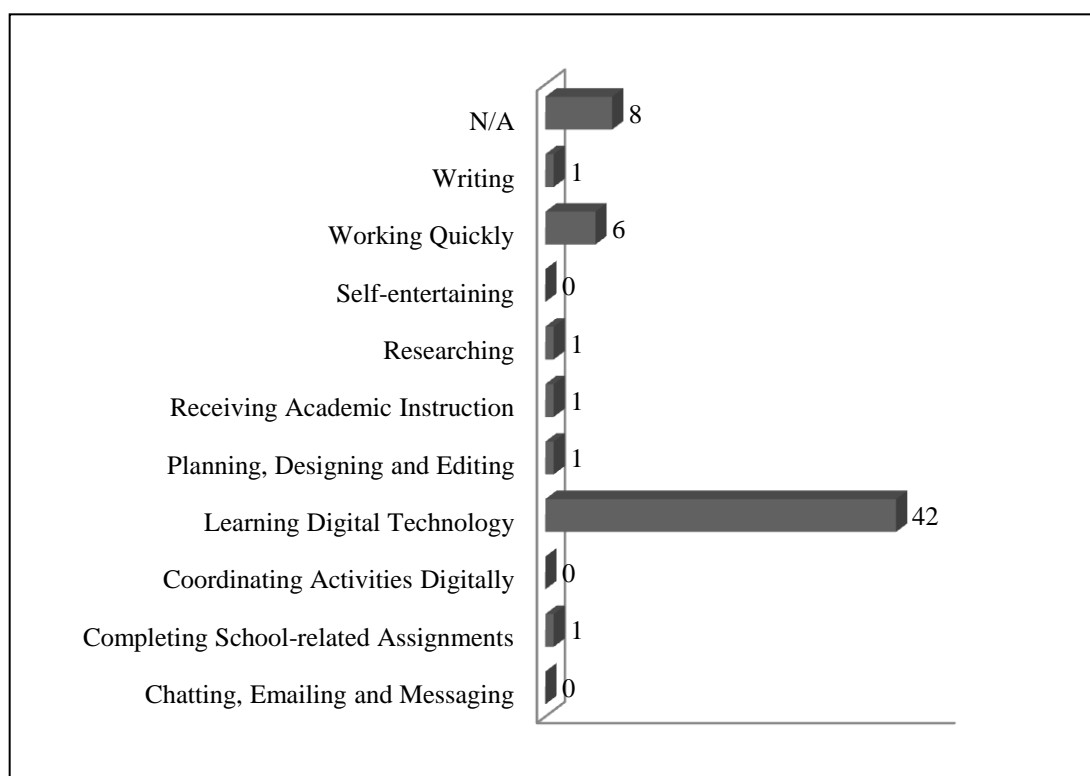


Figure 7-3: Category Occurrences/Student Responses: How Might Computers Make English Class More Difficult?

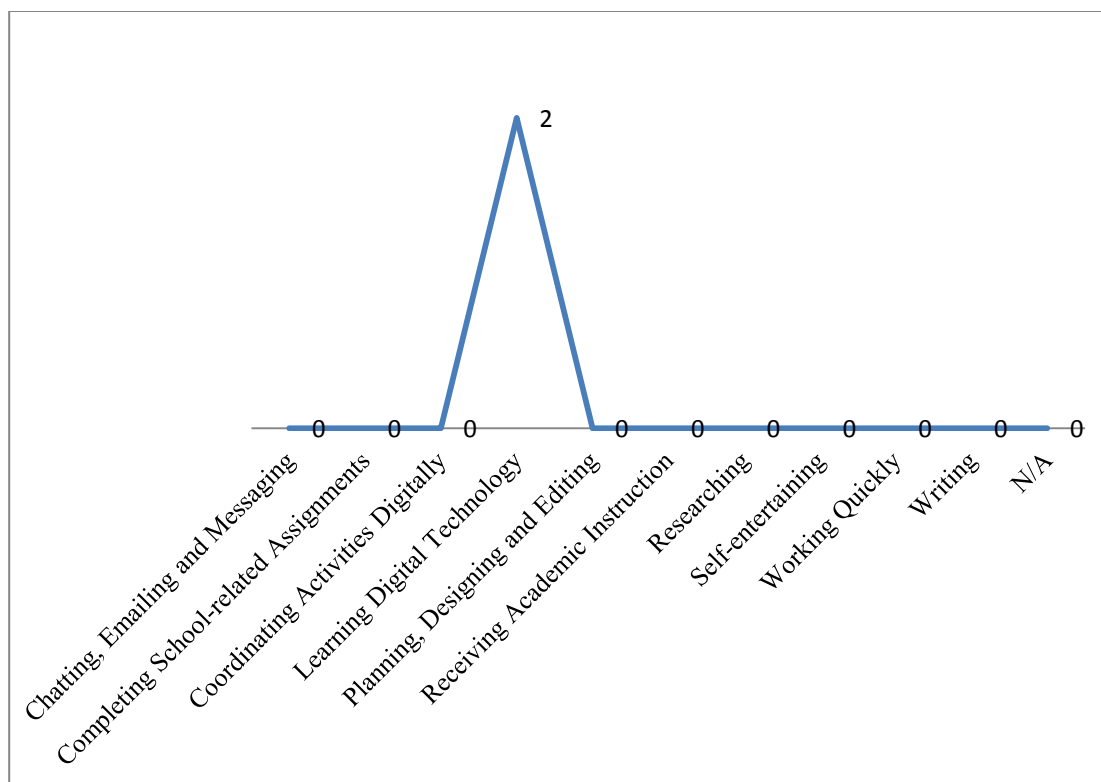


Figure 7-4: Category Occurrences/Professors' Responses: How Might Computers Make English Class More Difficult?

COMPUTERS MAKING ENGLISH CLASS MORE DIFFICULT: DISCUSSION

The closed-ended questions enabled me to gather some input from my participants regarding the problems associated with using computers in an English class. However, my open-ended question that asked participants directly about their views regarding the problems associated with using computers in an English class gave me an opportunity to learn more about the participants' opinions; I was also able to compare my participants' opinions with the opinions of participants in other studies.

The second open-ended question asked the following: How might computers make English class more difficult? I used the category "learning digital technology" (N=42) most often to code students' responses to the question, which suggests that

students are concerned about how a lack of digital literacy might impact their ability to use digital technology. Jonaitis found that BW students in her study were concerned about how a lack of computer skills might impact students in writing classes that use computers. I did not ask students if they were more concerned about their own lack of digital literacy or the lack of their classmates' digital literacy—a show of concern about fellow, potentially struggling students.

Next to the category “learning digital technology” (N=42), the category “N/A” (N=3) was the next category that I used often to code students' responses to second open-ended question. The data coded as “N/A” was still significant. Among the fall 2009 student responses that I coded with the category “N/A,” one student responded that “I don't think that they [computers] would, but some might say they might” and another student responded “I don't believe it [a computer] will make [English] class harder. It would only help.” The students' responses were significant because they demonstrated students' overall faith in digital technology and their abilities as learners. But, the survey tool did not allow students to provide overall thoughts about computers in an English class; only the students' direct responses to the question posed to them could be gathered.

It was significant that I was not able to use any other categories to label BW professors' responses to the second open-ended question, which suggested that BW professors also shared beliefs with the majority of the BW students in the study. Specifically, I concluded that both the BW students and BW professors in the study agreed, and were concerned, that computers in English classes will require the learning of digital technology for some students. Also, because the BW professors and

BW students were concerned about students' skills, I concluded that BW courses or the BW curriculum should include computer and digital technology skills training.

BASIC WRITING STUDENTS USING COMPUTERS ACROSS THE ACADEMY: RESULTS

The final open-ended question asked the following: What do you use computers to do in classes or school-related activities other than English class? There were 57 student responses to the final survey question. I did not pose the question to professors because the question was designed to specifically to investigate students' activities. Figure 7-5 shows the results of the 57 student participants' responses. Among the students' responses, I labeled responses with the "Completing School-related Assignments" category (N=38) more than with any other category.

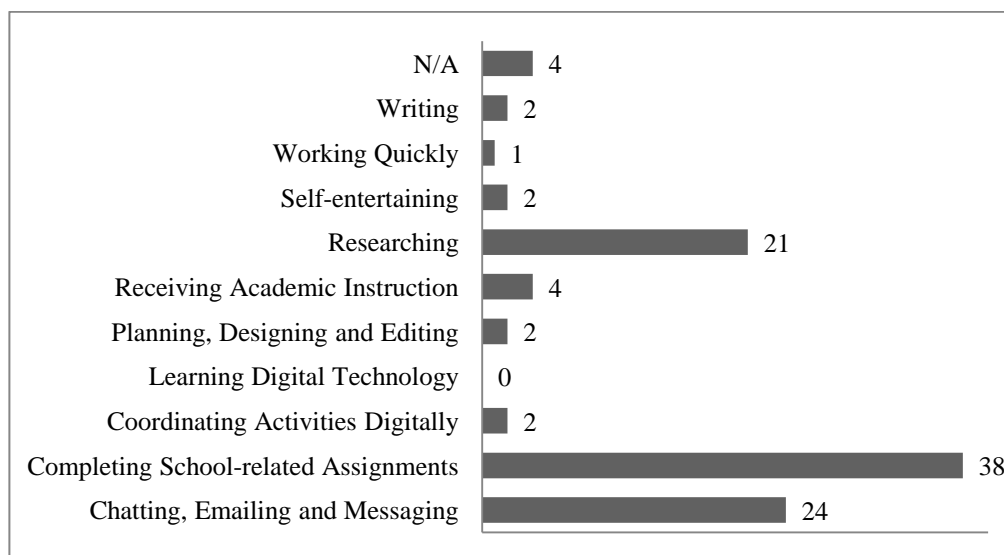


Figure 7-5: Category Occurrences/Student Responses: What Do You Use Computers to do in Classes or School-related Activities Other Than English Class?

BASIC WRITING STUDENTS USING COMPUTERS ACROSS THE ACADEMY: DISCUSSION

I concluded that outside of English, but in other college courses, the BW students in the study used computers primarily to complete school-related assignments and secondarily for communicating. The students' response to the question suggests that the site is requiring BW students to utilize computer skills across disciplines and in courses where writing was the not the focus.

The survey did not provide a question to ask BW instructors about how they use computers outside of their students' writing classes or outside of work because I determined that such information was only tangentially related to the study and had been addressed sufficiently by other questions. I think that more research should be conducted to compare how students use digital technology outside of the classroom to how their professors use digital technology outside of the classroom to find out how the potential similarities and differences in usage might impact the student-teacher dynamic in the classroom.

CHAPTER 8

STUDY CONCLUSIONS

My professional, academic and personal experiences with digital technology as I taught basic writing students at a rural, eastern Virginia community college led me to question what I needed to teach my BW students. Specifically, I wanted to make certain that I was providing my students with a superior educational experience. I determined that there were certain issues I needed to research and understand to assess and improve my BW classes. The purpose of my study was the following:

- Examine BW professors' and students' opinions about digital competency and skill training within a writing class,
- Assess BW professors' and students' interactions with digital technology inside and outside of the academy,
- Determine what skills and competencies BW students need to be considered digitally literate, and
- Contribute to the debate about BW curriculum development.

To fulfill my study's purpose, I established the following research question:

In what ways might BW professors' and their students' interaction with computers and digital technology inside and outside of the academy complicate the BW curriculum in the twenty-first century?

I addressed my research questions by surveying BW professors and two semesters of my BW students at the community college where I have been teaching English full-time since fall 2004. I developed both closed-ended and open-ended

survey questions. The closed-ended survey questions address four specific areas of study: educational preferences, computer ownership, computer usage and computer-based communication. My open-ended survey questions addressed the use of computers inside and outside of the academy by asking the following:

- What is good about using computers in an English class?
- How might computers make English class more difficult?

I presented a final, open-ended survey question to students only:

- What do you use computers to do in classes or school-related activities other than English class?

The study examines digital technology-related issues and research that potentially impacts BW.

My research suggests that our dependency inside and outside of the academy on digital technology for communication has complicated BW because digital technology has complicated literacy instruction—the focus of BW. Educators must determine what it means to be “literate,” and where digital technology fits within the literacy debate, before we can develop a BW curriculum that successfully advances students’ literacy development. For example, when I reviewed the data from the site, I was able to determine that the culture at the site encourages BW students to use digital technology to communicate effectively as soon as they join the college’s discourse community, but no one is making certain that the students have the necessary literacies to use digital technology effectively as soon as the students need those skills. There are no enforced digital literacy requirements for any of the students aside from requiring them to complete one of the digital technology courses sometime before they

graduate. My findings also suggest that most of the BW students, and at least some BW instructors, at the site own digital technology and have some digital literacy. However, because there are no BW-specific digital literacy requirements, the site's decision-makers cannot be certain that BW students have the digital literacy that they need to function effectively inside or outside the academy. The college finds it necessary to separate BW students into courses designed specifically to meet their word literacy needs but not their digital literacy needs. However, our culture encourages everyone to have rhetorical, digital communications skills. For example, *Consumer Reports* explains in the magazine's June 2010 cover story that "two out of three online U.S. households use social networks such as Facebook and MySpace, nearly twice as many as a year ago..." (24). The article suggests that millions of North Americans are now online and have found a need to communicate digitally. Stephens, Houser, and Cowan report that instructors may have a bias against students who have poor digital communications skills, so I propose that the academy should design courses to meet BW students' rhetorical, digital technology needs. I posit that a *successful* educational program must be proactive. I posit that a *successful* educational program must also address what the dominant culture is expecting of students to make certain that the students will learn what they need to learn to be successful inside and outside the academy.

STUDY DISCUSSION

Originally, I was unsure about how much my BW students used computer technology outside of my computer lab-based BW classes. My research indicates that the majority of the BW students in my study use computer technology inside and

outside of the academy. In fact, among the BW students in my study, only 16% of the spring 2009 BW students and 9.1% of the fall 2009 students did not own a computer. And, the majority of the students in my study owned computers that were less than three years old and used computers daily for a variety of tasks. Also, both of the BW instructors in my study owned a computer that was less than three years old. My results are similar to the results of other student-focused digital technology studies (Smith and Caruso) and instructor-focused, digital technology research (Millward). My research results led to a particular conclusion: many professors and students at the site have similar access to up-to-date computers, share more computer knowledge between them than they realize, and could be missing opportunities to benefit from more computer-related assignments. At the end of my study, I reached many other conclusions about the site that helped me address my research question

My data indicated that at least some BW students at the site use computers daily, which speaks to the part of my research question that asks about BW students' interaction with computers and digital technology inside and outside of the academy. The majority of all U.S. residents use a computer daily (Rhoades et al. 1), and computer usage in educational environments is increasing (Smith and Caruso; Stephens, Houser and Cowan; Sturgeon and Walker). I was surprised to find that the majority of the students in my study used computers daily for academic tasks outside of their English class. My study indicates that the academy expects freshmen, such as BW students, to have some digital literacy immediately for school work other than their writing course. The fact that the site may be placing digital technology demands on students without consistently and actively making certain that the students have the

necessary digital literacy to meet those demands suggests that the site needs to examine the fairness of its expectations. In other words, it seems contradictory for the site to expect BW students to use digital skills in classes and to access digital information when the students enter college but not to immediately require students to build their digital literacy in a structured environment. Millward reports that most colleges do not stress computer literacy requirements (377). My results suggest that the site should enable and encourage students to build their digital literacy immediately, across disciplines, and in a variety of environments to meet the site's growing digital demands.

The majority of the students in my study also thought that computer training should occur within English classes, or during the same semester as English, and did not think that computers made English class too difficult—all of which addresses the part of my research question that asks about the ways BW students' interaction with computers and digital technology complicates the BW curriculum. The two professors agreed that computers did not make English class too difficult and that computer training should occur within the same semester as the students' English class, but they *did not* think that an English class was the proper place for computer training. The study does not ask the instructors why they do not want computer training to occur within students' English classes. But, the difference in opinion about where computer training should occur complicates BW at the site because those differing opinions create potential tension between BW students' needs and BW professors' plans for their students. The instructors' responses to the questions suggest that they want their BW students to receive computer training or build digital literacy, but the instructors

do not want to be the people who provide such training. WPA suggests that instructors should have digital literacies and pass those literacies on to their students, but the instructors' responses in my study suggest that either the instructors do not have sufficient digital literacies, or they are resisting passing those literacies on to their students. If most BW students and their professors have similar computer experiences, professors who worry that they will have to teach their students how to use computers may be unnecessarily concerned; our BW students may know more than we think that they do about digital technology. Not all BW students have cognitive damage that prevents them from acquiring new skills (Rose, "Narrowing"). Because of the demands of the dominant culture, and BW students' interests, students at the site who do not have strong digital skills should be given a chance to acquire some basic digital literacy. And, BW students who have digital skills should have structured opportunities to increase those skills immediately at the site.

The majority of the BW students in my study believed that people who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact with other people and access information—all of which addresses the part of my research question that asks about the ways BW students' interaction with computers and digital technology complicates the BW curriculum. BW students who value digital technology and want to use digital technology to communicate in digital environments are not getting what they need from BW courses that do not address digital literacy. For example, "many college students have described the Internet as a functional tool that helps them to communicate with professors, conduct research, and access library materials" (Rhoades et al. 1). The student responses to my questions regarding the importance of computer

skills seemed consistent with the noticeable popularity of online social networking sites, text messaging and cell phones that other researchers (Smith and Caruso) have found among students across the academy. When asked what they used computers to do outside of their English class, the BW students in my study used computers most often for school work in other classes and communications. I concluded that digital technology-based methods of communication should be taught to BW students at the site because the students using such forms of communication may need to refine their skills; for example, BW students can read and write, but that does not mean that they do not need to refine those skills. Takayoshi and Selfe found that people today are being encouraged to compose in multimodal, computer-based environments (3)—another reason why BW students should receive computer and digital technology training as soon as possible so that they can integrate such skills into their communications processes. The two professors in the study could not agree on whether or not people who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact with other people. However, influential organizations, such as NCTE and WPA, suggest that writing courses that do not provide digital technology training do not meet students' needs. The majority of the BW students in my study wanted digital literacy development within their English courses. My study contributes to debates about BW curriculum development by providing insights into the differences between students' and professors' expectations—differences that could prevent BW courses from being successful. In other words, it will be difficult for BW courses to meet students' literacy needs when the course is taking place in a world that seems to value digital technology for communication purposes, but the BW

classroom—where communication is the focus—does not seem to take rhetorical, digital literacy seriously.

Although BW classes have been taking place in computer labs at least since 1987 (Stine “The Best” 224), BW instructors may need more digital literacy training, which addresses the part of my research question that asks about the ways BW professors’ interaction with computers and digital technology complicates the BW curriculum. BW professors’ interaction with computers and digital technology complicates BW if those professors think that they do not have the digital literacy necessary to help their students build their digital literacy. In their 2005 report on technology and pedagogy, the Two-Year College Association (TYCA) indicated that the professors would like to participate in more computer-related training, but teaching and administrative responsibilities took precedence (385-386). The instructors in my study agreed that computer training should not take place in an English class, despite the fact that they thought computers did not make English class more difficult, and were split on their feelings about the value of computers. In response to composition instructors who were concerned that they did not have the skill and expertise to integrate multimodal texts in their courses, Takayoshi and Selfe recommend that the professors “start slowly and small” and “seek their own level of comfort in digital communications environments” (10), which is also good advice for BW professors integrating computers and digital technology into their courses. Until the academy’s dedication to technological professional development for their professors in U.S. two-year and four-year colleges catches up with society’s and the academy’s growing dependence on digital technology, professors will have to depend on what little digital

skills they have to help their students achieve technological and digital literacy, which is unfair to the instructors. We must keep in mind that influential organizations, such as WPA, stress that instructors need digital literacy that they can pass on to their students. Research (TYCA; Stine, “The Best”) suggests that instructors are not receiving enough digital technology training. More research should be conducted to determine specifically the kind and amount of professional development that BW professors need. Those who design training opportunities for instructors should provide them with ongoing digital technology professional development, compensation for taking part in that professional development, sufficient time to pursue that professional development, and sufficient time and guidance to implement those new digital technology skills once they have been acquired.

The majority of the BW students and both BW professors in my study agreed that students’ computer training should take place within the same semester as the students’ English class—all of which complicates BW programs that do not provide such training because those programs are not meeting students’ or instructors’ needs. While the students and professors in my study did not agree that computer and digital technology training should occur within the English class, both students and professors agreed that students should receive that training as they complete their English class. My results suggest that even if technology training does not occur within the BW classroom at the site a technology course should at least be a co-requisite.

My results indicated that some students and professors were concerned about the fate of students who lacked computer skills in a course that required computer use,

which complicates BW courses that plan to include digital literacy development.

Jonaitis says that in her study on community college students' use of computers that a lack of expertise was high among the students' concerns. The *majority* of the students in my study could not find any significant problems with using computers in an English class. In fact, one of the participants wrote the following: "I don't believe it [a computer] will make [English] class harder. It would only help." I concluded that because the majority of the students found little difficulty associated with using computers in their English classes that BW students should have structured access to computers. Also, we cannot ignore the students who may lack strong computer skills. I posit that a BW course at the site that provides some in class computer skills training with the word literacy provided in BW will give students who lack minimal digital literacy the nurturing environment that they need to become comfortable with using digital technology, while encouraging them to acquire the skills that influential academic organizations (NCTE; WPA) say that they need.

Buckingham's research is an ideal lens for examining digital technology in the BW curriculum at the site and beyond. Buckingham argues that educators must acknowledge students' digital experiences, help students to understand them, and address the convergence of media in the classroom (74). Buckingham's definition for "media" is closely related to my definition for digital technology, which focuses on computer-based communications technologies. When reviewed through the lens of Buckingham's theories, my results indicate that the participants are being greatly impacted by the ubiquitousness of digital technology inside and outside of the academy and the importance of technological literacy within twenty-first century

society; therefore, digital literacy development should take place as often as possible and as much possible including in BW classes.

Recommended Literacies for BW Students at the Research Site

I created a list of digital literacies for the BW students at the site by drawing from several sources. First, drawing from Selfe's (*Technology* 147) research, I focus on the digital literacy that BW students need in their local environment. Next, drawing from Microsoft's digital literacy curriculum, I address the digital literacies that all people may need with an emphasis on BW students at the site. Next, I draw from various studies I have mentioned in this dissertation to support the inclusion of certain digital skills training. Finally, I used my literature review of the socio-cultural implications of digital technology to address such issues within BW students' digital literacy requirements.

The site's Web portal, the activities within the students' classes other than BW, and BW students' off campus activities all encourage BW students to have particular digital literacies, but I focus on the digital literacies needed at school—using those literacies as a starting point—to describe the digital literacy BW students should have.

1. The student should be competent with the basic parts of a computer that are currently most popular, which include the hard drive, keyboard and mouse, and to read from a computer screen directly. Microsoft's digital literacy curriculum includes computer hardware. I would consider a student with physical impairments who is able to manipulate the basic parts of a computer with assistance from tools, such as a screen reader or audio device, to have the first level of required basic computer skills.

2. The student should be able to demonstrate skill when using basic computer components. For example, the student should understand how to turn on a computer and activate the basic components; how the mouse interfaces with the computer screen, such as how to highlight text, click on icons and links, and manipulate the words and images on the screen; and the student should be able to demonstrate familiarity with other basic functions that seem necessary at the college. The student should be familiar with connecting external components to the computer's hard drive, such as plugging in a mouse cable or keyboard cable. Again, Microsoft's digital literacy curriculum includes computer hardware.
3. The student should have knowledge of popular software programs used in the students' educational environment often, such as a word processing program, and have the skills necessary to complete basic functions within that program, such as opening and closing the program, opening a new document, typing within a document, printing the document, saving the document to the computer's hard drive or popular external media, such as a USB flash drive, and retrieving the saved document. Within many of their classes, BW students have the option of writing within word processing documents. Among the popular programs or applications, I include word processing programs and a Web browser because the primary, digital activity at the site includes manipulating documents and accessing online tools and information. Also, Microsoft's digital literacy curriculum includes knowledge of popular software.

4. The BW student should be aware of the Web, how to access the Web, how to perform a basic Web search, and how to communicate via the Web.

Much of the site's resources, such as class schedules, course registration tools, final grades, and the college catalogue and student handbook, are primarily accessible from the college's Web site—all of which encourages all students at the site to have Web skills. The site also depends heavily on email for communication throughout its community. Microsoft's digital literacy curriculum includes email and Web skills.
5. The BW student should be able to demonstrate some rhetorical dexterity within digital environments. For example, the student should know what kind of language is appropriate within their digital discourse communities and the kind of communication method that should be used for particular situations. Some instructors have bias against students who do not have rhetorical, digital skills (Stephens, Houser, and Cowan). And, Cheryl Smith recommends that instructors address their students' "rhetorical moves" in digital environments (57).
6. The BW students should have enough skill to competently transfer their digital knowledge to new and different digital technology and situations. In their 2008 position statement on twenty-first century literacies, NCTE suggests the need for a person to have flexibility and be able to acquire new literacies as necessary. At the site, students in basic studies courses are blocked from registering for many credit-bearing courses, but they are allowed to register for some credit-bearing courses, such as public speaking

and student orientation, where professors are expecting them to use digital technology, such as Blackboard and email to communicate with faculty, staff and students.

7. Finally, the student should begin questioning the effects of digital technology socially and culturally asking questions about information sources, the intent of those sources, and how he or she should interact with and utilize those sources. As Lanshear and Knobel explain, “the ‘enculturation’ that lead to becoming proficient in [digital texts and technologies] are *literacies*” (5-7). To become “digitally literate,” students need to understand the socio-cultural implications of the digital environment and become acculturated to that environment. For example, Sturgeon and Walker report that millions of people around the globe now have Facebook accounts and college professors have established social media pages to interact with students, but there are implications related to that social engagement. In their study, Stephens, Houser and Cowan report that “when instructors’ expectations are violated with an overly casual email message, they like the student less” and “students may violate teacher expectations with their [students’] poor knowledge of email protocol, thus reducing their [students’] credibility” (307). Stephens, Houser and Cowan’s research suggests that students will have to consider how to interact with various forms of digital technology depending on issues, such as medium and audience, so that they can establish necessary ethos in digital technology-based communications efforts. Despite the

potential pitfalls of digital technology, Madge, et al. report that more colleges are using social media to help students in a variety of ways, such as engaging with peers, locating college-related information, and adapting to their new college environment. In light of the new and growing uses for social media, students will have to learn what information is appropriate to share via social media inside and outside of the academic environment and what information is not appropriate to protect their privacy, to do no harm to themselves or others while speaking through cyberspace, interacting with various audiences, and establishing new relationships as they learn to maneuver between the academic environment and the larger society.

Again, WPA recommends that by the end of FYC, students should have a variety of digital skills. As I develop the requirements for digital literacy for BW students, I also believe that the components of my list should be kept flexible; assessed at least annually; and adjusted based on the particular school's programs, resources, and requirements. The BW students' digital literacy requirements should also be adjusted based on the digital competence, knowledge, and skills that the majority of the BW students say is being expected of them inside and outside of the academy. In other words, what it means to be considered digitally literate for BW students has to be flexible and fluid because digital technology is evolving rapidly forcing new demands on and expectations of the users.

HYBRID BASIC WRITING: THE RATIONALE

To address BW students' digital literacy needs at the site and schools similar to the site, I suggest a hybrid BW (HBW) course. An HBW is not a new concept; Stine

reports (“The Best”) creating an HBW course at her institution. However, my HBW would combine basic writing instruction and digital literacy training with a focus on rhetorical dexterity development. In contrast to a computer course, where computer skills are the focus, HBW would teach students digital literacy and word literacy simultaneously covering such issues as handbook rules related to writing, basic computer skills and familiarity, cyberspace communications methods, adapting rhetorical modes to print and online environments, and selecting the appropriate digital communication method for the communication situation. My HBW reflects the kinds of skills that the BW students at the site seem to need. In the HBW, students might spend equal amounts of time on basic writing-specific skills and digital literacy development, or some activities might focus more on basic writing-specific skills than digital literacy or focus more on digital literacy development than basic writing-specific activities, but the goal should be to address basic writing skills and digital literacy simultaneously. Hockey explains that computer instruction within the humanities should be approached from a particular perspective:

When used in teaching such as this, it seems to me vital that the software be as flexible as possible and that the approach of the teacher not be to make the data fit the software—something which happens all too often—but to make the software fit the data. And if it does not or cannot fit the data, it should not be used. (263)

Hockey’s comment reminds me that in the humanities, BW instructors help students learn to select the appropriate rhetorical mode to achieve a particular rhetorical purpose, such as using persuasive writing to persuade audiences. BW can go one step

further by teaching students to select the appropriate digital technology to support the rhetorical mode and communication activity when such choices are left to the writer. In my design for HBW, the student would learn more than just how to manipulate the digital technology; the student would be reminded about the communications aspect of their activities and how to shape those activities to fit the communications goals. In HBW, students could add digital texts and technologies to the genre portion of their rhetorical situation analysis, as they consider purpose, audience, and context, as well as address how the rhetorical situation shifts between print and online culture. As Cheryl Smith explains, digital instructions enables instructors to address the “unanticipated rhetorical moves that students make” enriching writing instruction (57). Along with covering rhetorical, digital communication, HBW will be beneficial for BW students and instructors for a number of reasons.

First, HBW at the site would enable the students to enjoy the benefits associated with writing within an environment that makes use of computers. In an HBW course, students could improve their digital literacy by using computers to complete most or all tasks. Students in my study indicated that they appreciated the speed and efficiency digital technology enabled when performing tasks in a digital environment. Using the computers for each class session would enable the students to enjoy the benefit associated with writing within electronic environments, such as editing a word processing document, saving writing at multiple stages of development to review progress, and housing documents in multiple locations for easy access, while building their familiarity with software. One of the professors in the TYCA study wrote the following: “The use of computers helps to take away some of the writing

issues students have as it gives them more confidence with the use of Spell Check and Grammar Check.” Despite the fact that scholars (Stine, “The Best” 50; Pavia) suggest that computers can create difficulties for BW students, I posit that allowing students to avoid or only sporadically use computers is not going to help those students develop the rhetorical electronic writing experience that they need to become familiar and comfortable with computers. The instructor and students should decide how much time the students should spend in the classroom and how much time should be spent outside of class depending on the students’ educational needs.

Second, an HBW course held within a lab or a classroom that can make use of computers would enable students to learn how to apply the rhetorical modes within a digital environment, which is instruction not available in the traditional computer courses at the college. For example, an HBW might include instruction on writing effective email, creating a blog, or designing a Web page—assignments that could also simultaneously include discussions about assessing the rhetorical situation when writing. In 2003 the DOL reported that over 55% of the work force used computers in their work environments. HBW students would receive the routine exposure to computers that may help them build the digital literacy that many of them will need to be successful in the academy and in today’s highly competitive work force where rhetorical communication is important. Learning to write rhetorically within digital environments will benefit the BW students at the site where digital technology is a big part of the college culture. Researchers (Stephens, Houser and Cowan 307) suggest that instructors may have negative feelings towards students who have poor digital, rhetorical skills. BW students at the site, which has made digital technology a

significant part of the culture, may have to consider how to interact with various forms of digital communications technology and consider issues, such as medium and audience, so that they can interact effectively via digital technology.

Third, an HBW might produce BW students who have the digital literacy. Students developing rhetorical, digital literacy could be taught to communicate via a variety of methods, such as email; produce documents that can be easily edited during classroom activities; store documents that can be easily accessed, such as via the school's network, the student's email, or the student's personal USB drive; and to communicate effectively within electronic environments depending on which skill-building activities are practiced in the course. In an HBW course, early in their academic studies, the students could begin building the digital literacy. The majority of the students in my study indicated that computers in an English class did not make learning to write too difficult, which suggests that the majority of the students may be ready for rhetorical, digital literacy development. If the HBW utilizes Blackboard often, the HBW students could also gain digital experience that may help them in the future when working within an asynchronous online course that uses Blackboard giving the students more options for instruction.

Fourth, BW instructors could share their digital technology skills—skills that WPA says writing instructors should have—with students to help students build their digital literacy. At the site, all instructors must have computer skills to access the Web portal; create, edit, save, and reopen digital documents; post basic information to Blackboard; hold email conversations with administrators, fellow faculty and students; and perform other digital technology-based activities—all of which are culturally

expected activities at the site and require digital literacies identical to those that I listed earlier for BW students. Instructors build their digital skills through the professional developmental opportunities, peer instruction, and trial and error. Because the HBW would only require the students to achieve basic digital literacy—skills that the instructors must also have to function within the college’s culture—HBW instructors need only pass their existing digital knowledge to students, which should make teaching digital skills doable for the instructors. As an instructor at the site, I have to use Microsoft Word repeatedly to create documents for administrators, peers, students, and my records, which means that I must have experience with word processing. The computer lab enables me to project my instructor-computer’s screen on a film screen or smart board for my students. As I create a digital document using Microsoft Word at my instructor computer, I use the digital document to type examples of sentences, paragraphs, and other texts so that I can explain writing rules and digital document creation to my students simultaneously. My students mimic my actions at their computers, which also enables the students to build word and digital literacy simultaneously. Takayoshi and Selfe recommended that the professors “start slowly and small” and “seek their own level of comfort in digital communications environments” (10). Instructors could teach their students digital skills by demonstrating their own digital skills. Some instructors might fear that forcing students to consider writing rules and software features simultaneously might be difficult. I posit that students will believe that they can learn to apply standard English rules to their writing while using the computer if they see their instructors applying standard English rules to their writing while using the computer; we can teach by

example. Also, many of the BW students at the site are already using digital technology, which suggests that those students have some digital literacy that their professors may just need to further refine.

Fifth, the site can make use of existing digital resources. At the site, the HBW could be assigned to an existing computer lab. If lab space is limited, an HBW course could share lab space with another course to make the best use of the limited lab space. For example, two courses that meet twice a week could share use of a computer lab within the same time slot: one course could agree to use the lab one day and the other course could agree to use the lab on the other day. The day that the lab is unavailable to the HBW students, the students could complete their assignments outside of class. I also recommend that the site provide all instructors with the time that they need to pursue digital technology professional development.

Sixth, the HBW would encourage students to develop the skills that they believe to be necessary possibly strengthening the students' dedication to the course. My survey results suggest that students value digital technology. For example, the majority of the students in my study agreed that computer training should occur within their English classes, computer training within the English class did not make the class too difficult, and the majority of the students owned a computer. Pavia found that although her BW students had some struggles with the computer, ultimately, the students enjoyed using the computer (11). I posit that if the students did not value computers or computer skills, they would not agree that such training should occur within their English class and they would not own a computer.

Seventh, an HBW course would enable the instructor to give feedback in a variety of ways and store that feedback for reference from any computer that has Internet access. I use Microsoft Word's comments feature to comment within the student's work and direct the student to the related rule in the handbook or other resources. I can type comments into my students' documents much faster than I can hand write them by using word processing features, such as copy and paste, to duplicate comments within the student's document or reuse common comments used in other students' documents. My electronic, typed comments can be stored within the CMS, which enables the students and me to refer back to those comments as often as necessary from any location that has Web access. Through electronic documents, I can also show students some of my editing techniques, such as storing multiple drafts of my dissertation chapters so that I can quickly copy and paste information between drafts or make editing changes that I can track using Microsoft Word's track changes or other editing systems that I design according to the editing activities. Many of the students in my study indicated having experiences with Microsoft Office software. Students familiar with Microsoft Word can also use Microsoft Word's comments feature to comment on my comments or on their own writing to enable digital discussions between the students and me. Digital document editing and sharing also allows for group work and peer review among students without students being forced to pay extensive printing costs for several printed copies of their work. And, students would not have to manage and transport several copies of their work or classmates' printed work along with textbooks, laptops and other equipment students often bring to school. BW students with digital literacy can post and access drafts of their work

and classmates' work and communicate among themselves from outside of class via the CMS or email to give each other feedback and support or participate in online conversations—asynchronously or synchronously. Many of the BW students in my study owned fairly new computers and used their computers regularly for a variety of communications-related activities, such as social networking. Jenkins found that social media can provide users with an environment where they can interact across distances or time zones—activities that BW students who have digital literacy could perform with other BW students across their writing class, the college and the academy. In addition, some publishers provide online versions of their textbooks, drill exercises, writing activities, and other online tutorials that support the professor's efforts and give the students opportunities to focus on their individual writing issues. Students need digital technology skills to access and use many digital instructional tools.

Eighth, an HBW course would enable students to enjoy the flexibility of a hybrid course as well as the security of the classroom. In hybrid courses, students spend less time on campus in the classroom than their peers by completing a significant amount of assignments outside of class. For example, my HBW course requires students to meet for an hour and 15 minutes each week in class and complete and submit at least another hour and 15 minutes' worth of work outside of class to be submitted via Blackboard outside of class or in class by the end of the next on campus class session—whichever the student prefers—in case the student has questions about the work. Also, while no one has determined that traditional, on campus writing courses always produce superior writers, it stands to reason that BW students cannot improve their writing if they are constantly prevented from participating in instruction

because their personal obligations prevent them from attending class. The site's demographic data indicates that some BW students might fit the U.S. Department of Education's definition for "nontraditional" students who might be part-time students, full-time workers while attending college classes, and caregivers for dependents other than spouses (viii)—all potential distractions from the nontraditional students' educational pursuits (37). Researchers report that some BW students have fairly complex roles outside of class (Rose, *Lives*; Stine, "The Best" 51) — roles that I posit could become obstacles that may prevent the students from participating regularly in traditional, on campus courses. In addition, students who do not have sufficient access to computers outside of class, or who need computer support, could benefit from spending time in an on-campus computer lab with an instructor so that they can learn new digital technology skills in person. Stine found that hybrid courses enable students the best of both pedagogical words: direct instruction within in a classroom and the flexibility associated with working online, outside of class ("The Best" 59). Students in my study who were concerned that digital technology might make English class more difficult if the student lacked digital skills would have the face-to-face digital technology instruction that they may need during the in-class sessions. The HBW enables students to benefit from both on campus instruction and not being required to report to campus at times that may be inconvenient for the student.

Ninth, research indicates that computers are significant within the twenty-first century, which means that students need to hone computer skills early. Thirty-eight of the 57 students surveyed used computers outside of their English classes to complete school-related assignments, which suggests that the majority of the BW students at the

site were being required to use computers to be successful. Smith and Caruso found that computer technology was a significant part of students' activities in two-year and four-year colleges. A significant amount of the site's resources are only available via the college's Web portal, which means BW students must have some digital literacy as soon as they enter the college to access materials. An HBW would enable BW students to build digital early skills.

Tenth, an HBW would enable the students to develop and demonstrate their digital literacy and may give them an opportunity to build an additional set of skills to help them transition into the college's discourse community. The most unique feature of the HBW—as opposed to a BW course that does not have a digital-technology focus—is that an HBW would enable students to address the rhetorical dexterity needed to create digital texts. In an HBW, the students could develop their rhetorical, digital literacies along with other writing skills to prepare them for FYC and other digital communications-related situations. Lunsford found that BW students had cognitive difficulties that made it difficult for them to replicate their learning in new situations (“Cognitive” 38), which could mean that the students would have difficulty adapting to a new discourse community without proper training. However, Rose found that his BW students did not have inherent problems that made it impossible for the students to learn new things (*Lives* 172). Lunsford's research (“Cognitive” 38) suggests that BW students need practice in all skills that may be needed in the FYC to help those students transition to the FYC. Rose's research (*Lives* 172) suggests that the BW students can learn anything that we try to teach to them. Because scholars cannot say definitively that BW students cannot learn certain techniques, the students should

be given more opportunities to develop a variety of literacies; we simply do not know what our students can do unless we teach them, guide them and let them use their skills. For example, my research indicates that many of my BW students already have some digital literacy that they may have acquired outside of the academy.

An HBW is not the only option for BW students who need digital literacy development, but it does seem like a viable option for the site. If an HBW is not made available at the site, BW students could be encouraged to complete the mandatory computer skills courses in the same semester as their BW course, but that would create additional requirements for BW students that other students do not have. BW and computer skills faculty could work together to design course assignments and team-teach, but there may not be enough computer science or BW instructors available to develop a BW team-teaching program. Also, the instructors who teach digital technology could be given training in rhetoric and writing, but the site's budget may not allow for such training and the computer science instructors may not have time for such training. However, BW instructors already teach rhetorical writing and have computer skills; it seems reasonable that an HBW is the right answer for the site. As I mentioned, it is unclear at this time how the Virginia Community College System's Development Education Task Force's recommendations will change developmental English at the site. But, my study indicates that digital literacy should be a component of the site's basic, or developmental, writing instruction.

CHAPTER 9

COMPONENTS OF A HYBRID BASIC WRITING COURSE

In the previous chapter, I suggested that a hybrid basic writing (HBW) course might be beneficial at the site because HBW has the potential to provide those students with the digital literacy instruction their environment demands. This chapter provides an overview of my proposed HBW course.

My proposed HBW is based on a variety of resources. To design my HBW, I first used Selfe's recommendations (*Technology* 147) that we build technological literacy based on the demands of our local environment. I defined basic digital literacy for the BW students at the site based on the digital skills, competencies, and knowledge that the site's BW students need to be successful at the site. My proposed list of BW digital literacies also reflects Microsoft's digital literacy curriculum and literacy suggestions from WPA and NCTE. My HBW also includes Carter's rhetorical dexterity research to help BW students develop digital, rhetorical dexterity. Also, my HBW course design draws from applicable research discussed in my literature review. Finally, my proposed HBW is shaped by my teaching philosophy.

WHICH INSTITUTIONS SHOULD ATTEMPT HYBRID BASIC WRITING?

My proposed HBW does not fit all institutions. The HBW course is for institutions dedicated to helping students build digital literacy. But, there is no one HBW course design that can fit the needs of all institutions that want to help students build digital literacy. Because institutions' educational programs have diverse groups of students (Shaughnessy, *Errors*; Rose, *Lives*) and the institutions' digital resources

vary, some institutions may choose to have a BW program that has both BW courses that have little to no digital technology involved as well as HBW courses. Educators who wish to include digital literacy instruction within their BW courses could use my proposed HBW course to help them determine which elements of my course might work best to meet their students' needs within their institution's technology environment, budgets, policies, and processes.

HYBRID BASIC WRITING: MY PEDAGOGICAL TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

My teaching philosophy helped me shape my proposed HBW. I believe that an English instructor's goal should be to help students develop literacies that enable students to locate, participate in, and lead critical discourse communities. Specifically, because of the digital demands of modern society, I think that BW classes should introduce students to digital research and rhetorical, digital composing and communication so that students have an advantage in digital discourse communities. My teaching philosophy consists of six major parts: helping students develop digital literacies; encouraging students to examine, participate in and lead critical discourse communities; creating an educational environment that addresses multiple learning styles; enabling students to have flexible access to education; helping students develop their critical thinking skills; and continuing my professional development and research.

Writing instructors should help students develop literacy in a variety of communications environments. Twenty-first century digital, multimedia technologies are expanding the definition for literacy (Jenkins; Selfe, *Technology*; Smith and Caruso) and requiring people to have rhetorical dexterity in digital environments. To

participate in today's digital discourse communities, students may need multiple literacies (Cope and Kalantzis 5) to communicate across a variety of devices, such as computers, text-messaging devices, and video production technology; through use of a variety of modes, such as words, images and sound; and through use of a variety of media, such as research papers, the Web and video. Students must demonstrate rhetorical dexterity in their communications efforts (Carter 19), which means thinking critically about texts by examining the texts' rhetorical situations and determining what methods and modes are appropriate for that situation. To communicate using the various options available today, students need instruction that helps them build strong, traditional reading and writing skills (Kress), but students also need instruction that prepares them to communicate effectively using various methods and rhetorical modes (Takayoshi and Selfe), including digital technology.

I believe in taking a cultural studies approach to teaching writing in all college English courses. My cultural studies approach to writing encourages students to investigate, critique and participate in today's non-digital and digital culture, but I pay particular attention to digital discourse because those environments are becoming increasingly influential in the twenty-first century. BW students do not come to class empty of knowledge; instead, students come to our classes with some existing skills and knowledge (Rose, *Lives*) and their own culture—both non-digital and digital. Through my cultural studies approach to writing, I encourage students to analyze their culture to draw from their existing knowledge of their culture as they build new knowledge, skills and rhetorical dexterity. Before students can make quality contributions to the academy and critical discourse communities, they need

opportunities to examine and think critically about their communications environment (Carter) and build their literacies (Cope and Kalantzis) to address those environments.

I believe that education should address students' multiple learning styles. Not all students learn or absorb information the same way. Students in my study seemed to enjoy the variety of ways instructors could use digital technology to facilitate instruction. I think that instruction should address students' learning styles through use of learning styles assessments, such as the VARK learning styles assessment program. VARK also provides suggestions for ways to address multiple learning styles preferences, such as visual, auditory, read/write and kinesthetic preferences (Flemming). Utilizing digital technology's versatility, I teach in ways that address a variety of learning styles, such as visuals in the form of images, auditory guidance in the form of video or recorded lectures and discussions, kinesthetic activities that enable practice, and a variety of electronic reading and writing opportunities to facilitate critical thinking and introspection. Addressing students' learning style preferences creates a learning environment that is likely to help all students be successful.

I believe that educational institutions should provide courses in a variety of formats to make education accessible. Not all students have the luxury of dedicating all of their time to their education. Today's non-traditional college students have responsibilities that create educational obstacles (Computer and Internet). Rose explains that some BW students have writing difficulties in the classroom, but they manage complex responsibilities outside of the classroom (*Lives*). Therefore, I think that the best courses, such as hybrid courses, are those that include equal opportunities

for traditional, in-class instruction and interaction with professors when students need direct support as well as independent study opportunities outside of class to enable students to pursue their education and manage personal obligations. Students' academic potential and contributions to the academy should not be limited by their personal responsibilities.

Finally, to achieve personal fulfillment, my skills and knowledge must continue to grow and evolve. I plan to continue my digital technology research and draw from it as I design my students' course work; my digital pedagogy will evolve to meet my students' needs. I also plan to continue to update my digital literacy so that I can be familiar with emerging communications technologies and pass that knowledge on to my students. I also want to continue to draw from my peers' research so that I can take advantage of knowledge sharing opportunities and learn more about what the culture inside and outside the academy values. I also plan to contribute to the academy's research with my original research shared through conference presentations, journal articles, books, and other dissemination methods. I believe in leading my students by setting a good example and that good example is the pursuit of life-long learning so that I can make regular, positive contributions to the classroom, the academy and society.

HYBRID BASIC WRITING: INSTRUCTIONAL COURSE GOALS

The primary instructional goal for the HBW course is to enhance students' rhetorical dexterity and use of standard English to facilitate effective communications efforts in digital environments. However, the HBW course is flexible so that

instructors may use my proposed HBW course as a pedagogical starting point for designing their own HBW.

HYBRID BASIC WRITING: COURSE ORGANIZATION

My proposed HBW is based on my study's literature review, results and conclusions as well as my HBW teaching experience. I organized the HBW course with input from the Quality Matters standards (QM)¹⁸ so that my course design would be thorough, objective, and based on peer research as well. I recommend that anyone attempting to develop the HBW obtain QM training or training—formal or informal—in a similar course design method created to assure quality within courses that have a strong digital component so that the unique qualities of the digital environment can be effectively addressed. Because the HBW does encourage the use of digital technology, I also recommend that any instructors attempting to organize an HBW determine what digital technology resources are available at their college, assess their ability to use the digital technology, seek professional development when appropriate, and encourage their college to provide digital technology support to instructors. For example, at the site there are a variety of digital professional development options available to instructors. Also, the instructor should advocate within his or her college for robust digital technology support. No one instructor can know all there is to know about digital technology and, therefore, may need technical support when the technology does not perform as expected or he or she has questions. Teaching an HBW course

¹⁸ As discussed at the QM Web site, QM “is a faculty-centered, peer review process that is designed to certify the quality of online and blended courses.” Specifically, QM is a group of standards designed by educators from K-12 and higher education to create high quality online courses that are based on best practices, national standards, and current research.

does not require an instructor to be a digital technology expert, but the digital environment may require some instructors to build their digital literacies. I think that we should not ask our students to be learners and to take aggressive steps to improve their literacies while we resist expanding our own literacies. Our digital skills should evolve to support our students' digital literacy, educational needs (WPA).

QUALITY MATTERS GUIDES THE HYBRID BASIC WRITING COURSE

The QM program was designed to guide the organization of educational programs that utilize digital environments. As discussed at the QM Web site, the QM underlying principles are “continuous,” which means online courses designed through QM should be reviewed and improved regularly; “centered” on “research,” “student learning,” and a “quality goal at the 85% level or better;” “collegial” or “part of a faculty-driven, peer review process;” and collaborative or based on experiences and input from multiple sources. I first chose QM as a guide for my proposed HBW course because the site requests that their instructors teaching online courses study QM. I participated in an online, VCCS-funded QM training course in fall 2010 and applied the QM techniques to my spring 2011 online FYC course design and instruction. I considered my online QM-organized FYC course to be successful because its retention level was comparable to my on campus FYC courses, and online students' questions focused on course assignments—where I think that their attention should be focused—rather than course design-related issues, such as locating resources or understanding assignment requirements. In other words, I think that because I used QM to guide the design of my online course, my online course functioned effectively and efficiently; students' questions were few and far between as they produced quality work. I also

think that QM provides an excellent framework for a hybrid course because it enables instructors to consider thoroughly the various components for their course—particularly digital components for the course. When using QM, instructors can feel confident that their course's contents and design is based on peer-reviewed research, which is the next reason why I chose QM as a framework for my proposed HBW course. According to QM's organizers, a variety of organizations are using QM to improve their online and hybrid courses and instruction. On their Web site, QM's organizers report the following:

Community colleges, technical colleges, liberal-arts colleges, universities, non-traditional online institutions, and boards of higher education across the country are subscribing to the Quality Matters Program to supplement their quality assurance efforts and improve the quality and effectiveness of their distance learning programs.

Developed by educators from across the country, the QM has eight standards used to evaluate an online or hybrid courses. The QM eight broad standards include the following:

1. Course Overview and Introduction
2. Learning Objectives
3. Assessment and Measurement
4. Resources and Materials
5. Learner Engagement
6. Course Technology

7. Learner Support

8. Accessibility

I used the eight standards to help me consider the necessary components for my proposed HBW course. The HBW does not redesign or add anything new to the QM standards, but instead uses the QM standards as a baseline for the course's organization. Organized using the QM standards' eight titles, below is a summary of each of the QM standards along with my discussion about how the HBW course should comply with the standards and examples for how to make the HBW course comply with those standards. My recommendations for how to use the QM in the organization of the HBW course are only the minimal requirements; therefore, instructors may develop more rigorous requirements based on QM or combine QM with other standards. There are also overlaps of information and repetition of some points because some HBW course components relate to more than one of the eight standards.

HBW Course Overview and Introduction

QM suggests that instructors provide instructions for getting started in the course, how to locate resources, conduct introductions among the students and between the instructor and the student, and an explanation of the requirements regarding behavior and competencies. Because the standards do not dictate the contents of the overview and introduction information, I have not made such requirements either. However, I do recommend that the course overview and introduction information be disseminated at the start of the course to acclimate students to the course. QM also says that the course should provide instructions for

how students can reach the instructor, the instructor's preferred communications methods, a list of digital technology resources and technology support instructions, and instructions for how and when to use the digital technology. The administration at the site requires the professors to at least post their contact information and syllabus to the CMS, or Blackboard, by the first day for all classes; the syllabus also contains other information about the course, such as course descriptions and grading policies, as well as quotations from certain college rules as directed by the college. My syllabus provides contact information and a description of the course, the instructor's expectations of the students' participation and behavior in class and online, a general description of the kinds of assignments and grading methods, a list of course materials, and the required quotations from certain college rules. Within the course description, I also explain how digital literacy and word literacy will occur simultaneously. For example, my HBW course description will explain that students will use the computer to facilitate a variety of activities, such as improving their computer skills and building digital literacy, conducting their writing activities, completing writing-related skills drills, and submitting and receiving work via Blackboard. My course description will also explain that the students will learn how to assess the rhetorical situation across genres to communicate through various digital genres, such as word processing-based documents, blogs, discussion boards or email messages, depending on which technologies the students and I think necessary to utilize in the course. The course overview should mention the course focus on digital, rhetorical dexterity and explain that that means addressing the rhetorical situation related to digital texts and technology and making rhetorical choices about modes and methods during

communications efforts. When disseminating course overview information to students, instructors should use a method that is best for the instructors and the students. The information dissemination method could range from creating a series of word processing documents to creating digital presentations or videos depending on the instructors' digital literacy and available resources. There are useful resources free of charge and copyright restrictions available on the Web to use for the course overview and introduction.

I also have suggestions for the students' course competencies based on my experiences teaching an HBW course or BW course that strongly integrates computer technology. Most importantly, the students should have the aptitude to earn a score on the college's placement exam that places the student in BW. To enable the instructor to prepare the proper tools for the course and the student to grasp the course topics, perform the course-related tasks, and interact with the instructor and other students, the student should also have at least the following:

- Aptitude necessary to learn to apply the rules for standard English in non-spoken communication,
- Ability to understand and communicate using conversational English, and
- Capability to complete a learning styles assessment successfully.

I also think that a student will find the course much more enjoyable if he or she has an interest in digital technology. However, a lack of interest in a topic rarely releases students from those related course requirements in any course. Not every student relegated to a BW class is enthusiastic about or wants to improve his or her writing; some students are in BW because the college representatives told them that they

needed the instruction to be successful in the future. Educators' research and knowledge and the institution's requirements should help determine what is important and necessary in any course.

The basic student requirements are purposely general to make them flexible enough to fit the needs of a variety of institutions. At the site, as of fall 2011, there are two levels of basic or developmental writing: English 01, the lowest level, and English 03, which is the final step before FYC. The broad student requirements for an HBW course will enable both the lower and upper level developmental writing students to work within a hybrid environment.

HBW Student Learning Objectives

The QM standards require the course objectives to be measurable and stated clearly so that students can understand them and that assignment objectives be related to the course objectives. HBW students' primary learning objectives should be to write with minimal writing errors while working to increase their rhetorical dexterity in a digital environment, but the instructor can choose to edit or expand those learning objectives if they do not meet that institution's course requirements. The HBW course objectives recommend that the student be taught the most important skills within the first half of the course. The most important skills to be taught during the first half of the course include—but are not limited to—being able to do the following:

- apply rules from a standard English handbook to write complete sentences and paragraphs and identify and correct errors with minimal mistakes¹⁹;

¹⁹ There has been much debate within English studies about how students should learn about and practice writing (Lauer 128-129). Some instructors believe the students

- use a computer and the college's most popular word processing software to create, edit, save and reopen a digital document using a Windows- or MAC-based operating system;
- identify and use a computer's components, such as a monitor, keyboard, mouse, and printer—as necessary to use the college's computer equipment—and use the college's preferred digital storage devices and methods to manage tasks necessary for the course;
- connect the college's computers' external components, such as connecting the mouse, keyboard, and printer cables to the computer, as necessary for the college's computer systems;
- complete most writing tasks without computer technical assistance by performing trouble-shooting and determining solutions when the computer is not functioning as expected;
- perform basic tasks in the CMS if a CMS is used for the course;
- access and utilize Web-based materials, such as those available through the CMS and college Web site or portal, and perform a basic Web search for information related to the course;

should begin the course by reviewing the handbook rules before attempting any writing and some instructors believe that students should begin writing paragraphs and/or essays immediately and review the handbook as they correct the errors in their writing. There is also much debate about how errors in BW students' work should be addressed (Horner, "Discoursing;" Shaughnessy, "Diving;" Shaughnessy, *Errors*). I use the teaching method that suits the student group's interests and needs, helps individual students meet the group's standard as necessary, and meets the VCCS requirements. An HBW course can be adjusted to successfully utilize a variety of teaching methods—not just the one described in this document.

- locate and access the various digital communications methods available to students within their college; and
- communicate with the instructor and classmates using computer-based methods, such as a CMS and the college's other popular digital communications methods, such as email or social networking resources.

At the very least, the student should be taught how to do the following within the second half of the course:

- use rhetorical dexterity to select and use appropriate modes and methods within their non-digital and digital discourse communities;
- transfer techniques learned in the course to new and different non-digital and digital situations; and
- identify and create the basic parts of popular communications genres within the college environment, such an academic essay, a business letter, or formal or informal email message, and understand how the parts of a particular genre relate to and support each other.

Instructors are not required to divide the course in half with rigid lines of demarcation between a first and second half for the course, but I have found that building basic skills that can be further developed later often makes integration of word and digital literacy development an organized endeavor.

As suggested by researchers (Lanshear and Knobel 5-7), the students should also begin questioning the socio-cultural implications of digital technology. I posit that students could begin to address the socio-cultural implications of digital texts by

reviewing them, reviewing literature written about those texts, and by being asked and asking questions about the intent of those texts and how he or she should interact with and utilize them. Discussions about the socio-cultural implications of digital texts might be the steps necessary to prepare students to transfer what they have learned in HBW to other courses and beyond the academy.

HBW Course Assessment and Measurement

Overall, QM requires the assessment tools measure how students meet the course's learning objectives and measurement methods should be consistent with the course activities. Also, the grading policies and methods should be stated clearly for the students and students should have adequate time to practice skills. To meet the course assessment and measurement requirements, HBW instructors should explain early the kinds of assignments students should expect and how the assignments will be graded, such as with a rubric or by the CMS. For example, Blackboard enables instructors to create multiple-choice, true/false, multiple answer and other kinds of tests and record feedback.

The QM standards do not require the use of a rubric, but I determined that a rubric would be an acceptable method for grading many of the HBW students' activities. As I reviewed Carnegie Mellon University's (CMU) definition for a rubric, I determined that a rubric would be a grading tool that adheres to the QM Standards. CMU describes a rubric as follows:

A rubric is a scoring tool that explicitly represents the performance expectations for an assignment or piece of work. A rubric divides the assigned work into component parts and provides clear descriptions of the

characteristics of the work associated with each component, at varying levels of mastery. Rubrics can be used for a wide array of assignments: papers, projects, oral presentations, artistic performances, group projects, etc. Rubrics can be used as scoring or grading guides, to provide formative feedback to support and guide ongoing learning efforts, or both. (Grading and Performance Rubrics)

A grading rubric—as defined by CMU—includes the assessment methods required by the QM standards. The QM standards require the assessment method to “measure the stated learning objects and [be] consistent with course activities and resources,” which addresses CMU’s grading rubric’s explicitness requirement. The QM standard also requires the assessment method be easy for the students to understand, which addresses CMU’s recommendation that rubrics demonstrate clarity. The QM standard also requires the assessment method be “appropriate to the content being assessed,” which addresses CMU’s recommendation that rubrics provide descriptions related to the assignment. And, the QM standard also requires the assessment method allow for “timely feedback,” which addresses CMU’s recommendation that rubrics provide supportive, ongoing feedback. CMU also explains that a rubric is appropriate for assessing writing-related activities.

The instructor should also select textbooks and resources that align with the course objectives and create assignments based on those textbooks’ content so that instructions and assignments remain consistent with the course objectives. For an HBW, instructors should select a textbook that utilizes digital technology and focuses on developing rhetorical dexterity to help the students understand the connections

among the various topics in the course. Because the goal of the HBW is to integrate word and digital literacy, the assignment instructions should include digital literacy-related activities, such as word processing document formatting, building a blog or Web page, participating in a discussion board or social networking, and digital work submission requirements—all of which can be assessed with a rubric. I recommend sharing that rubric with the students within the assignments' instructions. Students can use the rubric to help them determine the expectations they must meet to satisfy the assignment requirements—using the rubric as a check-list as they complete the assignment—and to understand how their work will be assessed.

HBW Resources and Materials

QM standards require course resources and materials are sufficient for helping the students meet the learning objectives; that the relationship between the materials, resources and the learning objectives be clearly stated; and that all quoted material be properly cited. My results indicate that the majority of my participants saw value in computers as an instructional tool. Because computer- and Internet-based courses allow for the use of multimodal teaching tools, the HBW course could use digital resources, such as digital slide show presentations, videos, still images, printed text, and other multimedia posted to the CMS to facilitate instruction. Students in my study indicated an appreciation for multimodal teaching tools. Using multimodal teaching tools will also enable the instructor to address students' various learning styles. The course will also require the students to review resources that integrate handbook rules related to writing with a computer (monitor, keyboard, and mouse) throughout its instructions and assignments so that the connection between rhetorical writing and

digital technology can be made clear and solidified. A typical assignment will include a list of the required materials, such as software programs, Web sites, and the course textbook's pages; objectives for the assignment; a description of the activities necessary to complete the assignment; a due date/time; the grading rubric; and instructions for how to submit the assignment electronically.

HBW Learner Engagement

The QM standards require that there be effective methods for interaction between the instructor and students and among the students as necessary and the requirements for such communication should be clearly articulated. The standards also require the instructor to clearly state where and how the students can reach their instructor if the students need assistance. Blackboard at the site enables students to communicate with their instructor and fellow students via email, discussion boards, and live chat, which gives the students a variety of digital communications options and rhetorical experiences. The variety of digital communication methods available through a CMS will help to introduce students to digital environments. My study indicated that the majority of the students believed that a lack of communications-related computer skills, such as email, can cause people to miss valuable opportunities to interact with other people; therefore, it is also important to incorporate such training in the HBW course to meet the students' interests and perceived needs.

HBW Course Technology

The QM standards dictate that a course's instructional technology and resources sufficiently enable students to meet the course's learning objectives, be up-to-date, enable interaction, and are accessible, and there should be instructions for

using the technology. The in-class sessions should provide students with computer access within individual student work stations or areas. The classroom should also have an instructor computer with a projector that displays the instructor's computer screen for the student audience so that the instructor can explain the digital technology being used as he or she teaches skills and build students' confidence. For example, I have found that students who are skeptical about using the computer seem to become comfortable with digital writing and editing after watching me perform such activities. All of the computers should have the same version of word processing software, access to the Web, and the ability to save work externally, such as a CD-RW or USB drive, using those resources consistently across the classroom so that students can learn from repetitive examples. Many of the students and both the instructors in my study feared that digital technology would be a problem for students who lacked computer skills; therefore, using the software programs, the CMS and computers in the classroom will enable the students to ask questions and help students alleviate those fears through practice.

Although QM does not require the use of a CMS, I suggest that the HBW course be delivered primarily through a CMS, which will enable students to practice digital technology and writing skills, access digital resources and submit assignments electronically within a consistent, digital environment. Students should also spend a significant amount of time in class using the computer and CMS so that they can receive instruction and help from instructors face-to-face so that students will not be overwhelmed by working within an online environment outside of class. For example, my HBW students spend one of the course's two, one hour and 15 minutes sessions in

a class with me weekly. I provide the students with at least one hour and 15 minutes worth of instruction to be accessed through a combination of the textbook, Internet resources outside the CMS, and information posted to the CMS. Students use the CMS in class and outside of class to access instruction tools, communicate with other students and me, and complete and submit assignments. Through the CMS, instructors can post digital presentations, Web links, written instructions, presentations, and videos explaining technology-related activities, such as using the mouse or the Microsoft Word features used most often in the course, and information to answer students' most common questions from a variety of perspectives.

HBW Learner Support

The QM standards require the instructor to explain to the students where and how to obtain technical support. Much of the HBW course's technical support and related instructions should be posted to the course's Blackboard or CMS site along with writing assignments and other activities. To facilitate student engagement, and student-to-instructor interaction, students also should be allowed to discuss technical issues with their instructors during office hours, via email and other electronic communications methods and during the required class time to alleviate any fear or frustration the students may be experiencing with the technology or writing assignments. Instructors can also send Web links to trouble-shooting tools directly to individual students via email and post those same links to the CMS as needed to provide students with technical support. Assignments should also provide students with opportunities to provide feedback about the assignments. I once had a timid FYC student, who would never discuss issues with me in class, but she would write

eloquent, thoughtful emails to me while in class or from outside of class; I found those digital exchanges to be very informative. Students could send emails to the instructor or classmates or participate in a discussion board, live chat session, or class discussions to discuss writing and technology so that students can learn from and interact with their peers and the instructor to learn how to communicate effectively in an electronic environment. Stine explains that online BW students often speak more confidently in their digital environments, such as email and discussion boards, because they are not overwhelmed by face-to-face interaction, and students can create community and improve their literacies in an online environment (“The Best” 56-58). Before introducing a lesson, the instructor should decide how to respond to students’ writing and/or technology-related questions to reduce frustration. The instructor should use a method for addressing questions during in-class sessions that enables the students to complete most of the work at a comfortable pace while getting answers to questions. Research indicates that distractions from instructors trying to help students with digital technology problems can create problems in BW (Agostina and Varone qtd. in Pavia 5). Based on my experience teaching both word and digital literacy simultaneously, questions that the instructor should address as he or she prepares the lesson include—but are not limited to—the following:

- Will the instructor stop during class to address individual students’ questions or ask students to save all questions until the end of his or her instruction?
- Should the instructor ask students to work with their neighbors for assistance with writing and/or digital technology issues in the midst of lectures?

- Should the instructor ask the students to write an email to the instructor about questions that do not have to be answered in class?
- What combination of methods should the instructor use to address questions during in-class instruction and asynchronous, online activities?
- What other methods might the instructor use to provide students with support during class and outside of class?

The instructor should also set rules for the online environment, such as deciding whether or not standard English is a requirement on the discussion board, so that students learn what is expected of them in such environments. Often, determining how best to manage the classroom during an HBW assignment is determined through trial and error and based on the complexity of the assignment and students' and instructors' skills.

HBW Accessibility

The QM standards require the course to adhere to the rules within the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The HBW course should be ADA compliant by providing resources mentioned within the QM standards, such as content that is accessible for visual- and hearing-impaired students. As suggested by the standards, links within the course's Blackboard site or CMS should be "self-describing and meaningful" so that impaired students have a variety of options for obtaining an understanding of the course resources. To help my course be ADA compliant, I comply with the site's ADA-related policies by providing the ADA-related accommodations the students request by following the required procedures through the site's counseling office. I also include multimodal versions of materials to address

students' learning styles. A variety of tools are available on the Web to help instructors make their CMS, assignments, and processes ADA compliant.

HYBRID BASIC WRITING: SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS

I created sample HBW assignments. Each of the assignments provides learning objectives and guidelines that address resources, learner engagement, technology, and learner support. When it seems suitable, I discuss how the assignment could be made flexible to allow for student input so that students can help shape the assignments. I designed the HBW assignments to support my ongoing research efforts and to help the students address digital literacy and rhetorical dexterity.

My HBW assignments will enable me to continue to gather data from students. When I conducted my study, I asked the students about the digital technologies that they use, but I did not ask students directly about the digital literacies that they already possess. The assignment will give students an opportunity to discuss their digital experiences to assess aspects of their digital literacy, such as the rhetorical dexterity that they possess, the rhetorical dexterity that they think that they need to develop, and the importance of rhetorical dexterity with digital texts, to help me shape my HBW course. Two assignments that I think would gather the information that I want to know include a digital autobiography and a digital blog—both of which are described in this chapter.

HBW course assignments should provide students with an opportunity to build word and digital literacy with a focus on rhetorical dexterity development. Before attempting the assignments, as a class, the students should begin examining various digital texts, such as word processing documents, Web pages, social networking

pages, email messages, and text messages, to make certain that they have had exposure to such texts. Course instruction should introduce rhetorical situation analysis and discussions about how to address the rhetorical situation related to the digital texts and students' work so that students can learn what it means to manage the rhetorical nature of their digital texts. The instructor could also introduce discussions about rhetoric and research about the rhetoric of digital texts to prompt class discussion. Class discussion could also address how and when certain digital texts are most effective based on research and students' experiences with such texts as both producers and audiences. The discussions could occur during multiple class sessions and in relationship with other topics discussed in BW, such as handbook-related rules and tips, writing within rhetorical modes, and the benefits of multimodal composition. As they discuss issues related to digital texts, the students could work on basic assignments, such as a digital autobiography assignment and begin work on a digital blog. The two early assignments would also address other topics that I cover in the course, such as digital document formatting. I require my students to format their digital documents, such as paragraph and essay assignments, according to the Modern Language Association's (MLA) formatting rules because MLA is the formatting method stressed in many of the FYC courses at the site. The instructor could provide a basic description of the assignment that reflects topics covered in the course, but the students could help the instructor adjust the assignment as necessary; therefore, my course descriptions provide guidelines rather than requirements.

HYBRID BASIC WRITING ASSIGNMENT #1: DIGITAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I designed the HBW digital autobiography assignment (see Table 9-1) to adhere to requirements within the QM standards. To prepare for the assignment activity, the students should have covered any writing skills the instructor expects to see demonstrated in the assignment. To prepare to create an autobiography, the instructor should provide the students with examples of autobiographies and analyze that style of writing to help students understand the components of an autobiography. The instructor should also explain the rhetorical modes to be used in the autobiography. For example, for a digital autobiography, I explain and ask students to perform descriptive writing and tell them that it is acceptable to write in the first person point-of-view. The instructor should also discuss the various digital methods that could be used to create an autobiography and help students analyze the benefits or problems associated with each method, but for this assignment, I ask students to use a word processing program to practice with that technology specifically. I chose a word processing program because it is one of the digital technologies that is very popular at the site. In Table 9-1, I have provided the specific QM standards the assignments references.

Digital Autobiography Assignment as it Relates to Quality Matters	
Quality Matters Standard Requirement	Assignment Components
Learning Objective and Assignment Description ²⁰	<p>By the end of the assignment, the student should be able to describe his or her digital technology experiences through descriptive paragraphs and use of a word processing document. The student should write multiple paragraphs. Each of the paragraphs should focus on one of each of the following topics to create five separate paragraphs:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. digital technologies that they have used, 2. how they have used digital technologies, 3. how they learned to use digital technology, 4. audiences' responses to their digital texts, and 5. a reflection on their digital experiences. <p>The digital experiences can be those within the academy, outside the academy or both and limited to a certain time period. If the student has communicated using digital texts, such as email messages, social networking sites, text messages or other texts, the student should share the reasons why he or she chose to communicate using particular texts.</p> <p>If the students have not used digital technologies, the students would have to address a different kind of assignment that requires them to examine their lack of digital technology experience. The students should write a paragraph for each of the following five topics:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. the kinds of digital texts and technologies that they would like to learn to manage, or the kinds of digital texts and technologies that they are resisting and why they are resisting them; 2. how they would like to use digital technology; 3. the digital technology instruction method that they would prefer; 4. their thoughts about how their audiences would react to their digital texts; and 5. their reflections on their thoughts while considering digital technology and completing the assignment.

Table 9-1: The Components of a Sample Hybrid Basic Writing Assignment: Digital Autobiography.

²⁰ I included the assignment description with the learning objectives; an assignment description is mentioned with the QM standard's learning objectives requirement.

Assessment and Measurement	See the rubric.
Resources and Materials	The students should use their textbook and any online resources provided by the instructor to reference writing rules and notes from class about the components of autobiographies.
Learner Engagement	The students and the instructor could spend time in class discussing topics related to the assignment, such as writing rules, and the grading method. The instructor should also remind students about the ways that they can receive support from outside of class while working on their assignment.
Course Technology	The instructor could demonstrate digital technology-related aspects of the assignment, such as accessing the word processing software, creating a new document, formatting the document, and saving the document.
Learner Support	The student should be reminded about where to locate support while working on their activities outside of campus, and the instructor should provide examples and notes in class related to the assignment and online tools as necessary.

Table 9-1: Continued.

Digital Autobiography Grading Rubric

The digital autobiography rubric (see Table 9-2) shows students the criteria that will be used to assess their work and how parts of their work will be graded. The instructor should have class discussions to explain the rubric. For example, the students and the instructor should discuss what constitutes an error, and the instructor should provide examples of errors. Also, the rubric is designed to adhere to a 10-point scale. The BW program at the site considers 80% success in the course to be acceptable and passing. The instructor should explain how students can achieve a perfect score as well as the required 80%. For example, as shown in the rubric, the students do not have to produce a perfect assignment to obtain the required 80% score. Also, students can earn the necessary points by exhibiting strengths in certain

activities within the assignment, but they do not have to master every part of the activity to obtain a passing grade.

Digital Autobiography Assignment Grading Rubric							
Assessed Activity		Point Values					Total Points
		25	20	15	10	5	
Subject Matter	Did the student produce five paragraphs with each paragraph focusing on one of the required topics?	The student produced all five of the required paragraphs	The student produced at least four of the required paragraphs	The student produced at least three of the required paragraphs	The student produced at least two of the required paragraphs	The student produced at least one of the required paragraphs	
Handbook Rules	When reviewing all five paragraphs, does the student's work demonstrate knowledge of the handbook rules covered thus far?	None of the student's paragraphs show errors.	The student's combined paragraphs have one to five errors.	The student's combined paragraphs have six to 10 errors.	The student's combined paragraphs have 11 to 20 errors.	The student's combined paragraphs have more than 20 errors.	
Rhetorical Effectiveness	Each of the paragraphs describes the student's experiences with digital technology.	All of the student's paragraphs use descriptive language effectively	Four of the student's paragraphs use descriptive language effectively	Three of the student's paragraphs use descriptive language effectively	Two of the student's paragraphs use descriptive language effectively	At least one of the student's paragraphs use descriptive language effectively	
Use of Technology	Does the student's work meet the document formatting requirements?	The student's work does not have any errors.	The student's combined paragraphs have one to five errors.	The student's combined paragraphs have six to 10 errors.	The student's combined paragraphs have 11 to 20 errors.	The student's combined paragraphs have more than 20 errors.	
Total Score							

Table 9-2: Digital Autobiography Assignment Grading Rubric.

HYBRID BASIC WRITING ASSIGNMENT #2: DIGITAL DIARY

The digital diary assignment (see Table 9-3) can be a follow up assignment for the digital autobiography. The digital autobiography asked students to assess their past digital literacy experiences. The digital diary would require students to assess their ongoing digital technology experiences in an effort to keep them thinking about the rhetorical situations related to digital communication and to help the instructor gauge the students' learning. At the site, Blackboard has blog space, but the technology support staff often volunteer to hold in class training sessions to teach students how to create blogs using other blog services available on the Web as a part of the college's interest in information literacy.

Digital Diary Assignment as it Relates to Quality Matters	
Quality Matters Standard Requirement	Assignment Components
Learning Objective and Assignment Description	The student should be able to describe his or her ongoing digital technology experiences through use of a digital blog. Each of the students will maintain a blog in which he or she discusses digital experiences weekly. Some of the topics they could discuss include the digital texts that they create and the digital technologies that they use to create them, how and why they created the digital texts, and how they think the recipients of communications texts responded to their texts and why. The students could also discuss any new digital texts that they would like to learn to create, digital texts that they would like to improve upon, their opinions about new digital skills they have acquired inside or outside of class, any new digital technologies they would like to learn to use and why, and their thoughts about other digital issues that the class finds interesting.
Assessment and Measurement	Using the assignment instructions and discussions about digital rhetoric and composition, the students will help the instructor design a rubric to assess their work. The students will also conduct research to examine other blogs and discuss what they like about the blogs' design and content to help them make rhetorical decisions about their own blogs and to help the instructor determine how best to assess such elements.
Resources and Materials	The students should use their textbook and any online resources provided by the instructor to reference writing rules and notes from class about their discussions about the components of blogs.
Learning Engagement	The students and the instructor could spend time in class discussing topics related to the assignment, such as writing rules, and the grading method. The instructor should also remind students about the ways that they can receive support from outside of class while working on their assignment.
Course Technology	The instructor could demonstrate digital technology-related aspects of the assignment, such as building blogs.
Learner Support	The student should be reminded about where to locate support while working on their activities outside of campus, and the instructor should provide examples and notes in class related to the assignment and online tools as necessary.

Table 9-3: The Components of a Sample Hybrid Basic Writing Assignment: Digital Diary.

SAMPLE ASSIGNMENTS: ROOM FOR CHANGE

The sample assignments are just that—samples. I often adjust my assignments according to the resources that are available at the site and the students' interests each semester. Instructors could make adjustments to the assignments to meet their needs. For example, the digital autobiography could be built as a blog or posted to a discussion board so that the students could respond to each other's autobiographies and practice making rhetorical choices within their writing. The digital diary could be a series of word processing documents, a blog, a discussion board, a Web page, or delivered in some other format as determined by the students' rhetorical situation analysis, the course topics, the instructor's skills, and the technology and technological support available at the college. Each of the sample assignments could be expanded to include graphics and visual design elements, links to other online resource, and more. For example, for blog and Web page projects—when the design tools are available to us—I have required students to make rhetorical choices about the background colors of their blog or Web pages, add pictures to support the text, include links to information related to their Web page or blog topic, and made those requirements a part of the rubric either as required or extra credit. I also hold class discussions about the rhetoric of colors and pictures to help students make choices about their digital composition's design elements. And, students could build other digital technology-based projects that expand on the autobiography or blog, such as visual essays. The rubrics are also designed to be adjustable; no rubric is perfect or able to meet all needs. The instructor should allow their class discussions about digital technology,

assessment, and rhetorical modes and methods as well as the resources available to students to guide their adjustments to the assignments.

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

More research should be conducted among BW professors and students to determine to what extent digital literacy should be addressed within BW classes. One important element that the Virginia Community College System's Developmental Education Task Force's research, much like other studies about BW, is missing is the voices of those who will be impacted most by their proposed changes: BW students. Reflecting on Melkote's development support communications theory ("Reinventing" 40-41) reminds me that it is important that we allow the people most impacted by initiatives to participate in the shaping of those initiatives—something my study provides within its design. Few people like for decisions to be made about them without their input (Dillon and Foucault). Students do not have to believe in the effectiveness of their course for the student to be successful in the course. And, professors are not required to teach topics that the students agree should be taught within the course or find interesting. But, aligning the course's goals and objectives to the students' needs and interests may encourage the students to absorb what the instructor is trying to teach them, enable the student to be successful in the course, and prepare the students to apply the skills learned beyond that one course—all of which should be the goals of an educational system attempting to meet students' needs. My results indicate that BW students have some definite thoughts about the use of digital technology in their writing classes. Therefore, I agree with the conclusions that Pavia reached at the end of her study regarding BW students and computers:

We need to avoid making assumptions about our students' computer knowledge and about the effects of computers in our classrooms and instead make active inquiries into these issues. This requires us not only to research issues surrounding computer use in basic writing classrooms, but also to get to know our students better so we can see the attitudes and genealogies that they are bringing with them to the computer classroom. We also need to carefully consider our goals for our students' learning and make decisions regarding the use of technology in our classrooms based on these goals. (20)

As Pavia suggests, none of our decisions about BW course content should be made with only administrators' and instructors' input; we must also ask our students what they think and consider our students' experiences and contributions to the classroom.

In regards to digital literacy development, educators must acknowledge students' digital experiences and help students to understand them (Buckingham 74) to prepare students for society's growing digital literacy demands. My results indicate that BW students are using digital technology inside and outside of the academy in a variety of ways. Pavia's theory and Buckingham's theory relate to development support communications theory. Development support communications theory guides researchers to enable the recipients of the development initiatives to affect the initiatives (Melkote, "Reinventing" 40-41). The development support communications theory would support the inclusion of BW students' and BW professors' digital experiences and input in debates about the BW curriculum to empower the people directly impacted by the curriculum. Some of the definitive BW texts (Rose, *Lives*; Shaughnessy, *Errors*) share the voices of BW professors and researchers, but most

BW research fails to provide detailed transcripts of BW students' comments about BW programs—information that could have provided insight into what the students perceive their needs to be and the reasons for the success or failure of programs designed to help those students. We need to collect and consider students' thoughts about digital literacy in their classes and beyond their classes.

Also, despite the fact that I think an HBW course is an effective resolution for the complications that our society's growing dependence on digital technology is causing for the BW classroom, my study only examined a small group of BW professors and students in a local setting. What might be true and possible at the site may not be true and possible within all BW programs or at all institutions that must offer BW courses. We should conduct research at other institutions.

More research should be done to learn more about BW students' existing digital literacies and BW instructors' digital literacies. We should continue to compare how students use digital technology to how their professors use digital technology to determine how the similarities and differences in usage might impact the student-teacher dynamic in the BW classroom. Again, we should conduct studies at multiple institutions.

Finally, there should be an analysis of the academy's BW ideology and how related messages may be impacting BW students and academic leaders' perceptions of BW students. So long as there are BW students in higher education, people in charge of planning BW programs must consider all of the students' educational needs including those that may be a challenge to the academy's ideology. As Lalicker's assessment of BW programs (2-6) indicates, there are a number of approaches that we

can take to teaching BW—all of which can be effective. But, Cohen and Brawer's comments on the potential formats for remedial programs can be applied to BW curriculums as well:

Two options are *not* acceptable: allowing sizeable percentages of students to fail and reducing academic standards so that those who do get through have not been sufficiently well prepared to succeed in the workplace or in further education. (279)

We cannot be so afraid of BW students' potential limitations that we resist developing their potentially hidden talents or address their evolving educational needs.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: BASIC WRITING STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONS: SPRING

2009

The questions were deployed to students via the online survey tool—Survey Monkey—which enabled students to click on their responses to the questions.

I. Closed-ended Questions:

- 1) How often do you search for information on the Internet? (click one) daily, weekly, monthly, every few months, never.
- 2) Which of the following devices do you use **daily** either individually or as part of another device? (click all that apply) computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text messaging device, PDA, digital television
- 3) Which of the following devices make your life more enjoyable either alone or as a part of another device? (click all that apply) computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text messaging device, PDA, digital television
- 4) Which of the following devices make daily tasks easier either alone or as a part of another device? (Click all that apply) computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text messaging device, PDA, digital television
- 5) What tasks do you use a digital technology (computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text-messaging device, PDA, or digital television) to perform daily? (Click all that apply)
 - a. Listen to music
 - b. Watch films
 - c. Complete homework assignments
 - d. Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)
 - e. Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)
 - f. Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)
 - g. Play games
 - h. Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)
 - i. Read news and gather information
 - j. Perform job-related tasks
 - k. Shop
 - l. Pay bills
 - m. Organize your calendar and/or schedule

- 6) Which of the following activities do you enjoy using a digital technology (computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text messaging device, PDA, and/or digital television) to perform? (Click all that apply)
- a. Listen to music
 - b. Watch films
 - c. Complete homework assignments
 - d. Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)
 - e. Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)
 - f. Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)
 - g. Play games
 - h. Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)
 - i. Read news and gather information
 - j. Perform job-related tasks
 - k. Shop
 - l. Pay bills
 - m. Organize your calendar and/or schedule
- 7) Which of the following activities do you use digital technology (computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text messaging device, PDA, and/or digital television) to perform?
- a. Listen to music
 - b. Watch films
 - c. Complete homework assignments
 - d. Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)
 - e. Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)
 - f. Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)
 - g. Play games
 - h. Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)
 - i. Read news and gather information
 - j. Perform job-related tasks
 - k. Shop
 - l. Pay bills
 - m. Organize your calendar and/or schedule
- 8) Which of the following tasks would you use a digital device (computer, PDA, television, MP3 player, cell phone, etc.) to manage if you knew how to do it? (Click all that apply)
- a. Listen to music
 - b. Watch films
 - c. Complete homework assignments

- d. Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)
 - e. Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)
 - f. Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)
 - g. Play games
 - h. Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)
 - i. Read news and gather information
 - j. Perform job-related tasks
 - k. Shop
 - l. Pay bills
 - m. Organize your calendar and/or schedule
 - n. I already know how to do everything that is listed above; therefore, I don't need any instruction in those activities.
- 9) Which online, social activities do you (or would) use digital technology (computer, PDA, cell phone, etc.) to perform? (Select all that apply)
- a. Chatting or posting to chat sessions
 - b. Dating online
 - c. Maintaining Blogs
 - d. Maintaining a Facebook, My Space, or other kind of social networking page
 - e. Building a Web site
 - f. Uploading video (YouTube) for others to see
 - g. I don't want to know how to do any of the things listed above.
- 10) If you had the skills to use any method for communication, which method would you like to use to explain your thoughts to others? (Select all that apply)
- a. I like to use words to write about what I think and ask people to read my writing.
 - b. I like to speak to people in person about my ideas and have people listen to me.
 - c. I like to draw or create pictures (photography and/or art work) and share those drawings or pictures to help people understand what I think.
 - d. I like to make and share short films about my thoughts or experiences.
 - e. I like to record myself talking about my thoughts and ask others to listen to the recording when I am not around.
- 11) If you could use any method, what method would you use to communicate with your professors during the semester? (Select your top three choices only)
- a. Email
 - b. Text messaging
 - c. Phone calls
 - d. Speak in person (in or out of class or during office hours)

- e. Video conferencing (use a Web cam and computer to see, hear and talk)
 - f. Social networking (face book, My Space, etc.)
 - g. Blogs
 - h. Write letters and receive information through the U.S. mail or another mail service (UPS, FedEx, etc.)
- 12) Which kind of courses do (or would) make it easier for you to manage school and personal (family, friends and/or work) responsibilities? (Select all that apply)
- a. Traditional (classes that meet on campus weekly)
 - b. Hybrid (classes that meet partially on campus, but also allow a significant amount of work to be completed outside of class and through the computer)
 - c. Online or Distance Synchronous (classes that meet online at a specific time and allow students to see the professor and/or other students via Web cam)
 - d. Online or Distance Asynchronous (classes that do not require meeting online at a certain time and students may complete course work when most convenient for the student)
- 13) In which of the following kinds of courses do you (or would you) learn or perform best? (Select all that apply)
- a. Traditional (classes that meet on campus weekly)
 - b. Hybrid (classes that meet partially on campus, but also allow a significant amount of work to be completed outside of class and through the computer)
 - c. Online or Distance Synchronous (classes that meet online at a specific time and allow students to see the professor and/or other students via Web cam)
 - d. Online or Distance Asynchronous (classes that do not require meeting online at a certain time and students may complete course work when most convenient for the student)
- 14) How do you like to learn new information in your classes? (Select all that apply)
- a. I need to hear the professor explain new ideas and assignments.
 - b. I like to read about new information and instructions for activities and/or take notes.
 - c. I need pictures, charts, diagrams, and other visuals to help me understand how to do things.
 - d. After I learn something new in class, I have to go try that new thing immediately or I will forget what I've learned.
- 15) What kind of computer do you own? (Select all that apply)
- a. PC (HP, Dell, Gateway, Acer, etc.)

- b. Mac (Apple)
- c. I do not own a computer

16) If you own a computer, how old is your computer? (Select the response that best fits your newest computer.)

- a. Less than six months old
- b. Six months to one year old
- c. One to three years old
- d. Three to five years old
- e. More than five years old
- f. I do not own a computer.

- 1) Which of the following software programs or packages do you know how to use? (**Circle all that apply**) Adobe Acrobat, Adobe Pagemaker, Adobe Photoshop, Audacity, Blackboard, Camtasia, Dreamweaver, Filemaker Pro, Front Page, Gmail, iMovie, Lotus, Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Outlook, Power Point, Publisher, and Word 2007), Microsoft Producer, Microsoft Visio, Microsoft Works, Photo Deluxe, QuarkXpress, Snag It, Movie Maker, Word Perfect
- 2) Have your computer skills ever helped you get a job? Yes or No
- 3) Has a lack of computer skills ever prevented you from getting a job? Yes or No
- 4) Do you wish your college required you to complete a basic computing skills (turning on the computer, using common programs [Microsoft Office and Vista], and fixing common computer problems) course within your **first semester** of college?
- 5) Do you wish your college required you to complete a basic computing skills (turning on the computer, using common programs [Microsoft Office and Vista], and fixing common computer problems) course within your **first year** of college?
- 6) Agree or Disagree? People who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills.
- 7) Agree or Disagree? People who don't have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web.
- 8) Agree or Disagree? People who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact (email, text messaging, sharing information, talking through a cell phone, etc.) with other people.
- 9) Agree or Disagree? People with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills.

- 10) Agree or Disagree? People who have computer skills seem smarter than people who don't have computer skills.
 - 11) Agree or Disagree? If students must complete computer training, students should be taught how to use the computer in their English classes so that they can learn how to use the computer to write as they receive writing instruction.
 - 12) Agree or Disagree? Using a computer in a writing class makes learning to write too difficult.
 - 13) Agree or Disagree? If I must complete a computer class, I would rather receive computer instruction within the same semester as my first English class.
 - 14) Agree or Disagree? I think that I would understand ideas more if my professor used Web sites to teach me information instead of just using books.
 - 15) Agree or Disagree? I think that I would understand ideas more if my professor used films/television to teach me information instead of just using books.
- II. Open-ended Questions:** Write at least three or more sentences to respond to each of the following questions. You are not limited to the space provided. Make as many notes as you like.

1. What is good about using computers in an English class?

2. How might computers make English class more difficult?

3. What do you use computers to do in classes or school-related activities other than English class?

APPENDIX B: BASIC WRITING STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONS: FALL 2009

The questions were deployed to students via the online survey tool—Survey Monkey—which enabled students to click on their responses to the questions.

I. Closed-ended Questions:

- 1) How often do you search for information on the Internet? (click one) daily, weekly, monthly, every few months, never.
- 2) Which of the following tools do you wish your writing teacher would use to help you understand complex information? (Check all that apply) books, Web sites, films, television, pictures, graphics (charts and tables), lectures, hands-on activities (writing, using the computer, etc.), group work (working with classmates on activities), class discussions
- 3) Which of the following digital skills do you wish that you had? (check all that apply) If you already have any of the following skills, and you enjoy using them, select them as well. Conducting research on the Web, Interacting with interesting groups on the Web, Editing digital photographs, Editing digital films, Designing craft projects, Sending email, Sending text messages, Basic skills (saving and locating documents, downloading information from the Web, editing documents, etc.)
- 4) What tasks do you use a digital technology (computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text-messaging device, PDA, or digital television) to perform daily? (Click all that apply)
 - a. Listen to music
 - b. Watch films
 - c. Complete homework assignments
 - d. Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)
 - e. Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)
 - f. Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)
 - g. Play games
 - h. Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)
 - i. Read news and gather information
 - j. Perform job-related tasks
 - k. Shop
 - l. Pay bills
 - m. Organize your calendar and/or schedule

- 5) How often do you use digital technology (computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text messaging device, PDA, and/or digital television) to perform the following activities? Note: If you view television through satellite or cable service, you may consider those services to be digital television? (Click all that apply)
- Listen to music
 - Watch films
 - Complete homework assignments
 - Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)
 - Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)
 - Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)
 - Play games
 - Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)
 - Read news and gather information
 - Perform job-related tasks
 - Shop
 - Pay bills
 - Organize your calendar and/or schedule
- 6) If you had the skills to use any method for communication, which method would you like to use to explain your thoughts to others? (Select all that apply)
- I like to use words to write about what I think and ask people to read my writing.
 - I like to speak to people in person about my ideas and have people listen to me.
 - I like to draw or create pictures (photography and/or art work) and share those drawings or pictures to help people understand what I think.
 - I like to make and share short films about my thoughts or experiences.
 - I like to record myself talking about my thoughts and ask others to listen to the recording when I am not around.
- 7) Which kind of courses do (or would) make it easier for you to manage school and personal (family, friends and/or work) responsibilities? (Select all that apply)
- Traditional (classes that meet on campus weekly)
 - Hybrid (classes that meet partially on campus, but also allow a significant amount of work to be completed outside of class and through the computer)
 - Online or Distance Synchronous (classes that meet online at a specific time and allow students to see the professor and/or other students via Web cam)
 - Online or Distance Asynchronous (classes that do not require meeting online at a certain time and students may complete course work when most convenient for the student)

- 8) In which of the following kinds of courses do you (or would you) learn or perform best? (Select all that apply)
- a. Traditional (classes that meet on campus weekly)
 - b. Hybrid (classes that meet partially on campus, but also allow a significant amount of work to be completed outside of class and through the computer)
 - c. Online or Distance Synchronous (classes that meet online at a specific time and allow students to see the professor and/or other students via Web cam)
 - d. Online or Distance Asynchronous (classes that do not require meeting online at a certain time and students may complete course work when most convenient for the student)
- 9) How do you like to learn new information in your classes? (Select all that apply)
- a. I need to hear the professor explain new ideas and assignments.
 - b. I like to read about new information and instructions for activities and/or take notes.
 - c. I need pictures, charts, diagrams, and other visuals to help me understand how to do things.
 - d. After I learn something new in class, I have to go try that new thing immediately or I will forget what I've learned.
- 10) If you own a computer, how old is your computer? (Select the response that best fits your newest computer.)
- a. Less than six months old
 - b. Six months to one year old
 - c. One to three years old
 - d. Three to five years old
 - e. More than five years old
 - f. I do not own a computer.
- 11) Which of the following software programs or packages do you know how to use? (Circle all that apply) Adobe Acrobat, Adobe Pagemaker, Adobe Photoshop, Audacity, Blackboard, Camtasia, Dreamweaver, Filemaker Pro, Front Page, Gmail, iMovie, Lotus, Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Outlook, Power Point, Publisher, and Word 2007), Microsoft Producer, Microsoft Visio, Microsoft Works, Photo Deluxe, QuarkXpress, Snag It, Movie Maker, Word Perfect
- 12) Do you wish your college required you to complete a basic computing skills (turning on the computer, using common programs [Microsoft Office and Vista], and fixing common computer problems) course within your first semester of college?

- 13) Do you wish your college required you to complete a basic computing skills (turning on the computer, using common programs [Microsoft Office and Vista], and fixing common computer problems) course within your first year of college?
- 14) Agree or Disagree? People who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills.
- 15) Agree or Disagree? People who don't have computer skills miss valuable information on the Web.
- 16) Agree or Disagree? People who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact (email, text messaging, sharing information, talking through a cell phone, etc.) with other people.
- 17) Agree or Disagree? People with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills.
- 18) Agree or Disagree? People who have computer skills seem smarter than people who don't have computer skills.
- 19) Agree or Disagree? If students must complete computer training, students should be taught how to use the computer in their English classes so that they can learn how to use the computer to write as they receive writing instruction.
- 20) Agree or Disagree? Using a computer in a writing class makes learning to write too difficult.
- 21) Agree or Disagree? If I must complete a computer class, I would rather receive computer instruction within the same semester as my first English class.
- 22) Agree or Disagree? I think that I would understand ideas more if my professor used Web sites to teach me information instead of just using books.
- 23) Agree or Disagree? I think that I would understand ideas more if my professor used films/television to teach me information instead of just using books.
- 24) How important are the following activities in your leisure time? Choices were the following: Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Very Important, Not Important, N/A.
 - Watching television
 - Talking face-to-face with others
 - Watching films/movies
 - Surfing the Web
 - Text messaging
 - Talking on the phone

Reading books

Writing (essays, letters, stories, etc.)

- II. Open-ended Questions:** Write at least three or more sentences to respond to each of the following questions. You are not limited to the space provided. Make as many notes as you like.

1. What is good about using computers in an English class?

2. How might computers make English class more difficult?

3. What do you use computers to do in classes or school-related activities other than English class?

APPENDIX C: STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECT COVER LETTER

Your professor designed this survey and interview to assess your knowledge, use and understanding of digital technology (computers). As discussed in the next pages, your professor may use your responses to this survey/interview for her doctoral research and other projects. Your identity will not be revealed; therefore, you should be completely honest in the survey/interview.

Your participation in this survey/interview is completely voluntary. However, if you participate in this survey/interview and submit your answers to the Blackboard version of the survey/interview by the due date, you will receive **up to three-points extra credit on your final English course grade at the end of the semester**. Students, who chose **not to participate** in or complete the survey/interview, but want a chance to receive the extra credit, may receive the extra credit by writing and submitting a 500-word essay by April 20 instead of the survey/interview. To receive the extra credit for an essay, instead of the survey/interview, students must contact Ms Norris by the end of class the week of April 13 for the essay assignment; students **may not** choose their extra credit essay topic. The extra credit essay will be aside from the regular essay assignments for the class.

If you would like to participate in this survey/interview, to be eligible to receive the extra credit, please do the following:

- **Read** the Student Release form on the next page and **sign** it and **return** it to your professor during your next class session.
- Complete the printed version of the survey/interview attached to this document.
- Submit your answers from the printed version of the survey/interview document to the survey/interview in Blackboard by the week of April 27. The Blackboard version of the survey will be available by the week of April 13.

To participate in this survey/interview, the only document in this packet that you must return to your professor is the Student Release Form on the next page. You may keep all other documents in this packet for your records. If you would like a copy of your signed Student Release Form, you are welcome to copy the document yourself, or please see your professor during her office hours for a copy of the document before the end of the semester.

APPENDIX D: RESEARCH PROJECT STUDENT RELEASE FORM

Spring 2009 and Fall 2009
(Sign and return the next page to your professor)

As you know, your instructor Leslie D. Norris is also a doctoral student at Old Dominion University. As a part of her doctoral studies and as a professor, she conducts research studies to test existing methods and to develop new ways to help students be successful in their English classes.

This release form is an invitation to you to participate in a writing research study. The purpose of the study is to understand students' writing processes and to assess the effectiveness of certain teaching methods within writing course.

To participate in the study, students will be asked to perform the following activities along with their regular work in English:

1. Complete a maximum of 50 close-ended survey questions, spread across three to five surveys and the final exam, within Blackboard, or posted a comparable online, survey tool. The questions will be multiple choice, agree or disagree or true/false questions.
2. Write a maximum of five narrative paragraphs discussing past and present experiences with computer technology. The narratives will be considered a part of the students' regular course assignments.
3. Write a maximum of three, 300-word essays to discuss past and present experiences with computer technology. The essay will be considered a part of the students' regular course assignments.
4. Participate in scheduled individual and/or group interview sessions with the researcher.

The students' survey responses and narrative responses may eventually be published in a journal article, through a conference proceeding or as a part of the instructor's doctoral PhD dissertation/theses. However, the students' names and grades will be kept confidential and will not be submitted for publication without the students' permission on a separate release form.

Extra Credit Opportunity:

Students who agree to participate in the study will be **eligible to receive up to three-points extra credit on their final English course grade at the end of the semester.** Although the activities will not require the students to perform any activities above or beyond the abilities of any student recommended for the course, the instructor is offering the extra credit in case students think that the attention that they gave to the research study's activities prevented them from doing their best work on their regular

assignments in the course. Completion of the study's surveys is voluntary and students may choose not to answer questions within the survey that they find to be objectionable, but will still receive extra credit for their participation. Students may choose to drop out of the study at any time. To be considered a participant in the study, students must do the following:

1. Attempt to complete all of the study activities by the activities' deadlines;
2. Make up any missed study activities because of absences or tardiness within seven days – including weekends – of the activities' due date;
3. Follow the instructions for the research activities;
4. Provide their best work;
5. Complete the study activities during class or with a proctor present, as necessary;
6. Work alone and only with approved resources;
7. Follow the general behavior guidelines for students as described in college's policies and the instructor's course syllabus;
8. Sign this release form and return it to the instructor by the due date.; and
9. Be at least 18 years old by the day the first research tool is distributed to students.

Students who wish to participate in the study should print the form, sign the form below and return the form to the instructor by the start of the next class or the week of April 20, 2009—whichever comes first. The instructor will provide the student with a copy of the signed release form. Students are invited to contact the instructor with any questions regarding the study.

Student's Name: Please print your name on the line above

Student's Signature: Please sign your name on the line above

Date:

For more information, please contact the researcher:
Leslie D. Norris, Assistant Professor/English

APPENDIX E: BASIC WRITING FACULTY SURVEY AND INTERVIEW

QUESTIONS: FALL 2009

I. Closed-ended Questions

1. How often do you search for information on the Internet? Hourly, Daily Weekly, Monthly, Every few months maybe, Never
2. Which of the following tools do you use to help your students understand complex information? (Check all that apply) Books, Web sites, Films/Television, Pictures, Graphic (Charts and Tables), Lectures, Hands-on Activities (writing, using the computer, etc.), Group work (working with classmates on activities), Class discussions
3. Which of the following digital skills do you wish that you had? (check all that apply) If you already have any of the following skills, and you enjoy using them, select them as well.

Conducting research on the Web
 Interacting with interesting groups on the Web
 Editing digital photographs
 Editing digital films
 Designing craft projects
 Sending email
 Sending text messages
 Basic skills (saving and locating documents, downloading information from the Web, editing documents, etc.)

4. What tasks do you use a digital technology (computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text-messaging device, PDA, or digital television) to perform daily? (Click all that apply) Note: If you view television through satellite or cable service, you may consider those services to be digital television.

Listen to music
 Watch films
 Complete homework assignments
 Maintain personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)
 Maintain professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)
 Perform social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)

Play games
 Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)
 Read news and gather information
 Perform job-related tasks
 Shop
 Pay bills
 Organize your calendar and/or schedule
 Other: If you use digital technology for a task that is not on this list, please click "other" and list those additional tasks below.

5. How often do you use digital technology (computer, cell phone, MP3 player, text messaging device, PDA, and/or digital television) to perform the following activities? Note: If you view television through satellite or cable service, you may consider those services to be digital television. Choices included hourly, daily, monthly, more than monthly, never.

Listening to music
 Watching films
 Completing homework assignments
 Maintaining personal relationships (send messages to friends and family)
 Maintaining professional relationships (send messages to professors or college staff, employers, co-workers, business contacts, etc.)
 Performing social activities (chat groups, discussion boards, online dating, blogs, Facebook and/or My Space, etc.)
 Playing games
 Create personal projects (maintaining and editing digital photos and film, designing Web sites, etc.)
 Reading news and gather information
 Performing job-related tasks
 Shopping
 Paying bills
 Organizing your calendar and/or schedule

6. If you had the skills to use any method for communication, which method would you like to use to explain your thoughts to others? (Click all that apply)

I like to use words to write about what I think and ask people to read my writing. (This includes email, letters, essays, etc.)

I like to speak to people in person about my ideas and have people listen to me.

I like to draw or create pictures (photography and/or art work) and share those drawings or pictures to help people understand what I think.

I like to make and share short films about my thoughts or experiences.

I like to record myself talking about my thoughts and ask others to listen to the recording when I am not around.

I like to send short text messages to people and have them respond.

I like to call people on the phone.

7. Which kind of courses do you think make it easier for your students to manage school and personal (family, friends and/or work) responsibilities? (Click all that apply)

Traditional (classes that meet on campus weekly)

Hybrid (classes that meet on campus once per week, or a few times per semester, but instead allow a significant amount of work to be completed outside of class and through the computer)

Online or Distance Synchronous (classes that meet online at a specific time and allow students to see the professor and/or other students via Web cam)

Online or Distance Asynchronous (classes never meet on campus, and students must complete ALL course work through the computer)

8. In which of the following kinds of courses do your students appear to perform best? (Click all that apply)

Traditional (classes that meet on campus weekly)

Hybrid (classes that meet on campus once per week, or a few times per semester, but instead allow a significant amount of work to be completed outside of class and through the computer)

Online or Distance Synchronous (classes that meet online at a specific time and allow students to see the professor and/or other students via Web cam)

Online or Distance Asynchronous (classes never

meet on campus and students must complete
ALL course work through the computer)

9. How do you like to learn new information? (Click all that apply.)

I need to hear the professor explain new ideas
and assignments.

I like to read about new information and
instructions for activities and/or take notes.

I need pictures, charts, diagrams, and other
visuals to help me understand how to do things.

After I learn something new in class, I have to
go try that new thing immediately or I will
forget what I've learned.

10. If you own a computer, how old is your computer? (Click the response
that best fits your newest computer.)

Less than six months old

Six months to one year old

One to three years old

Three to five years old

More than five years old

I do not own a computer.

11. Which of the following software programs or packages do you know
how to use? (Click all that apply)

Adobe Acrobat

Adobe Pagemaker

Adobe Photoshop

Audacity

Blackboard

Camtasia

Dreamweaver

Filemaker Pro

Front Page

Gmail

iMovie

Lotus

Microsoft Office Suite (Excel, Outlook, Power
Point, Publisher, and Word 2007)

Microsoft Producer

Microsoft Visio

Microsoft Works

Movie Maker

Photo Deluxe

QuarkXpress

Snag It

Word Perfect

I don't know how to use any of the software programs or packages listed above.

12. Do you wish that the college required students to complete a basic computing skills (turning on the computer, using common programs [Microsoft Office and Vista], and fixing common computer problems) course within the students' first semester of college? Yes or No
13. Do you wish that the college required students to complete a basic computing skills (turning on the computer, using common programs [Microsoft Office and Vista], and fixing common computer problems) course within the students' first year of college? Yes or No
14. People who have computer skills have an advantage in life over people who don't have computer skills. Agree or Disagree
15. People who don't have computer skills miss valuable information available on the Web. Agree or Disagree
16. People who don't have computer skills are missing valuable opportunities to interact (email, text messaging, blogging, talking through a cell phone, etc.) with other people. Agree or Disagree
17. People with computer skills are likely to have more job opportunities than people who don't have computer skills. Agree or Disagree
18. People who have computer skills seem smarter than people who don't have computer skills. Agree or Disagree
19. If students must complete computer training, students should be taught how to use the computer in their English classes so that they can learn how to use the computer to write as they receive writing instruction. Agree or Disagree
20. Using a computer in a writing class makes learning to write too difficult. Agree or Disagree
21. If students must complete a computer class, students should receive computer instruction within the same semester as their first English class. Agree or Disagree
22. Students would understand ideas more if their professors used other tools (Web sites, films, television shows, pictures, etc.) to teach information instead of just using books. Agree or Disagree
23. Students would understand ideas more if students' professors used films/television to teach students information instead of just using books. Agree or Disagree
24. How important are the following activities in your leisure time? Choice were the following: Very Important, Somewhat Important, Not Very Important, Not Important, N/A

Watching television
Talking face-to-face with others
Watching films/movies
Surfing the Web
Text messaging
Talking on the phone
Reading books
Writing (essays, letters, stories, etc.)

II. Open-ended Questions

1. What is good about using computers in an English class? Please type your answer in the space provided.
2. How might computers make English class more difficult? Please type your answer in the space provided.

APPENDIX F: DATA CODING: HOW MIGHT COMPUTERS MAKE ENGLISH

CLASS MORE DIFFICULT?

Spring 2009 Student Responses

Coding	Students' Responses
1. Learning Digital Technology	1. If one doesn't know how to work that specific program or has no computer access at home.
2. Working Quickly	2. typing takes more time
3. Learning Digital Technology	3. computers in class may be more difficult if the person doesn't know how to use it.
4. Learning Digital Technology	4. It could make it difficult for people who don't know how to use computers.
5. Working quickly	5. If I had to type in information instead of writing it I think I would have a harder time.
6. Learning Digital Technology	6. I think if the students do not know how to use the computers.
7. Learning digital technology	7. When they don't work right!
8. N/A	8. By not showing up
9. writing	9. a lot of people like to write out their ideas instead of using a computer
10. Learning digital technology	10. if you have questions and cannot get ahold of the teacher
11. N/A	11. they don't
12. Learning digital technology	12. if you do not know how to use computers
13. Learning digital technology	13. Having to submit work and not knowing how to use the computer
14. Learning digital technology	14. bc if your teacher has all of your work on link and some people don't have computer that could be a big problem, so people don't know how to use a computer so how are they going to be able to look at what their homework is going to be.
15. Learning digital technology	15. I don't think they could make

	english more difficult unless you don't know how to use them.
16. Learning digital technology	16. People who don't know to use them might get confused.
17. Working Quickly	17. typing
18. N/A	18. I dont think computers make english class more difficult.
19. Working Quickly	19. If you can't keep fast it will take up time
20. Learning digital technology	20. It's difficult when the computer crashes and there no back.
21. Learning digital technology	21. If you don't know how to use the programs, it is hard to do your assignments.
22. Learning digital technology	22. will be more difficult for the user if they do not fully understand the software they are using to its fullest extent.
23. Learning digital technology	23. computer skills
24. N/A	24. It doesn't at all, it helps me alot

Fall 2009 Student Responses

Coding	Students' Responses
1. Learning Digital Technology	1. If someone is not so sure about how to use them, if it's something new they might have trouble.
2. Learning Digital Technology	2. All the students are at differnt levels with there computer skills
3. N/A	3. I don't think that they would, but some might say they might.
4. N/A	4. I don't believe it will make english class harder. It would only help.
5. Learning Digital Technology	5. havifg computers in English clss may be difficult due to the fact some people may not know how to use thema nd people can't learn frome their mistakes
6. Learning Digital Technology	6. Having computers in an English may be difficult to the students who do not have a computer at home or who does not use a computer very offent.

7. Learning Digital Technology	7. Some students may not have the idea to change or use the computer the same way they would as like a pen on paper.
8. Learning Digital Technology	8. If you do not have knowledge of computers it may make the class more difficult. As well as harder to follow along.
9. Learning Digital Technology; Planning, Designing, and Editing	9. If you use a computer in classs you might get destracted and start doing something else on the computer. Also, if you use word or something to type a paper it might not catch all your errors like you think they will.
10. Working Quickly; Learning Digital Technology	10. If you cant type fast you will not be able to keep up. Then you will have to spend time learning to type faster and try ans learn the programs.
11. Learning Digital Technology	11. For people that don't know how to use computers. Or because people aren't actually writing it down themselves.
12. N/A	12. I don't really see how having one in the classroom could hurt. I think its a advantage all the way around.
13. Working Quickly	13. My personal opinion, I dont think it will make it more difficult. Some people may be fast typers than others, so that may slow down some people.
14. Learning Digital Technology	14. It might be harder for some students to keep up if they dont know how to use computers which slows down the class. Also might be harder for people to pay attention to the computer and the teacher at the same time
15. Learning Digital Technology	15. Older students of a different generation are left in the dark on how to do things such as "Save target as" or simply burn a data disc.
16. Learning Digital Technology	16. They could slow the professor's teaching speed down and not be

	able to cover all the information needed. The computers might lock up or freeze which would cause a problem and disruption to class to get them fixed.
17. Learning Digital Technology	17. it depends what i might have to do on the computer. if iam just using blackboard or microsoft/other programs in class, then its not difficult at all. although this upgrade in microsoft is taking me a while to get use to....i have a very old computer.
18. Learning Digital Technology; Receiving Academic Instruction	18. I personally have hard time comprehending the criteria if I myself cannot write it and take notes on it. So in the end I take twice as many notes because of having to do things on the internet in class and for class.
19. Learning Digital Technology	19. Computers may make things more difficult, for those who do not have computer skills. Not having the skill to use a computer would put some students behind.
20. Learning Digital Technology	20. for those who dont know how to use one
21. N/A	21. They dont
22. Learning Digital Technology	22. trying to listen and type.
23. Learning Digital Technology	23. Some may find it hard to navigate.
24. Learning Digital Technology	24. People who don't know how to type will have take more time to complete assignments
25. Learning Digital Technology	25. In my opinion I do not think computers could make a english class harder unless you do not know anything about computers.
26. Learning Digital Technology	26. If you dont know have to use the pc at all your already behind.
27. Learning Digital Technology	27. If you don't have a computer to use, or you don't have access to the internet.
28. Learning Digital Technology	28. If they don't work sometimes you lose concentration . They make noises and they bother some people because of that .

29. Learning Digital Technology	29. It could make it difficult to a person who is not used to the computer.
30. Learning Digital Technology	30. If someone doesn't understand how to use a computer it could slow the class or the student itself. It could also discourage the student from wanting to come to class.
31. Learning Digital Technology	31. Being that I have limited skills it makes it a little more difficult. Not knowing the programs also makes it harder.
32. Learning Digital Technology	32. I do not have a lot of computer experience. It should have been explained to me that I needed to work with a computer.
33. Researching; Completing School-related Assignments	33. Computers will make your English class more difficult if you can not find the information you need. Computers will make English class harder if you if you submit your work and it gets lost.

Instructor Responses

Coding	Instructors' Responses
1. Learning Digital Technology	1. For those who do not know how to use a computer, it can be a very daunting activity to take part in at first.
2. Learning Digital Technology	2. Students lacking computer skills are at a disadvantage.

APPENDIX G: DATA CODING: WHAT IS GOOD ABOUT USING COMPUTERS
IN AN ENGLISH CLASS?

Spring 2009 Student Responses

Coding	Students' Responses
1. Completing School-related Assignments; working quickly	1. More information is available and assignments are quicker to complete.
2. Working quickly	2. convient
3. Completing School-related Assignments	3. if i have any questions the teacher is there to answer them.
4. Working quickly	4. It is easier for the teacher to read and grade papers.
5. Receiving Academic Instruction	5. I learned more in English class with word than any other class.
6. Researching; Completing School-related Assignments	6. The use of computers in an English class because it helps the students research the different assignment.
7. Receiving academic instruction	7. You have the teacher there to help you if you need it.
8. Receiving Academic Instruction	8. you know alot more
9. Planning, Designing and Editing; Receiving Academic Instruction	9. it helps you figure out what you are going to write about and also helps you learn
10. Chatting, emailing and messaging	10. Helps to keep in contact with the teacher
11. Receiving Academic Instruction	11. u can type your notes
12. chatting, emailing and messaging	12. a better way to interact and is not boring
13. Completing School-related Assignments	13. Easier to submit your work
14. Researching; working quickly	14. they can help you with anything thing. like if you have a question you can always surf the web to see what your answer would be.
15. Planning, Designing and Editing; Working Quickly; Researching	15. You can wirte and edit you work at a faster pace then by hand writing your paper and

	resaerch goes much faster.
16. Researching	16. It is easier to look up information.
17. Planning, Designing and Editing	17. Spell Check
18. Working quickly	18. more efficient
19. N/A	19. You don't have to write
20. Completing School-related Assignments	20. allows students to submit there work anytime prior to assignment submission date.
21. Researching; Planning, Designing and Editing	21. You can recieve your grades alot quicker. Also, and most important, you get to type online in microsoft 2007 which helps you to make your paper perfect.
22. Planning, Designing and Editing; writing	22. standard letters typed, help eliminate penmanship that people often struggle with, but also allow them to concentrate on the subject matter that are focusing to write about.
23. Planning, Designing and Editing	23. spell check
24. Learning Digital Technology	24. you can learn more websites and more microsoft word, etc.

Fall 2009 Student Responses

Coding	Students' Responses
1. Receiving Academic Instruction; Learning Digital Technology	1. You learn new things about the computer and your class.
2. Researching; Planning, Designing and Editing	2. A unlimited amount of information is given on the computer and spell check always helps
3. Receiving Academic Instruction; Working Quickly	3. some can take notes quicker than writing the notes down.
4. Planning, Designing and Editing; Working Quickly	4. It's not as messy. I can type faster than I can write.
5. Working Quickly	5. It is good using compputers in English class because its faster to type your assingnments
6. Completing School-related Assignments	6. It is good for the students who do not have computers at home. They are able to finish their assignments and ask questions.
7. Receiving Academic Instruction	7. To have different looks at what you are learning and not just in the book or on the blackboard.
8. Working Quickly; Planning, Designing and Editing; Receiving Academic Instruction	8. Being a fast typer alows me to type the information out in a neat and clear format. Also allowing me to focus on the teacher and the subject matter being taught.
9. Receiving Academic Instruction; Learning Digital Technology	9. You can get your papers typed. You also learn other things and programs on the computer.
10. Receiving Academic Instruction	10. You dont have top worry about writhing your notes. You can type them and save them or print them out to have.
11. Learning Digital Technology	11. I like it because I am more comfortable with a computer. It also makes everything alot easier to read.
12. Researching	12. Let's say you have a question and you dont want to bother your teacher. You can look it up online and you can interact with software

	on the computer.
13. Learning Digital Technology; Receiving Academic Instruction; Working Quickly	13. It helps me learn more about the computer,also it is helpful to have both at the same time.I think it will help me type faster.
14. Receiving Academic Instruction; Working Quickly	14. Using computers in enlgish class makes it easier to have more visuals for students to look at. Also makes multi-tasking easier and more organized
15. Writing	15. More focus on the senteces themselves rather than trying to decipher my nasty handwriting
16. Receiving Academic Instruction; Researching	16. It helps us to learn to improve typing skills. Also so we can take notes and refer to things that could be helpful during class on the web.
17. Receiving Academic Instruction	17. its something hands on that i get to do.. other than just sitting in class, taking notes and listening to lectures.
18. N/A	18. I do not like to use computers in English class for learning purposes, or any class for that matter. Therefore I do have anything good to say about this subject.
19. Working Quickly; Planning, Designing and Editing	19. I think using computers in English is a faster and more efficient way to get work done. A computer also may help with gramer.
20. Working Quickly	20. for me its better and faster no paper or pens
21. Receiving Academic Instruction	21. learn more about them
22. Receiving Academic Instruction	22. you are able to ask questions if you dont know how to use the computer. your skills will invore by using it in class
23. Writing	23. You do not get writing cramps.
24. N/A	24. nothing
25. Researching; Writing	25. It is nice using computers in my english class because if i am writing a research paper i can search right then and there for information. Also having a computer in english class makes

	writing a paper not as long.
26. Receiving Academic Instruction	26. learn the begining stuff.
27. Completing School-related Assignments; Researching	27. Using a computer to complete assignments. Makes it easier to do research as you complete the assignment.
28. Writing; Planning, Designing and Editing	28. The teacher can understand our writing better. We save a lot of paper and mistakes in typing and deleting.
29. Receiving Academic Instruction; Chatting, Emailing and Messaging	29. Using the computers in english class helps us learn to the basic programs need to to commuincate with each other.
30. Receiving Academic Instruction	30. Using computers in english class can be very helpful to prepare you for the future. You might need the skills you obtain for a job.
31. Receiving Academic Instruction	31. It gives me the chance to learn some computer skills. My skills are minimal.
32. Receiving Academic Instruction	32. It would be fine if I had any type of computer classes.

Instructor Responses

Coding	Instructors' Responses
1. Writing; Planning, Designing and Editing	1. The use of computers helps to take away some of the writing issues students have as it gives them more confidence with the use of Spell Check and Grammar Check.
2. Planning, Designing, and Editing; Researching	2. Computers provide access to Spell Check Grammar Check, and online resources.

APPENDIX H: DATA CODING: WHAT DO YOU USE COMPUTERS TO DO IN
CLASSES OR SCHOOL-RELATED ACTIVITIES OTHER THAN ENGLISH
CLASS?

Spring 2009 Student Responses

Coding	Students' Responses
1. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Researching; Self-entertaining	1. communication, research, entertainment
2. Completing School-related Assignments	2. homework
3. Completing School-related Assignments; Researching; writing	3. i use the computers for writing essays, paragraph, homework, and looking up info
4. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Researching	4. I use them to get into touch with my teachers and see what my grades are.
5. Completing School-related Assignments	5. We had to use computers in Biology class. The book had its own website and to me was difficult to follow.
6. Completing School-related Assignments	6. My subject in principles of sociology which is a hybrid class.
7. Researching	7. The RCC website.
8. N/A	8. Help students out
9. Completing School-related Assignments	9. i complete my homework assignments and tests
10. Completing School-related Assignments	10. Just to submit homework to blackboard
11. Completing School-related Assignments	11. for a computer class
12. Completing School-related Assignments	12. homework
13. Completing School-related Assignments; Chatting, emailing and messaging	13. Turn in assignments for other classes, and e-mail my teachers
14. Self-entertaining; Chatting, emailing and messaging	14. sometime i will go on myspace or facebook when i am in class.
15. Completing School-related Assignments; writing	15. Research projects and papers submitting work and to write papers.

16. Researching; Completing School-related Assignments; Chatting, emailing and messaging	16. I use them to look up my grades, find out information, submit my homework, and read emails from my teacher.
17. Completing School-related Assignments	17. ITE
18. Completing School-related Assignments; Chatting, emailing and messaging	18. do my assignments;do the test on line;communicate with my instrutor.
19. Completing School-related Assignments; Researching	19. I use the computer to check up on my grades and homework
20. Completing School-related Assignments	20. doing homework.
21. N/A	21. I haven't had that opportunity yet.
22. Researching; Coordinating Activities Digitally	22. research information. coordinate schedules of job or class goals in a persons life. organize specific information a particular user needs at the moment.
23. Completing School-related Assignments	23. papers
24. Completing School-related Assignments; Receiving academic instruction	24. Try to do my school work and learn other material

Fall 2009 Student Responses

Coding	Students' Responses
1. Completing School-related Assignments; Chatting, emailing and messaging	1. Homework, school, facebook, etc.
2. Completing School-related Assignments	2. To complete blackboard assignments and just to review what's going on around me
3. Completing School-related Assignments	3. I use computers to do my SDV 100 class, which is distance learning. I also use it for, well that's about it other than checking on my English work.
4. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Completing School-related Assignments; Researching	4. I use it to maintain email and assignments. I can also do research on the web for information.
5. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Completing School-related Assignments; Coordinating Activities Digitally	5. Check my email and chat with other people and also for professional and educational use
6. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Completing School-related Assignments	6. I use computers to type papers for my other classes, to e-mail my teachers as well as watching the news for my history class.
7. Completing School-related Assignments; Researching; Chatting, emailing and messaging	7. I use computers to finish homework for other classes, surfing the web, and chat on line.
8. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Researching; Planning, Designing and Editing	8. I use it to send e-mails, read the news, stay in touch with my professors, etc. I also use it to send notes to my daughter's teacher so that the information I am sending is legible.
9. Completing School-related Assignments; Chatting, emailing and messaging; Researching	9. Assignments for classes, email. I also look at announcements and course schedules.
10. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Completing School-related Assignments	10. To keep up with teachers, homework, and to turn in assignments. All homework is posted on blackboard.
11. Researching; Completing School-related Assignments; Receiving	11. Use it for research, and taking notes, and for homework.

Academic Instruction	
12. Researching	12. Look up information you have questions about maybe your class discussions that day.
13. Researching; Chatting, emailing and messaging	13. I am always on Blackboard looking over my homework. I check my grades and e-mail daily on the computer.
14. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Researching	14. i use it to communicate with teachers and check assignments. It also helps me check up on grades and find out what materials i will need for class
15. Planning, Designing and Editing	15. I am a professional Videographer for hire. I film bands music videos, weddings, birthday parties or your first time riding a horse and make a wonderful video all for a shiny penny. I also make flash movies and direct short films. Anything to do with any media is all me
16. Receiving Academic Instruction; Completing School-related Assignments; Chatting, emailing and messaging	16. I use my computer in class to take notes and type up my homework. I also use my computer to receive emails about school functions from staff and friends.
17. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Researching	17. check email, myspace, facebook, MY yearbook, google, and blackboard.
18. Chatting, emailing and messaging;	18. Talking to friends and family through email. And sometimes personal projects of my own.
19. Completing School-related Assignments; Working Quickly	19. Computers help me keep up with all my schoolwork. They also take less time to get things done.
20. Completing School-related Assignments; Researching	20. Blackboard and papers for nutrition
21. Completing School-related Assignments	21. blackboard for sdv 100
22. Completing School-related Assignments; Researching	22. i use it to do homework. i use it to look up my grades
23. All Categories	23. Everything.
24. Completing School-related Assignments; Chatting, emailing and messaging	24. I take Autocad, and check blackboard/email
25. Completing School-related	25. In rcc to figure out what our work is

Assignments	we must be able to get on black board to do homework or test.
26. Completing School-related Assignments; Researching; Chatting, emailing and messaging	26. Black board, email, Classes.
27. Completing School-related Assignments; Researching; Chatting, emailing and messaging	27. English is the only subject that I'm taking.
28. N/A	28. I don't understand the question .
29. Chatting, emailing and messaging	29. I use the computers for email.
30. Chatting, emailing and messaging; Researching	30. I use the computer outside of school to sociliaze with other people. i also use it to do research for my business i would like to obtain in the future
31. Completing School-related Assignments; Receiving Academic Instruction	31. To complete my homework assignments. i also try to get tutorials online.
32. N/A	32. This is my first class.
33. Completing School-related; Researching	33. I have not used my computer in school related classes alot so far. I have used my computer to do test and find some imformation .

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