

ADOLESCENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF RESEARCH-BASED GOAL
SETTING IN THE WRITING PROCESS: A QUALITATIVE
ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' OPINIONS

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Adolescents' perceptions of research-based goal setting in the writing process:

A qualitative look at students' opinions

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This qualitative case study examined participants' perceptions of research-based goal setting in the writing process. Specifically, the five participants learned how to generate and then used implementation intentions to set goals and state how they would reach those goals in a simulated classroom setting. In addition, this study examined how participants' motivational structures corresponded with their opinions and uses of these goal-setting strategies. Participants indicated that, for the most part, they felt that research-based goal setting, as it was implemented in this study, was helpful in improving their writing – though the effect of this strategy decreased when they felt rushed. In terms of the specific structure of the implementation intentions, one participant was resistant to use the strategy and one participant felt that having to state implementation intentions were excessive; she felt that simply setting a goal was adequate. These two differences of opinion from the other three participants corresponded to different general motivation orientations. These motivation orientations, thus, tended to correspond with differing use, both in application and in form, of goal setting and implementation intentions. However, this study also found that participants' motivation orientations were, in general, too complex to be placed in a single cell of the 3×2 motivation

orientation matrix. In addition, this study found that all participants tended to set goals based directly on teacher feedback. It demonstrated that goal setting, when conducted in the context created by the SAT writing course and in accord with what researchers have identified as best practices, is perceived by adolescents as being helpful and worthwhile. The study concludes by addressing the implications for educational practice and the avenues for potential future research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

The Crisis of Writing in Secondary Schools

The research on what high school graduates cannot do is quite bleak. It is beyond the scope of this study to outline all of the research that has gone into measuring the failures of America's secondary schools to meet their students' literacy needs past their senior year. However, a few of the most sobering statistics put the crisis in relief. In 2011, only 27% of students in the 12th grade scored "proficient" or "advanced" on state-administered standardized tests (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). At the 8th grade level, only 18% of boys scored proficient or above, and for black and Hispanic students, those percentages drop to 11% and 14% respectively (Fleming, 2012). Even for the highest scoring group, Asian students, that rate was still less than half: 44% (Fleming, 2012).

Naturally, the consequences of these struggles with writing (as writing portions are included on most standardized testing) are significant. Writing is a "threshold skill," meaning that it is a skill that employers expect employees to have before entering the workforce and a skill that employers will look for in prospective workers (National Commission on Writing, 2005). Despite looking for applicants with strong writing abilities, ten years ago, businesses were spending 3.1 billion dollars annually on writing remediation, necessary because of employees' poor writing skills (National Commission on Writing, 2004). And, in terms of our country's international standing, US graduates' literacy skills are lower than those of most industrialized nations (OECD, 2000).

As a result of this crisis in writing achievement, debate continues as to what could be done to improve the writing skills of America's students, ranging from teaching more critical, non-fiction writing to teaching more creative, fiction writing – and every possible combination in between. In fact, the debate has become so widespread that it has even permeated non-academic discussions. *The Atlantic's* “Why can't American students write” (2012), for example, delves into this issue with a series of divergent opinions. As even a cursory look at this series of opinions pieces demonstrates, most participants in this discussion are able to point to research to support their opinions, no matter how divergent they are.

Given that there is no shortage of opinions and perspectives, my task in this study will not be to take a position on the debate. Rather, I focus in particular on just one kind of promising, researched-based strategy designed to help improve writing, and investigate students' opinions of how helpful it is. I also seek to understand the relationship between their perspectives on goal setting and their motivation orientation.

Teachers' Efforts in Commenting on Essays

Mediocre to poor writing achievement seems almost an intractable problem. However, the issue is not that high school English teachers do not understand that writing needs to be improved or, in most cases, that teachers are not trying. Rather, it seems possible that the issue centers on many teachers being unaware of what makes writing instruction effective (Belanger & Allingham, 2003). Specifically, many teachers may focus on writing instruction that treats each piece as a discrete opportunity to teach writing skills. Rather, Hillocks (1995) has argued that effective writing instruction must address how each piece serves as a stepping stone to the next. Each work should be reflected upon, considered carefully, and used to improve subsequent

compositions (Hillocks, 1995). So, while extensive comments certainly may help students to improve their writing, many teachers assume that the comments alone will be sufficient when students must also work on their writing in a reflective manner (Belanger & Allingham, 2003).

Nowhere was this focus on extensive comments more evident than in my first year of teaching. I toiled over a stack of papers, spending an entire weekend to provide insightful, detailed comments to my students. I skipped sleep to decrease turn-around time, burning the candle at both ends. I slumped into class the following Monday, lugging a bag filled with papers. I watched students flip hastily through their papers, looking only for the grade at the end and then closing them – or folding them, or crumpling them – and putting them away. My experience is far from unique. In fact, I have yet to meet an English teacher who, upon hearing that story, hasn't said that he or she did exactly the same thing their first year.

High school teachers, however, complete these comments because they recognize the importance of students' writing achievement for success on high-stakes tests and in future endeavors (Belanger & Allingham, 2003). So, most continue to toil over the essays and hope that students will one day read the comments. However, many teachers are unaware that research indicates that providing written, marginal comments on a final draft produces, at best, only marginal improvement in future writing (*e.g.*, Belanger & Allingham, 2003; Ferris, 1995, 1997).

Focus of the Study

Because they put so much effort into their comments, most teachers I know attribute this lack of improvement to the students' lack of attention to the comments. Therefore, some teachers, myself included, have attempted to address the lack of attention to teacher feedback by forcing students either to copy down each comment for a few extra points or by forcing them to

go back through their papers and incorporate every comment into a revised essay. Certainly, in my experience, these approaches, particularly the latter, have led to some improvement in students' writing – but not for all and not consistently for any. Furthermore, forcing the students to make the changes I've mandated has a negative, unintended consequence on their agency as writers. In my opinion, their ability to self-identify and correct their problems diminishes when the task is shifted to involve merely making corrections that I have marked – even if I have only marked the problems and not offered the precise solution. In addition, their correction of the errors that I mark seems to perpetuate their belief that they *need* a teacher to mark corrections for them and, in my opinion, seems to stunt their development as independently competent writers.

The research on what helps students improve their writing does not bear out the extensive focus on writing comments that most secondary teachers give. Rather, meta-analysis demonstrates that the most effective ways to improve students' writing are explicit instruction in writing strategies; summarization; writing collaboratively, either with peers or with the teacher; and writing for specific, clearly-defined audiences in specific, clearly-defined genres (Graham & Perin, 2007).

In this study, I examined the use of goal setting, a specific writing strategy that has been demonstrated to help students focus on the genre in which they are writing and on the specific elements of their writing that need improvement. Because the effectiveness of this strategy for improving students' writing is already well-documented, I will be examining students' perceptions of this strategy. Such a consideration of students' perceptions is critical because of their level of involvement in the process – and the consequent need for them to “buy in” to it in order for it to be fully effective. Understanding their opinions can help educators to focus their implementation in ways that students will see as immediately beneficial.

As I researched the topic further, I discovered that other studies had found that not all students engage meaningfully with required reflective activities (Hobbs, 2007; Kato, 2009). Specifically, Hobbs found that all students in the program had universally negative opinions of the forced reflective practice due, in part, to the repetitiveness of the process: responses were required to the same 10 questions each time. Because of this repetition and their consequent negative feelings, Hobbs found that students were frequently relying on stock responses rather than genuine reflection to complete the questions as quickly as possible, which contributed, in a feedback loop, to their negative opinions about the reflection journal.

Kato (2009), however, found that collegiate students in a Japanese language program had different responses to a goal-setting and a self-assessment activity based upon their level (*i.e.*, beginner, intermediate, advanced). Kato found that less than half of students found the goal-setting activity helpful while far more found the self-assessment useful. However, these findings were not consistent across students' levels, with beginner and intermediate students tending to like the goal setting and self-assessment program and advanced students tending to dislike it. Beginner and intermediate students largely recommended continuing the self-assessment project (77% and 64%, respectively), while only 33% of advanced learners recommended the same. Despite this recommendation, a majority of each group (beginner: 89%; intermediate: 60%; advanced: 67%) found teacher feedback upon their self-evaluations helpful, echoing Schunk & Swartz's (1993) finding that progress feedback promoted greater improvement than goal setting alone.

During my pilot study, undertaken roughly a year and a half prior to this dissertation, I studied a gap in this existing literature on goal setting, namely opinions in the secondary school. Specifically, I looked at students' opinions of required goal setting for improving their writing in

terms of both how they set and used those goals and what sort of impact, if any, they saw on their writing as a result.

The participants' responses were overwhelmingly negative. All six of them acknowledged that they used goal setting in other areas of their lives; some of them even stated that they used goal setting successfully in either past or present English classes. However, none of the participants thought that the goal-setting activity, as implemented in their English classroom, had any positive impact on their writing. Typically, they reported, they simply finished the required activity as quickly as they could and moved on, forgetting about the goals they had written down almost immediately after having set them. They viewed the goal setting required for class as busywork and thought that the activity was meaningless. They thought the teacher viewed it as meaningless as well, as they reported that she did not give them feedback on their goals, a critical component of effective goal setting (Ross, 2006) and something they perceived of as demonstrating commitment to the activity.

It seemed that many of the participants were engaging in the goal setting, as required by their teacher, with a "let's just get it done with" approach. That is to say, they were doing the task with the minimal effort required to get it done. Many of the participants indicated that they became alienated from the goal-setting task after being asked to undertake it too many times in exactly the same way, and after they came to believe that the activity didn't matter to the teacher. Other participants disagreed, suggesting both that they were disengaged from the task from the start and that it would have been the same no matter what the activity was because they simply disliked the very act of reflection. Thus, it was clear that the activity was not effective; what was less clear was whether that ineffectiveness resulted from students' lack of engagement with a good activity, from the inferior quality of the activity, or some combination of the two.

Because I had not yet researched motivation and because of the limited time to complete the pilot study, I could not delve deeply into those interactions. Instead, I documented their perceptions of the goal setting as it was implemented in their classroom. In this current study, I was able to focus on these academic motivations, both in my review of the literature and in interviews I conducted with students. I considered what students' opinions of goal setting were, in what ways they saw those goals (in the form of implementation intentions, defined below) influenced their writing, and how their motivation influenced their use of goal setting.

Definitions of Key Concepts

Goals. Ryan and Deci (1996) define goals as “the target of one’s actions whereas motives are the reasons that one has those targets” (Goal Theory section, para. 2). Elliot and Sheldon (1997) define four types of goals: (1) task-specific goals for performance, such as “Make this free throw”; (2) situation-specific goals, such as “Demonstrate my competence relative to others in this situation”; (3) personal goals, such as “Get good grades”; and (4) self-standards and goals for future states of being, such as “Someday I will be a college graduate” (p.171). For this study I looked at goals as they relate to improved essay writing for the SAT. As such, I looked at the first two kinds of goals in Elliot and Sheldon’s typology, task-specific and situation-specific goals because the SAT essay, when the students compose it for the test, will be an isolated task and represents a highly-specific kind of writing under high-specific conditions.

The relationship between self-assessment and goal setting. That self-assessment and setting goals are linked is a key idea underpinning my research. Certainly, agents need not set goals themselves; goals can come from external sources . When, for example, a teacher tells a

student to stop fidgeting or he will have to go to the principal's office, sitting still is decidedly not a goal that the student has generated – but still may well be a goal. However, as discussed earlier, successfully teaching students to write and revise requires that they be able to take control over their own work. Teachers will not always be there to help students, so it is critical that student be able to look critically at their own work and identify strengths and weaknesses in order to become effective goal setters. Short of the teacher explicitly telling the students what goals to set and how to work on reaching those goals, the use of goal setting as a way to improve writing serves to increase the students' abilities to self-assess, in that they would need to determine the elements of writing for which they want to set goals. Even if the teacher indicates what steps to take to reach a goal or gives the students a list of possible goals from which to choose, the students are still maintaining some degree of agency. They need to choose which area for improvement that the teacher has discussed best applies to their own writing. They need to think about the ways that these problems have manifested themselves in order to decide how to work on that goal and so forth. Thus, self-assessment seems to be a necessary step for students to take if they are to become independent, competent writers capable of self-improvement.

Implementation intentions. According to goal theory, first codified by Thomas Arthur Ryan in his 1970 *Intentional Behavior*, consciously setting and intending to reach a goal increases the chances that the goal will be reached. On the surface, this statement seems tautologically true, but Ryan argues that the importance of articulating the intent to improve often goes unnoticed because it seems so obviously important. Consequently, he calls for an increased focus for researchers on the role of what he refers to as intentional behavior – actions motivated by consciously-attended-to goals.

Recent goal theory has explored a specific approach to pursuing goals in the conscious manner for which Ryan (1970) called: the implementation intention. An implementation intention is an explicit statement not only of the goal to be reached, but also of the steps that will be taken to reach that goal and a chronological plan for when those steps will be taken (Gollwitzer, 1993). For the purposes of this study, an implementation intention is expressed as follows: “In order to reach goal x, when situation y arises, I will perform response z.” As such, implementation intentions, while not goals in and of themselves, articulate a plan for reaching them.

One approach to improving students’ writing is teaching them how to set implementation intentions for an upcoming essay based upon meaningful feedback on a previous essay. As goal theory suggests, consciously attending to goals may increase the odds that students will take conscious, specific actions to achieve those goals (Ryan, 1970). And, as research on implementation intentions suggest, their establishment may lead to greater adherence to a systematic process for reaching goals (Gollwitzer, 1993). However, this has not been explored extensively with high school students in the context of writing instruction.

Motivation. A strong influence on the goals and implementation intentions that students set for themselves is the way in which students are motivated to complete their work. While some students complete writing tasks in order to improve their writing skills, others do the best they can but their motivation is simply to be done – and others still complete tasks with the minimal effort required simply to get them done. These “motivational structures” (which, for the purpose of this paper, I define as the way in which an agent is motivated to complete a specific task) vary from agent to agent and from task to task. Such motivation structures seem likely to have implications for the ways in which any agent sets goals and will, in many senses, be the

source of their motivation to set and follow through on the goal – or be the reason for their lack of motivation to do either.

Because of the complexity of motivation structures, it is important to delineate between different kinds of motivations. The earliest relevant distinction was Nicholls and Dweck's (1979) distinction between "performance goals, in which individuals seek to maintain positive judgments of their ability and avoid negative judgments by seeking to prove, validate, or document their ability and not discredit it" and "learning goals, in which individuals seek to increase their ability to master new tasks" (as cited in Elliott & Dweck 1988, p. 5).

When pursuing a performance goal, the agent seeks to accomplish some task as fully and effectively as possible to demonstrate competence. On the other hand, when pursuing a learning goal, the agent focuses "on developing competence, making progress, and achieving mastery of the material and of the task" (Kaplan & Maehr, 2002, p. 128). This difference can be illustrated by the two ways a student might complete a lab report on finding out why photosynthesis consumes carbon dioxide and releases oxygen. In the case of the student motivated by performance goals, success is measured by the completion of the task and any extrinsic modifiers (e.g., What grade did I earn on the lab report?). In the case of a student motivated by learning goals, success is measured by internal regulators, though these may certainly be informed by external factors (e.g., Do I understand how photosynthesis works? How well could I explain it to a peer?).

A third kind of motivational structure, academic-alienation, was added to Nicholls and Dweck's framework as a result of later research (cf. Nicholls, Patashnick & Nolen, 1985; Meece, Blumenfeld & Hoyle, 1988; Archer, 1994). The first two goals identified in Nicholls and Dweck's motivational structure focus on something beyond the completion of the task – either

what can be learned from its completion or what the evaluation of that task will be by the self or others. When motivated from an academic-alienation stance, however, the agent's motivation "is not achievement or demonstrating competence [as with performance-driven motivation] but to complete academic tasks with the minimum of effort" (Archer, 1994, p. 432). In keeping with the example lab report, one such academic-alienation-oriented motivation would be a student completing the lab report as hastily and with as little effort as possible in order to be done with it.

Though these three dimensions of motivation structures offer a convenient way to distinguish between various agents' motivations, research has called for their further subdivision in order to clarify each kind of motivation. Elliot (1997) developed yet another way to understand different kinds of motivation to reach goals. He distinguished between performance-approach and performance-avoidance goal orientations. A "performance-approach" orientation would be one in which the agent completes the task in order to perform well, such as a student completing an essay in order to earn a high grade. A "performance-avoidance" orientation, on the other hand, would be one in which the agent completes a task in order to avoid performing poorly, such as a student completing an essay to avoid appearing unable to complete the task. Thus, the critical difference is that the former goal orientation takes as its end demonstrating competence on the task; the latter, not demonstrating a lack of competence. As such, the "approach" orientation can be understood as an effort at acquiring something, such as a high score while the latter is an effort to avoid a negative judgment.

Elliot (1999) and Pintrich (as cited in Kaplan & Maehr, 2002) argued that learning goals may also be subdivided in terms of approach and avoidance. For example, wanting to fully understand a concept would be a learning-approach orientation; on the other hand, an agent's

being concerned that he might not be able to fully understand a topic (and the subsequent steps to avoid that undesired outcome) would represent a learning-avoidance orientation.

Though I have not seen the approach/avoidance dimension applied to academic alienation, I would argue that it well could be. An agent motivated from an academic-alienation-approach goal orientation would be attempting to complete a task with the minimal effort. An agent with an academic-alienation-avoidance goal orientation would complete a task with minimal effort and avoid future work by making sure that he or she does just enough to prevent having to make corrections or revisions. As such, I argue for the inclusion of the academic-alienation goal orientation based upon approach and avoidance, resulting in a 3×2 motivation matrix. The 3×2 motivation matrix that I will be using as one of the undergirding analytic frameworks of my study can be illustrated as follows, with an example of a statement that would match this orientation:

	Learning orientation	Performance orientation	Academic-alienation orientation
Approach orientation	Learning-approach: “I want to learn this skill as completely as I can.”	Performance-approach: “I want to do the best job on this individual task that I can.”	Academic-alienation-approach: “I want to complete this task with as little effort as possible.”
Avoidance orientation	Learning-avoidance: “I don’t want to show that I don’t know this skill.”	Performance-avoidance: “I don’t want to show that I can’t do a good job on this task.”	Academic-alienation-avoidance: “I want to put in as little effort as possible to avoid having to do further work.”

Table 1. The 3×2 motivation matrix. This figure presents the 3×2 motivation matrix that undergirds this study.

Though early research argued that agents used the same goal orientation regardless of situation, contemporary achievement goal theorists have argued that the same agent may adopt either orientation, even within the same task (Kaplan & Maehr, 2002). Thus, an agent may complete part of a task with a performance-approach goal orientation (*e.g.*, demonstrating competence in her understanding of basic inertia laws in the introduction of a lab report), another with an academic-alienation-avoidance goal orientation (*e.g.*, making the procedures outlined in

the lab report just detailed enough to not have to revise them), and yet another with a learning-approach goal orientation (*e.g.*, trying to fully understand what the findings of the experiment reveal about the more nuanced properties of inertia). Barron and Harackiewicz (2000, as cited in Kaplan & Maehr, 2002) have suggested that as agents get older, they tend to integrate diverse goal orientations on the same task.

It is precisely these goal orientations that my research will, in part, use as its analytic framework. During my study, I attempted to account for students' motivations on a particular task using the 3×2 model. In addition, these goal orientations are likely to be different for each task, and as such, I will need to carefully examine how the participants are engaging with each individual task, not simply what their overall motivation tends to be. As the research shows, there are significant implications for academic outcomes for different goal orientations (Kaplan & Maehr, 2002).

Problem Statement and Research Questions

As discussed earlier, previous research has focused on both motivation and implementation intentions. However, there is little qualitative research on how general education high school students perceive implementation intentions and their efficacy for improving their writing. Because students' opinions about what is important and what is effective tend to shape what they attend to and what they're willing to do, I believe that understanding what these opinions are is vital to understanding the efficacy of focusing teaching students to establish implementation intentions. Naturally, a student who is required to do so but dislikes doing so is less likely to do more than go through the motions; this is in contrast to students who set personally meaningful goals in assignments. As such, it was necessary to also consider the ways

in which participants were motivated to complete the work for the assignments associated with the study. Given that the best sources of information on students' opinions are the students themselves, for the purposes of this study, the primary data collection strategy was a focus group and individual interviews with students who engaged in this process.

The purpose of this study was threefold. First, I looked at adolescents' opinions on goal setting activities as they relate to writing, specifically at how students perceived the influence of goal setting on their writing. Also within the larger framework, I looked at how students responded to goal setting using research-based instructional methods designed to encourage them to use this strategy to improve their writing. Finally, I looked at how students' motivation orientations (discussed in this dissertation in terms of the 3x2 matrix addressed earlier in the chapter) influenced their use of goal setting.

In order to address my research purposes, the three questions that drive my study are:

1. What do adolescents think, generally, of research-based goal setting activities in the context of writing instruction?
2. More specifically, when goal setting is implemented using research-based practices in the context of writing instruction, how do adolescents think goal setting influences the quality of their writing?
3. How do students' motivation structures correspond with their perceptions and uses of goal setting?

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter summarizes and synthesizes the research on motivation and goal setting. I will first look at the research on students' motivation to write and what educators can do to foster this motivation. Then, having set up the 3×2 matrix for goal orientations in the previous chapter, I will address the research on the impact of these six goal orientations on achievement and, again, address what research has been done on helping agents to achieve their goals. I will close that section by addressing one manner that has been shown to be effective in doing so, implementation intentions. Finally, I will consider the role of goals in the classroom and the connections between self-assessment and goal setting, as well as what educators can do to encourage students to self-assess and set goals effectively.

Motivation and Goal Setting

Having addressed definitions of *motivation* and *goal setting* in the Introduction, in this section I will address the research on the effects of various motivational structures and the research on goal setting. Because motivation is the internal state that manifests outwardly, sometimes, as goal setting, I will consider motivation and writing first and follow that discussion with a consideration of the research on goal setting, closing with a discussion of implementation intentions, a statement of a goal that has been shown effective in helping agents to reach that goal.

Motivation and Writing

Despite the importance of writing, many students report that they lack motivation to write in school because of complex and rigid expectations, its separation from other school subjects, its solitary nature, and the delayed feedback (since there is not a single “right” response, students cannot know how they scored on their writing without the teacher’s looking carefully at it first) (Boscolo & Hidi, 2007; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). However, Lipstein and Renninger (2007) found that teachers could foster motivation to write by giving manageable and consistent feedback, teaching concrete ways to increase the impact of the writing, and challenging highly interested students.

Hidi and Boscolo (2007) argue that influence on writing motivation should be understood through three research-based dimensions: interest, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. They argue that interest has a powerful positive effect on both performance and affective experience with writing (*cf.* Hidi, Renninger & Krapp, 2004, as cited in Hidi & Boscolo, 2007; Hoffman, Krapp, Renninger, 1998; Krapp, Hidi & Renninger, 1992, as cited in Hidi & Krapp, 1992). They break interest into two subgroups: situational interest and individual interest. Situational interest “is evoked rather suddenly by something in the environment that focuses attention [and, as such, situational interest] may or may not have a long-term effect on individuals’ knowledge and value system” (p. 146). Individual interest, on the other hand, is “both a psychological state and a relatively enduring predisposition to attend to events and objects, as well as to reengage in activities [which] develops slowly, tends to be long-lasting, and is associated with increased knowledge and value” (p. 146). For example, a student may be interested in a particular writing assignment (situational interest) or may be interested in writing in general (individual interest).

Even though research has found individual interest to be important in explaining motivation, it may not correlate with writing performance (Hidi & McLaren, 1991; Renninger et al., 2002) due to the fact that interest in writing and skill in writing do not necessarily go hand in hand (Benton et al., 1995). Furthermore, interest in a particular topic may well not correlate with interest in writing about the topic (Boscolo & Cisotto, 1997, as cited in Hidi & Boscolo, 2007; Nolen, 2003, as cited in Hidi & Boscolo, 2007). As such, Lipstein and Renninger (2007) argue for the consideration of interest in topic and interest in writing as distinct features, as students with interest in writing tended to perform better than students only interested in the topic. Because of this difference, gauging students' interest about the topic is not the only factor that must be considered; educators need to also assess and foster students' interest in writing specifically.

The second element that influences motivation to write, according to Hidi and Boscolo, is self-efficacy, or writers' perception of their own skill (also, Hidi et al., 2002). They argue that high self-efficacy encourages writers to participate, to work harder, and to continue with tasks even when faced with challenges or setbacks. Other research indicates that self-efficacy is highly correlated with writing performance (Pajares & Johnson, 1996; Schunk & Swartz, 1993) and motivation to write (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997).

Third, Hidi and Boscolo found that self-regulation is correlated with motivation to write. They explain that self-regulation refers "to self-initiated thoughts, feelings, and actions that writers use to attain various literary goals, which include improving their writing skills and enhance[ing] the quality of the text they create" (p. 150). Research has also shown that instruction in self-regulatory strategies can positively impact students' motivation to write, even when writing conditions shift (Zimmerman & Kinsantas, 2002) and that such strategies foster

success on writing tasks (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997), suggesting that self-regulatory strategies are not task specific.

In addition to these strategies, research has looked at what educators can do to foster motivation to write. Bruning and Horn (2000) identified four clusters of conditions that can help it develop: nurturing functional beliefs about writing, fostering engagement using authentic writing tasks (similar to situational interest), providing a supportive context for writing (as a means of increasing self-efficacy), and creating a positive emotional environment for students (linked to individual interest and, again, to means for increasing self-efficacy). Other research has looked more carefully at the second condition, the writing task itself, to examine how the circumstances of writing foster or inhibit the motivation to write. Hidi and McLaren (1991) found a correlation between interest in themes about which participants were asked to write and the production of subsequent expository texts. Olinghouse, Zheng and Morlock (2012) identified six elements of a “writing task and prompt that may influence a student’s motivation to write. These were time allocation, audience specification, audience intimacy, definition of task, allowance for multiple perspectives, and real-world relevance and purpose” (p. 111). As factors that influence motivation, they are important in getting the whole picture of what motivates students to write.

Goals

Whereas motivation is internal and its measurement is subjective, goals can be made external and their measurement can be made objective. Thus, it is possible to consider explicitly-stated goals and the actions taken to reach those goals as a way to understand the implicitly-conveyed intent to reach those goals. As Ryan (1970) put it, intent is “so universal a

condition that its effect is often overlooked as an important variable [to human behavior], while much effort is devoted to tracking down the effect of much weaker factors” (p. 187). As a result of systematically overlooking psychological intent in previous behavioral research, Ryan argued that researchers have had an incomplete understanding of how goal setting influences learning. But, as discussed earlier, it is important to look at goals – the external, objective manifestations of intent – in order to understand how intent influences behavior. In the following sub-sections, I will look at the impact that goal orientations have on academic achievement, the complex influences on the achievement of goals, and research on the effective use of goal setting.

How goal orientations influence goal achievement. As discussed in the Introduction, the intent behind goals – or *goal* orientations – can be broken down into a 3×2 matrix. Specifically, there are learning-oriented goals and performance-oriented goals. Those two subsets can then be further subdivided into three groups: approach-oriented goals, avoidance-oriented goals, and academic-alienation-goals.

Schunk (1996) hypothesized the means by which both learning and performance goals promote achievement, albeit in different ways. He asserted that learning goals lead directly to achievement gains, but performance goals only help students to better assess their abilities. This suggests that performance goals may only indirectly lead to increased achievement. As a result, he argued that students who are given learning goals performed better than those given performance goals. Other studies corroborate his theory, as Kaplan and Maehr (2002) outline in their meta-analysis.

Other research has corroborated the finding that learning goals tend to lead to better performance than performance goals. Both Locke and Latham (1990) and Schunk and Swartz (1993) found that asking students to achieve a specific, explicit learning goal was more effective

at improving achievement than giving students a vague performance goal (e.g., Do your best).

Seijts, Latham, Tasa and Latham (2004) found that when a task calls for the acquisition of a skill (i.e., a learning goal) rather than the attentive focus required to complete a task (i.e., a performance goal), learning goals are more effective at increasing achievement. They also found that specific performance goals were no better than vague ones at improving achievement.

Although other research on performance-oriented and learning-oriented goals demonstrates that either can improve student achievement (cf. Jackson, 1999; Moore et al., 2001; Stajkovic, Locke & Blair, 2006), better overall results are associated with learning-oriented ones (cf. Bell & Kozlowski, 2002; Kaplan & Maehr, 2002).

The approach-avoidance dimension, too, influences the extent to which goals influence achievement. Elliot and McGregor (2001) found that approach-oriented goals were most positively correlated with self-determination, deep processing, perceived class engagement, and academic performance on multiple forms of assessment while being negatively correlated with subsequent performance-avoidance oriented goals. Avoidance-oriented goals, on the other hand, were positively correlated with worry, emotionality, and fear of failure, and negatively correlated with self-determination. In terms of the research on the impact of the approach-avoidance dimension on achievement, Kaplan and Maehr's (2002) review of the literature found that performance-avoidance goals "consistently related to negative outcomes such as test anxiety, self-handicapping strategies, avoidance of help seeking, and low achievement" (p. 137).

In spite of the demonstrated benefits of performance-approach orientations, their impact on achievement are disputed. Kaplan and Maehr (2002) state that such orientations are related to positive outcomes, including "task-engagement, positive attitude towards challenge, positive self-concept, self-efficacy, performance on tests, and even intrinsic motivation" (p. 137). By

contrast, Middleton and Midgley (1997) found no connection between positive and negative outcomes for performance-approach goal orientations. Other research has found that such orientations cease to be beneficial when conditions change (Middleton, Kaplan & Midgley, 2002; as cited in Kaplan & Maehr, 2002), and that performance-approach oriented goals may lead to “self-handicapping, the avoidance of novelty and challenge, the avoidance of help-seeking, the use of cheating, and reluctance to cooperate with peers” (pp. 82-83). As such, because performance-approach orientations rely on doing well on a particular, likely-isolated task – and because they involve wanting to appear capable – the above detriments may arise when the conditions change. The agent has mastered a particular task and feels he can perform well on it; any change in the task threatens that positive assessment of the task.

Complex influences on goal achievement. Because of the complexity of goal setting and motivation, different agents will respond in different ways to goals (either those set by or for them) and to implementation intentions based on a variety of factors. The same goal can be pursued differently in different situations – or perhaps even in the same situation on a different day – by the same agent (Seijts et al., 2004). Clearly, various intrapersonal and situational conditions play a role in goal achievement. Furthermore, agents are better able to use goals adaptively (to switch between performance-oriented and learning-oriented goals and to use multiple goal orientations when working on a complex task) as they develop higher cognitive abilities (Bell & Kozlowski, 2002) or when they have greater focus on intrinsic, rather than extrinsic, rewards (Simons, Dewitte & Lens, 2004).

In terms of motivation to achieve goals, Elliot and Harackiewicz (1994) found that providing highly motivated agents with clear criteria about how their performance will be assessed increased their intrinsic motivation to complete tasks, while such provisions had the

opposite effect on agents with significantly less general motivation to achieve. According to Hart and Albarracin (2009), when primed with a performance goal and then interrupted from their task by a potentially fun diversion, highly motivated agents tended to stay motivated to achieve their goal whereas low motivated agents tended to become motivated to have fun.

Other factors that influence the achievement of goals include age (Harackiewicz et. al, 2002; Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Bong, 2009; Romer, Duckworth, Sznitman & Park, 2010), race (Steele, 1997), and gender (Midgley & Arunkumar, 1996) – though many of these factors are beyond the scope of my present study. Synthesizing the literature on intrapersonal and situational interactions, Kaplan and Maehr (2002) noted that the intricate interactions of learning, performance, goals, and behaviors (both positive and negative) have caused many researchers (e.g., Bempechat & Boulay, 2000, as cited in Kaplan & Maehr, 2002; Dowson & McInerney, 2001) to move away from quantitative research focused on controlled settings “in favor of qualitative methods and a grounded theory perspective that allow the exploration of these unique motivational processes” (pp. 141-142).

Effective use of goal setting. Given the complexities of influences on the success of a goal, it is important to consider what traits make a goal effective. Certainly, simply setting a goal is not enough to ensure that it will be reached. I could declare that it is my goal to do a thousand pushups in two minutes, but it’s unlikely that I would. But moving beyond goals that are unattainable because they are unreasonable, it is necessary to understand what makes goal setting effective. For the purposes of this paper, I define *effective* as this: likely to improve performance in a manner relevant to the goal that has been set. For example, a goal to decrease comma errors in my writing would be considered effective if, as a result of setting the goal, I decreased the number of comma errors. I would not consider the goal effective if it did not result in fewer

comma errors but somehow lead to improved subject/verb agreement (perhaps because I was re-reading my work more carefully). Whereas subject/verb agreement is undeniably important, it would not be an improvement related to the goal that I set.

In a 2003 meta-analysis, Schunk established three characteristics of an effective goal (i.e., one that is likely to result in improved performance or learning): it is specifically defined, it will be accomplished relatively quickly, and it is sufficiently challenging. Schunk (1996) defined the third requirement – sufficiently challenging – as requiring the student to expend sufficient effort to focus on the goal without it seeming unattainable (p. 164).

Having defined what research shows to be an effective goal, it is important to now address how to effectively use those goals. One critical component of effective use of goals in the classroom is feedback on the process of reaching these goals. Schunk and Swartz (1993) found that children who were given learning goals for writing and feedback on progress toward them tended to increase the transfer of their writing skill from one assignment to the next over students who received only performance goals. They “also found that combining [learning] goals with progress feedback enhanced transfer of writing strategy use, skill, and self-efficacy” over receiving learning goals alone (p. 351). Thus, students must receive consistent feedback on their goals in order for them to be effective. Though Schunk and Swartz addressed goals provided to the students, it seems likely that their finding would hold true for student-generated goals as well.

Implementation intentions. One strategy that research has shown to be particularly effective at helping agents achieve their goals is the implementation intention. As discussed earlier, an implementation intention is an augmentation of a goal (“I intend to reach goal x .”) that takes the form of “In order to reach goal x , when situation y arises, I will perform response z ”

(as used in my study, adapted from Gollwitzer, 1999, p. 493). Gollwitzer argues that implementation intentions must be formulated after goal intentions, but provide a clear plan of when and how the agent will reach the intended goal. He further argues that implementation intentions (a) allow the agent to adapt to circumstances while maintaining focus on goal attainment; (b) make the decision to enact a goal quicker and, perhaps, subconsciously when the situation in question arises; (c) help the agent better detect when the goal can be worked towards; and (d) protect against “tempting distractions, bad habits, or competing goals” (p. 494).

Empirical evidence demonstrates the efficacy of using implementation intentions for attaining various goals, including boosting test scores (Bayer & Gollwitzer, 2007), preventing test anxiety from negatively impacting performance (Parks-Stamm, Gollwitzer & Oettingen, 2010), improving compliance with an assignment during spring break (Gollwitzer & Brandstatter, 1997), and increasing time spent studying (Orbell, 2003).

The effect of articulating implementation intentions has been accounted for by its speeding response to a stimuli by decreasing need for conscious intervention (Bayer et al., 2009) and by increasing automaticity of response to that stimuli (Brandstatter, Lengfelder & Gollwitzer, 2001). Webb and Sheeran (2008) found that the effects of implementation intentions were not the result of increased deliberation but rather a heightened awareness of opportunities and the creation of strong links between opportunity and response. Similarly, Gallo & Gollwitzer (2007) found that using implementation intentions does not increase cognitive load, suggesting that they can be implemented automatically once internalized.

Goals in the Classroom Context

In this section, I will consider what research has been done on the role of goals in the classroom context. Murayama and Elliot (2009) assert that “[f]ar less research has been conducted on [classroom goals] than personal achievement goals” (p. 433). Of the research there is, the majority of it is quantitative, looking at the effect that goals have on students’ performance on specific tasks. This research clearly indicates that goals, when used appropriately and implemented properly, can improve students’ performance on a variety of tasks. However, not much qualitative research has been conducted on the role that goals play in the classroom.

In their meta-analysis, Murayama and Elliot (2009) point to several reviews of the research at the “classroom level of analysis in accounting for achievement-relevant outcomes” (p. 433). Midgley et al. (as cited in Murayama & Elliot, 2009) examined goal-orientations in the classroom, differentiating between performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals, but not between learning-approach and learning-avoidance goals. These three orientations (learning, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance), when applied to the classroom, resulted in three different classroom goal structures:

- ... (a) a [learning] goal structure, in which the classroom environment focuses on engaging in academic work to develop competence, especially task- and intrapersonally-based competence;
- (b) a performance-approach goal structure, in which the classroom environment focuses on engaging in academic work to demonstrate competence, especially normative competence; and
- (c) a performance-avoidance goal structure, in which the classroom environment focuses on engaging in academic work to avoid demonstrating incompetence, especially normative incompetence. (Murayama & Elliot, 2009, pp. 432-433)

Naturally, of these three structures, it seems that the first, structured around learning goals, would be the most conducive to authentic learning and engagement and the least likely to result in the negative outcomes generally associated with performance-avoidance goal orientations and

sometimes associated with performance-approach goals. However, in the typical classroom, assignments have grades associated with them, priming students for a performance-approach or performance-avoidance goal orientation that, at best, competes with the more beneficial learning-approach goal.

Because such elements in the classroom negatively influence students' ability to successfully pursue learning-oriented goals, Kaplan and Maehr (2002) argue that teachers should help students learn how to implement goals while also working to understand how they view their assignments. The latter, they argue, is critical for students to understand how to apply different strategies effectively in a variety of contexts (p. 153). Given the complexity and personalized nature of this knowledge, they found that it would require input from each student and a highly personalized approach to helping them set appropriate goals that can have a positive impact on learning and achievement. Kaplan and Maehr's meta-analysis underscores the need for the personalization of students' learning by the teacher in order to make goals effective. Evans (2001) found that self-assessments can be a useful way for teachers to understand how students perceive their own writing and to address gaps when they exist between self-assessment and teacher assessment of the actual product.

One way for teachers to better understand students' perceptions as related to a variety of assignments and how to help them reach their goals in a given situation would be to have them self-reflect and then generate their own goals and implementation intentions based upon their previous performance of similar tasks. However, there is surprisingly little research on this strategy, and what has been done has been conducted under relatively contrived circumstances. As Kaplan and Maehr (2002) lament, research on the role of goals, motivation, and implementation has relied on the experimenter providing goal to the subject rather than a student

generating his or her own goals or implementation intentions. While the research indicates that experimenter-provided goals and implementation intentions can be effective, there is a dearth of research on goals and implementation intentions generated by students.

Given that I studied student-generated goals in a relatively naturalistic setting in which students were expected to assess their needs and typical behaviors before setting goals and establishing implementation intentions, it is important to establish that students actually can engage in meaningful self-assessment as a key step in the process. Once an agent has identified a problem in a piece of writing, the next logical step is to generate a goal to improve that problem. This, of course, assumes that the agent wishes to improve. Though I have not seen research on this topic, I believe it is common sense. Once an agent knows that some aspect of a product could have been better, it is a matter of the agent's motivation to improve in the future, whether that motivation comes from inside the agent or from an external force.¹ However, in order to know that an aspect of an essay needs to be better, the writer must first self-assess. Because research has already looked at experimenter-provided goals and implementation intentions, I examined goals and implementation intentions generated by the students. In order for them to generate their own goals, they must be able to self-assess.

Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) define *self-assessment* as “a process of formative assessment during which students reflect on the quality of their work, judge the degree to which it reflects explicitly stated goals or criteria, and revise accordingly” (p. 13). However, I maintain that while revision often follows self-assessment, self-assessment does not necessarily entail “revising accordingly,” as an agent could do the former and decide not to do the latter – or could attempt a revision without adequately self-assessing the needs of the paper. Much of this self-

¹ What follows – moving from the goal to the implementation intention – assuredly is a larger matter, one that would require greater collaboration with the teacher. See Andrade & Boulay (2003) for a discussion of the importance of teacher input in order to solve problems that students identify.

assessment in the classroom, though, is completed using “criteria generated by the teacher that are so clear that the student can assess himself in the same way that the teacher does” (Andrade & Du, 2007, p. 160), thus decreasing the chances that students will self-assess ineffectively. Furthermore, Andrade and Du also point out that self-assessment itself can have a positive effect on writing as it promotes students’ monitoring of their own “thinking processes and task performances as they happen” (p. 161). As such, although revision might not necessarily follow self-assessment, these studies argue for a mechanism by which self-assessment promotes writing improvement.

Research has shown that both middle-school students (Grisham & Wolsey, 2005) and college students (Cho & Schunn, 2007) are effective peer reviewers. Although there is not an exact correlation between being able to assess others’ work and being able to assess one’s own, it demonstrates that students do seem to possess two of the skills essential for so doing: identifying what makes writing good and judging the quality of writing against these criteria. Furthermore, the tools of assessment used are the same. Both peer review and self-assessment require judging the quality of work against a standard. If students can be effective peer reviewers, it is logically likely that they can self-assess – assuming that they can look at their own work in the same objective manner that they can look at another’s. While such a critical look at one’s own work may be more difficult, it seems that practice with looking critically at others’ work might help develop these skills.

Self-assessment and goal setting are distinct: the former is a necessary step to accomplish the latter.² For the purposes of this study, it is important to look at what little research has been

² It may seem that self-assessment could be bypassed if a teacher provides feedback on a student’s essay and then asks that student to set goals for improvement. However, it would be the rare case that the student is given so little feedback (or asked to set so many goals that all of the problems addressed in feedback) that the student would not have to reflect in order to decide the specific instances of feedback about which he plans to set goals.

done on students' ability to set goals for their own writing. In such studies, goal setting has often been considered as part of a larger strategy for writing improvement. Self-Regulated Strategy Development (Graham & Harris, 1989) has considered how students respond to their own writing with the mediation of teacher comments and feedback, as part of its six-step process that includes goal setting and self-assessment. However, studies that show the effectiveness of Self-Regulated Strategy Development (e.g., Chalk, Hagan-Burke & Burke, 2005; De La Paz & Owen, 2000; Helsel & Greenberg, 2007; Lane et al., 2006; Santangelo, Harris & Graham, 2008) do not necessarily show that goal setting alone is effective for improving writing. Rather, they demonstrate that goal setting can be a *component* of an effective strategy for improving writing.

Research has also demonstrated that students can effectively self-assess and can improve the quality of their own writing when using a student-and-teacher-generated rubric as part of the writing process (Andrade, Du & Wang, 2008) or when using model papers to generate evaluative criteria and then revise their work after composing a first draft (Andrade, Du & Mycek, 2010). There are, of course, limits to the potential of self-assessment. Andrade et al. (2010) found that self-assessment, when grounded extensively in observation of models, is most likely to increase achievement on assignments that are nearly identical to the models but may be less helpful on other kinds of assignments due to difficulty with transfer. Other research finds that self-assessment improves with practice (Hanrahan & Isaacs, 2001; Oscarson, 2009). Similarly, Andrade and Du (2007) found that as students practiced self-assessment, their attitudes about it became more positive and that most students believed that self-assessment was effective at improving the quality of the work they produced. However, this study also found that being able to self-assess in one assignment or discipline did not always transfer fully to another assignment or discipline. Furthermore, they found that, ironically, the better students are at self-assessment,

the more they may begin to challenge the criteria by which they are being assessed. They theorize that this willingness to challenge the criteria may stem from the conflict between the student's criteria for excellence and the teacher's criteria.

The studies discussed in this section underscore the role that the teacher must take in scaffolding students' understanding and implementation of a skill. Like the setting of goals, students need help developing the skill of self-assessment. Only once they have cultivated this skill are they likely, as discussed earlier, to be effective self-assessors. Being good at self-assessment, of course, will not make writers effective at goal setting, but it is a necessary component – assuming that the goals will not be given to them. Even if writers are receiving feedback from others, they need to be able to assess which of those comments are most appropriate and, in a classroom setting, which lessons are most applicable to their own writing.

In order for students to develop self-assessment skills and be able to apply those self-assessments to subsequent revisions, Andrade (2000) and Andrade and Boulay (2003) found that teachers not only needed to give rubrics to their students but also needed to provide guidance to help students understand how to address the problems they identified. Goodrich (1996; as cited in Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009) identified eight elements that students needed to be able to self-assess effectively:

1. awareness of the value of self-assessment
2. access to clear criteria on which to base the assessment
3. a specific task or performance to assess
4. models of self-assessment
5. direct instruction in and assistance with self-assessment
6. practice
7. cues regarding when it is appropriate to self-assess
8. opportunities to revise and improve the task or performance

In order to bring about these conditions, Ross (2006) recommended four teacher-actions:

1. Define the assessment criteria students will use.
2. Teach students to apply the assessment criteria properly.
3. Provide feedback on their self-assessments.
4. Help students improve performance based upon self-assessment.

In their discussion of his work, Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) added two more recommendations for what teachers should do to make self-assessment effective:

5. Allow enough time for revision once students have self-assessed.
6. Have students self-assess (i.e., identify strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, et c.) rather than having them self-evaluate (i.e., grading their performance).

Thus, as with all other activities in the classroom, there must be a gradual release of teacher control over the activity, a slow and systematic transition from a teacher-driven activity to a student-driven activity in order for successful learning of the skill. Also, as Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) point out with their sixth step, teachers must discourage students from focusing only on the extrinsic reward of a good grade. Rather, they need encouragement to also focus on assessing the actual quality of their writing. Although neither Ross nor Andrade and Valtcheva are addressing goal setting directly, as discussed earlier, effective self-assessment is a necessary step preceding the ability to effectively set goals for their own writing. As such, I take these six recommendations as applicable to effective implementation of goal setting as well as of self-assessment.

Based on the results of a pilot study that I conducted two years ago, I believe that there are additional teacher actions that educators should add when extending beyond self-assessment and into goal setting:³

³ It is important to note that in the pilot study, many of Andrade & Valtcheva's criteria were not met; as such, my first two additions are somewhat tentative. That said, both of these were common refrains in the participants' responses about what they thought was needed to make the self-assessment and goal setting more effective in the classroom.

7. *Vary the questions to which the students are asked to respond to avoid a feeling of monotony.*
8. *Show enthusiasm for goal setting and self-assessment.*

A final recommendation that I added to the list (when applied to goal setting) stems from research on goal setting, specifically on the effect of implementation intentions, which suggests the importance not only of setting a goal but also of articulating how to reach that goal and when those steps will be taken (Gollwitzer, 1993).

9. *Have students set implementation intentions rather than just goals.*

Given the research on the efficacy of implementation intentions for improving task performance, I maintain that having students set them would facilitate their use of goal setting in the classroom. Theoretically, I take this list of nine teacher-actions as one of the undergirding principles of my study. I define “research-based goal setting activities” as those that correspond with this list.

It is important to note clearly that neither Ross nor Andrade and Valtcheva’s lists were concerned with effectively applying goal setting in the classroom. Thus, I am not arguing that their lists were incomplete for their purpose of promoting effective self-assessment. Rather, I am arguing that, when considering goal setting, their teacher actions that promote self-assessment should be present in addition to the three additional teacher actions I have identified that promote effective use of goal setting.

The SAT Essay

In order to appeal to prospective participants – and in order to have a ready set of essay questions – I used prompts from the SAT essay in this study. Because the purpose of the study was to look at goal setting, these essays provided an ideal set of questions. They were similar

enough in format that goals set for one could easily apply to the next, and students found that they had similar problems from essay to essay.

In 2005, the College Board added the Writing section to the SAT. In this section of the test, the students write a single, holistically scored essay and respond to a series of multiple choice questions addressing writing conventions. The College Board argued at the time that inclusion of the essay writing task would increase focus on writing within secondary education and results from it would serve as a better predictor of success in college than the results of the quantitative or verbal sections of the test (MacGowan, 2005). The College Board has asserted that it has been successful in these two respects (Korbin, Deng & Shaw, 2011).

Criticism of the SAT Essay

However, as the College Board was adding this section to the SAT, numerous critics expressed concerns about it. They were both practical and pedagogical, based on prior research about one-shot, high-stakes, timed writing assessments, and many of these concerns still endure. One practical concern has been the fact that essay scoring has been shown to vary greatly when an individual takes the SAT more than once suggesting problems with reliability (Camp, 2009; MacGowan, 2005; Mlodinow, 2008). Second, there has been concern that the essay requirement exacerbates the existing score gap between affluent and poorer test takers, as the affluent test takers can afford tutors to help with writing – just as they have been able to afford help with the other two sections (MacGowan, 2005). Educators' concerns include that factual errors in students' writing do not lower scores (Perelman, 2005), that students are encouraged to generate formulaic responses (Albertson & Marwitz, 2001) which can contribute to a narrow definition of writing and, consequently, to students' devaluing writing (Ketter & Pool, 2001; Luce-Kapler &

Klinger, 2005), and that longer essays score better than shorter ones despite the quality of the writing (Perelman, 2005). This suggests that, if teachers teach to the test, they will be encouraging formulaic essays unconcerned with facts that value length over quality of writing and development of argument rather than encouraging good writing.

Few of these concerns have been assuaged since the SAT began including the essay writing task. However, a study conducted by researchers at The College Board (Korbin, Deng & Shaw, 2011) found that although a positive correlation does exist between length of essay and score, such correlation is explained by an underlying variable: the students' scores on the Critical Reading portion of the SAT. Consequently, The College Board suggests that underlying skill accounts for both quality of essay and length of essay. Gregg et al. (2007) argue for a different underlying variable, asserting that fluency in writing results in an increase in both quantity and quality of writing in standardized testing situations. Korbin et al. (2011) also proposed that longer essays generally made arguments that were better developed and better supported, thus resulting in a higher score. In short, they argue that length and quality are correlated, although there is not a direct, causal relationship. Instead, they further observed that there were other traits of essays that more strongly predicted writers' scores. Higher scores were positively correlated with use of a five-paragraph theme (Effect size = .28) and use of an academic example (*e.g.*, a historical or literary example, scientific fact) (.20). Scores were negatively correlated with ending the essay mid-sentence (-.21) and with using no examples (-.67). Because these elements, typically associated with what teachers consider "good writing," more strongly predicted a higher score, they argue that if teachers are "teaching to the test," they would still do well to teach the elements of "good writing" rather than just encouraging students to write as

much as possible. Thus, any concerns about the score influencing pedagogy should, they argue, be reconsidered.

Motivation and the SAT Essay

Olinghouse et al. (2012) looked at motivation with regard to writing state-mandated tests, but the findings may apply equally well to understanding motivation related to the SAT essay. As discussed earlier, the study found six elements of a writing task that motivate students to write: “time allocation, audience specification, audience intimacy, definition of task, allowance for multiple perspectives, and real-world relevance and purpose” (p. 111). With respect to time allocation, the SAT essay does not mirror the writing process in which most writers engage: writing “over a period of several days” (p. 112), according to Olinghouse et al. Instead, the student may have as little as 25 minutes on a state standardized writing assessment to plan and compose an essay. The essay task does not identify the audience for the paper beyond stating that the author must write legibly because “people who are not familiar with your handwriting will read what you write” (p. 389, *The Official SAT Study Guide*, 2006). This specific declaration is quite the opposite of what Olinghouse et al. call for when trying to promote students’ motivation: familiarity with audience.

However, the SAT essay prompts do meet Olinghouse et al.’s (2006) other three criteria for motivation on a writing task. First, the task is clearly defined. Second, each of the essay prompts in *The Official SAT Study Guide* asks the writer to choose and argue for a position, implying that multiple perspectives are acceptable. The prompts invite the writer to draw from “examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observation” (p. 389), further indicating the acceptability of multiple perspectives. Finally, each of the questions connects to

the real world and allows writers to draw on their own experiences in response. As such, the SAT writing task meets only half of the criteria that Olinghouse et al. argue are necessary for encouraging motivation in writing.

Naturally, the SAT essay also has the added motivation of students wanting to do well on it to improve the Writing portion of their SAT score. Merely talking to a high school student about why they want to do well on the various sections of the SAT yields numerous reasons that the score matters, from college acceptance to parental approval to competition with peers. For most high school students, these concerns are simply not present on state-mandated writing assessments. Furthermore, each of these added traits relates to only one feature of the essay to be composed: what score it will earn. Such a focus pushes SAT test takers even more strongly toward a performance-oriented goal.

Conclusion

The approach that I take in my study responds to Kaplan and Maehr's (2002) call for qualitative research to examine the complex influences on motivation. As the studies in this section have discussed, why an agent succeeds or fails at achieving a goal is more complex than Likert scales could accurately capture. It is only through a qualitative look at what motivates writers that we could understand how they use goals, how the use of those goals influences their thinking about tasks, and the complex role that the teacher takes in influencing motivation, goal setting, and achievement. By addressing these gaps in the research, I hope to be able to contribute to the body of work related to these topics.

Furthermore, I will organize my thinking about the complexities of goal orientations through the lens of the 3×2 motivation matrix (as discussed in the first chapter), as research

demonstrates that these orientations can influence the way that students are able or unable to reach their goals.

Finally, while teachers can only influence, not control, their students' goal orientations, they can exert a much greater degree of control over the ways in which goals are formulated and used in the classroom. Thus, in the design of my research (to be discussed in the following chapter), I will be applying the elements discussed in this chapter that help to promote both effective goal setting and the attainment of those goals.

Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

In this section, I will consider the assumptions and previous research relevant to the design of this study. Then, I will explain my research design and give details about the course designed as part of this study. After that, I will describe participants, beginning with how they were recruited and then will provide details about the recruited participants. After that, I will discuss the implementation of the course and the data that I collected from the participants. I will then address my role as the researcher and the trustworthiness of my findings, followed by a description of my data analysis strategies, and, finally, the limitations of this study.

Theoretical Assumptions Relevant to Design

Because the aim of this study was to learn more about students' opinions of research-based goal setting activities, it is critical to first identify what this means. In order for students to be able to set goals for the improvement of their writing, first, they need to be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses in their own writing, which I shall refer to as *self-assessment*. Second, once they have identified problems with their writing, in order to improve as a result of goal setting, they need to have the desire, the skills, and a plan to improve those identified weaknesses. Even if they are completing the task as a requirement of the course, they are still motivated to adhere to the requirements of the course through a performance-oriented goal. While teachers should hope for more than academic-alienation-oriented motivation from their students, it is still a kind of motivation.

One critical element undergirding my study is the list of nine teacher actions found to be critical in making self-assessment effective. The first four come from Ross (2006), the fifth and sixth from Andrade and Valtcheva (2009), and the final three are additions that I made based on my pilot study.

1. Define the assessment criteria students will use.
2. Teach students to apply the assessment criteria properly.
3. Provide feedback on their self-assessments.
4. Help students improve performance based upon self-assessment.
5. Allow enough time for revision once students have self-assessed.
6. Have students self-assess (*i.e.*, identify strengths, weaknesses, areas for improvement, *etc.*) rather than having them self-evaluate (*i.e.*, grading their performance).
7. Vary the questions to which students are asked to respond in their reflections to avoid a feeling of monotony.
8. Show enthusiasm for self-assessment.
9. Have students set implementation intentions to reach their goals.

Because I was interested in students' opinions when goal setting was implemented using research based practices, it was important to consider how I implemented the nine teacher actions from the list above in the context of the course offering. I will further consider the extent to which I was able to meet these nine criteria in the "Limitations" sub-section.

Finally, it is important to remind my reader about the formulation of an implementation intention (Gollwitzer, 1993) that I used in this study: "In order to achieve goal *x*, when situation *y* arises, I will perform response *z*." This formula is nearly identical to Gollwitzer's formulation, "Whenever situation *x* arises, I will initiate the goal directed response *y*!" (Gollwitzer, 1999, p. 493) However, in order to make the formulation more user-friendly for adolescents, I have modified the phrase into its current form.

Research Design

In my study, I was interested in how high school students understood and used goal setting when it was implemented using research-based practices and what relationships, if any, there were between their motivation to write and their opinions of goal setting. Furthermore, because qualitative research stresses that phenomena are dependent largely upon their specific contexts, I knew that my purpose in the study was going to be to try to understand students' opinions in this one – and isolated - instance. With these considerations in mind, the methodological approach that made the most sense was a case study. In particular, I conducted an instrumental case study (Creswell, 2007) in that it focused on a specific issue – goal setting when it is implemented based upon research-based methods – and then selected a bounded case to examine and then illustrate this issue. For the purposes of this study, the bounded system that I analyzed was the classroom context that I created as a way to address my research questions. In keeping with a case study approach, I drew on multiple sources of data including interviews, informal discussions with participants, and writing samples. Overall, I treated all interactions with participants and all the writing that they did in the class as data, especially given that the class was created specifically for the purposes of this study.

By taking an open-ended approach to the research and to the kinds of data included in the study, I believe that I was able to generate thick, rich description of the participants' relevant opinions and motivations. I conducted this study in the context of a weekly after-school course on writing for the SAT that met for seven consecutive weeks.

Description of Course

In order to collect data effectively for this study, I created a class that the participants would engage with throughout the course of the study, a course that met five times in order to have each participant write, reflect, and receive instruction in writing in exchange for their participation. In this section, I will explain the structure of the course as a whole and will explain what occurred at each of the five meetings.

Course Meetings

I met with participants for the intervention portion of the study. These five meetings were each 75 minutes and followed the same format: 25 minutes for composing an SAT essay, a 5 minute break, and a 45 minute instructional period. At the start of these meetings (excluding the first), I returned essays to the students with written comments on the essay, on their implementation intentions, and, if applicable, on the other work that they had turned in the previous week, such as revisions or other exercises, as detailed below (for my comments on their essays, see Appendix E. At this point, participants were reminded to review their work from the previous week to prepare for the composition of their new essay. With one exception due to my forgetting to make photocopies, writing prompts were taken from a book published by the College Board, *The Official SAT Study Guide* (2006), which contains authentic SAT tests. The week that I forgot to make copies, the fourth course meeting, I used a prompt from the College Board's website (see Appendix M for a list of each week's prompts).

In the second part of the course meetings, the instructional period, I selected elements of the participants' essays that needed improvement in order for them to perform better on the SAT essay. I spoke with participants as a whole group rather than individually. In the following

subsections, I will address what topics we covered in the course meetings and provide an outline of each of these meetings. I feel it is important to note that if the topics covered in the instructional period seem rather superficial, that is because the participants' arguments were sufficient for the SAT essay's demands, which are slight. Instead, their essays tended to suffer because of superficial problems such as a lack of sentence variety and comma or syntax errors.

All courses took place in the early evening at a local church that graciously allowed me to use one of its Sunday school rooms for this study. The room was furnished with a table, chairs, and a chalkboard, which made it an ideal non-school location for conducting this study. It is in this location, too, that the preliminary meeting, and all focus groups occurred.

First course meeting. For the first 25 minutes of this meeting, all participants composed their first SAT essay on what motivates people to change. After they had completed the essay, they took a short break. After this, we looked at the rubric that the SAT uses for assessing students' essays (for this rubric, see Appendix G). We discussed terms that they had questions about, then considered what patterns they noticed in the rubric. We then examined four sample essays (two essays that earned a 6, one essay that earned a 5, and one essay that earned a 4) from the book from which the essay prompts were taken. Based on the characteristics of an essay, identified both by the students and by me, that earned a 6, I asked participants to set two goals for their next essay by responding to the question, "What would you do differently next time?" We then adjourned.

Second course meeting. Participants began by reviewing their goals from the previous course meeting and then composed their next essay. We then took a short break. After this break, I instructed them on "implementation intentions" and how to set those using specific examples from their first essay based on the problems that they had identified. To reinforce the

importance of reflection on their writing, I had students first score their own essay from that week and then had them peer review to see if their assessments jibed with another student's. As a last activity for the day, students set two implementation intentions for their next essay which they would write the following week.

Third course meeting. Participants spent the first 25 minutes composing their essays. After they finished and took a short break, we discussed how effective they thought they were at achieving their goals set the previous week. Because many of them had selected goals centered around being more specific, the second half of the meeting focused on having students look critically at the essays that they had just composed in order to consider places where they could have included more specific details. Next they shared those examples with the class. To close, I had students read over their essay and set two implementation intentions related to the two most significant weaknesses they noted.

Fourth course meeting. After writing the essay and taking a break, the participants and I discussed if they thought they had included enough details this time. This was the focus because everyone, except for one student who had been sick, had made this an implementation intention for that week. Then, because I had been noticing that students needed to have greater sentence variety, I taught a lesson on that topic. Then, they tallied the number of different ways they began their sentences in that night's essay and concluded the night by setting implementation intentions for the next week's essay.

Fifth course meeting. After composing the essay and taking a short break, the participants and I looked at some sentence combining activities from *Sentence Combining* (Strong, 1994). We discussed what sentence combining is, how to best do it, and how it can improve future writing. After that, we did a few activities to practice this skill, shared our

results, and gave each other feedback the quality of their sentences. Because the participants would not be writing an essay the following week, they did not set implementation intentions.

Participants and Recruitment

Because this case study focuses so intensely on the five participants who completed the course and focus groups, I begin a description of my methodology by discussing how the participants were selected. Next I will discuss initial sample exclusion criteria for the study and then describe course participants. A more detailed description of the five focal participants will then follow.

Participant Recruitment

Participants were recruited for this study through advertising, both verbal and written. Prior to the start of the study, I put recruitment posters up in the area around the school where I teach (see Appendix I for a copy of the advertisement). When these posters drew only two prospective participants, I also put an advertisement on Craigslist, though this netted only phishing scams. Ultimately, all participants were recruited through word of mouth. At the school where I teach, five students heard about the study from the director of the school's tutoring center, whom I had asked to help spread the word about the study. The other four prospective participants heard about the study through my father, a doctor in the area, who tends to talk quite a lot about me to his high-school-aged patients and their parents.

In all cases, because the participants were under the age of 18, their parents contacted me through email so that I could send them more information about the study (for a copy of the

initial email sent to parents, see Appendix J; for a copy of the email sent to those who responded in the affirmative to that first email, see Appendix L).

Selection and Exclusion Criteria

Going into the study, I planned to accept the first 15 applicants who confirmed their interest, even if more were interested. The first criterion was based on number. I had planned to limit my study to 15 participants, even if more were interested. As it turned out, there were only 11 interested and otherwise-eligible prospective participants, so no one was excluded based on my having more than 15 high school students interested in participating. Had this occurred, I would have accepted the first 15 prospective participants once I confirmed their interest and availability.

The next criterion was that participants had to be currently enrolled in high school as freshmen, sophomores, or juniors. I established this criterion in the interest of having participants who are integrated into high school and who have extensive experience with SAT-like writing tasks, or at least sufficient experience with the composition of essays to be able to understand the requirements of an SAT essay. One interested participant, an eighth grader whose father emailed me, was excluded based upon this criterion.

Beyond capping the number of participants at 15 and requiring that they be high school students, I had two exclusion criteria, each of which was sufficient for exclusion on its own.

The first exclusion criterion was that students could not be currently enrolled in one of the classes that I teach as part of my job at a local public high school. Naturally, there would have been the potential for a perceived conflict of interest if students were helping me by participating in my study and if I were also assessing their school assignments. Two students in

my sophomore English course spoke to me about the study, but I informed them that they could not participate. They understood.

This exclusion criterion does not include students whom I taught previously or whom I may teach in the future. Indeed, both Jessie and Karen had taken a semester-long elective that I teach; Karen was enrolled in this elective during her freshman year, and Jessie was enrolled in it during the first semester of the school year when the majority of the data for this study was collected. However, recruitment began after the end of the course, so there was no potential for conflict of interest in my recruiting them or their agreeing to participate in the study.

The second exclusion criterion was that participants needed to be able to attend at least four of the five course meetings. The study depended upon students' being exposed to the concepts taught during the second half of each course meeting to ensure that they had sufficient experience with and understanding of implementation intentions to be able to comment on their experience with them. All prospective participants who attended the interest and information meeting (described in the next section) and did not continue were excluded from the study based on this criterion. Despite my best efforts, I was unable to find a weekly meeting time to which all interested participants could commit. Because four prospective participants could not meet on the day when the other 7 could, they had to be excluded from the study.

Two other participants, Yvonne and Zara, were also excluded based on their participation in the course. They had to be removed from the study during the course of the seven-week program, once they had already begun their participation. In Yvonne's case, she simply stopped coming to course meetings and thus missed more than one session. In Zara's case, she informed me that she would need to miss a second session, and I told her that she would have to be excluded from the study.

In order to clarify, the table below offers some data about each of the participants and each of the prospective participants. All students were, during the time of the study, sophomores in high school. Students marked with an asterisk are students at the high school where I teach.

Pseudonym	Did the student participate for the entire study?	If not, why not?
Annie (female)	No	Could not attend on the night most convenient for most participants.
Celeste (female)	Yes	n/a
Jessie* (female)	Yes	n/a
Jean (female)	No	Could not attend on the night most convenient for most participants.
Karen* (female)	Yes	n/a
Patrick* (male)	No	Could not attend on the night most convenient for most participants.
Melody* (female)	Yes	n/a
Meredith* (female)	No	Could not attend on the night of the week most convenient for most participants.
Thomas	Yes	n/a
Yvonne (female)	No	Unknown; she stopped coming to meetings and did not respond to emails.
Zara (female)	No	Had to miss more than one meeting.

Table 2. List of participants. This figure presents the pseudonyms of prospective participants, whether or not they participated in the entire study, and – if they did not participate in the entire study – why that was the case.

Descriptions of the Five Focal Participants

In this sub-section, I will provide a brief description of each of the five participants who completed the entire course of the study.

Celeste. Celeste was a sophomore and was the only participant from her school. She joined the study after hearing about it from my father, who is her doctor treating her for injuries that prevented her from participating in sports during the spring. She informed me that it was

because of the injury that she had the time to participate in the study. Otherwise, she would have been busy with practices and games.

Interpersonally, Celeste was an affable young woman who frequently thanked me for the classes and showed a great deal of enthusiasm for both the course and for writing. She engaged readily and pleasantly with the other participants even though she had never met any of them prior to the study.

In terms of the quality of her writing, Celeste was an adept writer who frequently expressed a desire to do better. On each of the four essays she wrote, she earned a score of 5 (out of 6). However, she often expressed concern about the quality of her writing during timed writing, both in the course and in school. She implied that she was insecure about her ability as a writer, ascribing her success to her teacher being an easy grader rather than her ability. Celeste reported feeling stressed any time she was given a fixed amount of time to write an essay, which added to the pressure that she felt when completing the writing task. She felt that the combination of this pressure and lack of time resulted in her often making small, superficial spelling or style errors or having difficulty refining her thesis statements and topic sentences. She believed that this sometimes negatively impacted her ability to implement her goals.

Jessie. Jessie was a sophomore at the high school where I teach, and she had been a student in the Journalism elective course that I taught the semester prior to this study. She heard about the study through word of mouth at the school.

Interpersonally, Jessie was a boisterous young woman who often became excited and talked over others. She was often glib, especially with me and with Karen, a close friend of hers who also participated. In spite of these behaviors, she did not seem to be perceived as rude by anyone in the class.

In terms of her writing, her ideas were generally very good, and her creativity shone through in her essays. She scored well to begin with and improved during the course, earning a 4 on her first essay, a 5 on her second and third, and a 6 on her fourth; she was absent for the fifth week. Although she had never done any practice SAT writing, she quickly learned to, as she put it, “adapt to the new environment” of the SAT essay. She noted during her interview that the open-ended prompts and the fact that they invited the use of personal accounts matched closely with the way that she thinks and what she prefers to write more about than do more traditional school assignments, which tend to be analytic and text-based. She commented, “I would always pick telling ... a story rather than re-narrating information.” This is what she did in her practice essays.

In all but her first essay, she employed narratives – rather than more detached, impersonal examples – to respond to the prompt, and in all cases, these were invented “personal” narratives, supposedly about her, but she reported that they were entirely different from her real life. She made it clear that this was very comfortable for her during our first discussion of invented examples when Melody indicated that she was hesitant to make up events. In response, Jessie said, “Why? I do that all the time. I’m like, ‘I was born with six fingers and one hand!’”

Like Celeste, Jessie indicated that she became stressed when given a fixed amount of time to complete her assignments, even to the point that she admitted that she was trying to convince her school to allow her extended time to complete in-class assignments even though she does not have a documented learning disability

Karen. Karen was another of three participants from the high school where I teach. Like Jessie, I had previously taught Karen in the Journalism elective. In Karen’s case, she had taken it in the previous school year. She, too, heard about the study through word of mouth.

She was close friends with Jessie and alternated between treating her glibly and being reassuring, especially when Jessie expressed genuine concerns about her own performance on the SAT. Karen was frequently the first to respond to questions, both during the course meetings and during focus groups, but she tended not to cut her peers off or talk so much that she prevented them from doing so. Though she was by no means a quiet young woman, contrasted with Jessie, she was more reserved.

Karen wrote quite well. Her writer's voice was lively and engaging, she used vocabulary aptly, and she developed her ideas clearly. Other than the first essay, on which she scored a four, her subsequent essays were all sixes, a jump that she attributed to learning quickly about the SAT essay genre. In her writing as well as inter-personally, Karen presented herself as being quite confident; she rarely expressed concern that she would not be able to complete a task. With the SAT essay, for example, while Jessie expressed great concern about writing an essay in 25 minutes, Karen responded with light-hearted jokes.

Melody. Melody was a shy young woman, especially when contrasted with the two other participants from her school, Jessie and Karen. Melody's responses were usually short and succinct, and she sometimes had to be prompted to respond to questions in the focus groups. She was also a very diligent student who brought her AP US History text book with her to class for every meeting just in case she had a few minutes to do her homework, especially when the AP exam was imminent. Furthermore, she was the only student to have taken the SAT previously; she had taken the test twice already.

In most tasks relevant to this study, from setting goals to evaluating her writing to remaining motivated in school, Melody expressed a desire for assistance. During the focus group when Jessie and Karen were bemoaning how overbearing their parents are, Melody

expressed the opposite viewpoint. She explained that when she receives a bad grade, her father simply says, “Okay. Don’t do so bad the next time.” She wishes her “dad would try to push [her] more just to feel like he cares.” She explained that she believes she would work harder with this kind of parental attention. In much the same way, she expressed a need for external sources of motivation in order to prompt her to work harder.

In terms of her writing, Melody’s work improved gradually over the course of the five-week intervention, both in terms of score and in terms of writing quality, moving from a 3 on the first essay to 4’s on her next two essays, and a 5 on her final essay. Often, the issue with her responses was that they were too short, and Melody frequently expressed that timed writing was a problem for her. She stated that her “brain doesn’t function well” during timed writing. Melody reported that she is readily able to complete her essays in 45 minutes to an hour when she’s at home, but she cannot complete them in the 45 minutes afforded her for in-class essays in school.

Thomas. The only male participant and the only student from his high school participating, Thomas was unique in many ways. An avid boulderer (a kind of rock climbing that focuses on ascending very short and very difficult routes) and enthusiastic about the sciences, he was disinterested in English and frequently expressed his dislike for writing. In conversation, especially in groups, he was reserved and self-deprecating. In one-on-one situations, he opened up a bit, but he was still the most reserved of all of the participants. He joined the study at his parents’ insistence. I found this out after he came to a session having argued with his parents about whether he had to go. Nevertheless, with me, he was polite and attentive. I would not have guessed he was resistant to attending the class if he had not told me.

Thomas stated that he preferred to focus on things with a right or wrong answer, as is the case in math and science classes, subjects for which he indicated a strong preference. Thomas's being most interested in getting the "right" answer included assessments in English. When I asked him about revisions he had done for school, he reported how his current teacher, after grading and marking his essay, gives it back to him so that he can correct any grammatical mistakes and earn some credit back on the essay. He stated that he usually did this because it was an easy way to earn extra points. I believe Thomas completes this task because the elements that he's being asked to address – "grammar and stuff, but that's it" – are manageable and concrete. Grammar is right or wrong depending on dialect, and in Standard Written English there are rules that make something right or wrong.

Data Collection

The data collected for this study include the participants' written work (survey, essays, goal setting during class, other elements written during our meetings) and reflections (interview data, focus group data, and informal comments during classes).

In total, I met with participants ten times over the course of the study: once for a preliminary meeting, once for a pre-intervention focus group, five times for the course, once for a one-on-one interview, once for a post-intervention focus group, and a final time for a one-on-one member check after I had completed preliminary analysis of the data. In the following subsections, I will describe those meetings and detail the data collected at each.

Preliminary Meeting with Prospective Participants and Their Parents

Prior to the collection of data, I spoke with parents and prospective participants at the church where the rest of the meetings were held. The purpose of this meeting was threefold. First and foremost, because the participants were all under the age of 18, I needed to obtain parental consent for their taking part in the study. During this meeting, after I read the consent forms aloud to the parents and took any questions they had, they signed the forms and returned them to me (see Appendix A for this consent form). The students signed assent forms (see Appendix B for this assent form). Second, I asked the students to complete a short survey about academic motivation and goal setting so that I could begin to get a sense of the participants (see Appendix K for this survey). Finally, I knew that it would be difficult to find a time for participants to attend seven meetings (the five course meetings bookended by the two focus groups), so I had participants complete a note card indicating days of the week and times that they would be able to attend course meetings.

Pre-Intervention Focus Group

At the preliminary meeting, it became clear that participants had spring break during two different weeks. I had scheduled the first focus group during one of them. Thus, I conducted two different focus groups, one during the originally planned time and the other in the hour prior to the first of the five course meetings.

The first focus group included Jessie, Karen, and Melody, all students at the high school where I teach. The second included the other four participants, Celeste, Thomas, Yvonne, and Zara – though the latter two dropped out of the study before its completion and thus their incomplete data has not been considered in the analysis. These focus groups were video

recorded and transcribed. Both of these focus groups addressed what experiences participants had with goal setting and what their perceptions of it were; both focus groups lasted approximately 40 minutes (see Appendix C for this interview protocol).

Data from Course Meetings

The majority of the data collected in these meetings was collected during the first and third parts of the course meetings, the writing of the essays and, at the end of each meeting, the goals or implementation intentions that participants set. In the second part of the course meetings, the instructional period, I selected elements of the participants' essays that needed improvement in order for them to perform better on the SAT essay. Field notes were collected during this portion of the course meetings, but I have maintained records about these elements as well and have referred to them when reviewing my data. (For a full discussion what occurred in these meetings, please see the earlier subsection on Course Meetings in this chapter; this subsection deals with the data that were collected during these meetings.)

First course meeting. All participants attended this meeting, and after writing the essay and taking a short break, we examined the SAT writing rubric and sample essays. Based on the characteristics of an essay, identified both by the students and by me, that earned a 6, I asked participants to set two goals for their next essay by responding to the question, "What would you do differently next time?"

Second course meeting. Karen was too sick to attend this meeting, and Melody was on a multi-day field trip, so only five participants attended. After composing their essays, we discussed implementation intentions, how they can impact writing, and participants set implementation intentions for their next essays.

Third course meeting. Thomas was sick, and Melody arrived fifteen minutes late, too late to compose the essay. We then discussed how well they thought they had met their implementation intentions from the previous week. At the end, they set implementation intentions based on the two most significant weaknesses that they thought were present in their essays.

Fourth course meeting. Zara was absent from this meeting. They composed their essays, we discussed adding details to their essays, and they set implementation intentions for the next essay.

Fifth course meeting. Prior to this meeting, Zara withdrew from the study. Celeste, Jessie, and Yvonne were all absent from this meeting. The three students who were able to attend composed their essay, took a short break, and did a few activities addressing sentence combining from *Sentence Combining* (Strong, 1994). Because the participants would not be writing an essay the following week, they did not set implementation intentions.

One-on-One Interviews

Between the end of the third course meeting and the start of the fifth, I conducted one-on-one interviews with participants. Jessie, Karen, and Melody were interviewed at the high school they attend and at which I teach. Celeste and Thomas were interviewed at the church prior to the fourth and fifth course meetings, respectively. Yvonne was interviewed at her house, and Zara was not interviewed because she had stopped attending the class. These interviews were all audio-recorded and later transcribed. Each interview lasted between twenty and thirty minutes and focused on their opinions about implementation intentions and what impact they felt the course was having on their preparation for the writing portion of the SAT.

During these interviews, I followed an open-ended protocol, starting with a general list of questions that I wanted to answer (see Appendix D for the interview protocol) and adapting them and their order based upon the flow of the conversation. In all cases, participants gave responses to the questions on the interview protocol, though some of them answered them as part of a response to an earlier question.

Post-Intervention Focus Group

The final group meeting with the five participants who persisted through the course occurred the following week. Yvonne did not show up, and because she had stopped coming to class, Zara was not invited. This meeting was video recorded and transcribed.

During the focus group, I followed an open-ended interview protocol (see Appendix F for the interview protocol). In the case of this focus group, the conversation moved naturally through the questions in the order that they were in for the protocol. These questions asked participants to reflect on their work throughout the course and sought their opinions on goal setting, especially how those opinions might have shifted throughout the course of the study.

I selected a focus group for the collection of this data for two reasons. First, it allowed participants to build off of each other's ideas and use each other as sounding boards for their own thoughts. During the discussion, participants were able to deepen both their own and their peers' ideas. Second, it provided a streamlined way to gather all participants' opinions, especially given that they were present to compose a final essay without relevant instruction afterwards.

Researcher Role and Trustworthiness

In this section, I will first discuss the potential issues with trustworthiness that might be present for this research study. Then I will discuss the steps I took to decrease the impact that my own bias could have had on my ability to develop trustworthy findings as well as what steps I took to ensure that participants provided me with what I believe to be their actual perceptions and feelings.

Clarifying the Researcher's Bias

Based on both the literature I have read and my experiences in the classroom, I believe that goal setting, and especially implementation intentions, can be very beneficial in helping students achieve their goals. Furthermore, I had studied students' opinions of goal setting in the past, and I have required students in almost all of my English classes to set goals. It was impossible for me not to enter this study with some pre-conceived notions about this activity; in fact, they have helped to shape the entire study (e.g., the three additional teacher actions that make goal setting successful). Indeed, in many ways my prior focus on the use of goals made me more able to successfully gather and interpret the data. This prior research, though, creates some potential problems in that I might impose my opinions or previous findings on the data that I collected through this study. However, I was vigilant in trying to avoid letting my previous findings influence my interpretation of the data for this study by consistently challenging them and by actively looking for disconfirming evidence that seemed to relate to findings from my previous studies. One way that I worked to avoid introducing my bias into this study was to change the context and modify the focus of the study. My previous study looked at students' use and opinions of goals in a year-long English class; this study looked at participants' motivations

and use of goal setting in a five-week after-school workshop that they elected to attend.

Furthermore, the previous study did not examine motivation whereas this one did.

A more potentially problematic aspect of having already researched this topic was that I had studied the effectiveness of goal setting and implementation intentions. Because of this research, I came into the study having looked extensively at a research base that shows goal setting and implementation intentions help the agent achieve his or her goal, and I could have entered the study assuming that these techniques would be effective in the context of my study. However, my pilot study was eye-opening in that respect. During that study, I learned two things that helped me to reserve judgment. First, I found that simply because studies have demonstrated that a method works in settings other than the one being studied, it does not mean that it will necessarily work as well – or at all – in another setting. Second, I was clearly reminded that even a research-based strategy is only as effective as its implementation. As such, simply knowing that a strategy was successful in one setting does not guarantee its success in another setting. This realization is, in large part, what shifted my focus to the implementation of the strategy as well as the strategy itself. As such, I am confident that, rather than hindering the trustworthiness of my findings, the previous research only aided my research this time around.

In spite of the negative feedback from participants in the pilot study, it was still my belief – based on research and personal experience – that goal setting can be an effective strategy if implemented properly. Because of my bias, I took pains to ensure that my questions were open-ended rather than leading, as a way to indicate that I was seeking the participants' opinions rather than confirmation for my opinions. In my analysis of the data, I did my very best to look at what the participants said about goal setting rather than imposing my own opinions on them. As I discussed in the previous paragraph, my pilot study ensured that I would not make assumptions

of effectiveness – and especially not of perceived effectiveness. Finally, because the study rested on implementing goal setting in a manner with which I was not yet familiar, it was not until I evaluated their writing and heard the participants' feedback that I judged whether or not this manner of using goal setting was effective.

The greatest potential for my bias to have influenced the implementation of this study was when I introduced goal setting to the participants and when working with it in the course meetings. Although I would hope that participants were not accustomed to a teacher presenting a technique he thought would be ineffective, I still think that I was fair in my presentation of goal setting. I did not present it as a panacea but rather as technique that could be, in some ways, helpful. However, it is worth noting that pilot study findings suggested that demonstrated enthusiasm for goal setting is critical for its success, so I could not both present implementation intentions in accord with the research-based design of my study and present them neutrally to students. To that end, I did demonstrate enthusiasm for the strategy and tell students that I believed it could be effective.

Member Checking

Another way I worked to reduce potential bias was to use member checks of my findings with participants. I met with students several months after the course ended and after I had the opportunity to carefully review the data and generate findings (for the interview protocol for these meetings, see Appendix H). The participants and I met one-on-one in order to do the member check. My expectation was that if I presented a finding that seemed wrong to the participants, they would be able to point out my error. It was helpful to have some findings about which, going into the member checking, there was not unanimous consensus among the

participants; I was able to tell them, in all honesty, that they might not agree with all of the findings. Consequently, they were primed to listen carefully and give me their honest opinions. Indeed, member checks confirmed the findings that seemed true for some students and not for others during my initial analysis of the data.

Furthermore, one participant, Celeste, did not speak much during the second focus group, so the member check meeting also served as a way to get her opinions on some of the findings, and in the case of one of the findings, she had a different opinion from the group, so I was able to modify my findings based on her responses. Other than that, though, there were no responses during member checks that indicated that my findings were not a valid interpretation of the data I collected.

Researcher's Role as a Potential Complication

Three of the five participants (Jessie, Karen, and Melody) were students at the high school where I teach. Two of them (Jessie and Karen) had taken a Journalism elective with me. Jessie was no longer my student as of about two months before enrolling in the study; Karen, as of approximately 8 months. In the elective they both took, however, I did not use goal setting extensively, nor did I ever expound on what I see as the benefits of goal setting. As such, I doubt that they knew my opinions any more than the other three participants in the study. However, given that I use goal setting *quite* extensively in my sophomore English class – and given that students do talk about their teachers, it is possible that Jessie, Karen, and Melody knew about my use of goal setting from other students. So, although I do not think it likely, it is indeed possible that these students were telling me what they thought I wanted to hear based on what they had heard about my teaching. While I could never know this with absolute certainty, having

examined their responses and triangulated them against their other responses, I think that this possibility is a very distant one. Their comments indicated not just a parroting of what I had said about goal setting; rather, they indicated that they had considered the strategy and formed their own opinions.

Along these lines, the fact that I was the teacher of the course and the researcher may have caused students to engage in ‘teacher-pleasing,’ or telling me that they liked what they were doing because they didn’t want to hurt my feelings or alter my informal assessment of their work. However, given that this was only a five-week course and that they were electing to be there rather than receiving a grade for it, I doubt that this was a serious problem in my study. The participants in this study were there because they wanted to (or their parents wanted them to) receive free instruction on the SAT essay. In addition, the standard signs of teacher-pleasing behaviors – such as saying that they loved the activities without being able to provide any concrete reasons for that enjoyment – were not present.

Nevertheless, to further guard against both possibilities for why students might tell me what they think I wanted to hear, I was sure to tell participants that there are no right or wrong opinions and that the answers that make me happiest are their honest ones. Furthermore, I asked the same question multiple times throughout the course to make sure that participants’ responses were consistent. I believe that with the many types of data I collected I am able to tell that participants were expressing their sincere beliefs. This assertion is based on seeking disconfirming evidence; having enough data to write thick, rich descriptions; prolonged engagement with the research; and having multiple data sources.

Analysis of Data

At the same time that I was collecting my data, I was also analyzing it. Thus, I was able to be more recursive in my collection and analysis, following what Creswell (2007) describes as the “data analysis spiral” (p. 150). This on-going analysis allowed me to return to ‘the field’ to collect more data as I began to analyze what I had already collected – and even during the interviews or focus groups. Because my goal was to generate thick, rich description of the participants’ views, this spiraling analysis helped me to see the gaps in my data while I was still collecting it – and thus improved my understanding of their opinions. This deepened understanding allowed me to better analyze the data. What follows is a discussion of those analytic strategies.

Initial Coding

I began the study with nine research-based teacher-actions, the 3×2 motivation matrix, and other previous research on goal setting, motivation, and writing, each of which could serve as an analytic framework. Because of this background knowledge, I began my coding with a clear initial framework to employ when coding data, the cells of the 3×2 motivation orientation matrix. Furthermore, since I knew I would be looking at how participants perceived the effects of goals, I was able to include codes that addressed the extent to which goals affected their writing. Finally, before looking carefully at the data, I knew that I would want to code based on individual participants, so I generated a code for each participant.

The codes that I generated prior to looking carefully at the data are as follow:

- Effect of Goals
 - Factors influencing effectiveness
 - Minimal effect
 - No effect
 - Positive Effect
- Motivation
 - Academic Alienation-Approach
 - Academic Alienation-Avoidance
 - Learning-Approach
 - Learning-Avoidance
 - Performance-Approach
 - Performance-Avoidance
- Participants
 - Celeste
 - Jessie
 - Karen
 - Melody
 - Thomas
 - Yvonne
 - Zara

In first going through the data, I identified statements that the participants had made indicating their motivation from one of these six orientations. As I was coding initially, I noticed many statements that indicated they were motivated by more than one cell in the 3×2 matrix, so I added “complex motivation”. Additionally, as I got further into the coding, I noticed that many participants were indicating that they felt, as one participant put it, “a serious lack of motivation” to complete work, though they were still completing it. Consequently, I added that quote as an *in vivo* code.

I was also able to further generate inductive codes by, as Corbin and Strauss (2008) define *open coding*, “[b]reaking data apart and delineating concepts to stand for blocks of raw data [while at] the same time ... qualifying those concepts in terms of their properties and dimensions” (p. 195). Though I did not use open coding exclusively, given my starting with

many of my codes already in place from the research literature, I nevertheless continued to generate new codes throughout the research process. This recursive coding process allowed me to find elements that the previous research had not touched upon.

In terms of when new codes were generated, I added codes when the earlier codes did not sufficiently make sense of the data that the participants' comments had generated. I had expected to do so, as the codes that I had generated prior to looking carefully at the data related only to the educational theories related to the study. Open coding was critical for this study, as with most qualitative analysis. The participants' opinions of phenomena may not fit neatly into predetermined categories, and to have attempted to do so might have resulted in not garnering as much information from the data as I believe my approach has.

The codes that I generated as a result of a deep engagement with the data are as follow:

- Degree of Agency⁴
 - High agency
 - Moderate agency
 - Low agency
- Effect of Goals
 - "Part of a balanced breakfast"⁵
- Kinds of goals or improvements⁶
 - Dialogic
 - Style
 - Surface
 - Unspecified level

⁴ I distinguished between high, moderate, and low agency based on the statements that participants made in their comments. If they expressed that they felt they had absolute or extensive control over their decisions and the outcomes of those decisions, I coded this as "high agency." If they expressed that they felt they had some control, I coded this as "moderate agency." If they expressed no (or almost no) control, I coded this as "low agency."

⁵ This code stemmed from an in vivo quote, where one of the participants expressed that she believed goal setting to be part of what helped her succeed in improving her writing – though she indicated that it was not the *only* aspect of the course that helped her to improve.

⁶ The first three codes in this category correspond to different levels of an essay. The first, dialogic, corresponds to elements of the essay's rhetoric, or the elements that help the author construct his or her argument. The second, style, corresponds to elements that are part of the conventions of genres of writing. The third, surface, corresponds to the rules of Standard Written English. Finally, "unspecified level" corresponds to a participant indicating that an improvement had occurred but referring to it so vaguely that it was impossible to tell at which of the three previous levels the improvement occurred.

- Motivation⁷
 - “a serious lack of motivation”
 - complex motivation
- Pressure from parents
- Feeling rushed when writing
- Focusing on the score the essay earned
- Sources of Goals⁸
 - Adaptation of Goal
 - External Feedback
 - Self Feedback

Generation of Findings

I used NVivo 9, a qualitative data analysis software program, to code and sort data. This software allowed me to organize my data, search within it for codes, and look at what codes overlapped, frequently followed or preceded another code, or which codes seemed to not occur near each other in the data.

Using this software to examine codes and these relations, correlations, and interactions, I was able to generate my findings by making hypotheses about the potential correlations between the various codes and then testing those hypotheses in other places in the data. Having coded my data in order to break them down into manageable chunks, I was then able to form connections between those data in what I believe to be meaningful ways, ultimately leading to the findings discussed in subsequent sections.

⁷ The first code in this category, “a serious lack of motivation,” comes from an in vivo quote wherein a participant expressed that she is not motivated to do work and simply does it for a grade. Given the discrepancy between motivation theory, which argues that however an agent is spurred to complete a task counts as motivation, and many of the participants’ opinions, which were generally that only learning-oriented motivations counted as genuine motivation, I thought this was an important distinction to demarcate when it popped up. The second code, complex motivation, corresponds to statements that a participant made in which he or she indicated that his or her motivation would not fit into a single cell of the 3×2 matrix.

⁸ The first code, adaptation of goal, corresponds to when a participant expressed that he or she generated a new goal because of a change in circumstances, further reflection, or partial completion of an earlier goal. The second code, external feedback, corresponds to when a participant expressed that he or she set a goal based on something that someone had said about his or her essay. The third code, self feedback, corresponds to when a participant expressed that he or she set a goal based on his or her own thinking about the strengths or weaknesses of his or her own essay.

In generating these findings, I actively searched for disconfirming evidence, for pieces of data that did not fit the pattern. These included statements made by participants that either directly contradicted other participants' statements, which were rare, or statements that could be interpreted as suggesting a complexity to the data that the other statements might not. I then carefully considered how to make sense of those data and how to modify findings, as necessary, to fit those data. In almost all cases, such complicating data required that the finding be made more specific – indicating that many of these findings are not generalizable, as is typically the case with qualitative data. Ultimately, though, I was interested in accurately capturing the qualitative aspects of the participants' motivations and experiences with goal setting; qualitative data can be 'messy' and can and often does resist being packaged neatly. I believe that my findings reflect these complexities.

Limitations

First and foremost, this study is limited by the number of participants. Though I had hoped to have fifteen participants, in the end, I only had five participate in the entire data collection process. As such, while I feel that I captured the participants' opinions accurately, they are an even smaller sample size than I had hoped for. But, even if I had the numbers I wanted, I would have been interested in a detailed, in-depth description of participants' opinions. In accord with the basic tenets of qualitative analysis, I hoped to understand phenomena in a particular context, not to generalize findings, which would be the role of a quantitative researcher – or at least a much broader qualitative study.

Second, perhaps the most important plan for the implementation of this study was that the way goal setting was implemented would be in keeping with what the research says about

effective goal setting. However, the sixth criterion is that students focus on self-assessment (i.e., the strengths and weaknesses of their writing and areas for improvement) rather than on self-evaluation (i.e., assigning a grade or score for the performance). In an SAT essay, the purpose is to score well, and getting participants to focus on anything beyond what their potential score would be is tricky, if not impossible. Participants consistently wondered about the score of their essay, and, necessarily, a lot of our discussion used numbers to talk about writing. To have done otherwise would have been artificial. Nevertheless, it is critical to note this limitation: in this respect, I was not able to implement goal setting based strictly upon research-based practices as I was not able to keep participants focused only on the writing itself and not the scores the writing earned.

Beyond the challenge of enacting that sixth criterion, the other eight had to be implemented in order to give this study the potential to respond in a meaningful way to both the first and the second research questions. Throughout the course of the study, I reflected (sometimes in writing) on the extent to which I was meeting each criterion in order to improve and adapt my instructional methods. Ultimately, other than the sixth criterion (having students self-assess rather than self-evaluate), I believe that I was successful in my implementation of the teacher-actions. However, I can give concrete, irrefutable evidence that I did so for only a few. Certainly, I *taught* the students how to use the assessment criteria (the rubric), but I cannot be sure that they fully internalized it, given the short length of the course. I provided feedback on their self-assessments, which they used to improve performance on subsequent essays, but there were no full revisions of the essays once they wrote them. That said, they *did* revise parts of some essays during some classes. Furthermore, as I have argued earlier, I maintain that the SAT essay prompts are similar enough to each other to be considered revisions of the previous one. I

varied the goal setting questions students responded to, but I cannot be sure that they viewed these variations as different enough to be considered novel questions. I certainly was enthusiastic; of this I am sure, though concrete evidence is difficult to furnish. Finally, I instructed them to set implementation intentions, though some students resisted this, both directly by critiquing them (Karen, Melody) and indirectly by not doing them (Thomas).

Finally, one of my concerns going into the study was that the nine teacher-actions would be insufficient to make goal setting effective in the classroom. Given participants' responses, that does not seem to be the case. However, it is possible – and likely – that the list is incomplete and that there are other elements that would promote the effective use of goal setting in the classroom, either as well as or instead of some elements on the list. My goal was not to determine the validity of the list, though; it was to examine what happens when it is implemented. Subsequent research certainly may modify the nine teacher-actions, and I will provide some analysis of what I see as changes to the list based upon this study in my Discussion section.

Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, I will explain what findings I drew from a careful cross-case analysis of the data collected from the participants. This chapter will be divided into three sub-sections. The first section, “Motivation and Goal Orientation,” will look at how students were motivated and what their orientations tended to be based upon the 3×2 matrix. In that sub-section I will address how the motivations of these participants were, in most cases, too complex to be isolated to a single – or even a most prevalent – cell in the 3×2 matrix. I will also address how the participants in this study, with one exception, had a more limited view of what it means to be motivated than does the research.

The second section, “Generation and Perceived Effects of Goal Setting,” will consider how the participants created and used their goals and implementation intentions in this specific context. In general, the participants set their goals based primarily on teacher feedback. The second section will also discuss how participants found goal setting to be effective when implemented based on what research suggests, though I will also consider a few important caveats and that the participants believed that the effect of goal setting decreased when they were rushed.

The final section, “Interactions Between Motivations and Goals,” will address the ways in which the participants’ complex motivations seem to have influenced their setting and use of implementation intentions. In short, the ways in which participants were motivated influenced both the form and the content of their goals, with academic-alienation-orientations seeming to

correlate with not using implementation intentions and with performance-orientations seeming to correlate with using them and believing that they are effective.

Motivation and Goal Orientation

In this sub-section, I examine the ways in which participants were motivated and what their perceptions of the concept of “motivation” are. Briefly, I will discuss how, although participants’ motivation orientations were highly complex, they did not seem to be motivated from either learning-avoidance or academic-alienation-avoidance orientations. Also, I will address how the participants’ definition of *motivation* differed from that found in prior research, though I will not be arguing for a revision of the formal definition of the term. Nevertheless, the distinction between participants’ and researchers’ definitions is important because of the focus on participants’ opinions in my qualitative research.

“I Don’t Really Want to Sound Stupid in Front of People and I Want to Have the Knowledge of the World and Also Get Good Grades I Guess”: Goal Orientations Were, in Many Cases, Too Complex to be Broken Down to a Single Cell of the 3×2 Matrix

As anyone who has worked with teenagers knows, they are complex beings. Many of the goal orientations that the participants expressed in this study proved to be no exception.

For Thomas and Melody, their motivation seemed to stem from their opinions of the subject about which they were setting the goal. Thomas, for example, stated that he’s “more of a science-y type of person” because “you can’t just kind of wing math because then it’s completely wrong but I feel like in English, you kind of more like, [have] free reign, poetic license, so I try to almost just get it done.” This interest in completing tasks that have a right or wrong answer

extends, as I discussed earlier, to his extracurricular interests, such as slacklining or bouldering. In both cases, the criteria for success are clear: completion – either by making it to the other side of the slackline or by ascending the boulder. However, given that these are both activities that Thomas showed genuine enthusiasm for in the interview, it is not that someone is forcing him to do them and he just wants to complete them, which would be in keeping with academic-alienation-approach. Much to the contrary, his enthusiasm belies a performance-approach orientation, where a sufficiently completed task is a good task – in the same way that a properly completed math problem is what is expected. In short, the expectations for absolute success are clearly set and can be completed. As previous research has well established, goal orientations may differ based on the specific tasks at hand (Lipstein & Renninger, 2007).

Melody's goal orientations ran along similar lines, especially in terms of her desire for clear definitions of success and clear rewards. These preferences seem to incline her towards math and science. She described dropping out of Science Olympiad during the pre-intervention focus group because "it's like you join, you study, you have to wait two years to be on the team." In keeping with this attitude, her goal orientations, when she expressed more than one simultaneously, both fell into the performance row of the 3×2 matrix. During the one-on-one interview, she stated:

"I want to do as best I can, or want to try to at least because then if I don't try, then I'm going to be like, 'Oh, well, now I don't, I wouldn't know if it would have been possible for me to get a better grade on this,' whether I just was slacking off or I actually don't know it, because if I don't know it, then I should work on it, because then we have finals, so then I need to [know] that. But then if I don't try, I'm not going to know."

Here, her concerns are couched in performance-oriented terms, even though the statement at first seems to indicate learning-approach orientation. Ultimately, she is concerned with the learning because "then we have finals so then I need to know that," showing that the learning is

instrumental to her successful performance. Like Thomas, she sometimes is satisfied to merely complete the task regardless of how well she learned something.

Jessie, Karen and Celeste, on the other hand, expressed multiple goal orientations toward the same tasks. When I asked Jessie what kept her coming to the SAT workshops despite her busy schedule, she stated, “I feel that it’s a really good learning experience. It’s free. I get to learn how to write an essay, [so] I enjoy [it].” Jessie’s statement seems to be about enjoying learning to write, not about earning a better score on her SAT essay later on.

Karen’s statements, too, did not clearly specify whether her focus was performance- or learning-oriented. In the post-intervention focus group she said that the goal setting “organized [her] thinking about [her] next essay,” which led to her receiving “better feedback than [she had] before, so [she] knew that method was working [and] making [her] writing better.” Here, it is impossible to tell precisely what she means by “making my writing better.” She could mean an improvement in the quality of the writing itself, which would correspond to a learning-oriented motivation (as she is interested in learning how to improve her writing). Or, she could mean an improvement to the score that the writing receives, since she does mention the feedback that she received on the essay, which would correspond to a performance-oriented motivation.

Celeste presented, perhaps, the most complex statements about motivation, including the following, taken from our one-on-one interview when I asked her about what motivates her:

CELESTE: Well, getting good grades. Obviously, I like seeing a 90 or above on my paper, but also I want to improve my writing because I like writing. I think it’s really interesting, the capabilities of people to write in certain ways as I read the certain books and see different peoples’ writing styles. So I definitely want to improve my writing and see the capability I have of writing well. ... I like to go to school to learn because I don’t want to be...I don’t really want to sound stupid in front of people and I want to have the knowledge of the world and also get good grades I guess. It’s good...I mean, yeah. I definitely like getting good grades... But it’s interesting to learn things, too. Yeah.

DOUG: Would you say that you’re always motivated by both of those things, or are there some classes where it’s like, “I don’t care as much about my grade. I want to learn,” and

then others where it's, "I don't care about what I'm learning. I just want to get a good grade"?"

CELESTE: I think it's a lot of the time both, but sometimes, I just want to get a good grade even if I don't really care about a subject. Sometimes in French class that happens because my teacher likes to teach us crazy things. Sometimes it's interesting to learn things, but the way we're tested on them, I don't feel like I can grasp the concept before we're tested, so I don't get as, like, insight on that. I don't know if that makes sense.

DOUG: What do you mean?

CELESTE: [For example], we're learning about the history of France, but just, like, the way she taught it, I didn't understand as well as I could have and I was kind of struggling, so my only goal was to get as good of a grade as possible, so it didn't really matter if I understood it or not. It was just going to be over with after I was tested on it. But in other classes, like math, a lot of the time I don't understand it or I do understand it once in a while but I, I definitely focus on getting good grades in that. But, English I like to improve my writing but also get good grades. It's interesting to learn things, but probably overall, I care a lot about getting a good grade. Yeah.

Unlike Thomas and Melody, Celeste tended to focus more on English than math and science, but even the difference in her level of interest in writing did not account fully for her complex goal orientations. When I pushed her to decide upon a single goal orientation (after her first statement in the above transcript), she still rejoined that, in essence, she really was motivated by both the learning-approach and the performance-approach orientations.

Celeste's statement that is perhaps of most interest because of the complexity of goal orientations that it reflects is, "I don't really want to sound stupid in front of people and I want to have the knowledge of the world and also get good grades I guess." Expressing three goal orientations (performance-approach and –avoidance as well as learning-approach) in a single sentence, Celeste underscores the critical element to remember when considering how goal orientations interact with anything, including academic tasks: individuals can have multiple goal orientations toward the same task. Therefore, it is essential to consider motivation as complex. In most cases, motivation cannot be reduced to a single – or even to a predominant – orientation.

“I Have a Serious Lack of Motivation”: Participants Tended to View Only Learning-Oriented Goals as Actual Motivation

In the 3×2 matrix, performance- and academic-alienation-oriented goals are also considered motivation, because they are states of mind that promote action on the part of the agent. However, four of the five participants in this study did not tend to think that completing a task either just to complete it or just to earn a good grade qualified as a kind of motivation.

This issue first arose during the pre-intervention focus group, when the following exchange took place:

MELODY: The teacher would write what I need to improve on and still give me a good grade, which is kind of contradictory. So then I felt that if I’m getting a good grade and I have to work this much harder to go from an A- to an A, I don’t feel like it’s worth it, so...I guess I just need more motivation.

JESSIE: That’s definitely one of my problems. I have a serious lack of motivation because I’m always tired, I’m lazy, and I don’t want to do work. But, like, there are times when I try but the majority of the time, I’m just like, “Oh. School.”

What is clear from this exchange is that neither participant thinks that the motivation to earn a particular grade or simply to complete a task counts as genuine motivation. In her response to this question, though, Karen stated, that her “motivation pretty much [is] to focus and then ... just write it” when she has an essay due that she does not particularly feel like completing, suggesting that she does indeed see academic-alienation and performance orientations as motivation.

That said, Thomas expressed a similar sentiment to Jessie and Melody, stating, “I don’t feel motivated in school, so I usually just try to get a minimum of a B, but [now] I want to do better and raise my grades.” Certainly, a B in a district as competitive as Thomas’s requires at least some effort, but he describes his decision not to strive for more as a sign that he lacks motivation – despite the fact that he would *like* to perform better.

Based on the discussions with the participants in the study, especially during member checking, it seems that the issue here revolves around divergent definitions of *motivation*. In research, this word is defined as the intention to take a certain action regardless of the reason for taking that action – from writing out of a genuine love of writing to writing out of a desire to simply finish the task as hastily as possible so that you can stop. For the participants of this study, however, they used *motivation* to refer to the scale of the intended outcome. As Melody put it, motivation entails “something more long-term” or “something bigger that applies to more aspects of your life.” In short, the participants seemed to view only identified regulation and intrinsic motivation (from Ryan and Deci, 2000 and from Vansteenkiste et al., 2006) as constituting motivation.

The only participant to disagree was Celeste, who stated that whatever encourages people to do their work, for whatever reason, should be considered motivation even if it is simply to earn a certain grade.

That most of the participants disagree with researchers’ definition of motivation is important given the qualitative nature of the research – especially given the comments that some of the participants made about feeling unmotivated to complete some tasks. While I am not advocating for a redefinition of motivation, participants tended not to think of motivation as encompassing “short-term” motivations, such as simply completing a task or simply earning a high score or grade. Such a distinction is, I would argue, critical for understanding how participants viewed motivation. In short, their view is more limited than most researchers, and when discussing this with them, it was important for me – as it would be for any other researcher examining their perceptions of motivation – to keep this distinction in terminology in mind. My

definition of motivation was not the same as theirs, so in order to get responses about their motivation, in some cases, I needed to know that their terms differed from mine.

It is also of note that, in this particular study, participants did not make statements indicative of learning-avoidance or academic-alienation-avoidance orientations. That is to say, both orientations were, in my coding of the data, nonexistent. It is impossible to say, given the limited scope of my study, whether this is a finding that could be generalizable for high school students or whether it is specific to participants in this study. Certainly, this is a fertile area for future research.

The Generation and Perceived Effects of Goal Setting

Having addressed the participants' motivation orientations, I turn now to some overarching trends in the way that they set and used goals and in the ways that they perceived the impact of implementation intentions on their writing. Briefly, I found that participants set goals primarily by reflecting on teacher feedback. Once set and applied, participants all indicated that they believed that their goals had helped them improve their writing, though they acknowledged that this positive effect decreased when they were rushed. Participants were, however, at odds over whether the highly-specific format of the implementation intention – “In order to do x , I will do y at time t in the writing process” – was more beneficial than simply indicating x from the above formula (or merely setting a goal). They agreed, however, that setting goals was not beneficial in isolation; they felt that there needed to be discussion and instruction for them to set goals.

“You Have to Write to the Test or Write to the Teacher”: Participants Tended to Set Goals Based Predominantly on Teacher Feedback

Though participants were not all on the same page about the usefulness of implementation intentions, they all agreed that the method with which they set their goals for the next essay was a combination of reflection on what had been successful on their previous essay, what they had learned from what we had discussed in class, and my comments on their previous essays.

It is important to note that the participants were required to set goals for their next essay at the end of each class. As explained in the Methodology section, this goal setting occurred prior to their receiving feedback on the essay they had just written but after we had discussed some element of writing that I had noticed presented consistent problems in the previous week's writing. Because they had not yet received feedback on their previous essays, the structure of the course might have pushed students towards setting goals based on a combination of self-reflection and teacher-provided feedback. However, participants reported little about setting goals based only on their own reflections. Instead, their goals were often related to the instruction I had just provided them as a class or were related to the comments I had put on their essays. For example, when I provided them with instruction on sentence variety, all of them set goals based on sentence variety in their subsequent round of goal setting.

Melody was the most outspoken about her desire for teacher-provided feedback in order to help her identify what goals to set, even prior to the beginning of the intervention. In her preliminary survey, she stated that if “it's possible to work on ... goals with someone who can evaluate one's writing and provide constructive feedback and give advice on how to improve, then [goal setting] is beneficial.” Thus, while she did not express concern about setting a goal

once she understood what problems are present in her essay, she did express that she needs support evaluating her own work for weaknesses.

During the one-on-one interview, she explained that in her freshman English course, she found goal setting to be helpful because she “got [her] writing back pretty consistently” and “would know that, ‘Okay, I haven’t been being specific lately, so then I need to think about my next essay and think about specific examples I want to include.’” During the English class in which she was enrolled at the time of the study, however, she stated that her teacher “kind of gives [essays] all back at once” near the end of each quarter. As such, she is unable to use her teacher’s feedback on essays throughout the quarter to set goals. This desire for feedback on her writing in order to set goals extended to the study, where her goals for subsequent essays all seemed to be set based on my comments on her previous essays or based on the discussion we had as a class that day. Melody’s experience most underscores what all participants perceived as the need for teacher feedback and instruction in order to have a focus for creating implementation intentions.

Jessie also expressed a desire for teacher feedback before setting goals, but it did not matter to her at what point the feedback came – provided it was given. During our one-on-one interview, she expressed her appreciation for learning about the importance of articulating implementation intentions because they require her to explicitly state how she would reach that goal. A vaguer goal might only ask her to identify a problem and decide to fix it, which she feels capable of doing herself, but the implementation intentions also require her to specify *how* she would reach that goal, obliging her to ask for help if she had questions about how to achieve it. As such, the goal setting in the study worked well for her. By contrast, she stated that “the goal setting we do in school is just tedious and pointless because I think the most important part is

identifying the problem and then not saying yourself how you're going to fix it but having someone tell you how, or multiple ways that you can go about fixing it [which is missing during school]. Because you obviously can't do everything to fix [it yourself]." By contrast, the goal setting that Jessie did in the SAT course stemmed from our discussions. So although she was not receiving individual feedback, the class discussions served as a source of feedback for her writing. She stated, too, that even someone helping her identify her problems and then asking her to come up with how to fix it "would be okay, too. [I] just [want] some way that you're not the only one putting input into your problems." Ultimately, she stated that the root of her desire for teacher feedback was because "[i]n reality, it doesn't really matter what I think about my writing. It matters what other people think because it's getting graded by somebody who's not me. I mean, I have to like my writing, I have to feel that I'm a good writer and confident in my writing, but still. You have to write to the test. Or write to the teacher." Thus, for Jessie, because the final assessment of her writing – or the assessment that matters – is external, she feels the need to have an external evaluation of her writing in order to feel that she can effectively set goals.

Before the study began, Thomas stated a more extreme version of Jessie's stance, saying that the only time goal setting or revision was ever successful for him was when he already had concrete feedback from his teacher telling him what, specifically, to fix. Even then, he stated that he "can't make all of" the changes that she has requested because "when I write the essay... that's how I would think of saying it, but she thinks it's wrong. It makes sense in my head, but it doesn't, I dunno. I don't really know how to explain it." Much of this explanation seemed to stem from Thomas's feeling that he is not a strong writer.

Regardless of the source, though, Thomas was consistently looking for external feedback to inform his goals. The only goal that he set that was not, apparently, the direct result of external feedback, either in the form of my comments on his essays or in the form of discussions with the class, was his statement in the one-on-one interview that he needed to come up with “more creative topics” for his writing, which was not something that I had addressed.

As indicated in her description in the Methodology section, Karen was the most apparently self-assured of the participants. Nevertheless, she indicated that she used her teachers’ comments to guide her thinking about her writing:

KAREN: I also made a goal about varying sentence structure because we talked about that in the last class ... [T]hat’s something that I never really thought about, but I guess after we read through the list and put checks next to the ones, I realized that I kind of have ... a lot of one kind of sentence and maybe I should try out some other types of sentences that I’m not as comfortable using and then get better at using them, so I decided to make that a goal as well.

For Karen, simply discussing the various ways to start sentences was not sufficient to cause her to set that as a goal. She states that it was not until *she* realized that she was using many of the same kinds of sentences repeatedly that varying her sentences became a goal for her in the next essay. Although the decision to make sentence structure variety a goal was hers, she was still relying on teacher feedback to call her attention to this aspect of her writing.

The data indicate that the reasons varied as to why participants depended on a mixture of teacher-provided feedback and self-assessment for setting goals. So too did what participants do with that external feedback. However, all five participants maintained that teacher-provided feedback was necessary to use goal setting effectively.

“I Think [Setting] the Goals [as We Set Them] Was Helpful”: Participants Believed Research-Based Goal Setting Helped Improve Their Writing

This was the most unexpected finding of the study, especially given the almost universally negative opinions of goal setting that participants had expressed in previous studies (Hobbs, 2007; Kato, 2009; Levandowski, 2010). It is important to point out that, in all three of the previous studies, goal-setting activities were not implemented in a research-based manner and did not use implementation intentions.

Turning to the data from my study, certainly, students did not start out believing that setting implementation intentions could help improve their writing. However, once students were introduced to the highly specific implementation intentions format during the course, they began to report that they helped to improve their writing.

When asked in the final focus group if there was anything they wanted to add, both Karen and Celeste took it upon themselves to state, again, that implementation intentions were “helpful,” and Celeste asserted that “they should do more [with them] in school.” This statement echoed Melody’s earlier comments that she thought goals would be even better used in the school setting, where “essays are more like a process” than the one-shot SAT writing tasks.

Interestingly, even though Jessie stated that writing implementation intentions was “painful” for her, and “just not interesting,” she nevertheless stated that it was “helpful and [that] it did allow [her] to improve.” This dislike of the activity, despite finding it effective, was interesting, especially because it would seem that her aversion to the task would push her to think of it as less effective. This, however, was not the case. Certainly, there is nothing logically contradictory about this stance; many things are good for us that we don’t enjoy, such as running on a treadmill. Still, if teachers are interested in motivating students to use a strategy, they

would need to be, at worst, aware of students who acknowledge its efficacy but still dislike it and could, at best, think of strategies to help those students enjoy the activity.

When describing how implementation intentions improved their writing, participants tended to address improvements both in their scores (performance orientation) and in the quality of their writing (learning orientation). This dual effect was clear in the post-observation focus group when Celeste stated both that setting goals had helped her improve her score and that they also made her “more aware of the way [she] write[s]” and helped make the essays “more fun to write,” both of which benefits she saw as “definite improve[ments].” Thomas moved the focus away from grades by stating that the goal setting had helped in that he “got more confident” and helped him to “improv[e] his structure.” Melody agreed, saying that the implementation intentions had made her writing “more focused.” Karen then stated that they “organized [her] thoughts about how [to] improve [her] next essay” and to understand “what was working for [her] and what wasn’t.”

Certainly, all of these improvements could be connected to their score improvement, but this is not how they talked about them, for the most part. They seemed to be focused on improvements to the quality of their writing, which are the learning-oriented benefits of the goals, rather than on the scores, which were the performance-oriented benefits of the implementation intentions.

There are three important caveats to this finding. The first is that Thomas reported that establishing implementation intentions was not that helpful to him during the study. His perception, though, likely has a lot to do with the fact that he usually forgot to use his implementation intentions. During the final focus group, he stated, “[L]ast week when we had our one-on-one review before, you told me about the goals and I remembered [those goals], and I

got a higher score on that essay, so it definitely worked just being able to remember them.”

Based on this statement, Thomas believes that goals helped to improve his writing, but, having mostly forgotten to use them, he did not benefit from them consistently throughout the course of the study. In this case, I am taking Thomas’s statement at face value rather than assuming that he was intentionally avoiding using the implementation intentions. As discussed in the methods chapter, participants were prompted to review their implementation intentions prior to composing their new essays. Still, even this reminder was not enough for Thomas to remember them – an issue that he attributes to feeling rushed, which I will return to in the following subsection.

The second caveat to this finding is that Karen disagreed with the other participants in that she did not feel that the specific format I asked them to use to identify their implementation intentions was necessary for her to be able to improve. During the final focus group, she explained why:

I think that the goals were helpful in the fact that they were goals, but I don’t know if the structure ... was really any more helpful than just writing down the goal. [A]t least for me, ...the simpler they are, and the more to the point, usually they’re more effective because it gives me less to think and less to keep in mind. ... I feel like some of the [implementation intentions] I wrote, ... I just didn’t remember what my goals were, and so I had to go back and look at them and a lot of times when I was finishing my essay, I couldn’t keep a clear picture of the goal in my mind, and I feel like if I had just wrote one thing, like “Give specific detail at an important part of the essay or at a key point for an example,” then I would have been able to sort of do that better and keep that in mind and then execute that task. Instead of “In order to improve my writing I’m going to do this at this time.” It’s just easier for me to keep something simpler in my mind when I’m writing.

Both Jessie and Melody immediately disagreed, with Melody pointing out that the specificity of the implementation intentions helped her:

[The implementation intentions were] good to make me really specific because at the beginning I was like, “I need to be more specific,” which is not specific, so this time I was like, “I want to expand upon my examples by providing more detail when I’m giving

background information,” which really helped me because I just did it. I didn’t have to think about how I would do it while I was writing my essay, which saved a lot of time and I could write more.

Of note is that Melody’s comment echoes Gallo and Gollwitzer’s (2007) finding that implementation intentions do not increase the agent’s cognitive load. For her, its specificity allowed her to implement the goal more automatically. Furthermore, for Jessie and Melody, the establishment of how to meet the goal was not implicit in the setting of the goal, whereas Karen stated that it was. Given this difference, it makes sense that Jessie and Melody would find the specificity of the implementations helpful and that Karen would find that same format rather tedious.

Ultimately, Karen synthesized these positions, stating, “You identify a goal and you *set* it, like, that’s it. ... There’s not really a better way to do it or a worse way to do it. It just depends on each person, what works for each person, and once you find a way of setting goals that works for you, then, that’s it.”

The third and final important caveat is that although participants agreed that establishing implementation intentions was effective and important, they also agreed that other elements in a writing program were also important. Certainly, this qualification to the finding is almost self-evident, especially given the way in which participants reported setting their goals. If participants are not instructed in strategies to improve their writing, then they might be setting goals without knowing how to improve their work.

Melody, during the one-on-one interview, stated that she believes the improvement in her writing had to do with both implementation intentions and other elements of instruction “because when I have goals, ... I think about them when I’m writing the essay and I try to work on them as opposed to just writing essays over and over. I don’t think that would be helpful, because then

you're not gearing yourself towards anything. You're just writing." Explicit in this statement, though, is that the goal setting has to be about something. Simply setting goals, while all well and good, does not provide a meaningful focus for those goals; writing instruction is necessary for that. Similarly, Jessie stated that "the other things ... in this class ... were really important, and not just the goal setting. We gained a lot of skills from goal setting, but we gained even more on just how to write for the SAT." As does Melody, Jessie indicates that in addition to the goal setting, other instruction about writing is both helpful and necessary.

“[I]t’s Not Hard to Remember Them, But It’s Hard to Apply Them Because of the Pressure of the 25 Minutes”: Participants Claimed That the Positive Impact of Goal Setting Decreased When They Were Rushed

Certainly, elements that writers would attend to when they had unlimited time may suffer during a timed writing task. However, previous research (Brandstatter et al., 2001; Gallo & Gollwitzer, 2007) has suggested that implementation intentions might function semi-automatically once set, requiring minimal cognitive load and thus allowing agents to enact them more easily than goals formulated in other ways. However, the participants reported that when they felt rushed during a timed writing task, especially when they had only 25 minutes to write the SAT essay, they often became so focused on the task that they were not able to keep their implementation intentions in mind.

Data from four of the five participants demonstrated this finding. Melody stated that, in a timed setting, her “brain can’t function well,” affecting everything from her concerns about organization to her fears that she won’t have time to finish. Ultimately, focusing and de-stressing became goals for her, but when rushed, she had trouble with these. Similarly Jessie

explicitly set a goal for herself when she takes the actual SAT to “just be calm” because she understands that she gets “really worked up about tests.” Naturally, any anxiety about timed writing would interfere with a goal of staying calm. Celeste and Thomas both stated that, at some points, the stress of timed writing caused them to forget their goals completely, though this happened more often with Thomas than Celeste. As Thomas put it, he only “sometimes ... remember[ed] them [and] look[ed] at [his] essay and tr[ie]d to fix it according to the goals.” However, he stated that because he “always just feel[s] rushed,” he isn’t always able to keep the goals in mind while writing the essay. For Celeste, she seemed to suggest that this was more a memory issue, stating that if she “wrote [her goals] right before [she] wrote the essay” she would be better able to remember them despite feeling rushed and just “focus[ing] on finishing the essay.”

The only participant who did not express concern about remembering her goals was Karen, who, as mentioned previously, did not use the implementation intention format while writing, preferring instead to say only what she wanted to improve (e.g., “Vary my sentences”) without specifying how or when in the writing process she would try to reach this goal. Karen stated that she used these simpler goals in order to “keep a clear picture of the goal in [her] mind.” While this finding may seem to point to the need for simpler structures than implementation intentions in order to make goal setting more effective, two facts are important to remember. First, prior quantitative research offers clear evidence of the efficacy of implementations at many kinds of tasks. Certainly, the opinions of the participants are not sufficient to overturn those previous findings. Second, based on their comments, this study seems to have been the first time that participants were introduced to implementation intentions. As such, they may have been uncomfortable with them based on their novelty – or that

implementation intentions are more difficult for adolescents. It is certainly possible that, over a longer period of time, they would have become more comfortable with them and found them easier to recall. This is an area for potential future research.

Interactions Between Motivation and Goals

In this final sub-section, I will be addressing the ways in which the participants' motivation orientations and their goals – either in their form, their implementation, or their effect – seem to interact. In general, motivation orientations did seem to interact with the structure, content, and use of participants' implementation intentions.

Specifically, the participants tended to use their goal setting in ways that lined up with their general motivation to complete writing tasks. Academic-alienation orientation, expressed by one participant, seemed to contribute to a decreased use of implementation intentions (and thus decreased the likelihood of them helping to improve writing). On the other hand, participants who tended to express performance orientations tended to like using the specific format of the implementation intentions. However, the participant who tended to approach her work from the learning orientation commented on the usefulness of goal setting but not implementation intentions. I will elaborate on these correlations below.

“I Just Wanna Get It Done”: Academic-Alienation-Oriented Motivation Correlated with Not Using Implementation Intentions

The discussion of this finding will be limited, as there was only one participant, Thomas, who tended to express an academic-alienation orientation. As such, it is difficult to draw a conclusion about how academic-alienation orientation correlates with motivation to set goals.

That said, Thomas's general attitude of "just wan[ting] to get [his writing assignments] done" seemed related to his failure to use implementation intentions in the SAT course. He was introduced to implementation intentions in the second class – which included giving the participants the format of the implementation intention, written on the board for the participants to use as a template. At the end of class, I informed the participants that they should write their implementation intentions for their next essay, turn them in, and head home for the evening. Thomas ignored the format, turning in the following two implementation intentions: "In order to write more when I write my next essay, I'll put more detail in" and "In order to write better in my next essay, I will not use bad grammar." Though it could be argued that he means for both of these to be global writing goals, applicable to his entire essay, I would argue that his rushing through the setting of the goals could be an expression of his academic-alienation orientation. This seems especially likely given that he was usually the first participant to leave and that his implementation intention did not include key elements; it did not include how he would concretely achieve those goals.

The next goals that Thomas set were during the fourth week, as he was absent due to an illness in the third week. This time, despite a reminder to follow the implementation intention format, he set the following goals: "Use different types of sentences throughout the essay" and "Use more creative topics for the essay not just dealing with personal life". He was, again, the first participant to leave.

Even when I specifically encouraged him during our one-on-one interview to create an actual implementation intention, Thomas was either unwilling or unable to do so – or, perhaps, a combination of the two:

DOUG: For those goals that you said last week, how would you make them a little more specific?

THOMAS: Well, I have to make sure I use those different types of sentences throughout my paragraphs, so, like, don't always use the subject first, so, not like "I'm doing this," say, uh, I dunno. And then for the creative topics one, not using what goes on in my life, like something I read about or something.

DOUG: So how do you think you'd be able to do that?

THOMAS: Just remember.

On the one hand, the above suggests that Thomas either did not know how to set the implementation intentions or was simply unwilling to do so. Based on his shutting down the conversation about how he might take steps to reach his goal by simply stating that all he has to do is "[j]ust remember," I would argue that it appears to be an issue of effort rather than an issue of ability. A student who is unable but interested would inquire and would look carefully at the format in an attempt to replicate it. That said, for his first goal, he did not seem to know how to rephrase the sentence in the form of an implementation intention in order to bring about the change that he stated that he wanted to make. On the other hand, the sentences in Thomas's final essay, written about half an hour after this interview, were more varied than the ones in the previous week. As such, he either was simply not interested in specifying how he would reach that goal, wanting instead to move quickly through the process and be done with it, or he did not need to articulate an implementation intention in order for it to be effective. However, given his lack of improvement on most goals that he had set before and given his own perception that he had not put in enough effort, my interpretation of the data is that he was most interested in moving as quickly as possible through the process.

Although there was only one participant who tended toward an academic-alienation orientation, the results of this study suggest that such an orientation correlates with the agent not using implementation intentions, even when those are required of him. It strikes me as likely that this avoidance is because setting implementation intentions is somewhat complicated; it is

far easier to just state a goal and be done with it, which would, of course, be appealing to someone who has an academic-alienation orientation.

**“I Think Goal Setting is Helpful...to Whatever Extent You Make It Helpful”:
Participants’ Motivation Orientations Seemed to Influence the Structure, the Content, and
the Use of Their Goals**

Connected to the previous finding is the finding that participants’ dominant orientations towards goal setting seemed to manifest both in the kinds of goals that they chose and in the way that they set goals.

To continue discussing Thomas, he tended to rush through goal setting, preferring to simply state what his goal was rather than establishing an implementation intention. Merely setting a goal seems to jibe with an academic-alienation orientation: it is the easiest way to fulfill the bare requirements of the assignment. However, it was not only setting the goals that seemed to be influenced by his academic-alienation; the focus of the goals he set seemed to be on completing the task rather than completing it well. During the final focus group, Thomas restated a goal that he had set on a few essays throughout the course: finishing. This goal, both non-specific and explicitly focused only on completing the task, was the only one that he stated during this final focus group.

In addition to their structure and content, Thomas’s goals seemed to be influenced by his overall academic-alienation orientation. He stated that he often forgot his goals, and as such, was not able to employ them in his essay writing. While this is, on one hand, a memory issue, it may on the other hand be an issue of not putting in effort. At the start of each class, I returned participants’ essays and encouraged them to look them over to prepare for the new essay.

Participants' goals were on their previous essays, and while some participants looked them over, Thomas did not, tending instead to simply sit in his seat and wait for the next writing task to begin.

The majority of the participants – Celeste, Jessie, and Melody – tended to be motivated primarily from a performance orientation. The only participant who tended to be motivated more often from a learning orientation was Karen. These four participants' goals tended to be similar in content, in that they were all focused on a relatively specific and achievable element of their writing that would both improve the quality of their writing and increase their scores. Because better writing correlates, for the most part, with an improved score on the SAT rubric, the differences in the goals for a performance-oriented agent and a learning-oriented agent may be no different. Similarly, because goal setting serves those who are learning-oriented or performance-oriented, the way in which such differently motivated agents use goal setting while writing seems to be indistinguishable, at least on the surface.

The difference becomes most apparent when considering the structure of the goals themselves. As discussed in the third finding (that not all participants viewed implementation intentions as necessary), Karen found the strict format I gave them for writing implementation intentions unnecessary while the other three female participants said they appreciated it. I would argue that this makes sense given the performance-oriented motivation of these three participants. In their performance orientations, there is often a desire, shown throughout these data, for clear rules and formats that they can follow, evidenced especially in their appreciation of the sample essays. In much the same way, the clear, rigid format of the implementation intention offered a way to ensure that they were meeting the goals of the implementation intention. It is a "plug-and-chug" formula that, if followed, ensures that they set an effective

goal. There are clear criteria for doing so, which likely is appealing to those with a performance-oriented approach.

Karen, on the other hand, tended to be motivated by what she could learn and how she could improve her writing. Since she could meet her goals without explicitly writing out *how* she would reach her goals – and since the learning was more of a motivation than the score – Karen tended to prefer to simply state what she wanted to improve in order to remind herself for next time. The non-specific form that Karen used was, interestingly, quite similar to how Thomas set goals. However, whereas Thomas was setting them as quickly as he could to finish the goal-setting task, Karen was setting them in the way that worked best for her.

Thus, it seems that the orientation from which participants generally approached their writing in this study influenced the ways in which they wanted to set goals. Melody, Celeste, and Jessie, who are generally motivated from a performance orientation, were happy to create a specifically-articulated implementation intention; it allowed them to have a specific product (or part of a product) on which to focus. Karen, generally motivated from a learning orientation with her writing, was less interested in a specific outcome because she was more interested in improving her writing in general. As such, the format of the implementation intention that called for a specific product was less meaningful to her. Thomas, who was generally oriented from an academic-alienation orientation, on the other hand, seemed to generally want to complete writing tasks as quickly as possible and thus seemed to approach formatting his goals in the same way, but for different reasons.

It is important to note here that the correlations between goal orientation and motivation have been observed for a very small sample and are not generalizable. For such to be the case, research with far more participants would be necessary. I will return to this point in my

Discussion section when I describe implications for future research. However, they are suggestive that there may be relationships between them.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

In this final chapter, I will first summarize the findings addressed in the previous chapter. Then, I will address some of the implications that these findings have for researchers and educators. Finally, I will put forth some possibilities for future research based on this study.

Summary of Findings

In the previous chapter, I addressed the three research questions. The first two research questions related to what adolescents think about goal setting in the context of writing instruction and more specifically their perceptions of goal setting as it was implemented in the study. Most participants thought that articulating implementation intentions, as used in the study, were helpful but claimed that their impact decreased when they were rushed. In terms of how the participants generated their goals for subsequent essays, they tended to set their goals based on teacher feedback. In order to address the third question, how students' motivation structures correspond with their perceptions and uses of goal setting, I had to first look at their motivation structures. Most participants' goal orientations were too complex, even on a single writing task, to be broken down to a single goal orientation from the 3×2 matrix. However, based on one participant who was predominantly motivated from an academic-alienation-approach orientation, such an orientation seemed to correspond with not using implementation intentions. Overall, varied goal orientations did seem to correspond with varied generations and uses of implementation intentions.

Implications of This Research for Educators and Researchers

In this section, I will consider how my research may impact future research and future efforts in the classroom. First, I will address the complexities that arise as a result of the complexities in participants' motivational structures. Second, I will return to the list of nine teacher-actions that guided this study and consider what alterations my findings might suggest.

Multiple, Complex Goal Orientations

As noted throughout the findings, even the participants who expressed one predominant motivation orientation did not present that orientation exclusively. Thomas, although usually academic-alienation-approach oriented, expressed all of the other motivation orientations identified in the research (i.e., learning-approach, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance) as well. Karen, who strongly tended towards the learning-approach orientation, also less frequently demonstrated performance-approach and academic-alienation-approach. As addressed in the Findings section, the students' motivation orientations were too complex to tag any with a single orientation, especially for a complex task such as writing an essay for a test that will, in part, determine college acceptance.

The implications for research of the complexity of goal orientations are significant. If it is impossible to isolate a single motivation orientation on the 3×2 matrix for an authentic task, then it is impossible to isolate the effects of a learning-approach orientation versus a performance-avoidance orientation with regard to any task. Subsequent research will need to consider these issues carefully, especially as research seeks to understand the impact of these motivations. Clearly, any difficulties in isolating a motivation orientation would compound the difficulties in efforts to isolate the effects of such motivation orientations.

One motivation orientation can be, in all likelihood, better isolated from another in a controlled, experimental setting. In such settings, directions can be more carefully monitored and tasks more carefully crafted to isolate individual motivation orientations in the 3×2 matrix, but such studies do not replicate day-to-day, authentic experience in the same way that research conducted in a naturalistic setting can. For example, experimental research would be unable to replicate a school setting and all of the complexities associated with it. As noted in the Findings chapter of this study, high school participants' motivations were strongly influenced by the time crunches endemic to high school life and by the participants' academic interests. In short, while using the laboratory setting might isolate specific motivations, I am not confident about the relevance of such research to the day-to-day high school setting or the complex and conflicting goal orientations that agents may have in those settings.

Part of why any controlled, experimental setting would be problematic for authentic findings is that complexity is at the heart of studying goal orientations. Melody stated that she wanted to learn the content in classes in order to master the material because there would be a final exam. Another agent might have simply stated that she wanted to make sure that she learned all of the material so that she knew it. We might think that she was expressing a learning-approach goal orientation when, at its root, the agent's motivation was doing well on the final and future assessments on related topics (and thus a performance-approach orientation). For example, Jessie stated that she enjoyed learning how to write – but was not clear about whether that was because she inherently enjoyed learning how to write or because she wanted to perform well on the essay portion of the SAT. Karen's statement that setting goals resulted in "much better feedback" than she had received before showed that the goals were "making [her] writing better." As I discussed in the Findings section, it is impossible to tell whether this statement is

performance oriented, learning oriented, or both. This kind of complexity of participants' goal orientation demonstrates that even when a student's orientation seems initially to fall into a single cell of the matrix, deeper examination may reveal that the orientation might not be reducible to one cell or another.

This complexity, though, does not mean that the 3×2 matrix is not useful. Certainly, the matrix provides useful terms for thinking about students' motivation – just not in a reductive, singular way. Based on this research, I believe that placing any person in a single cell of the matrix for all tasks is not possible – and may not even be possible on a single task. Rather, I might suggest considering goal orientations in terms of six sliding scales, where each cell of the matrix is represented in terms of its strength or weakness. Karen would, for example, be rated overall as strongly learning-approach oriented, weakly performance-approach, very weakly academic-alienation-approach oriented, and devoid of any of the avoidance orientations. Certainly, as these findings have shown, most agents scales would shift given the specific tasks in which they are engaged; Thomas, for example, would be more performance-approach and less academic-alienation-approach for many science tasks and the reverse for many English assignments. Such descriptions may seem, at first glance, as unnecessarily complex; but I believe these findings have shown that motivation is too complex to be described more simply.

I see uncovering these complexities as one of the strengths of qualitative research. Whereas a quantitative study might give us a false sense of the ability to isolate goal orientations, qualitative research helps us to see and make sense of the realities of the complexity of goal setting and goal orientations when applied to real-world settings and tasks. Though complexities in goal orientations dramatically complicate the findings, ultimately, dealing with those complexities strikes me as the best way to conduct research that will apply to the complexities of

the classroom setting. As Kaplan and Maehr (2002) stated, these orientations “should be investigated in particular populations of students, within specific learning environments [using] qualitative methods ... that allow the exploration of these unique motivational processes” (pp. 141-142). As *unique* denotes, motivations are ever shifting things, varying from agent to agent, from task to task, and even moment to moment.

As complex as these motivations are, it is critical for teachers to be able to have a nuanced understanding of their students’ motivation orientations. First, the old assumption that each person is motivated from one orientation overall is a faulty one, and one that could lead teachers to assume that if a student is learning-oriented in one context, he will approach every task from this orientation. Such an assumption could prevent teachers from reassessing students’ orientations on individual tasks or from understanding that they can create learning opportunities that might engage students who seem unengaged, both of which are critical for ensuring that students are engaged with each task in the classroom. Simply because a student is excited to learn about photosynthesis does not mean that she will be excited to silently transcribe notes scrawled on a chalkboard. On the other hand, simply because a student is not interested in analyzing rhetorical strategies in “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” does not mean that he won’t be interested in completing a poster assignment. Second, understanding that multiple orientations can exist for the same task could help teachers avoid making assumptions about their students’ engagements with work. Simplification of motivation orientations can prevent teachers from fully understanding and responding to their students. While a student may be fascinated by her research on prohibition, she may also want to get that research over and done with – and the more fully her teacher understands these complexities, the better he can foster her learning.

Also, it is of note that despite the complexity of the participants' responses and apparent motivations, there were two cells of the 3×2 matrix that were not evidenced in this small sample size. During discussions with these participants, none of them expressed either learning-avoidance or academic-alienation-avoidance orientations, even on a particular task rather than as an overall goal orientation to many tasks. I am hesitant to make broad claims from limited data, and I have not held this absence out as a finding given the very small sample population. However, in terms of the lack of academic-alienation-avoidance orientation, I believe that this absence could be accounted for by the fact that the intervention used here would not attract any participants who were frequently motivated to do as little work as possible in order to avoid doing future work. Simply put, an entirely optional SAT course is not the place to go to avoid doing work.

I have a more difficult time accounting for the lack of any learning-avoidance orientations. Again, though, I am hesitant to make any broad claims or consider this absence to be much more than a statement of what occurred with these particular participants in this particular setting. In the member check, Melody stated that if "I didn't think I could improve at all, then I wouldn't have taken the class." Perhaps that accounts for the absence of such a motivation orientation, but as I have said before, the small sample size prevents me from making any broad claims.

Being Motivated to Earn a Specific Grade is Problematic for the 3×2 Matrix

During the surveys and interviews, Thomas and Melody expressed that they work hard enough to achieve a certain grade (a B for Thomas, an A- for Melody) but are not interested in

working hard enough to move beyond that. Certainly, such a motivation would be placed in the performance row of the matrix. However, choosing the proper column is far more complex.

On the one hand, the participants *are* concerned with their performance on the task, so it seems tempting to place them into the performance column of the matrix. Yet they are not attempting to produce the best product or to earn the best score that they can. They are satisfied with reaching a specific threshold. As such, it seems that the motivation could be considered academic-alienation oriented, as with such motivation, agents are satisfied, too, with reaching a threshold: a passing grade in order to prevent them from having to do more work. However, an agent may not be motivated to complete the assignment as perfectly as possible, but just to earn a “perfect” grade. While there may be room for improvement on the task, the above logic would seem to direct us to label him as having an academic-alienation-approach oriented motivation. This seems more than a bit silly.

There seem to be three options for resolving this problem, presented in increasing feasibility. First, a certain threshold could be established beyond which an agent could be considered performance oriented. The grade of a B seems a reasonable spot for this, since this is, at least in theory, considered to denote “good” work. However, drawing such a line seems quite arbitrary. After all, a grade of C is considered, at least in teacher-speak, “okay”.

If we remain committed to a matrix into which we could discretely place each motivation an agent experiences, then it seems more reasonable to establish a fourth column for an agent concerned with completing a task at a specific level rather than to the best of the agent’s ability. If I am writing this dissertation only well enough to satisfy my evaluators, this motivation would be categorically different than my actual motivation, to complete this dissertation to the best of my ability. If we are committed to a matrix with discrete cells, I would suggest calling this

orientation achievement orientation, as the agent is concerned with a specific achievement, not the quality of the product.

However, I am, as I stated in the previous sub-section, not committed to a matrix with discrete sections. Motivations in the real world are sufficiently complex, I believe, to require a consideration of an individual inhabiting more than just one cell of the matrix in each case – as I have previously argued. If such reasoning is accepted, then there is no need for discrete cells; rather, we need to consider motivation as a multi-dimensional set of spectrums. For example, if one student is motivated to complete a task well enough to earn at least a B and a second student is motivated to complete a task to earn at least a passing grade, both are motivated from a performance-approach orientation. However, when considering these along a spectrum, it would make sense to say that the first student is more performance-oriented than the second, who is more academic-alienation oriented. Put another way, considering orientations as a spectrum would help us to distinguish between completing tasks to earn a specific grade and completing tasks as successfully as possible.

Implications for Teacher Training and Professional Development

In addition to encouraging teachers-in-training to familiarize themselves with the research-based teacher actions that this study has shown students believe to be effective in helping them engage meaningfully with goal setting – which I will discuss in the next section – this study has important implications for pre- and in-service teachers.

First and foremost, both the complexity of motivation orientations and how motivation to complete one task may likely not mean the same motivation on another task. This distinction serves as good reminders that learners are dynamic beings. Thus, teachers cannot assume that

their learning-oriented students will be engaged with every task in the same way; it is not enough to hook students once and assume that their interest will carry them through the year. Rather, teachers need to continually monitor their students' engagement through informal assessments and adjust their instruction accordingly. On the other end of the motivation spectrum, it is also important that teachers remember that a student who is disengaged with one task and completing it from an academic-alienation orientation is not necessarily always an academically-alienated student. Their current orientation could be the result of the task itself, of their interest in the subject, of external factors, or of any number of other considerations. To put it briefly, motivations are complex and fluid, and the more that teachers can plan with this in mind, the better they might engage all of their students all the time in the most meaningful ways possible.

Second, and more broadly, it follows from the above that teachers should avoid making assumptions about their students. In the case of Thomas, he tended to approach writing tasks from an academic-alienation orientation. However, this does not mean that he's a disengaged kid – as I well might have assumed if he were in one of my English classes. As I noted earlier, he became noticeably more energetic when discussing chemistry, so it's not that he hates school. Instead, it seems that the writing tasks that he is forced to do, either in school or in this study (since he was there at the insistence of his parents), simply don't grab his attention. But he certainly isn't lazy. As teachers, it can be difficult to see our students as multi-faceted individuals whose interests are complex and, often, radically different from our own. The more we can be reminded of these complexities, the better.

Alterations to the Nine Teacher-Actions

Based on the research of Ross (2006) and Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) and on my pilot study, I went into this study with nine teacher actions that served as the undergirding theory for my study: that a classroom where these nine teacher-actions were met was a classroom where self-assessment and goal setting were implemented successfully. As I argued in my Methodology, I believe that I was able to establish such a classroom. Now, as I am reflecting over the study as a whole and the comments participants have made, I believe that there are some alterations to be made to the list.

For the most part, the nine teacher-actions seem to have all been components of a successful goal-setting program. Participants all agreed that goal setting was helpful in some form or another, though there was some disagreement about whether the format of the implementation intentions was necessary. All five participants, though, agreed that goal setting had helped them improve their writing. There was, however, one element of the original list that I was not able to achieve in this study; because participants still found the goal-setting program to be effective, I am not confident that this element of the list needs to be as strict as it initially was.

Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) asserted that revision and goal setting might not be effective if students are focused on a grade or a score. They argued for teachers encouraging students to focus on self-assessment (i.e., the identification of strengths and weaknesses) rather than on self-evaluation (i.e., grading). Going into this study, I knew that this would be a practically impossible task, as the numerical value assigned to all SAT scores – and even to all SAT essay scores – virtually forces students to preoccupy themselves with a grade rather than the quality of the writing. Of course, it is possible to think both about the score *and* the quality

of the writing – and a high score is usually indicative of good writing. Still, focusing on the essay's quality rather than its score has been shown to increase the quality of the essay, and any discussion of the score takes away from a focus on quality – or at least adds another consideration to the mix. And in my study, participants expressed a desire to make sure that their score on the SAT essay was good far, far more than they expressed a desire to make sure that the essay was a high quality piece of writing. And, given the task, this seems quite reasonable. I have yet to meet someone who takes the SAT for what they can learn from it.

Despite this focus, participants stated that they believed that having implementation intentions was helpful in improving their writing, so for the purposes of this study, keeping participants' minds off of their scores did not seem essential. However, I make no claims that I have shown that goal setting is equally effective at improving writing when participants focus on scores as when they do not. I have not even shown that goal setting is effective at improving writing. Either of the previous findings would require quite a different study entirely – though I think that these are fertile areas for research, as I will discuss later.

Furthermore, the context of this study is different from the classroom in more ways that it would be reasonable to list here. In short, though, there are three critical ways that I believe this context differed from that of the classroom. First, students had elected to take part in the course, which would make them more likely to be receptive to what they learned in the course. In most classrooms, students do not choose to be there in any real sense. Second, they were working on essays whose structures were so similar as to be reasonably considered revisions of each other, allowing for them to directly transfer skills and strategies from one writing to the next. In many classroom contexts, subsequent essays differ so much from each other (whether in form, content, or both) that they cannot be thought to be revisions of each other. Third, they were completing a

task that is explicitly designed to measure their abilities and to assign a score to those abilities. In many classroom contexts, assignments are primarily intended to extend students' thinking on the topics about which they are writing. The grade, at least for the teacher, is secondary.

It is also vital to note that Andrade and Valtcheva (2009) were considering how to help students self-assess their work whereas I looked at goal setting. As I have discussed earlier, I maintain that students need to identify their areas for growth before setting goals to improve; thus, it seems that effective self-assessment would be a precursor to effective goal setting. But because they were considering how to strengthen students' self-assessment, their strategies are designed to encourage a focus on that self-assessment. For the purposes of motivating a student to complete such self-assessment, as this study demonstrated, both learning and performance orientations seemed to work to encourage the participants. Because of this, in order for students to effectively use goal setting, it does not seem that they need to focus on self-assessment (which corresponds to a learning orientation) over self-evaluation (which corresponds to a performance orientation) – beyond needing to self-assess in order to establish what improvements they will focus on.

Also, given that participants in this study frequently expressed multiple simultaneous goal orientations, the dichotomy that Andrade and Valtcheva draw between self-evaluation and self-assessment might be a false one.

Implication 1: Give Participants the Option of When to Compose Their Goals and Whether to Use Implementation Intentions

During the final focus group, I asked participants what they thought could make goal setting more effective. Thomas stated that he thought it would be better to set goals immediately

prior to an essay rather than after the previous essay, and all participants agreed in some way. For example, Jessie stated that the “act of writing them out” just before writing a new essay would be better than just reading over previously selected goals, as they were directed to do in the course. Karen then wondered whether establishing goals before a new essay would be less effective than establishing them after the previous essay. However, Melody argued that it would give them “more time to think about it” if they wrote their goals just before starting a new essay. What was clear in the exchange was that although they initially agreed (and I will return to why I think this is in the next recommended addition to the list), there was eventual disagreement about when goals should be composed. Another point of disagreement, as discussed in the findings, was that Karen believed that implementation intentions were unnecessary for her, while other participants disagreed, stating that they found the formula and specificity very helpful.

As such, I would argue that the use of implementations intentions should be an option rather than a requirement and that the timing of establishing goals should be left up to the writer. Given the extensive research that demonstrates the effectiveness of implementation intentions, though, I maintain that all students should be taught about them, their value, and how to articulate them. Furthermore, they should practice both goals and implementation intentions and should experiment with setting them immediately after some essays and before others. Once they have, though, they should be given choice in both matters, though teachers should, of course, guide them based on evidence. I am not aware of research that suggests that one combination is more effective at improving writing performance than the other. This could be tested empirically in future research.

Implication 2: Explicitly Remind Writers to Review and Apply Their Goals

Immediately Prior to a New Writing Assignment

During the exchange about what could be changed to improve the use of goal setting, Thomas stated that he often had trouble remembering his goals from the previous week on the new essay. Jessie suggested that by returning their essays and goals to them before the new essay, I could have helped them to remember their goals better. When I pointed out that I had indeed give back their essays and their goals before each new essay, they rejoined that it might be helpful for me to explicitly remind them to review their essay and their goals and to apply those goals to their next essay. In the second course meeting (the first time that I returned their essays), I did indeed tell them to take five minutes to review their goals and think about how to apply them, but I am not confident that I did that in subsequent weeks. Regardless of whether I did or not, though, it is clear from the quoted exchange that the participants in this study did not use the time in that manner or remember my ever having suggested that they use the time that way. Many of them did not even remember getting the essays back prior to writing the new ones.

As such, I would suggest adding to the list of teacher actions that the teacher should explicitly remind participants to review their goals (or to set the goals) in the minutes prior to starting each new writing assignment.

Along these lines, it may also be worthwhile for teachers to experiment with the order of their lessons to see what works best for their students. In this study, participants received an essay back, composed a new essay, were instructed based on their previous essays, and set goals for their essay for the following week. It might be worthwhile to consider reordering these items to see what works best. For example, if a teacher wanted to shift the focus from self-reflection to

more direct application of what the teacher just taught, students could receive a lesson on problems in a past essay, set goals, and then compose a new essay immediately. This, too, would address the suggestion from some participants that goal setting be carried out immediately before the next essay was composed in order to keep those goals fresher in their minds.

The Revised List of Teacher Actions to Promote Effective Use of Goal Setting

Having outlined the rationale for the changes to the list of teacher actions above, I would like to close by presenting a revised list of teacher actions that promote effective use of goal setting based on my findings. I have put all revisions based on the findings of this study in italics. The rationale for each change has been addressed in the previous portion of this sub-section of the Discussion:

1. Define the assessment criteria students will use.
2. Teach students to apply the assessment criteria properly.
3. Provide feedback on their self-assessments.
4. Help students improve performance based upon self-assessment.
5. Allow enough time for revision once students have self-assessed.
6. *Have students self-assess in order to set goals for improvement in the future.*
7. Vary the questions to which students are asked to respond in their reflections to avoid a feeling of monotony.
8. Show enthusiasm for self-assessment.
9. *Introduce students to implementation intentions and encourage them to use them, but allow them to personalize the format of stating goals.*
10. *Explicitly remind participants to review and apply their goals immediately prior to beginning a writing assignment.*

Areas for Future Research

In this final sub-section of the paper, I will consider areas that I believe have particular potential for future research, both quantitative and qualitative – and in many cases, both. However, given the qualitative findings that I generated here, I would be interested to see whether or not those translate to quantitative differences as well.

The first area worth examining is how goal setting differs when tasks are graded *versus* when they are not. I think that such an examination would be best served by a blending of qualitative and quantitative analysis. It would be beneficial to know whether a focus on learning over time *versus* a focus on increasing their scores translates into differences in participants' use of goal setting or in the effectiveness of that goal setting. Such research could help teachers guide their students' learning and show them how to foster long-term improvements. Also, while prior research has already examined differences between performance orientations and learning orientations (Schunk, 1996; Seijts et al., 2004), it is unclear if these differences matter when considering their impact on writing achievement when using goal setting. On the qualitative end of things, it would be interesting to find out whether participants' perceptions were different when using goal setting on an unscored task *versus* a scored task. Again, such research could help guide teachers' practice by demonstrating how this strategy shifts when used under a variety of conditions.

Another worthwhile area for study relates to an examination of the debate that the participants got into during this study when discussing whether it would be better to set goals immediately before an essay or after the previous one. On the one hand, it might seem that the goals would be fresher in the writer's mind and more relevant if he set them prior to writing a new essay. On the other hand, the writer might be able to focus more clearly on the goals if a new essay is not looming in the next few minutes. To settle the issue, a quantitative examination of the impact that these two different approaches have on participants' scores would be useful.

One of three areas, though, that could expand the body of knowledge about this topic would be to study perceptions of goal setting among individuals who tend to have similar motivation structures. As I noted in the Findings, it does not seem that any one participant, in a

real world setting, is ever genuinely motivated in one solitary way. There were, however, certainly participants who tended to be more motivated in one manner than another, and participants whose motivations were far more blended. It would, I think, be particularly fascinating to explore the opinions of participants who are predominantly motivated in one way to understand their approach to goal setting. Is their motivation structure consistent based on orientation, or are there strong variations within such similarly-oriented groups? If there is variation, what else contributes to these differences if not orientation? It would also be worthwhile to find out whether there is a significant difference in the changes that goal setting effects in participants who tend to be motivated in different ways. In other words, can the amount of change that goal setting effects be correlated with that agent's motivation orientation?

The second area that could expand the body of available research would be examining whether, from a quantitative perspective, implementing goals according to the ten teacher-actions I addressed earlier in the Discussion produces a statistically significant difference in score over a control group. Previous research on goal setting and writing is scant to begin with, but no research that I came across applied goal setting to writing in such a carefully codified and prescriptive matter. Along these lines, it would be interesting to examine the effects of each of the elements of the list. When goal setting is implemented according to the list I have generated, how does it affect writing performance? How important are each of the individual elements of the list?

A third and final area that would help teachers apply this research directly in the classroom would be a study that looked at the use of implementation intentions in an authentic classroom setting. As discussed earlier, there are many important differences between the context of my study and the classroom context, and it would be worthwhile to know how these

differences in context influence the participants' use and perceptions of research-based goal setting. Do they have the same attitudes about them? Do they see the goals influencing their writing in the same ways when writing tasks change more from task to task? Does the fact that they have not chosen to be in the class have any influence?

I would like to include a final possibility for future research as a sort of footnote, as it is somewhat outside the area of the focus for this study. Throughout my discussions with the participants, a common refrain for many of them was the amount of pressure they feel from parents to perform well in school. Such performance was always couched in terms of a score, not on a learning goal or the mastery of a particular subject. It would be interesting to examine the ways in which parental influence impacts the motivation orientations of their children – both in terms of “high pressure” parents and “low pressure” parents. Is there a connection between the child's attitude and that of the parent? To what extent does parental pressure push adolescents to adopt performance-oriented goals?

Conclusion

In closing, I would like to return to what I perceive as the strengths and weaknesses of this study. The strengths, as I see them, are that these findings and the qualitative method by which I arrived at them help to shed light on the complexities of the participants' goal orientations. Too often, research has sought to pigeonhole orientations into one cell or another; rather, I think that this research shows quite clearly that motivation is too complex to be simplified into a single cell in a chart. As such, future research should strive to grapple with the complexities of motivation. Another contribution that I feel this study has made to the present body of research is that goal setting, when carried out in a systematic and research-based way,

will be perceived as effective by adolescents. Whereas much of the previous research has found that students disapprove of this intervention, I believe that their opinions could well have stemmed from an ineffective implementation of goal setting in the classroom.

Despite these main strengths, I would be remiss if I did not list a few weaknesses. First and foremost, though this research has shown that participants believed that this intervention was effective, this research has not shown that it *was* effective. To do so, more quantitative research would need to be conducted. The other important limitation of this study is that it was conducted outside of the regular classroom setting with self-selecting participants and involved a writing task that is quite distinct from the typical classroom writing task. For there to be any claims made about research-based goal setting's perceived efficacy in the classroom setting, other research would need to occur. However, I do think that the results from this study are promising in that respect: if conducted according to research, I believe that students in a standard classroom setting would find goal setting effective – and that it would, indeed improve their writing.

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PARENTAL INFORMED CONSENT

Investigator: Mr. Doug Levandowski
Faculty Co-Investigator: Dr. Alisa Belzer
Rutgers University
Study Title: Goal Setting & Motivation

Your child is invited to participate in a research study that is being conducted by Mr. Doug Levandowski, who is a graduate student in the Graduate School of Education at Rutgers University. The purpose of this research is to determine how students' motivation and their opinions of goal setting affect their writing.

Students who are in their Freshman, Sophomore, or Junior year are welcome to participate in this study. Each student's participation will consist of 7 tutoring sessions, 1 focus group, and 3 one-on-one interviews.

Your child's participation will involve the following:

- The completion of a short survey about their opinions about goal setting. Completion of this survey will take approximate ten minutes.
- Your son or daughter was one of the first 12 students to return the necessary forms, so Mr. Levandowski has selected him or her to participate in the second phase of the study. This second phase will involve the following:
 - meeting once a week for seven weeks for a writing workshop; dates and times to be arranged between Mr. Levandowski, the participants, and their legal guardians
 - completing writing assignments given as part of the writing workshop (all completed during our meetings)
 - attending two focus groups (likely during the first and last writing workshop), where the participants and the researcher will discuss questions important to the research
 - three one-on-one interviews with Mr. Levandowski; two of these will take place during the seven weeks of the writing workshop; one will take place after Mr. Levandowski has had a chance to look at the data, likely at some point during the summer or the 2012-2013 school year

This research is confidential. Confidential means that the research records will include some information about your child, such as their opinions about goal setting. I will keep this information confidential by limiting individual's access to the research data and keeping it in a secure location. Furthermore, when discussing research data, either in speech or in writing, Mr. Levandowski will use pseudonyms.

The research team and the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect research participants) at Rutgers University are the only parties that will be allowed to see the data, except as may be required by law. If a report of this study is published, or the results are presented at a professional conference, only group results will be stated. All study data will be kept for three years.

There are minimal foreseeable risks associated with this study. There is the unlikely chance that some students might feel embarrassed by some of the questions, though (a) care has been taken in

designing the questions to avoid this and (b) students can decide not to answer questions or to drop out of the study at any point.

You and your child have been told that the benefit of taking part in this phase of the study – the seven week writers workshop that will focus on the SAT essay, including the focus groups and interviews – will be a chance to practice and receive feedback on your child's SAT essays and a chance to share his or her opinions with Mr. Levandowski.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose for your child not to participate, and you may withdraw your child from participating at any time during the study activities without any penalty to your child. In addition, your child may choose not to answer any questions with which your child is not comfortable.

If you or your child have any questions about the study or study procedures, you/your child may contact me via email (doug.levandowski@gmail.com) or by telephone (609.462.8862).

If you or your child have any questions about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect those who participate). Please contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Your child will also be asked if they wish to participate in this study. A copy of this consent form will be given to your child to return to you so that you may have it for your records.

Sign below if you agree to allow your child to participate in this research study:

Name of Child (Print) _____

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (Print) _____

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator's Signature _____ Date _____

AUDIOTAPE AND VIDEOTAPE ADDENDUM TO CONSENT FORM

You have already agreed to allow your child to participate in a research study entitled: Goal Setting & Motivation conducted by Mr. Doug Levandowski. We are asking for your permission to allow us to videotape and audiotape your child as part of that research study. In order for your child to participate in this study, you must consent to your child's being videotaped and audiotaped.

The recordings will be used for analysis by the research team, including an analysis of trends and of specific statements. Quotes from your student, with his or her name replaced with a confidential pseudonym, may be used in assignments for the principle researcher's graduate work at Rutgers and in published articles on his research.

The recordings will include a video recording of the focus group and an audio recording of the follow-up interviews. The video recording of the focus group will include full facial pictures and will contain the student's real name. The audio recording will contain the student's real name as well. After transcription, these names will be changed to pseudonyms.

The recordings will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at the researcher's home. Neither the filing cabinet nor the labels on recordings will contain the student's name or any identifying information about the student. These recordings will be kept for one year after the completion of the study. After this time, they will be destroyed and only the transcripts of the focus group and interviews will remain, both of which will have any identifying information removed and all names replaced with pseudonyms.

Your signature on this form grants the investigator named above permission to record your child as described above during participation in the above-referenced study. The investigator will not use the recordings for any other reason than those stated in the consent form without your written permission.

Name of Child (Print) _____

Name of Parent/Legal Guardian (Print) _____

Parent/Legal Guardian's Signature _____ Date _____

Principal Investigator Signature _____ Date _____

ASSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Investigators: Mr. Doug Levandowski
Faculty Co-Researcher: Dr. Alisa Belzer
Rutgers University
Study Title: Goal Setting & Motivation

This assent form may contain words that you do not understand. Please ask the researcher or your parent to explain any words or information that you do not clearly understand before signing this document.

Mr. Levandowski is inviting you to take part in his research study. Why is this study being done:

As part of his graduate school course work, Mr. Levandowski is conducting a study. In this study, he will be exploring students' opinions about setting goals on their essays and exploring how students' motivation relates to both goal setting and writing.

What will happen:

As many Freshmen, Sophomores, or Juniors as wanted had the opportunity to complete a survey. Mr. Levandowski asked the first twelve who responded to participate in this study.

During this portion of the study, a few things will happen. First, I'll ask you complete a short survey. But the most significant part is that you'll have the opportunity to take part in a seven week SAT essay tutoring program. This will include meeting once a week – but no homework. At the first meeting, we'll have a focus group where I'll ask the group some questions about writing, about goal setting, and about what motivates you to write. Also, I'll be asking to interview each of you three times. Two of these times will be during the seven weeks that we're meeting as a group, and a final interview will be during the summer or the 2012-2013 school year.

Finally, I will be asking participants to email me if they have questions or if they think of anything after an interview or focus group that they wanted to say. These emails may also be included in the study.

What does it cost and how much does it pay?

You do not have to pay to take part in any phase of this study. In terms of compensation, you have the chance to work on your writing throughout the course of the five week study this summer.

There are very few risks in taking part in this research, but the following things could happen:

Probably: It is unlikely that anything bad will happen. Assent forms, parent consent forms, and surveys will be kept locked up. The people working on this study are very well trained and understand the importance of confidentiality.

Maybe: It is possible that someone not involved in the study might see some of your writing or hear an interview. However, I do not expect that any of the content will be especially sensitive. In addition, I will be doing my utmost to prevent anyone not involved with the study from seeing anything that could connect you to the study.

Very unusual: Mr. Levandowski may learn that you or someone else are in serious danger they would have to tell an appropriate family member, such as a parent or caretaker or the appropriate officials to protect you and other people. This is very unlikely because the focus of survey.

Also, if you become upset or embarrassed by any of the questions, you can choose to stop participating in the study at any time. Given the focus of the questions, though, this is unlikely.

Are there any benefits that you or others will get out of being in this study?

All research must have some potential benefit either directly to those that take part in it or potentially to others through the knowledge gained. As part of this second phase of the study, you will receive free work on the SAT essay.

It's completely up to you! Both you and a parent/guardian have to agree to allow you to take part in this study. If you choose to not take part in this study, Mr. Levandowski will honor that choice. No one will get angry or upset with you if you don't want to do this. If you agree to take part in it and then you change your mind later, that's OK too. It's always your choice.

CONFIDENTIALITY: We will do everything we can to protect the confidentiality of your records.

If Mr. Levandowski does write any professional articles about this research, those articles will never say your name or anything that could give away who you are. We will do a good job at keeping all our records secret by following the rules made for researchers.

Do you have any questions? If you have any questions or worries regarding this study, or if any problems come up, you may contact the principal investigator, Mr. Doug Levandowski at via email (doug.levandowski@gmail.com) or via phone (609.462.8862).

You may also ask questions or talk about any worries to the Institutional Review Board (a committee that reviews research studies in order to protect those who participate). Please contact the IRB Administrator at Rutgers University at:

Rutgers University, the State University of New Jersey
Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
3 Rutgers Plaza
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8559
Tel: 732-932-0150 ext. 2104
Email: humansubjects@orsp.rutgers.edu

Your parent or guardian will also be asked if they wish for you to participate in this study. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

Please sign below if you assent (that means you agree) to participate in this study.

Signature

Date

Name (Please print): _____

Investigator's Signature: _____ Date: _____

N.B.: This serves only as a rough guide of the topics that the interview will explore. Because students will have presented different ideas during the focus groups to varying degrees of specificity, I will need to ask some students to elaborate, ask others to specify, et c. This appendix does, however, present the kinds of questions that might be asked.

Introduction: Hi everybody and thanks for agreeing to take part in the study, showing up today, all that stuff. Most of our first meeting today is going to be a whole-group interview where we'll talk a bit about your experiences with setting goals, what's worked, what hasn't...those sorts of things. There shouldn't be anything too personal, but of course if there are any questions you don't want to answer, you don't have to. Any questions? [respond to questions as needed]

1. Okay, first question. All of you are here because you have different opinions about goal setting and different levels of experience with them. What I'd like to do first is have each of you introduce yourself to the group and tell us all a bit about how much experience you have with setting goals for academic work. I'll go first. [self-introduction to show them what I'm expecting] Who'd like to go next?
2. Great. Thanks everyone. What I'd like to do next is talk a bit about ways that you've used goals for school that have worked and ways that haven't worked. This will help us come up with a plan for setting goals in this workshop, and it will give me more information for my study. So, what helps you when you're setting goals? What gets in your way? [Possible follow-up: What about when you're actually trying to carry out the goals you've set? What helps? What hurts?]
3. Is there anything else you want to comment on that we didn't address during our discussion or anything that you want to go back to?
4. Any questions for me?

That'll do it for today. If you think of anything you'd like to add, feel free to email me, let me know after our next workshop, whatever you'd like. Thanks so much for your time, and I'll see you at our next workshop.

N.B.: This serves only as a rough guide of the topics that the interview will explore. Because students will have presented different ideas during the focus groups to varying degrees of specificity, I will need to ask some students to elaborate, ask others to specify, et c. This appendix does, however, present the kinds of questions that might be asked.

1. You said on your survey that you [amount of experience with goal setting]. Can you tell me more about that experience? [or, discussion of elements of goal setting that the participant may not have realized constituted goal setting]
2. [If participant has used goal setting] I've had students tell me that goal setting is the best thing ever, and I've had students tell me that it's a complete waste of time. Can you tell me a bit about whether you think goal setting helps your writing or not? [Follow up, if necessary: Why do you think that is?]
3. Okay, let's take a look at what you wrote most recently for the workshop. Walk me through how you wrote this essay. [Possible probing question indented below]
 - a. Sometimes, people write the whole thing without pausing at all to think or revise, press print, and never think about it again. Other people agonize over every word and erase almost everything at least once. Most people are in between. Where do you fall on that revision spectrum?
4. What were your goals while writing this essay?
5. How did you set those goals?
6. Was writing this similar to or different from your usual writing in school? [Follow-ups, if necessary: What made it similar/different? Were you motivated to do this assignment in the same way that you usually are? What usually motivates you to do your work in school?]
7. What motivates you in school usually? [Follow-up: Is that the same way that you're motivated for this course?]
8. How do you feel about how the SAT essay writing is going so far? [Possible follow-ups: Are there any aspects of it that are particularly frustrating? Rewarding?]
9. I know, especially at this time of the year, you're probably really, really busy between the end of the school year and the weather finally being nice. What motivates you to keep coming to these meetings?
10. Do you think that working on setting goals has helped your writing? [Possible follow-ups: Why? Why not?]
11. Have you applied goal setting to any of your work in school? [Possible follow-ups: Why? Why not? Has it helped?]
12. Anything I can do to make goal setting better?

Melody – Week 1

- 3
- too brief
- the examples are inconsistent and inadequate; use more description and, as you thought in the goal, think about only one example in order to more fully develop it – maybe something that connects the two points you’re trying to make; you could argue that self-improvement is, ultimately, necessary

Karen – Week 1

- 4
- What are some of the ways that teachers push students? Get into specifics here. Also, the focus is a bit weird given that you’re talking about school as a way that peers change you
- the middle paragraph is too brief and too hypothetical; make up a friend who moved – or you moved – or something like that
- the final body para has the same issue as the first body para
- good conclusion; those are important
- yes, I think your two goals address the issues that are keeping you from a better score

Yvonne – Week 1

- 3
- it would be good to set up the reasons for change concisely as a thesis statement; even if you just take one minute before you write the thesis statement if you haven’t thought of it yet, you’d have a stronger start to the essay
- you need stronger, more vivid examples for your essay; think of people you know – either personally or historically or fictionally – who underwent changes and talk about them
- I agree with your goals; varying how you structure your sentences would be good

Zara – Week 1

- 5
- your intro is pretty good but a little repetitive for how short it is; and I agree with your second goal: the thesis needs to be stronger to focus your essay
- from the start of the first body paragraph, it should be clear how this is going to contribute to your overall point
- the second body para is clearer, but not as specific; if you don’t remember details, for the sake of this kind of essay, just make them up...seriously...
- the essay is pretty well focused, though, and I agree that you could use another paragraph for support, though going into more specifics and making sure the reader knows every step of the way why you’re including this information is probably more important

Jessie – Week 1

- 4
- good, clear thesis, though I'm not sure you need to restate the quote; you could probably put it better
- the first body paragraph is too unfocused; use just one example – how you quit smoking – and give us some vivid detail about how you couldn't do something you love; talk about having a coughing fit during a practice and having your coach tell you that you wouldn't be able to swim anymore if you don't quit...I don't know...make something else up, too
- the other paragraphs have the same issues; any of the examples (if you developed them more) could be fine (except for the janitor one, which no one would believe and you wouldn't know about because he would have been in med school long before you ever got to the high school)
- avoid abbreviations for things in your essay; write out the whole word
- and your goals are good, more so the first than the second

Celeste – Week 1

- 5
- your introduction lists quite a lot of reasons why a person would want to change; focus only on a few to clearly set up your essay
- your first goal is the exact comment I would make about your first body paragraph: be more specific; focus on one and go into depth – ditto for the other body paragraphs, too
- talk more about dyeing your hair; describe the moment that you decided; were you snowed in and tired of looking at the blanket of white outside? if you're making things up anyway, the sky's the limit
- good, clear conclusion

Michael – Week 1

- 3
- your introduction needs to be a bit clearer; what exactly will you address in the body paragraphs?
- I'm not clear about the focus of the first body paragraph; I think if you were clearer about that, you could come up with a stronger example, too
- your second and third paragraph seem ultimately like they're really focused on the same idea – going to college...make up an older brother and talk about his experience of going away
- and a 1 would be *really* awful; you'll never get a 1 on an SAT essay unless you try – or suffer some kind of traumatic brain injury; I hope neither ever happens

Zara – Week 2

- Watch out for the repetition in the first paragraph. Take a look; you'll see what I mean.
- Your two examples are good, but try to use a few more specific details to hammer them home. What do you talk about when you skype (I assume) with your family in India? What is the name of that company (if you don't know, make it up).
- The length of the essay is good.
- Try, also, to have a little bit more developed conclusion. Think about a connection between these two examples that might make the essay even more coherent.
- Score: 5
- Self-evaluation: You're right on in terms of your comments, but the score is just a bit low. Also, you aren't fully fleshing out your comments. To start thinking more specifically, think about this, too.
- Goals: For both of these, I think you need to have a clearer plan about how exactly you'll reach those goals. That's something that we'll discuss tonight.

Celeste – Week 2

- The introduction is clear, and I really like the example in the first paragraph. I think a few more details (what exactly do you do when you're annoyed with waiting for a text? describe it more...we'll talk about description tonight)
- The bully paragraph has the same issues, but more pronounced. Think of / make up a specific example to drive this point home. What was the fight over email about? How did it escalate? *et c.*
- What might you say that would connect the lack of patience and bullying? What unifies those two ideas?
- Score: 5
- Self-evaluation: Looks good for the most part. You're using specifics to illustrate your points. That said, I disagree that you need to work on the intro/conclusion; I think the middle is where you have the most room for growth in terms of details.
- Goals: They seem really, really good. We'll talk tonight about making them a little more specific, but overall, good.

Yvonne – Week 2

- Your f's look like t's. That's really throwing me off – and would probably do the same to your reader on the actual SAT. That's something that's going to take a lot of practice, so try to work on that in general. Ditto for your o's and a's and your e's and i's...
- The two body paragraphs are good starts, but you really need a lot more detail in order to get your point across effectively. Try to avoid generalizations without a specific example to back them up. Talk about a family friend who took an easier job and wasn't fulfilled. Talk about a time that you procrastinated.
- Score: 4
- Self-evaluation: Try to go into more detail about your writing, too. What you say about it is right on, but you aren't being specific enough. Use examples to start to see the very specific ways that you could improve.
- Goals: This is something that we're going to talk about this week, but you need to make sure that your goals are specific enough. Every goal you set will be working on improving the essay overall, so try to think about what you'll do to add more details and set the goal around that.

Jessie – Week 2

- Your focus and your details are really very nicely done. The concluding portion could be a bit stronger, though, since you're asking the reader to take all of the message out of your one example.
- Also, think about more details that you could use. What happened when he told you that you weren't as good as you thought you were? How did he tell you? What did that feel like? *et c.*
- The quality is there, but the length is not. I'm not sure if you could get a 5 for this short of an essay, but it meets the other criteria of a 5, so that's what I'm going with. But especially since you finished with so much time to spare on this one, work next time on knowing how many details you can add and still finish with a minute or two to catch any major issues – or how much you can write and get right to the buzzer.
- Self-assessment: Yes. You're spot on with your self-assessment.
- Goals: They're great. Good work. Can I use them as examples tonight to talk about specificity of goals?

Michael – Week 2

- Your introduction is a little rushed, but it does start to set up the essay well. Another sentence or two to build into your argument would be good.
- The first paragraph has decent specificity, but make up a crime you read about recently that wouldn't have been solved before – something like that.
- The next two paragraphs, I think, should be one. They're both about the changes that education has produced. Also, I think you should start the paragraph by transitioning. "Another way that..." or something better than that.
- The details in that paragraph about what there wouldn't be without education were good. Really good.
- I think you should have a final paragraph that sums up everything you've said and concludes your essay. Keep the details in the body paragraphs, probably.
- In terms of how short this is, I'm not sure it would get over a 3. The quality is definitely a 4 and maybe even a 5, but you have to get comfortable enough with the writing of the essay that you can say more.
- Self-assessment: Try to be a lot more detailed. If you look at the specifics that Celeste mentioned when she looked at yours, I think you'll see what I mean. Looking very specifically at the things that you could improve is a good way to think about the the things that you'll do differently next time.
- Goals: We're going to talk a bit tonight about being specific with your goals, and that's something I think you'll need to work on. You want to try to come up with a very specific way that you'll work to improve your writing for next time. We'll discuss that tonight during class. I agree, though, that adding detail and working on grammar are both important – the detail issue more so.

Zara – Week 3

- I'm not sure how well the husband-stealing-for-wife's-medicine example helps you. It doesn't seem like he was stealing out of greed at all... More like he was stealing to save someone's life – and that sounds to me like conscience fighting itself. Also, don't say that your teacher told you about it; say that you saw it on the news – and make up details. The discussion here is fairly vague. What did she have? What medicine was it? What else had he tried?
- I'm also not sure about the next example. I don't know how they'd feel about pop culture references since they explicitly refer to your "reading".
- Score: 4 or 5
- Goals for this essay: I agree with what you said here. Good work on that reflection.
- Goals for next essay: I wonder about whether the second one is reasonable or not. Can you really include 3 body paragraphs? Might it be better to focus on fully developing two of them?
- Adding details: I'd like to see you do a bit more in terms of the details that you're adding here.

Yvonne – Week 3

- Based on the intro paragraph, I'm not sure what you're going to discuss. Make sure that's clear.
- There needs, I think, to be at least one more body paragraph in there. It could be that you break the one story into two and develop it a bit more, but having only one body paragraph weakens your essay. If you are going to split this into two paragraphs, though, you need to make sure there's a focus for each. Is one your struggling with the decision and the other the outcome of it (seeing your mom happy, *et c.*)? Something like that...
- Score: 4 or 5
- Goals for this essay: As I said earlier, if you are going to only have the one personal example, the writing needs to be a bit more dynamic and detailed. We're going to talk about varying writing styles tonight.
- Revision: I don't see the details that you'd add to the essay. You seem to be looking at the places where you didn't put in enough detail...
- Goals for next essay: Both are good, but keep in mind that the conclusion, while important, is not as vital as the introductory paragraph.

Karen – Week 3

- The intro paragraph works really very nicely. The past tense sets up that this is all going to change.
- The two body paragraphs work really nicely; the first is the rise, the second is the fall. this works quite well.
- And then the third one sets up the revelation / point of the essay. Also, good use of a rhetorical question in there. They love risks like that. And the fourth is the resolution, though I might combine that with the last one.
- I'm 99% sure they'd count this as on topic, but just to be sure, I might have made one of the things you missed something (or a few of them) that your conscience told you to do. You told your family that you couldn't get out of work (when you know you could have) and therefore couldn't go to...I don't know...your grandmother's birthday / brother's dressage event / sister's play.
- Assuming this is counted as on topic, it's a 6. Nicely done.
- Goals for this essay: Good, detailed reflection. Nicely done.
- Added descriptions: Nice, especially the last sentence. The parallel structure is great.
- Goals for next essay: They look really good!

Celeste – Week 3

- The first two paragraphs really seem like your introduction. I might cut that down a bit to get into the examples more quickly.
- The next paragraph, about Wells, is good. I might end with a strong concluding sentence to wrap up your point, though.
- A clear example of something really bad that Boss Tweed did would have been good – even if you make it up. Just make it sound realistic.
- Good conclusion.
- Score: 5 (maaaaaaybe 6)
- Goals for this essay: I agree that your first goal (the thesis one) could still use a bit of work. The detail one was better (using the historical examples was *awesome* – but a bit more detail, like a sentence or two extra, would be even better).
- Added details: Again, I would use a specific example (real or invented) that Tweed did to illustrate his greed at the expense of those he was supposed to serve.
- Goals for next essay: Try to be a little more specific about your goals for the next essay. It sort of sounds like you're saying "To do better at this I'll do better at this".

Jessie – Week 3

- The introduction clearly sets this up as fiction. Make sure that this is believable for a high school student to have done. A lot of the details push away from this.
- Yeah, I don't think this works. It's too far in the invented-personal-narrative direction. Even if this had actually happened to you, I think it would still be too focused on the events and not focused enough on the morals. Besides, if you find a ticket, it's yours. It's not like you saw someone drop it. (That's not really the point, though.)
- Score: I really don't know. If they went with this, I could see it getting a 6 because of how strong the writing is. My guess, though, is that it'd be a 5 because it isn't as organized as it might need to be to be higher.
- Goals for this essay: These worked this time – perhaps too well.
- Added details: Yes, that's more detailed and would have been good for an essay that was a bit more focused on lesson rather than narrative.
- Goals for next time: The first one is good, but how are you going to make sure that you write more quickly? Have you been intentionally slowing yourself down?

Melody – Week 3

- The example that you have, I think, should have another one along with it. Also, I think your introduction needs to be a little longer to better set up the essay, as does the conclusion to wrap up the essay.
- That said, the example you include is very good. Maybe a little bit more in terms of the descriptions that you're using. What is some of the treatment that the people of Myanmar are facing? What has she had to endure for her courage?
- Added description: I would go even further with this. What techniques did your friend dislike? What did he do in reaction to that? How did he change... All that good stuff.
- Goals for next essay: I see the areas for improvement, but I don't see the specific goals that we talked about (the "In order to [the main thing you want to achieve], I'll do [the action that will help you reach that goal] at [some particular stage of the writing process]."). That formula is a good way to think about whether or not you know exactly how to reach the goal or if you need more help.

Melody – Week 4

- The introduction is a little bit short, but it does do a reasonable job of setting up your essay.
- The paragraph on temperance is pretty good. You include some nice specifics, and you connect it clearly and logically to your argument.
- The next paragraph, though, sort of contradicts what you said before. In the temperance paragraph, you're saying that a sign of action was the passing of a law, but in this paragraph, you're saying that just passing laws doesn't do enough to change things... Also, this paragraph could be a little bit more detailed. It seems like you were running short on time, though.
- The conclusion needs to be a bit more detailed and specific. Your handwriting is small, but you should try to fill up more of the space on the page.
- Score: 4
- The revised part is pretty good, as are your goals! Nicely done on those two.

Yvonne – Week 4

- I would spend less time on generalities after you have your introductory paragraph. When you use the word *you* in here, you're generally making a vague, broad statement, the kind that are generally better avoided in the SAT essay.
- The personal examples are good, but these need a bit more detail than you have now. Also, it's always best, if you're going to use multiple examples, that you consider some things from history or literature as your examples.
- I also think applying some of the different sentence structures that we talked about would be good. The examples that you have in your revisions are pretty good. The third one, though, should probably start off "As a result..."
- Some of your sentences have some issues with their grammar / coherence. I've put a little red star by a few of them in the essay. Let me know if you have questions when you read them.
- Score: 4
- Goals: I think these goals are good ones. Since you told me that you usually have time at the end of the essay, make sure that you spend about a minute thinking before you write. Like you said in the interview, I think when you do that, you'll realize that you have a better sense of what you're going to say – and may even think of some stronger examples.

Michael – Week 4

- Your introduction could do a little bit more to set up the essay. The first sentence seems to sort of abruptly jump into the topic. Maybe one before that to say what makes that phrase pop into your mind?
- For the examples that you're using, try to add a little bit more in terms of the details that you're working into your essay. For example, when you got mad at your parents and acted rather than just talked, what about that helped? What exactly did you do? It might be best to choose one of these examples and get into more description about it throughout the whole essay. For example, the one about the fight with your parents. One paragraph could be about talking to them about the problem and feeling like they aren't listening. After that, you could have a new paragraph that considers what action you did and how that actually helped.
- If you are going to do multiple examples, it would probably be best to think about one from history or something you read for school or at home.
- If you're feeling frustrated with writing, you and I could meet up to talk another time. We're only going to do two one-on-one interviews probably, but you and I could meet up and talk about writing essays and things like that. I want to make sure you get as much help out of this as possible.
- Score: 3 or 4
- The revision that you did to the part of your essay is really good! By changing up the way you're starting sentences, you've made it even more engaging – and it seems like that might have even gotten you to add more detail. Now, I know that the exercise you're doing is rock climbing, not just exercise in general! I haven't been rock climbing in a while...I should go back. My first year of teaching, I went to Rockville about once or twice a week with my dad and brother... It's a good way to get out some stress.
- Goals: For your goals, I know it might seem silly, but it's a really good idea to think about how you're going to work on your goals. So instead of saying that you want to use different types of sentences, you could give yourself a little bit more of a plan, like this: "In order to have more variety in my sentences, I'm going to make sure that I use at least three different starts of sentences in every paragraph of my next essay." Something like that, since it says specifically what you'll do to work on that goal (having three specific different starts of sentences) and when (during your next essay). Think about whether that's a reasonable, more specific goal for you, and try to change the other goal so that it fits that pattern a little more.

Karen – Week 4

- The essay is good in terms of its overall structure and getting to the crux of the argument at the end.
- One thing that I would suggest is being a little more heavy with the details at a few points – but not too many. And you do have good details in the third paragraph that describes the friend's generic reaction to your problems.
- Score: 6
- Your revised portion is good. Also, though, consider having more variety in the length of your sentences. You tend to have longer sentences – which is good – but maybe mix in one or two very short ones for a good punch at an important point. In general, though, stick with the longer, more complex sentences.
- Your goals look good.

Jessie – Week 4

- I like how the introduction sets up the rest of the essay. It's clear that you're going to take on an interesting stance, and you have good parallel structure in your second and third sentences. And the last sentence makes it clear that something was going to change. It builds suspense or whatever.
- The next two paragraphs are good. The dialogue works well to set things up. Good work.
- I like the discussion of the meeting with the school psychologist. It might have been good, though, to know what decisions you two came to about why you were hitting people or how often you went back to talk to her – since if the issue was significant enough for them to send you to her, they would want more than just one half-hour meeting.
- I don't know how I feel about the last sentence. It seems to be moving away from the purpose of the paper, though it doesn't exactly lose the point and it is a clever way to phrase things. But try to include the main idea in there in an interesting way.
- Score: 5 or 6
- The revisions are good.
- The goals look great.

Celeste – Week 4

- Good intro paragraph that sets up what you're going to address pretty well.
- In the first body paragraph, though, I think you should be a bit more detailed and specific.
- In the next paragraph, I think it would be better to start with the historical examples, since those sort of pop out in the middle of the paragraph and could be more developed throughout.
- Try to avoid second person ("you") in the essays since that's a bit too in-your-face for the readers. Other than that, it's pretty good.
- Score: 5
- The revisions you have are really good. Work on having this kind of variety in your sentences during the essay!
- The goals look good, too!

Michael – Week 5

- The example of your friend might need to be tweaked a little bit since you're too young to have a friend play the market if he's your age. And rather than having to explain that he's not your age, just change him to an uncle or something.
- The example, though, works really well. The details are good, and the part that says, "He then set a goal to sell when it hit 20 million dollars. Then it came. The biggest stock market drop since the Great Depression. Depressed, Mike..." This works really well for a few reasons. First, the first sentence in the quote makes me think, when I hit the second one, that the stocks hit 20 million – but the thing that you're talking about coming is actually the stock market crash. Nicely done. Second, the use of Great Depression and depressed works really well. It's very clever and shows that you have a pretty good command of the English language.
- The next paragraph could really use a topic sentence, though. What is this paragraph going to address? Based on the start of the essay, I assume it'll be about being careful with consequences, but tell your reader that. Make sure I know why you're discussing Andrew Jackson here.
- This is a really good example, but it's clear that you just ran out of time. I would suggest continuing to practice these prompts so that you can get used to writing more and knowing when your time is going to run out.
- Score: 4, though the quality of the first body paragraph is a 5.

Karen – Week 5

- This is good. You're varying your sentence structure and lengths. You're also taking risks: an ellipsis here, a question there.
- This works well during the body of the essay, but I think you need to go more general for the close of the essay.
- Great work!
- Score: 5 or 6

Melody – Week 5

- In your thesis, try to make sure you're telling your reader what examples are going to come later.
- That said, it's great to connect to Macbeth, and you provide a good discussion of why he fits into this category. The next paragraph, though, could use a little bit more discussion in order to develop it as much as the previous one.
- The conclusion, too, is pretty short. Seems like you ran short on time a bit.
- Score: 5

N.B.: This serves only as a rough guide of the topics that the interview will explore. Because students will have presented different ideas during the focus groups to varying degrees of specificity, I will need to ask some students to elaborate, ask others to specify, et c. This appendix does, however, present the kinds of questions that might be asked.

Introduction: Hi everybody and thanks for being here on the last day. I really can't tell you how much I appreciate your help with all of this.

1. Before we start, I'd like you all to take a few minutes and write in response to the question I'm going to ask you. This first question will require some thought, so I want to make sure that you have a chance to reflect before answering. How has your writing changed throughout this course? What do you think has made those changes happen?
2. Now, I'd like to share those responses with the group. You can either read what you wrote directly, or you can just use it as a guide. Who'd like to start?
3. I'd like to talk a bit about goal setting, since that's a pretty big part of my study. How has your understanding of goal setting – how to do it, how effective it is, all that stuff – changed throughout these weeks? For this one, it's important that you're honest. I'd be happy to hear that nothing's really changed and that you think goal setting is stupid. I'm interested in your honest, unfiltered opinions! I actually need them for my study to be successful!
4. If we were having another class and it was going to be on using goal setting more effectively, what would you want me to cover in the class? What should we discuss?
5. If this course were one that people paid for – meaning it wasn't part of a study about goal setting – would you suggest using goal setting again? Again, I absolutely need your completely honest opinions!
6. What are your goals for when you write the SAT essay when you take the actual test?
7. Anything that we didn't cover today that you'd like to mention?
8. Any questions for me?

Well, folks... That's it! Again, I cannot tell you how much I appreciate your time, your opinions, your writing – everything! I couldn't have done my study without all of you. Thank you thank you a million times thank you! If you think of anything after you walk out of here, drop me an email – or just drop me an email to check in or whatever! I'll be in touch end of the summer or beginning of next school year to schedule our very last interview to talk to you about some of the things I think I've noticed in what you've said. I'll want to see if what I'm seeing seems right to you or not!

The Essay

Exhibit 9.1 SAT Scoring Guide

Score of 6	Score of 5	Score of 4
<p>An essay in this category demonstrates <i>clear and consistent mastery</i>, although it may have a few minor errors. A typical essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectively and insightfully develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates outstanding critical thinking, using clearly appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position is well organized and clearly focused, demonstrating clear coherence and smooth progression of ideas exhibits skillful use of language, using a varied, accurate, and apt vocabulary demonstrates meaningful variety in sentence structure is free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics 	<p>An essay in this category demonstrates <i>reasonably consistent mastery</i>, although it will have occasional errors or lapses in quality. A typical essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectively develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates strong critical thinking, generally using appropriate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position is well organized and focused, demonstrating coherence and progression of ideas exhibits facility in the use of language, using appropriate vocabulary demonstrates variety in sentence structure is generally free of most errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics 	<p>An essay in this category demonstrates <i>adequate mastery</i>, although it will have lapses in quality. A typical essay</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue and demonstrates competent critical thinking, using adequate examples, reasons, and other evidence to support its position is generally organized and focused, demonstrating some coherence and progression of ideas exhibits adequate but inconsistent facility in the use of language, using generally appropriate vocabulary demonstrates some variety in sentence structure has some errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics
Score of 3	Score of 2	Score of 1
<p>An essay in this category demonstrates <i>developing mastery</i>, and is marked by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue, demonstrating some critical thinking, but may do so inconsistently or use inadequate examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position is limited in its organization or focus, or may demonstrate some lapses in coherence or progression of ideas displays developing facility in the use of language, but sometimes uses weak vocabulary or inappropriate word choice lacks variety or demonstrates problems in sentence structure contains an accumulation of errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics 	<p>An essay in this category demonstrates <i>little mastery</i>, and is flawed by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops a point of view on the issue that is vague or seriously limited, and demonstrates weak critical thinking, providing inappropriate or insufficient examples, reasons, or other evidence to support its position is poorly organized and/or focused, or demonstrates serious problems with coherence or progression of ideas displays very little facility in the use of language, using very limited vocabulary or incorrect word choice demonstrates frequent problems in sentence structure contains errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics so serious that meaning is somewhat obscured 	<p>An essay in this category demonstrates <i>very little or no mastery</i>, and is severely flawed by ONE OR MORE of the following weaknesses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develops no viable point of view on the issue, or provides little or no evidence to support its position is disorganized or unfocused, resulting in a disjointed or incoherent essay displays fundamental errors in vocabulary demonstrates severe flaws in sentence structure contains pervasive errors in grammar, usage, or mechanics that persistently interfere with meaning

Essays not written on the essay assignment will receive a score of zero.

(Source: College Board, 2006, p. 105)

N.B.: This serves only as a rough guide of the topics that the interview will explore. Because students will have presented different ideas during the focus groups to varying degrees of specificity, I will need to ask some students to elaborate, ask others to specify, et c. This appendix does, however, present the kinds of questions that might be asked.

Introduction: Thanks for taking a bit of time to meet with me today. This is the last time I'll need to meet with you for the study, so let me thank you again for taking part in it. I couldn't have collected the data without your help, and I hope that you feel that you've gotten something out of this as well. As with the other interview and the focus groups, I'll be recording this in case there are quotes that I want to use in my paper. And, as always, if there are any questions that you don't want to answer, we can just skip them – though I doubt there'll be anything upsetting in this interview. Do you have any questions before we get started?

1. The majority of this interview will be me explaining one of the things that I noticed when I was looking at my data and then asking you if what I said sounds right to you or not. If it does, I'll probably ask you to explain what sounds right about it. If it sounds wrong, I'll probably ask you to explain what's wrong with it. Does that make sense?
2. Okay, great. Now, these findings aren't in any particular order:
 - a. Participants found research-based goal setting effective at improving their writing.
 - b. Participants viewed goal setting as one component of an effective writing program – and not necessarily the most important one. (Really discuss this with Camile)
 - c. Not all participants thought that implementation intentions were necessary.
 - d. All participants set their goals through a combination of self-reflection and feedback from the teacher.
 - e. Participants claimed that the effect of goal setting decreased when they were rushed.
 - f. None of the participants expressed learning-avoidance or academic-alienation-avoidance goal orientations.
 - g. Goal orientations were, in many cases, too complex to be broken down to a single cell of the 3x2 matrix.
 - h. Participants tended to view only learning-oriented goals as genuine motivation. (Really discuss this with Camile)
 - i. Performance orientations seemed to positively affect participants' perceptions of goal setting.
 - j. Academic-alienation-oriented motivation correlated with not using implementation intentions.
 - k. Participants' motivation orientations seemed to influence the structure, content, and the use of their goals. (check this with scenarios...how likely would you be to use goals if... kind of stuff)
3. Have you used any of the stuff that we worked on in the study outside of the study?
4. Any questions for me?

Thanks so much for your time. Seriously. I really couldn't have done this without the help from the five of you who stuck through the entire study with me. Thanks, and let me know if you ever have any questions for me about the study.

Free SAT essay workshop

I'm looking for participants in a study I'm conducting through Rutgers. In exchange, I'll be providing participating students with free help on SAT essay writing.

If you're a freshman, sophomore, or junior, then please have a parent or guardian email me for more details!

doug.levandowski@gmail.com

Mr/Mrs. [name] –

Thank you so much for your interest in this study! In this email, I'll give you some information about the study so that you can decide if you would like your son or daughter to participate in it.

About me: My name is Doug Levandowski and I'm an English teacher at Princeton High School, where I've been teaching for seven years. I'm also a Doctoral candidate at Rutgers University in New Brunswick. I'm conducting this study as part of my final research for the program.

About the study: The study that I'm conducting starting this summer is going to look at how students use goals when writing and at their motivation while writing.

What your son or daughter will be doing if he or she chooses to participate: I don't want to overwhelm you with details, but I know you may have questions that I don't address here. So if there are any questions that you have that aren't answered here, please let me know and I'll be happy to answer them.

In short, if your son or daughter participates, he or she will be meeting with the other participants and with me eight times this spring, once a week for eight weeks. During the first meeting, there will be a focus group where I ask all of the participants some questions about their writing, their use of goal setting, and so forth.

During the other seven whole-group meetings, we'll work on SAT essays and talk about setting goals. In addition to those whole-group meetings, I'll need to have three one-on-one interviews with your daughter or son: once near the start of the seven weeks, once near the end, and once during the summer or next school year (once I've had a chance to process all of the data I'm hoping to collect). All of the writing that I'll be asking your child to do will take place in our meetings, so this study won't take any longer than the time we're meeting. I know how busy kids are these days, especially at this time of the year.

Also, there will be one additional meeting that you'll need to attend with your son or daughter in order to sign some other important forms before we get started. That meeting will be with all prospective participants and their parents. At that meeting we'll go over some of the requirements and my expectations, and – perhaps most importantly – we'll schedule our meetings. This first meeting will occur on Tuesday, March 20th at 7 pm at The Presbyterian Church of Lawrenceville. The church is located at 2688 Main Street in Lawrenceville. The later meetings will take place in April, May, and, if necessary the first few weeks of June.

Important requirements: Since this workshop is part of the study, I will need all participants to attend all of the workshops and focus groups. Obviously, unexpected absences might not be able to be avoided, such as illnesses, family emergencies, and so forth. However, if you know that your child won't be able to make it to some of the meetings, I need to know that up front. Too many unexpected absences may result in my needing to remove your child from the study.

When these workshops will occur: Specific dates and times will be arranged later, but my plan is to conduct the focus group and the seven week workshop during April and May on the same day

of the week for eight weeks in a row. As I said before, if you know that attendance will be a problem, please discuss those issues with me now.

Your involvement: Other than signing two consent forms at a first meeting in March, you'll need to make sure that your son or daughter has transportation to the writing workshops and to any interviews so that he or she can be there on time. Other than that, nothing on your end.

The next step: If you're interested in having your son or daughter participate, please let me know. I'll be accepting the first 15 participants who confirm their interest in the study by responding to this email.

Please let me know if you have any questions at all. Thank you so much for your interest, and I look forward to hearing from you soon!

- Doug Levandowski

Name _____

Survey on Goal-Setting

Explanation: *This short survey will ask you a few questions about goal setting and what motivates you to complete work for school.*

It is vital that you answer these questions as honestly as you can, and remember, you are not required to participate.

1. How often do you set goals for yourself when completing essays for school? (Beyond the basic, “I’m going to finish this assignment by 9 tonight,” and more like, “When I write this essay, I’m going to make sure I avoid using ‘you’.”)

2. If you do set goals, what are some examples of goals you’ve set on recent essays?

3. How beneficial do you think setting goals is at improving your writing?

4. Please explain your previous response. Why do you feel that way?

5. Which of the following best describes your motivation to complete school work most of the time? (please circle a response)

Note: If none of these is a good description, just skip to question 6.

I complete my assignments because of what I'll learn from completing them.

I complete my assignments because I want to earn a good grade.

I complete my assignments because I don't want people to think I can't do them.

I complete my assignments because I don't want to fail.

I complete my assignments so that I don't get in trouble.

I often don't bother completing assignments for school.

6. Motivation is a pretty complex thing that probably isn't best described in a single sentence. Lots of times, people are motivated differently depending on different circumstances. Someone who's motivated to learn in, say, history might just do the least he or she can do to get by in math. In the space below, talk to me in a little more detail about what motivates you in school. Feel free to be as specific as you want. You can even attach another piece of paper if you want.

[Name] -

Thank you for your interest in this study. You were one of the first 12 respondents to the advertisement and have been selected to participate in this study.

Our first meeting will take place on [location] at [time and date]. If you know of any reason that you AND a legal guardian would not be able to make this meeting, please let me know. If this meeting works for you, please let me know that, too.

Thank you again for your interest, and I look forward to working with you!

- Mr. Levandowski

Week #1

What motivates people to change? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. (Fox, Israel, O’Callahagn, 2006, p. 389)

Week #2

Do changes that make our lives easier not necessarily make them better? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. (Fox *et al.*, 2006, p. 453)

Week #3

Is conscience a more powerful motivator than money, fame, or power? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. (Fox *et al.*, 2006, p. 517)

Week #4

Is it better for people to act on their feelings than to talk about them? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. (College Board, 2012)

Week #5

Can success be disastrous? Plan and write an essay in which you develop your point of view on this issue. Support your position with reasoning and examples taken from your reading, studies, experience, or observations. (Fox *et al.*, 2006, p. 581)