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Jennifer P. Gray
College of Coastal Georgia, jgray@ccga.edu

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"You Can't Be Creative Anymore": Students Reflect on the Lingering Effects of the Five-Paragraph Essay

Cover Page Footnote

This article is in MLA format. I offer special thanks to Lil Brannon, Sally Griffin, and the rest of my writing group at UNC Charlotte for their support and feedback.

The five-paragraph essay continues to make headlines in composition and pedagogy journals and on teacher listservs. This long-cherished genre has been touted for teaching the basics to writers in college, and teachers often claim that it is the best “flexible” foundation for solid essay writing, especially for “at-risk students” who are “below the norm” (Smith 17; Seo 15). Many current college composition textbooks suggest five-paragraph essays as starting points for developing academic papers; these textbooks often include graphic representations of the five-paragraph essay structure: an opening paragraph, three supporting paragraphs, and a concluding paragraph (Skwire & Wiener; Johnson-Sheehan & Paine; Nadell, Langan, & Comodromos 85; Long; Sabrio & Burchfield 28). On the other side of this conversation, there are numerous five-paragraph essay critics who claim that the essay is a “school-created thing” that has no real “function in the world” and persists due to an enshrinement in textbooks as preparation for objective standardized testing (Brannon et al. 16). Researchers worry that students will “never move beyond this formula” and “adherence to the five-paragraph theme may actually limit students’ development of complex thinking” (Campbell & Latimer 5; Argys 99).

As a first-year college writing teacher, I find myself puzzled when I receive student papers in only one genre: the five-paragraph format. Much of the five-paragraph essay research does not resolve my dilemma because the genre is described from the teachers’ perspective, as opposed to the students’ perspectives. I already know what I think about the genre, and I know what research has been saying about it as well. What is lacking is the students’ contributions to this conversation. When I asked my students about this genre, they indicated that they would like to write in other genres, but they just do not know how. One student in the study, Lia¹, said, “I want to try to get away from the whole five paragraph thing. It is going to be interesting because I’m not sure how I’m going to do that.” Many students lack the ability to work outside of the five-paragraph essay format, resulting in a one-size-fits-all approach to any writing task assigned. Because of this, I have seen students submit extended biology lab reports and long personal narratives in the five-paragraph form. Other students, like Timothy, expressed frustration with the rigid format, saying “it was their three paragraphs,” as if he didn’t even have ownership over his own paragraphs. My students seemed paralyzed by a pre-determined

¹ Student names are pseudonyms.

format; one student in the study described this feeling as “being brainwashed.”

This article explores this five-paragraph essay debate by talking to student writers about writing in pre-determined forms, such as the five-paragraph essay. It is my hope that by listening to student writers reflect on the five-paragraph essay, they will ultimately contribute to conversations concerning this genre of writing. The data from this qualitative research study indicates that students find minimal value in highly pre-determined forms, such as the five-paragraph format; however, the worrisome aspects this research highlights are a lack of writing flexibility and a disengagement with writing. Students are lacking the skills to move between different writing styles in different situations, which is a skill strong writers should possess. In order to learn this skill, Joseph Harris explains that “students must learn the ways of” writing in the academy, which requires students to participate in various academic discourse communities (116). A discourse community is, according to Anne Beaufort, “a participating network of communicative channels, oral and written, whose interplay affects the purposes and meanings of the written texts produced.” Discourse communities have “a set of shared goals and values...[and] norms” which participants must learn. The discourse of the academy is ever-shifting, depending upon the course, instructor, and overall discipline. Relying on one genre does not appear to provide students with the ability to learn about the different writing occasions found in academic discourse communities. This article will conclude with some feedback and suggestions for teachers and administrators.

Methods

Exploring two specific case studies of college composition students, Steve and Nicole, highlights their thoughts about highly structured pre-determined writing. Qualitative research seeks to “listen well to others’ stories and to interpret and retell the accounts” (Glesne 1). It is through the listening and observing process that researchers can be present within the culture or experience the specific “everyday practices” they are studying (Grbich 9, de Certeau xi). My research goal was to be there in the moment with my participants’ experiences and perspectives, which are socially constructed and unique according to their backgrounds (Schram 47). This research study employed a qualitative methodology using ethnographic techniques of interviews to produce case studies of two first-year student writers. My research question focused on “What ideas of writing exist in the classroom?”

Participants. Steve and Nicole are both 19-year old students enrolled in a second-semester course (English 2) in a first-year writing sequence at the site of this research study, a large Southeastern university² with an enrollment of almost 25,000 students. Steve is an only child, Caucasian, from an upper-class family, and Nicole, an African-American, is one of four siblings from a middle-class family. During our interviews, Steve quietly confessed that he did not make good grades in school, and while Nicole was valedictorian of her elementary school class, she vehemently indicated that she did not continue to be “that A child” she used to be. Both students were required to take the English 2 composition course to satisfy their general education requirements for their respective degrees. In Steve’s case, his language highlights how his own agency as a writer was removed during his experiences. In Nicole’s case, her identity as a writer was bracketed when she finally figured out what her teacher wanted. Steve and Nicole’s stories and language illustrate how their experiences with pre-determined writing genres like five-paragraph essays have impacted their thoughts about being a college writer.

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). To explore Steve and Nicole’s experiences, I use James Paul Gee’s theory and method of CDA to closely examine their language as they discuss their ideas of student and writer identity. Gee explains that the primary function of language is twofold: “to support the performance of social activities and social identities and to support human affiliation within cultures, social groups, and institutions” (1). Discourse analysis examines potential meanings behind spoken or written words. A CDA is “predicated on the idea that language and discourse embody ideologies and are thus constitutive of social identities, social relations, and worldviews” (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis 119). Gee explained that the analysis considers “how language, both spoken and written, enacts social and cultural perspectives and identities...how language gets recruited ‘on site’ to enact specific social activities and social identities” (preface material, 1).

When researchers utilize CDA, they provide a transcript excerpt and then break down the transcription into lines to isolate the language for a detailed exploration. Researchers then group the lines into stanzas and name the stanza in reference to the perceived major theme

² I will use the pseudonym of Stonie to reference this university

of the conversation between the blocked lines. Gee indicated that these blocked lines represent a “unitary topic or perspective, which appear[s]...to have been planned together” (107). These line separations are not restricted to complete grammatical sentences; they express blocks of meanings perceived by the researcher. After separating the language into stanzas, researchers are able to employ Gee’s building tasks. These tasks explore in detail concepts of identity, social goods exchange, activities, political power, significance, and relationships. Researchers choose to focus on some or all of these tasks. Specific chunks of language present what Gee stated as the “what” activity of the language, and the “who” (22) of the language. The language Steve and Nicole use reveals their cultural and social situatedness within the university and beyond. The CDA provided a way to explore how Steve and Nicole perform their writerly identity, which is also wrapped up in their student identity. Gee explained that individuals use “language to get recognized as taking a certain identity or role” (11), so an in-depth CDA provides researchers with the ability to question how a person negotiates the language to enact a certain identity.

Results

For this in-depth textual exploration, I will begin with Steve’s interview transcript.

Steve’s experiences. In this particular transcript’s context, Steve discusses his feelings about writing and equated them to a feeling “more like paranoia...like if the red line pops up, it is paranoia, like oh god what did I do wrong. Go back and correct it.” I asked him to say more about this idea of paranoia, and this was his response:

When I—in kindergarten and first grade, [pause] it is fairly vivid for me. I wasn’t exactly what you would call a [pause] grade A student. And my—one of the big things with writing that I have—my dad would sit me down because my biggest problem was homework, I would never get homework done, I’d wait until the last minute and I was pretty constantly in the principal’s office because I didn’t get things done, I would hide notices that I didn’t get stuff done that I’d have to have signed by my parents, so my parents would get frustrated and mad at me and sit me down. I would be writing and I’d probably be writing a one page paper—“my name is Steve and I did this this this” you

know basic simple words and introductory, and how I'd make a mistake or erase something my dad would get all mad at me, crumple it up and make me start over. So that and there's other situations on that I could expound on, but that is the basic idea.

To examine Steve's language in more detail, I will break up his lines into three different stanzas that illustrate his construction, or lack thereof, of agency.

Stanza One: Steve as a Student

1 When I—
 2 in kindergarten and first grade, [pause]
 3 it is fairly vivid for me.
 4 I wasn't exactly
 5 what you would call a [pause]
 6 grade A student.

Steve uses language to present his constructions of himself as a student. He uses a vivid memory, an instance of himself as a young child, that explains the kind of student that he is. His use of the word, "you," in line 5 is a direct reference both to his interlocutor (the researcher) and the more generalized "you" meaning the "common sense" as in "you know"—everyone knows. Steve also knows that I am a teacher at another university, in a leadership position in a writing center, so he constructs our relationship as one where we would agree. In his mind, he is not the "A" student, and certainly any professional in the field would agree. Framing his analysis in this way, with a mark of humor, also allows Steve both to claim authority, or agency, over his experience while not claiming to be a great writer or a knowledgeable writer. In fact, his authority comes from his lack of competence and his ability to "duck" the responsibility for being a writer, "I wasn't, what you would call, an A student." After framing his portrait of himself as a non-A student, he moves into the second section of his response, one that illustrates how his non-A behavior is how he possesses agency in his identity as a student.

Stanza Two: Not getting it done

7 And my—one of the big things with writing that I have—
 8 my dad would sit me down
 9 because my biggest problem was homework,
 10 I would never get homework done,

11 I'd wait until the last minute
12 and I was pretty constantly in the principal's office
13 because I didn't get things done,
14 I would hide notices
15 that I didn't get stuff done
16 that I'd have to have signed by my parents—

Steve's markers of agency appear as phrases beginning with "I," and a closer look at this heavy use of "I" illustrates his ownership in this behavior. Right away, Steve identifies his problem with writing as not getting things done. Ideas of "proper" writing and student behavior are exchanged as Steve discusses how he was socialized to view school performance as getting things done much in the same way that a factory worker might get things done. The aim is to complete the task, not struggle with an idea. He can perform well as the slacker by avoiding the completion of his writing (his work). Three times in the transcript within five lines (line 10: "I would never get homework done; line 13: I didn't get things done; line 15: I didn't get stuff done") he identifies this behavior as one of his "biggest problems" with writing.

It is not putting words down on paper that Steve has problems with, but with the apparatus that surrounds the task. He resists the performance of writing because of where he perceives that writing is controlled. Within ten lines, Steve uses "I" constructions in an active formation eight times. The "I" use revolves around what he did not do in terms of proper student behavior. He has agency in owning his resistance to the task of writing as he never gets homework done, he waits until the end, he is always in the principal's office because he does not get things done. He hides notices indicating his lack of doing and he avoids getting his parents to sign these notices. Steve has agency in these activities as he is the actor, completing the activities and recognizing them as elements that make up his construction of his problems that he has "with writing."

This stanza illustrates how it is important to view Steve as a student in order to understand him as a writer. He defines the writer through the idea of a student because writing is just another pre-determined performance for a student. Writing assignments are things to "get done," so he performs this task. Steve has defined himself as a "non-A" student, and he has agency in this behavior. However, Steve loses agency when he begins to discuss the specifics of his writing production in the third stanza of this excerpt.

Stanza Three: A Production of "This This This"

17 so my parents would get frustrated at me and mad at me
 18 and sit me down
 19 I would be writing and
 20 I'd probably be writing a one-page paper—
 21 "my name is Steve and
 22 I did this this this"
 23 you know basic simple words and introductory, and
 24 how I'd make a mistake or erase something
 25 my dad would get all mad at me
 26 crumple it up and
 27 make me start over.
 28 So that
 29 And there's other situations
 30 on that I could expound on,
 31 but that is the basic idea

For Steve, a writer produces material correctly in the first attempt to avoid it being appropriated by another. The assumption is that a writer does not make mistakes and is overseen by an authority figure. Steve's agency has been removed in this section of his discussion; he has been moved to an object position in the sentence. Here in this position, over five times in this stanza, he becomes the object to someone else's actions, as opposed to being the actor in the activity. By losing the ability to act as a writer, Steve becomes the victim to the authority figure who claims knowledge of the way the writing should proceed.

This stanza also potentially illustrates his commonsense idea of "proper" writing format, the five-paragraph essay. Steve repeats a word ("this") three times in line 22, which echoes the five-paragraph essay's three-body points: "I did this this this." Three points comprise his "one-page paper" with "this this this." While we can't be sure he is referencing the five-paragraph format (he might have three sentences instead of three paragraphs), his past writing experiences, discovered in his interviews, suggest much experience with this format. In past interviews, he describes writing as "the five paragraph...have your thesis, include your three subjects in the body paragraphs, and conclude." Therefore, there is evidence that he at least knows this format and may have internalized the three-point structure.

Finally, it may be worth mentioning Steve's father. It is possible that his father's behavior impacted Steve's constructions of writing; however, there is not much evidence to support or deny this idea. Steve did not mention his father often, other than to describe his father's personality as "anal retentive and exact." Some of these traits, enforced with such rigor, may have shaped Steve's ideas of what good writing should be, but we cannot be sure.

Nicole's experiences. In Nicole's transcript, she was describing the type of writing she had done in the prior semester's writing course, English 1, at the site of this study. She had just indicated that her prior teacher sat her down and told her that she "needed to change" her writing. When asked for more exploration on this experience, she replied:

It kind of bothered me and made me mad because I was passionate about writing and I loved writing, and then he tells me that you can't be creative anymore. It has to be research and recite. The type of papers we did were five-paragraph paper, issues, like religious issues and technology issues, just like things that were going on in the world today. We would have to take a position, and support our decision and I remember my first paper, I am very religious and so of course I'm going to be passionate about it. I guess that it was a personal experience that I was writing about, that he just said no to. That's when I was like, wow, what am I supposed to do? This is my opinion on religion, this is my perspective on it and now you are telling me I can't put myself in it? I didn't understand, so the next couple of papers were rough, because I was learning how to separate myself from that, and eventually I learned how to state my opinion, state the facts, and support with details and keep it at that.

As in Steve's case, I will break Nicole's language down into stanzas for a closer examination of how Nicole uses language to construct her perceptions of her identity as a writer in an academic setting.

Stanza One: Nicole's Prior Writing Identity

- 1 It kindof bothered me
- 2 and made me mad

3 because I was passionate about writing
 4 and I loved writing,
 5 and then he tells me
 6 that you can't be creative anymore.
 7 It has to be
 8 research and recite.

Here in this stanza, Nicole actively describes her prior identity as writer³. She uses active "I" constructions twice in line 3 and 4, and she places herself in the object position in lines 1, 2, and 5 by using "me" to refer to her interactions between herself and her teacher. She has ownership in saying that she "was passionate" and "loved writing," but she exhibits an object position when she became "bothered" and "mad" when her teacher told her she was not able to access the very "creative" aspect of her writing identity. Her use of past tense indicates that she does not feel "passionate" or feel "love" for writing after this interaction with English 1 that has socialized her understandings of writing. For Nicole, now writing has become a very un-creative thing, something that only involves "research and recit[ing]" material. She then begins to describe what the writing looked like in her English 1 course.

Stanza Two: Following Directions in English 1

9 The type of papers
 10 we did were
 11 five-paragraph paper,
 12 issues,
 13 like religious issues and technology issues,
 14 just like things
 15 that were going on in the world today.
 16 We would have to
 17 take a position,
 18 and support our decision

In stanza two, Nicole describes the writing as something she "did." This performative portrayal of writing involves descriptions of writing in terms of formats, line 11's "five-paragraph paper" and line 17's indications of a "position" paper. This description of writing as a

³ It is worth mentioning that during her initial interview, Nicole described herself as "such a creative writer." She started writing poetry and private journal entries in middle school.

“five-paragraph” paper echoes Steve’s similar descriptions and experience with writing in forms. In this stanza, there is no “I” use at all on Nicole’s part; it is as if she does not exist in this description of the format-driven writing she completed during the semester. She has removed herself from the writing passion she described in line 3 above, and instead composition is akin to production of paper “type[s].” Writing is equated to papers of certain types, formal papers completed as the teacher describes, using proper “support” of a position. In line 17, she indicates she has to “take” the position, as if the ideas or the position originates outside of her, and she will adopt it to support her chosen “issue” as dictated by the class assignment. The paper is described through format or structure, and planned instructions. Writing is now following the course’s description of what she should do, and Nicole learns in stanza three that there is no room for her personal passions.

Stanza Three: He just said No to me

19 and I remember my first paper,
 20 I am very religious
 21 and so of course
 22 I’m going to be passionate about it.
 23 I guess that it was a personal experience
 24 that I was writing about,
 25 that he just said no to.
 26 That’s when I was like,
 27 wow, what am I supposed to do?
 28 This is my opinion
 29 on religion,
 30 this is my perspective on it
 31 and now you are telling me
 32 I can’t put myself in it?

In stanza three, readers immediately see a return to frequent “I” use, a revisiting of how she used to be in terms of a writer. Here in lines 19, 20, 22, 23, 24, 26, 27, and 32, she uses “I” once in each line as she explains how upset she becomes as her teacher attempts to calibrate her to what writing should look like in his particular course. And this course’s writings are not much different from other standardized composition courses around the country; this type of “passionless” or personal-less writing is a common demand upon students. This moment of Nicole’s first paper stands out as a turn, or

adjustment, she makes in her identity as a writer within the institution of school. This personal sharing of her passion, something she equates as a part of her writing identity, was shut down. She flounders in lines 27 (“what am I supposed to do”) and 32 (I can’t put myself in it?) and attempts to comprehend how to be a different writer than we saw in stanza one. And while writing is ultimately personal—selected and negotiated by the writer’s choices/interest/needs—here, her writing becomes constrained by the course’s format and content restrictions. She internalizes these constraints as a directive in line 32 to not “put [her]self in it.” In line 27, she illustrates that she is unsure of how to proceed now that her passion is removed and negated, but stanza four shows that format focus drains and trains her on “correct” performance so her teacher will not “just say no” to her again.

Stanza Four: *Okay--I’ll Just Learn to Perform*

33 I didn’t understand,
 34 so the next couple of papers were rough,
 35 because I was learning how to separate myself from that,
 36 and eventually
 37 I learned how to state my opinion,
 38 state the facts,
 39 and support with details
 40 and keep it at that.

Stanza four illustrates an emotionless passivity and disengagement as Nicole has internalized a correct English Composition performance as a means of sterilizing her own writing, by removing, or as she indicates in line 35, “separating” herself from the writing. She has to bracket and pack away her former constructions of Nicole the writer to become the correct performing composition student who tells us in line 40 that she plans to “keep it at that.” Gone is the passionate writer who “loved” writing, and in its place is Nicole who struggled through some “rough” papers to become calibrated into simple regurgitation of “facts” and “details.”

Synthesis and implications for first-year writing. Now why are the ramblings of one student’s kindergarten through first grade’s experiences and one student’s conversation with her teacher relevant for current college composition teachers thinking about the five-paragraph essay? I am hoping that these two student perspectives will invite composition teachers “to give pause and thought to their

assumptions and practices" (Beaufort). Regardless of whether we use the five-paragraph essay or not, or we use something in between, it is important to constantly listen closely to our students and reflect on how our practices and biases impact them.

I would argue that the effects of highly formalized genres like five-paragraph essays have caused Steve and Nicole, as well as other students like them, not to see themselves as writers. For example, by listening to Steve, we see that it is in the actual activity of writing that Steve claimed no agency. Here he lost his power to act. The writing activity is governed by standardized rules and regulations, administered and implemented by the teacher at the time. Fear of error created a failure to produce. Steve could not finish for fear of mistakes in the doing. He could not produce in this environment, so he did not see himself as a writer. Steve's ideas of writing were reinforced (and may still be enforced) in his writing classrooms that focused on standardized formats and formulas for writing. Nicole bracketed her identity as a writer, someone who loved and was passionate about writing, and instead became a passive disengaged producer who simply regurgitated the facts and kept "it at that." Her training in her particular first-year writing class told her that she could not put herself in her writing, so she negotiated this order by separating herself as a writer from her sterile production of writing for a grade. She disengaged from her course. Both students became retention risks as they moved away from engaging with their coursework.

The case studies of Steve and Nicole represent two instances of how the standardization practices in writing instruction manage to restrict the teaching and learning of student writers. These two writers are precariously situated, restricted, and constrained by the discourse practices of first-year writing at Stonie. Both students dutifully came to class for an entire semester, wrote essays assigned by the teacher, and did as they were told. They tried to approximate the idealized product that the teacher "wanted," often illustrated by the textbooks used in the course. Steve explained that he would try to write "what the teacher wants you to write." Nicole made a B in the course and Steve made an A. They looked like they were performing their assigned duties: attend class, produce papers, and please the teacher. They did everything the teacher and first-year writing program administrator (and society) asked of them as students, producing the best graded documents for class in a well behaved manner, but their particular writing class and first-year writing course

goals were not about becoming a writer, capable of handling most rhetorical situations. Instead, both students learned how to follow directions, behave by obeying authority figures, fix papers of grammatical errors, and figure out how to produce right writing by filling out formats with conventional wisdom.

For writers like Steve, an authoritarian teacher who focuses on formats reinforces his view that he is not a writer. For Nicole, the authoritarian teacher, enacting the standardized curriculum often dictated by others, molds a passive producer of research recitation. One sixteen-week semester cannot remove the imprinting they have received from past experiences. As composition teachers, however, we can provide more spaces for students like Steve and Nicole to begin to feel the power that writing can have in their learning. I am grateful to Steve and Nicole for providing the composition community with two more valuable perspectives on about the teaching and learning of writing.

Alternative Options

A starting place for teachers, students, and administrators who wish to challenge lingering impressions students have about the five-paragraph essay may be to deliberately interrogate how practices persist in college and school classrooms despite the alternative pedagogies advocated by the profession itself. Some options for this challenge include naming the practice of the five-paragraph essay during class, hosting student-invited WPA events, and researching, longitudinally, across different courses at the institution.

Naming. Researching the five-paragraph essay during class time can provide a way into this conversation. Tony Scott suggests naming “the contradictions and inadequacies in our programs, scholarship, and pedagogy—to keep pushing the issues to the forefront” (186). The power of agency residing behind representing “our programs, scholarship, and pedagogy” makes the complexities more transparent (186). Scott indicates that the “power of literacy and learning is far more likely to come about when we conceive of our identities and the identities of our institutions as dynamic, constantly evolving, and subject to being rewritten” (190). Helping students contribute to the conversation about the five-paragraph essay can be a way for them to regain some of their lost agency and engagement. For example, when asked to name what the five-paragraph essay meant to her, one of the quieter students in the study, Jenny, sat upright and animatedly

exclaimed: the five paragraph essay was “such junk!” I would be quite interested to hear class discussion based on five-paragraph formats and the choices (or lack thereof) some of our students have experienced. Research papers investigating the history and use of the five-paragraph essay would also be excellent options for student-based naming and discussion.

Student-Invited WPA Events. Local sites that house writing programs can offer professional development opportunities, such as brown bag and orientation sessions. These sessions can be more advanced than pragmatic logistics; they can be moments where teaching practices can be examined and researched. Student writers can even be invited to participate in workshops. These workshops can be places to listen to students like Steve and Nicole talk about the effects of standardized and highly controlled writing assignments or the effects of less rigid writing formats and assignments. Because so many part-time faculty members are not aware that their traditional pedagogy may or may not be based on research or scholarship (they are, in many cases, following a textbook that their boss gave them), creating a forum to make the “why” behind their classroom practices visible can provide a way to re-envision what success in their first-year writing classrooms can be. Shor’s text, *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*, is an excellent place to start this re-visioning as it provides a still-relevant theoretical basis for the included practical classroom-based descriptions to help teachers reflect on their classroom activities and their teaching philosophies (217-265).

Longitudinal and Interdisciplinary Research. Future research can focus on exploring how students negotiate what it means to be a writer in college. Some potential directions for study include providing thick student-based descriptions with a larger sample size than this study. A longitudinal study that follows students who placed out of the first-year writing requirement and who only have their high school experiences may provide insightful contributions as well. In addition, with the growing interest in WAC/WID (Writing-Across-the-Curriculum/Writing-in-the-Disciplines) programs, centering a study on rich descriptions of students in WAC/WID courses may help to represent the student’s experiences as writers across different disciplines.

Conclusions

The results of this study are dismal because the participants move away from possibility, growth, creativity, and engagement. The participants share their thoughts on the five-paragraph essay and other highly standardized writing assignments that illustrate disengagement with their coursework. The students represent their work as passive, recitation-based, mechanical, and impersonal. Lia, a student in the study, pleads to figure out how “to get away from the whole five paragraph thing” because she feels “just so stuck in the whole thing.” Mary, another student in the study describes the five paragraph essay format as not all that “useful” because “whenever you go into a harder class...they want you to actually use your brain not just your formats.” Danielle summed up her experience with five-paragraph essays as “it was regurgitation!” These student-based descriptions inspire me to move students closer to their classwork, resulting in active, creative, and non-mechanical writing experiences that encourage “dramatic” levels of student engagement (Light 56). Research that adds student voices to the conversation can be a part of this inspiration to create stronger and more engaged student writers.

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