THE CITATION CIRCLE METHOD AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF
STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WHEN DOCUMENTING AND
SUMMARIZING ACADEMIC SOURCES

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The Citation Circle Method and the Effectiveness of Student Engagement when Documenting and Summarizing Academic Sources

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Michelle and Rick Davis for all of their love and support (financial and otherwise), my brother Matthew Wilder for all of the nonacademic books he sent me for a little entertainment, and my sister and brother-in-law Kelly and Armando Rodriguez for all the visits to San Diego for fun weekend excursions and all the text messages and phone calls reminding me that I would in fact complete everything on time.
The main part of intellectual education is not the acquisition of facts but learning how to make the facts live.

- Oliver Wendell Holmes

The learning process is something you can incite, literally incite, like a riot.

- Audre Lorde
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Kimberly Diane Wilder
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The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the AVID College Readiness Essential Skill4: Citation Circles in teaching college level developmental writers how to properly engage with and integrate academic sources into their essays. The purpose of the research is to ease students into appropriate use of sources in their academic writing by introducing, practicing, and re-practicing the Citation Circles method. Though designed for AVID College Readiness, this activity can follow the reading of any text or lecture—or it can be used in relation to student experiences. After consultation with the instructor teaching the class, as well as the developer of the activity, the Citation Circle method was tested in a developmental writing class at a community college in Orange County, California. Two runs of the activity were tested with different types of academic writing with a class of developmental writers. The results indicate that if used regularly, the Citation Circle activity can help students become more comfortable with quoting, summarizing, and paraphrasing academic sources in their essays.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since the publication of the English edition in 1970, Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* has become one of the most frequently assigned texts in philosophy of education classes. Freire’s fiery critique of long-established, top-down teaching methods argues, “Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers and student” (Freire 77).

Inspired by Franz Fanon and Karl Marx, Freire predicates that the efforts of a revolutionary educator, who wishes his or her students to become functional human beings that question freely, think critically, and act of their own free will, “must coincide with those of the students in critical thinking and a quest for mutual humanization” (Freire 75). It is because of this he becomes increasingly critical of the “banking model of education” (Freire 70). True liberation, then, comes from the ability to inquire about, reflect on, be conscious of, and most importantly, to act on the world around you in order to transform it (Freire 79). For Freire, “knowledge emerges only through the invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, and with each other” (Freire 72). He claims that educators who seek to liberate their students must first see their students as capable and intelligent people. If students are going to be able to become “beings for themselves,” they must be viewed as equals, co-educators, rather than opposites (Freire 74). The educator must believe in the creative power of the students and place a certain amount of trust in them to use that power. This is an important step to helping students of all skill levels take a more active role in their education.

Paulo Freire’s work has laid the groundwork for other writings on the nurturing of students toward finding their authority in the classroom. Teaching practices that allow the
students to become an equal in the classroom have been a concern for rhetoric and composition instructors for the better part of thirty years. An avid proponent of Freire’s “critical democratic” teaching model is renowned scholar and teacher Ira Shor, who has done a tremendous amount of research on the values of liberal teaching practices. In his 1996 book, *When Students Have Power: Negotiating Authority in a Critical Pedagogy*, is a centerpiece in this area of study. It offers numerous feasible suggestions to teachers and instructors who wish to practically apply Freire’s critical pedagogical methods in their classrooms. When the book was published in 1996, it was the first of its kind dedicated to the development of a teaching method that might allow a teacher to enact a “power sharing critical pedagogy” (Shor 149) in the classroom. This method allows teachers and instructors to re-evaluate the situations they create in the classroom to help foster self-aware students that will be able to question and situate themselves in the value systems around them. Shor has made significant contributions to the field of rhetoric and composition. His research has encouraged others in the field to rethink some of the concepts that we take for granted such as “collaboration” and “democratic teaching practices.” What Shor has provided is a possible answer to “power-sharing” questions within the classroom.

Because of the work of these two men, many of the experts in the field of education have now started to view teachers and instructors as “co-subjects” in the classroom, rather than the ultimate authority who merely stands at the front of the room and gives orders. Many educators have worked very tirelessly to fashion a democratic learning environment to help students become better critical thinkers and writers. The hope is that the students then develop skills that will help them become more confident inside and outside of the classroom. One such method that helps promote a strong sense of power and agency both inside and outside of the classroom is the use of the Socratic Method. In his 2006 article “Socratic Dialogue, the Humanities and the Art of the Question,” Sebastian Mitchell of the University of Birmingham, UK, hopes to outline “appropriate strategies for formulating questions within seminars . . . and the aim of such questioning should be more than just the
development of students’ knowledge of a given subject area and a facility with the subject-specific and transferable skill” (Mitchell 181). Mitchell starts by giving an overview of the Socratic Method as used by Socrates, and then outlines the changes in Socratic dialogue in the twentieth century. He discusses R.G. Collingwood’s “variant on the Socratic use of question and answer as a means of arriving at statements which could be described as true, and ‘The Socratic Method’ initially developed by German philosopher Leonard Nelson” (Mitchell 184). Collingwood argues that the most fruitful dialogue that a person has “occurs almost exclusively within the confines of one’s own mind rather than in the company of colleagues and students” (Mitchell 185). Mitchell notes that Collingwood’s model falls short because it fails to pose the questions that would be useful to the students’ growth and development.

Leonard Nelson’s approach was much more in line with Freire and Shor’s idea of allowing students to become more active in their interaction with the questions and with the students who are also participating and interacting with the questions. It moves beyond Socrates’ method because it changes from a student-instructor interaction to a group discussion. Mitchell also notes the difference of the role of the instructor within this discussion:

The role of the teacher would differ from Socrates; he or she would not make an active contribution to the discussion. Instead the teacher would facilitate the sessions by ensuring that everyone understands what is being said, that everyone contributes to the session, and that the maieutic principles are strictly observed. The group, through a process of collective rational reflection, should arrive at a consensual answer to any problem . . . the session proceeds by the participants’ contributions and suggestions forced upon a single issue rather than being directed by the tutor’s interrogative strategy. (Mitchell 185)

The goal of the seminar, then, becomes more than merely searching for the “right answer” and instead can be learning about varying viewpoints through the interaction with a group. Mitchell notes that for this model to be successful though, “students have to know
certain things; they have to learn how to think conceptually about topics and texts they encounter; and they need to be properly equipped to answer their assignments” (Mitchell 194). Even beyond that, the hope of this method is to allow students to develop a means of reflecting on their surroundings and the world they live in and realize that even though they will not always get a clear answer, there is no need to stop asking questions.

**RESEARCH FOCUS**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of the *AVID College Readiness* Essential Skill4: Citation Circles in teaching college level developmental writers how to properly engage with and integrate academic sources into their essays. The purpose of the research is to ease students into appropriate use of sources in their academic writing by introducing, practicing, and re-practicing the Citation Circles method. Though designed for *AVID College Readiness*, this activity can follow the reading of any text or lecture—or it can be used in relation to student experiences. It is my view that this activity can help students not only become more actively aware of academic writing, but can also help students become better critical thinkers and readers for their other classes.

In my analysis I intend to illustrate the relationship between the Citation Circle activity and improvement in the student’s use of academic sources in their writing. This improvement will not only benefit the quality of work produced in the composition classes, but it will also benefit the student’s success as a member of the academic community. That, coupled with critical pedagogy like the ones advanced by Freire and Shor and echoed in tenets of the Socratic Method, will allow students not only to write better, but will also allow “teachers and student become Subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and alienating intellectualism” (Freire 86). Students will ultimately be more successful in their academic programs when they learn to take control of their learning and actively engage with their readings, writings, and discussions inside and outside of the classroom.

The relationship between critical-democratic pedagogy and student authority in the classroom has been well researched, but the use of the Citation Circles activity has not been
studied at the college level. Further research into the effects and benefits of this activity is needed. Although it appears that the Socratic Method is beneficial for student authority and agency within the classroom setting, the relationship between the activity and improvement in the student’s writing is what really needs to be evaluated. The field of rhetoric and composition, teachers who believe in teaching critical thinking skills, and most importantly, developmental writing students will benefit significantly from such research and assessment. Therefore, this project will serve as a starting point for other researchers and instructors who wish to pursue similar modes of study.

Using a case study approach, I will observe and examine a developmental writing course at the community college level while they participate in the Citation Circles activity and attempt to become more comfortable documenting and using academic sources in their writing. This study is focused on one section of a developmental writing class in the Humanities Department at Fullerton College. The whole class was observed during several iterations of the activity, and five students enrolled in the class opted to be part of follow-up interviews and allowed me access to samples of their writing to analyze and evaluate. Through this project I hope to show that the Citation Circles activity can work in a four-year college classroom.

**IMPORTANCE OF ASSESSMENT**

While I believe deeply, based on my experiences both inside the classroom and out, that developmental and basic skills writing students deserve all the help and support they can get from an academic institution, I also understand the need to illustrate that necessity to others. Since 1992 basic skills and developmental reading and writing classes must work hard within an institution to demonstrate their worth to the institution as well as their contributions to student learning. As a result, it is crucial that those conducting research in the field of developmental and basic writing are able to provide evidence that their approaches in the classroom afford students with opportunities to achieve successful academic outcomes put forth by colleges and universities as well as the individual fields of study in the academic settings. At a time when the budget determines what classes are
important, and the demand for higher education is on the rise, it is absolutely necessary to provide practical evidence of the improvements in basic skills students as a result of using Socratic methods in the classroom and allowing the students to take a more active role in their education. Documenting and evaluating teaching methods and activities that improve a students’ learning provides the means of communicating the value of the work done in basic skills classrooms.

Through evaluation of such methods, instructors and practitioners can gain important insights that will help ensure that the relationship among participants are maintained and supported. It is also a venue for documenting the concerns, challenges, and benefits of power-sharing teaching practices. Evaluation and assessment makes it possible for instructors to communicate their observations about the multitude of learning styles that they witness with their students and provides ways for instructors to determine what will be the most beneficial to the students. Studies like this may also help establish theoretical justifications which will allow instructors to respond productively to students about power-sharing activities in a basic skills classroom.

Edward M. White describes a three-fold method for such evaluations: They must be designed to incite regular conversation between researchers and instructors, they must benefit all participants involved, and they must support teaching practices (White 204). Before the analysis of the activity and its benefits, it is essential to establish the significance of using a power-sharing critical pedagogy in the classroom. Thus, to conclude this chapter, I will offer a short summary of Paulo Freire and Ira Shor’s critique of top-down teaching methods, and I will also provide a brief outline of Shor’s six primary characteristics of “power-sharing critical pedagogy.”

**A RESPONSE TO OPPRESSIVE PEDAGOGY**

As Paulo Freire wrote, the primary letdown of traditional university teaching methods is their inability to help students move “toward humanization” (Freire 85). His main critique of the “banking” (Freire 70) model of education—traditional top-down pedagogy—is that it “masks the effort to turn women and men into automatons—the very negation . . . to be more fully human” (Freire 74). Freire writes that the banking model is one where the “students are the depositaries and the teacher is the depositor.” The system of education
requires, what Freire calls, the “teacher-student contradiction.” In this system, the teacher puts themselves at the front of the room as the person who knows all, “considering the ignorance” (Freire 72) of the student absolute. The assumption that students are empty vessels is precisely what is going to keep them from ever becoming fully human. For Freire, this approach promotes a “false understanding of men and women as objects” (Freire 77). He also notes that anything that will “alienate human beings from their own decision-making is to change them into objects” (Freire 85). When the teacher is standing in front of the class doing all of the lecturing, and writing notes on the board for students to copy down, they are the ones that are doing all of the learning. The student is not actively part of the learning process, and therefore actually learns very little from the class.

This is disadvantageous to both students and teachers. With this model, students are denied agency; they become bins and containers to be filled by the teacher: “The more completely the teacher fills the containers, the better he is. The more humbly the containers agree to be filled, the better students they are” (Freire 72). This model of teaching, still used in educational settings of every level, is, according to Freire, a reflection of how oppressive and dehumanizing society can be as a whole. Ira Shor writes, “these power problems are social and historical” (Empowering Education 17). For him, the inequalities “exist in the classroom . . . because education is a social activity formed within social conflicts and society at large” (Empowering Education 17). Shor later asserts that “no pedagogy is autonomous of society because every pedagogy . . . is dependent on larger social conditions enveloping every learning process” (Empowering Education 181). It then becomes crucial for teachers and instructors to address the pre-existing issues that the students face when they enter the academy. Problems with race, class, gender inequalities, problems between the students and the institution, problems between teachers and students, even among the students themselves all must be addressed before the instructors can address the system for which these problems occur.
Both Ira Shor and Paulo Freire base their arguments on the fact that “authority shapes the experience of knowledge making” (*Empowering Education* 18). The goal in this activity is to allow both the students and the teachers to create a space in which the learning can move beyond the “the grand cultural canyon” (Freire 211) and move into a more democratic space. The hope is that teaching strategy will create a space where “the teacher-students and the student-teachers reflect simultaneously on themselves and on the world . . . thus establishing an authentic form of thought and action” (Freire 83). It was from this that Shor developed the concept of “power-sharing critical-democratic pedagogy” (Freire 211).

**POWER-SHARING CRITICAL-DEMOCRATIC PEDAGOGY**

The power-sharing, critical-democratic pedagogy that Shor puts forth in *When Students Have the Power* is a process that is meant to reorganize authority and to rethink teaching and learning for both the teacher and the student. Part of this involves rethinking the power structure in the classroom. “The teacher-of-the-students and the student-of teacher-of-the-teacher-of-students cease to exist, and a new term emerges: teacher-student with student-teacher” (Freire 80). Shor asserts that this approach to teaching is more democratic than the “unilateral authority now dominating school and society” (*When Students Have the Power* 122) because it allows for a collaboration between the student and the teacher. Shor offers several examples to demonstrate this method, including “negotiating the curriculum” (*When Students Have the Power* 59), “collaborative decision-making” (*When Students Have the Power* 59), and “shared authority” (*When Students Have the Power* 154). The chief aim of this method is to allow the students to have agency over their education. The process becomes a joint venture between teacher and student, rather than something that the teacher does for the student. Shor believes that this is a more active form of learning that will allow the student to more actively engage in the process as well as gain the authority that they need to be successful.

With this pedagogy, Shor seeks to overturn traditional classroom models and provide a space that “create[s] the conditions for a critical of knowledge, power, and society” (*When
Students Have the Power 154). The shared authority allows the students the power they need to make a change in themselves and the society around them. Shor details some of the potential benefits of such a learning style:

By sharing authority and assuming teacherly roles, students take greater responsibility for their educations, which can translate into a more intense relationship between them and the learning process. By opening the process to student authority, power-sharing repositions students from being cultural exiles to becoming cultural constituents . . . the reinvention of power is thus a contingent ideal and an unpredictable experiment appropriate for education in a society that calls itself democratic and may yet become so. (When Students Have the Power, 199-200)

The teacher’s role in this process is still essential, though. It would be easy to assume that because the students are now taking an active role in their education, and the teacher is no longer the sole authority figure, the role the teacher plays in the classroom is somehow less significant. Shor promises readers this is not the case. He writes, “teachers don’t stop being authorities or academic experts, but they do deploy their power and knowledge as democratic authorities who question the status quo and negotiate the curriculum rather than as authoritarian educators who unilaterally make the rules and lecture on preset subject matter” (When Students Have the Power 56). The teacher is in charge of jump-starting the process, for helping the students get started in the direction that they need to being going in, but the teacher no longer acts like the single authority over that trip. The teacher no longer has a monopoly over education.

In negotiating this new role, it is important that the pedagogy includes both the instructor’s expertise and the needs and interests of the students. For Shor, the “democratic side of critical pedagogy means not ignoring, silencing, or punishing unhappy students but rather inviting them to make their criticisms public for deliberation. By bringing conflict out into the open, I hope to interfere with the formation of Siberia” (When Students Have the Power 57). An essential part of the formation of the critical pedagogy is to make sure that the teacher maintains authority while simultaneously allowing the students a chance to work through the curriculum. Students need to be able to find a place within the classroom in
which they are comfortable to enter into meaningful dialogues with both the instructor and each other. It is these discussions that will shape and affect their lives.

For Shor, this power-sharing method has six factors: (1) It has to be based in student conditions. Every class will be different because the students will be different; (2) Students are allowed to participate in decision making in the classroom, and outside of the classroom, where they learn to think for themselves, rather than have someone tell them what to think or what choices to make; (3) it is a “problem-posing process” (When Students Have the Power 52); (4) The classroom setting allows for competing viewpoints to serve as answers. Students will constantly question the status quo; (5) It will be “interdisciplinary, field based curriculum focused on . . . critical projects about knowledge, society and experience (When Students Have the Power 131); and, probably the most important, (6) This method will foster critical thinking, which Shor describes as “a literate social performance enabled in a . . . linguistically meaningful context, enacted in the language that the students possess, inside a . . . negotiated process which encourages them to question the cultural assumptions of society . . . and the status quo” (When Students Have the Power 40). In this system, for a student to be able to learn how to think critically, they have to have the freedom to pursue knowledge and ask questions on their own terms, with language they are familiar with, in a way that makes sense with their given experience.

These six components were largely recognized in Shor’s course, despite some limitations still in place by the institution. Although Shor’s suggestions are for classes of all levels, I feel that many of these concepts can be applied in the basic skills classroom to help students take control of their learning and gain the skills necessary to be successful not only in their writing classes, but in any class that they will encounter in college.

**THE BASIC SKILLS INITIATIVE, POWER-SHARING AND THE BASIC SKILLS STUDENT**

Research has shown that many freshman entering major colleges and universities have a hard time with the transition from high school into college life. These students are
experiencing a major culture shock and find it “difficult to adjust to the pressures of college living” (Ratliff 2). This becomes especially true for large colleges and universities where the size and the diversity in population coupled with the expectations of university professors can be overwhelming. In the state of California many freshmen enter college having met the basic “A-G Requirements” (See Appendix A), but have not developed the critical thinking skills necessary to keep up with the high demands of college level coursework and are left feeling frustrated and inundated. These students are especially likely to drop out within the first year. A study published in 2011 by the Campaign for College Opportunity Coalition and the Institute for Higher Education and Leadership & Policy at Sacramento State University found that 2 out of 3 students do not graduate from community college, and many more do not finish a degree or transfer to a larger college or university within six years.

This problem is largely attributed to the fact that because of the “open enrollment” policy at the community college level, many of these students are entering classes without the skills that they need to succeed. These students are often labeled as “developmental,” “remedial,” or even “basic.” The terms in and of themselves are problematic:

Trying to define “basic writing” perplexes us, shot through as the term is with local contexts, different approaches, and standardized grammar tests. Any article or research report in basic writing has to be read carefully for how the author describes basic writing. “Basic writers” are equally as elusive. Sometimes they are called “remedial,” implying that they are retaking courses in material that should have already been mastered. Sometimes they are called “developmental,” suggesting a cognitive or psychological problem. At other times they may be called “Educational Opportunity Students,” suggesting division by access to education. Or they are just called “basic,” requiring fundamental or foundational instruction in writing. (Stygall 320)

However a school chooses to define these students, though, it is clear that they need some help if they are going to remain in college. By 2007 the remedial classes had all but ceased to exist at the college level in California. In that same year California community colleges wrote a grant and received funding for the Basic Skills Initiative. The goal of the BSI was to improve student access and success. The Strategic Plan guides California Community Colleges as they serve over 2.9 million students annually at 110 colleges. The BSI was a part of Strategic Plan Goal Area 2: Student Success and Readiness (California Community Colleges). The project addressed credit and noncredit basic skills as well as adult
education and programs designed to help underprepared students. A two-pronged approach by BSI created an environment for unprecedented accomplishments in Basic Skills. One prong of this plan allocated colleges supplemental funding to specifically address basic skills needs. This funding was guided by locally developed action plans documenting usage of the funding. The other prong took the shape of a Professional Development Grant which was designed to address training needs for faculty and staff in basic skills, and English as a Second Language (ESL). The Basic Skills Professional Development Grant provided statewide training and support to address the professional development needs of community college administrators, faculty, and staff in the areas of basic skills and ESL instruction in both credit and noncredit instruction (Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges).

While the BSI is a good start, there are some tips and activities that the instructor can do to help the basic skills or developmental students within the class that will help them become more confident not only in a classroom setting, but also with their writing and communicating abilities. One of the most important aspects of a critical-democratic pedagogy is the class discussion. In many of the basic skills classrooms, there is little to no discussion. Instead, the class is focused on grammar exercises and the more traditional banking methods. What is missing is the discussions that can really help the students engage on a more critical level with the learning process rather than just settle for being a vessel to be filled by the teacher.

The discussion, though, must be rooted in what Shor identifies as “the student conditions” (When Students Have the Power 29) and come from what Freire calls a “generative theme” that is rooted in “student suggestions, experiences, conditions, and expressions” (Freire 40). These discussions can then be tied to the readings that the students do and can be used to illustrate the examples that are used to teach the tools the students need to become better writers. Teachers who are focused on critical teaching methods will center the discussion that is “context-based and student-centered . . . to stimulate students’ ability to perceive their surroundings more critically” (Empowering Education 149). With the
instructor fostering and encouraging the students to take a more active role in classroom activities, then the classroom dynamic becomes one that is more welcoming and accepting of critical-democratic learning.

When the students feel like they are part of the learning process, whether it is having a say in the reading list, being invited to make suggestions to the syllabus, or even just having regular group discussions, will foster new ways of thinking that the students did not think possible. This new process of participation “provides students with active experiences in class, through which they develop knowledge that is reflective understanding, not mere memorization” (Empowering Education 21). By holding the students accountable for their learning, and not treating them like they are deficient in some way because they have been deemed “developmental” or “basic,” the school is sending a “hopeful message to the students about their present and future; it encourages their achievement by encouraging their aspirations. They are treated as responsible, capable human beings who should expect to do a lot and do it well” (Empowering Education 21). This becomes important for the basic skills student because the confidence they learn through the writing class, and through the chance to be part of a power-sharing model, will carry over into the other classes that they take, as well as give them the confidence that they need to be able to complete their degree.

In this chapter, I have illustrated the importance of power-sharing, critical democratic pedagogy and its importance to basic skills students. In Chapter II of this study, I will provide background on the Socratic Method, followed by a detailed discussion of how the Socratic Method can be used to today to benefit basic skills students. I will end the chapter with the history of the Citation Circles activity developed for AVID College Readiness and the possible benefits at the college level.

This second chapter is intended to not only establish a connection between the Socratic Method and power-sharing critical democratic classrooms, but also to establish a connection between Socratic activities and the benefits to basic skills students’ writing. In the final three chapters I will discuss the methods and findings of my research in order to illustrate the potential benefits of using the Citation Circle activity at the college level.
CHAPTER 2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE SOCRATIC METHOD
AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CRITICAL ENGAGEMENT WITH BASIC SKILLS STUDENTS

In this chapter I will demonstrate the connection between Socratic-based activities and student engagement, specifically to highlight the benefits that critical thinking and learning can have on a developmental student’s writing. I will do this in two steps. First, I will discuss the Basic Skills movement at the college level, including the goals of such classes and some of the problems encountered in meeting those goals. Second, I will give a brief history and explanation of the Socratic Method, which will allow me to illustrate a successful model of power-sharing in the classroom. This will include a brief description of the Citation Circle activity and how activities like this best serve not only the students, but the goals of critical-democratic teaching methods.

BASIC SKILLS PROGRAMS: GOALS AND LIMITATIONS

David Bartholomae, professor and former chair of composition studies at the University of Pittsburgh, wrote an essay in 1979 in which he gave a very accurate description of the basic writing programs:

Most basic writing programs I observe . . . begin with the assumption that the writing of basic writers is a “simpler” version of a universal writing process, or that it is evidence of unformed or partially developed language behavior, that the performance of basic writers is random, incoherent, as if basic writers were not deliberately composing utterances but responding, as the dominant metaphor would have it, mechanically and doing so with unreliable machinery. The end product of this reasoning is that basic writers need, finally, to learn basic or constituent skills, skills that somehow come prior to the writing itself. Before the students can be let loose to write, the argument goes, they need a semester to “work on” sentences or paragraphs, as if writing a sentence in a workbook or a paragraph in isolation were somehow equivalent to producing the units in the midst of some extended act of writing. . . These basic skills are defined in terms
of sequences—“words, sentences, paragraphs, essays” or “description, narration, exposition, persuasion”—that in turn stand in for pedagogy. (Bartholomae 85-86)

While this is no longer the only approach to teaching basic skills students, it is still a dominant fallback method for many teachers who are new to the field or for instructors who feel that this is the easiest way to reach all of the students at once. The readings are easier, the discussions, if there are any, are very surface level, and many of the students do not become better writers or gain too many skills that can be carried over to their other classes. The level of participation and critical engagement with the material that the students take becomes almost non-existent because they have not yet learned the difference between competency and fluency. A class structured in this way offers both teachers and students a way to work through the curriculum without ever having to talk about writing and simply provides evidence that such a style produces only limited returns.

This interaction becomes problematic when the goal of many of the humanities programs at the undergraduate level is, as Sebastian Mitchell explains, “to convey a level of subject expertise to a student body that by its nature is not too well informed about the particular field. This requires exposition, explanation, and demonstration; it is consequently difficult to envisage an entire programme of study that could operate nominally on maieutic principles” (Mitchell 188). The demonstration part of this equation is often where many basic writing programs are lacking. Mike Rose outlined the gap in teaching in his article “Remedial Writing Courses: A Critique and a Proposal”:

Phrase to paragraph length fill-ins or brief responses, often in workbooks or on worksheets makes much of the writing in these classes. When the fuller assignments are given, the topics are most often personal and simple. They are meant to be relevant and accessible but in fact are usually old-hat and unacademic—a unique artifact of the composition classroom. . . . The end result, of course, is that our students’ papers are flawed, not only by the writers’ current compositional inadequacies, but also the writers’ very composing situations. (Rose 110)

Writing small paragraphs one at a time or copying sentences in a workbook are not reflective of the types of writing that the students will encounter in their other classes, and, therefore, offer little to no practical help to the student. These types of assignments, as Rose writes:
do not lead outward toward the intellectual framework that contains it. And that’s a pity, for remedial writing curriculum must fit the overall context of a university education: students must, early on, begin wrestling with academically oriented topics that help them develop into more critical thinkers, that provide them with the some of the tools of the examined life, and that, practically, will assist them in the courses they take. (Rose 110)

The “tools” that Professor Rose is referring to go beyond critical thinking skills. These skills include: critical reading and writing skills that allow students to get past the surface level of an academic essay; organizational skills that allow them to not only keep track of what they read and write about, but also help them organize their own thoughts in a clear and reasonable way; and how to assess information that can be used not only in classroom discussions, but also in their writing. As I am sure that many instructors and professionals would agree, establishing a class that can do all of this at once is easier said than done. Despite the challenges presented, there are several ways that a more critically engaging class can be approached. One way that allows for a more critical-democratic classroom is the use of the Socratic Method. What follows is a brief history of the Socratic Method as well as a discussion about the benefits activities from this method have in a basic skills classroom.

**A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE SOCRATIC METHOD**

Socratic seminars are defined as “exploratory intellectual conversations centered on a text” (Lambright 30). Employing the group-discussion model, these seminars are closely modeled on Socrates’ “instruction-through-questioning method . . . they focus on a wide range of topics, including specific readings, scientific demonstrations, and the arts” (Polite and Adams 256). The classroom atmosphere is one that allows for meaningful discussion, with a “student-centered environment to foster authentic engagement and prompt ideas to occur” (Loan 41). The discussion is one that “encourages students to analyze the text critically and requires them to provide support for their statements with details from the text” (Chorzempa and Lapidus 55). The hope is that sharing ideas and engaging in these discussions, strong critical thinking and writing skills. Students will be forced to organize
and assess not only their own thoughts, but the ideas and arguments presented in the text. Being able to properly transition between the two thoughts is an essential skill that will carry well into other fields of study. As Gilbert Ryle explains: “Thinking is trying to better one’s instructions; it is trying out promissory tracks which will exist, if they ever do exist, only after one has stumbled exploringly over the ground where they are not” (Ryle 228).

**WHERE IT ALL BEGAN: PLATO’S *MENO***

Written in a Socratic dialectic manner, Plato’s *Protagoras and Meno*, published in 1956, centers on a young Thessalian aristocrat who asks Socrates about the nature of virtue. Instead of giving an answer, Socrates asks Meno what *he* thinks the term virtue means. Meno is surprised by the lack of response from Socrates, so he supplies his own thoughts about the definition of virtue. He states that virtue is something that has a different meaning for different types of people. Socrates dismisses the first definition because it does not encompass all the instances in which virtue is present. Meno tries again, but fails to come up with a definition that has more than just a few elements of virtue, like justice and the want for good. As Mitchell states, “The discussion is consequently back to where it started, no coherent and comprehensive account of virtue in sight” (Mitchell 182).

Meno, frustrated at all of the questions and answers, grumbles to Socrates that his “mind and lips are literally numb, and I have nothing to reply to you” (Plato 128). Upon his instances that he really does not know the meaning of virtue, Socrates persuades Meno to continue to search for a definition. It then becomes clear to Meno that if, in fact, Socrates truly does not know the definition of virtue, then both men are on an equal ground intellectually. He then tries a new path with the argument about the nature of knowledge. Meno states “that it is impossible to discover anything new, because one either knows it already, or if one should happen to know something genuinely new, one would not possess the conceptual framework to be able to recognize it” (Mitchell 182). Socrates counters with an absurd idea that all souls are immortal and just transfer from body to body. In those travels, the souls attain a vast array of knowledge. This type of knowledge is not always
apparent to the conscious mind, but rather the latent knowledge can be called upon at a later time with the proper questioning and stimulation.

To demonstrate his point, Socrates asks Meno’s young slave to solve a geometric equation. The slave has no knowledge of mathematics, and Socrates offers no formal teaching on the subject to help the boy. Through a series of careful questions though, the slave is able to correctly solve the problem. Because of this, Socrates and Meno agree that if virtue cannot be defined, it should still be considered a form of knowledge. Socrates then raises the point that if virtue is indeed a form of knowledge, and knowledge is something that can be taught, then there should be teachers and students in that subject area the way that there are teachers and students of art, music, and sculpture. No matter how hard we look though, we cannot find such people.

At this point in the conversation the two men are joined by the politician, Anytus. Socrates switches modes and asks Anytus why people in his field struggle to teach their children to be virtuous. This question serves a dual purpose. The first goal of this question is to see the struggle of labeling virtue as a form of knowledge, and the second serves as a critique on the citizens who are supposedly capable of wise governance (Mitchell 182). Anytus is not fooled by the question and understands that he is being criticized for his own status and education. He becomes very angry, threatens Socrates, and leaves. The last part of the dialogue returns to the notion that virtue is a type of knowledge and, therefore, teachable even though the more practical evidence would suggest that virtue cannot, in fact, be taught.

**SOCRATIC DIALOGUE**

*Meno* offers readers a look at a wide variety of Socrates’ teaching methods. As Mitchell explains: “We see him interviewing three different figures and adjusting the style of his questioning according to the status and disposition of his interlocutors” (Mitchell 183). The importance of the early dialogue is how the use of questions allows Meno to understand his own points and his own beliefs. Meno starts the dialogue confident that he knows what virtue is, but through the course of Socrates’ questions, Meno eventually contradicts himself
and comes to learn that he does not understand the topic of virtue at all. With Anytus, the purpose of the question is to make a strong critique of the educational system and the consequences for the Athenian government. The only time that Socrates actually takes on a teacherly role is in his discussion with Meno’s slave. It would be realistic to assume that the slave already knew the answer to the geometric problem, and because of that, the questions were meant to lead him toward the correct answer.

Socrates is forced to vary the approach that he takes for each of the conversations. He must tailor his mood, speech patterns, and questions to each of the people that he speaking with. He starts out serious with Meno and then lightens his tone as Meno becomes more and more agitated. Socrates then becomes very serious and straightforward with Meno’s slave, and he falls somewhere between anger and mockery with the politician. Similarly, each of his participants must react to the form of logic that is being presented to him by Socrates. There is a drama added to the dialogues because each of the participants may choose to leave the conversation at any time for any reason (much the way Anytus does). While each of the discussions is different, one element that remains clear: “through a process of question and answer interlocutors come to understand that they do not have a proper grasp of what they initially thought they knew” (Mitchell 184). Paul Friedlander summarized the key purpose of a Socratic dialogue: “The soul has come into view in its proper activity, the search for ultimate reality; and this experience serves as a foundation for the moral task, which is to become better” (Friedlander 284).

THE SOCRATIC METHOD

The Socratic Method that is most commonly used in classrooms today is modeled after the approach popularized in the 1920s by German philosopher Leonard Nelson. The objective of Nelson’s teaching was “to reveal through a process of collective reflection and introspection the ultimate standards—logical, ethical, esthetic [sic]—that are implicit in our ordinary judgments” (Mitchell 185). Nelson modified his method from that of Socrates because he felt that the “tendency of Socrates’ discussants to be little more than yes men; he
was skeptical of Socrates’ reasoning, and thought he frequently breached his own maieutic principles with long expository speeches” (Mitchell 185). Nelson also altered the discussions to go from the tag-team of the philosopher and the student to a group discussion. Instead of depending upon one person to puzzle out the answers to the questions, it would be up to a group to discuss the definition of virtue or solve the mathematical question. The role of the teacher/philosopher in Nelson’s version also takes a more hands-off approach to the dialogues: “Instead the teacher would facilitate the sessions by ensuring that everyone understands what is being said, that everyone contributes to the session, and the maieutic principles are strictly observed” (Mitchell 185). This becomes crucial for educators advocating a power-sharing model in their classroom. The questions that the students ask and are asked are also vital to this process: “Questions can be used as a means of including all of the students within a discussion. Open questions may be employed when you have undertaken a long exposition and students are particularly keen to discuss the work itself” (Mitchell 194). The group discussions allow the students to interact with each other, as well as take charge of their learning, by postulating their own theories and working out their ideas and concerns with their peers.

Although the role of active questioning is slightly diminished from the Platonic form, the increased student participation is equally as important. The students now take an active role in what they are learning and have a more participatory role in the classroom: “They articulate their feelings and are eager to participate. They learn critical thinking skills, as well. Students support their statements with references to the text. . . Students develop facilitation skills as they participate (Quatroke et al., 28). This method has strong power-sharing roots and can work in every field of study.

**THE AVID PROGRAM AND THE CITATION CIRCLE ACTIVITY**

Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) is a program that was first developed in 1980 by Mary Catherine Swanson, an English teacher at Clairemont High
School in San Diego, California. The AVID program serves to support students so that they can go to college and reach their full potential. While any student may be admitted into the program, the target student is that in the “academic middle” (the B/C student who may need an extra push and some guidance to get them to college) and the minority and low-income students. The class is also a boost for those who will be the first in their family to go to college. AVID serves as a support system for its students by teaching study and organizational skills, as well as helping them learn the skills that they will need to succeed in college (public speaking, interaction with the teacher, going to office hours, etc.). The class is not meant to be thought of as a remedial class, but as an acceleration class. AVID encourages students to take more challenging and rigorous classes and offers tutoring and study support from AVID trained tutors who are usually local college students or college graduates. These tutors also serve as role models to the students. They can help answer questions about college and the academic rigors that these students will soon be facing.

AVID is huge proponent of using the Socratic Method in the classroom. Students often go through many rounds of Socratic Seminars in the hopes that they will learn a deeper understanding of complex ideas through rigorous thoughtful dialogue, rather than by memorizing bits of information; active learning; and the tools to explore and evaluate ideas, issues and values from themselves as well as those around them. In a Socratic Seminar, participants seek deeper understanding of complex ideas in the text through rigorously thoughtful dialogue. This process encourages divergent thinking rather than convergent. The students are given the opportunity to “examine” the text, be it a novel, an article, a poem, etc. After reading the text several times they are then worked into a discussion. At this level, the students are worked into a sense of emotional safety when they begin to understand that the activity is not a discussion/debate with right or wrong answers, but rather a dialogue that seeks to understand how each student came to the answer or conclusion that they did. The students eventually learn that the ability to ask meaningful questions that can lead to thoughtful and stimulating dialogues can be just as important, if not more so, than finding “the answer.”
THE CITATION CIRCLE ACTIVITY

The following activity was taken from the *AVID College Readiness Handbook*, edited and compiled by Ann M. Johns, published in 2009. Although the activity is intended for 11th and 12th grade AVID students, it can also serve as a useful tool for developmental writing students. Documenting and incorporating sources into a paper properly and effectively can be a struggle for college students and even more so for college students who do not have all of the skills needed to be a successful writer at the college level. Integrating sources into texts is one of the least taught skills at the college level, and the Citation Circles’ method will ease the students into the appropriate use of sources into their writing. This activity can follow the reading for any text or lecture—or it can relate to other student experiences. This activity will not only engages students in the learning process, but it will allow them to learn a valuable skill early in their academic writing career.

In the following chapter, I will define the aim and purpose of this study; describe the design and assessment process; outline the procedures and guidelines used; discuss the instruments used to gather data; and finally, explain the limitations of the project.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH FOCUS

AIM AND PURPOSE

The design of the assessment process for this study is based on an in-class activity that was developed to help juniors and seniors in high school become better prepared for college writing. It is an activity that also speaks to the trouble that developmental and basic skill writers have at the college level. The assessment process was also based on the work that I have done in both basic skills classes at the college level as well as tutoring in AVID classes. The activity, which is published in Ann M. Johns’ book *AVID College Readiness*, has served as a guide to structuring an activity that would be useful to college students who are in developmental writing classes. There were several factors that went into carrying out this study: (1) designing an appropriate assessment guideline for this project; (2) determining the appropriate method for gathering data; (3) determining and implementing the best methods for the analysis of the data; and (4) raising questions that, when asked, allowed me to better understand what developmental writers at the college level need in terms of an in-class activity that will help them become more comfortable with their writing.

Since this was the first time the activity was tested at the college level, there were several questions that I considered while I was in the planning stage of this study:

1. What was I hoping to get out of the activity?
2. What method of collecting data would give me the answer to number 1?
3. How would I evaluate the data I collected?
4. What type of protocol would I use to get information from the students?

THE EFFECTS AND OUTCOMES OF CITATION CIRCLES

This project came together because of my desire to build a basic skills class that would be the most beneficial to students’ just entering college. While building an entire class was a huge undertaking for someone who has limited teaching experience, it was clear that
there were a few areas of study that I could fruitfully research. Through a chance meeting with Ann Johns, I learned about the Citation Circle activity for high school juniors and seniors and the possibility of testing it on college-age students to help them enter the academic discourse community.

**INSTRUMENT SELECTION PROCESS**

Very careful consideration was given to the collection of data in this study. Many factors were considered, such as the methods of collection available to me; the accuracy of the data collected from the questionnaires and the observations; the possible barriers that would arise and possibly interfere in trying to collect the data; the method of analysis; and, most importantly, the response I desired from the participants involved. I was also concerned about the types of survey and follow-up questions I asked, the bias involved in the method I used, as well as advantages and disadvantages of the possible methods.

My primary concern with this process was time and access to a developmental writing class. I knew that to be able to run several trials of the activity, I would have to find an instructor who was willing to give up several days of instruction. I was also worried about being able to work with the busy students in the class to schedule follow-up interviews if needed. It was important to find an instructor who was willing to work with me and had the flexibility to work with my school and work schedule.

Another important concern was that the methods used benefit the writing program. I wanted to make sure that I could be dialogic, reflective, and inclusive. For that to take place, it was important that I was able to meet and interact with the instructors and students. The face-to-face interaction was important because, I believe, it can foster a conversation that is not possible through the questionnaire and an analysis of the writing samples. Face-to-face responses are more likely to be more detailed and full responses, which will be vital to the study. The physical interaction also helped me gauge the comfort level of the students as they moved through not only the activity, but also their writing process.
At the start of the project, I considered several different methods of data collection, including surveys, interviews, in-class observations, essay questions, a reflexive journal, and a focus group that included both writing instructors and students. It became clear though that there were some methods that were better suited to an in-class activity than others.

Since the students would be doing a significant amount of writing in the course of the semester, I quickly ruled out reflexive essay questions. Students would be less likely to participate in an “optional” essay in addition to doing the work that is already required for their class. Grateful for the willing participation that the class has already given me, I did not want to overload the already busy participants. I also ruled out a focus group because of many of the factors mentioned earlier, partially the time and scheduling conflicts among the students, instructors, and myself. I also concluded that I could get the same results conducting face-to-face interviews. A review of the syllabus would have proven unsuccessful as well because the in-class observation of the activity is more important than the readings that are presented to the students.

After careful consideration of all the above mentioned factors, I chose to use the following methods of data collection for this study: an in-class observation of the activity and its effectiveness and a short survey before and after the activity with follow-up interviews with a random sampling of students. The multiple sources used were based on the suggestion of one of the writing instructors initially interviewed for the project. The suggestion came from Edward M. White’s *Developing Successful College Writing Programs*, published in 1989. Although White’s work is geared more toward a large scale program, many of the concepts introduced can still be applied to the study and analysis of a classroom. White suggests several times that the use of multiple methods and measures is important when evaluating writing programs. He explains that past research has taught us to “measure everything possible” (White 204). His most important advice in that article is to utilize the experience and the knowledge of the instructors to examine their students’ performance and actions in the classroom, as well as the short- and long-term growth throughout the semester.
This study incorporates a wide variety of data collections because it speaks to the type of learning environment that people like Ira Shor and Paulo Freire seek to create. The inclusion of multiple voices (and perspectives) creates a more liberatory atmosphere. That in turn can be transferred to designing an activity that will be most beneficial to the students. Designing a study to incorporate multiple sets of data also served to further validate the findings.

**JUSTIFICATIONS, BENEFITS, AND LIMITS OF THE METHODS USED**

The primary instrument used in data collection was the in-class observation of the activity being performed and the analysis of several writing samples from the students participating in the study. These two methods were given priority over the other methods chosen because being able to observe the activity, as well as the students’ participation in the activity, will greatly help my ability to determine their comfort level with the sources and with their writing. Being able to follow up the observation with an analysis of the writing that the students would produce would allow for a strong measurement of how well they were able to incorporate what they learned from the citation circles.

Another tool in collecting data for this study was the use of two short surveys, before and after the in-class activity (See Appendix B). These questionnaires allow me to collect background information on the students in order to better understand their comfort with writing. The initial questionnaire contains questions to help me learn about the students and their academic background. The questionnaire given after the activity and the paper they wrote after the activity was used to gauge the students’ comfort level with the concepts they learned from the activity, as well as things they liked or didn’t like as well as what they would have done differently with the activity. By allowing students to give feedback about the activity, I hoped to make them feel less like test subjects and more like active participants in not only their own learning process, but in the formulation of an activity that will be used to help hundreds of students in the future. This is a major goal in power-sharing teaching methods. The surveys also serve as a less time-consuming method of data collection that
could easily be done at the beginning and end of a scheduled class time without taking too much of the participants’ time outside of class.

The last instrument I used to gather information was a follow-up interview with randomly selected students. While the students were chosen at random, they were all given the chance to opt out of giving an interview. The randomness of selection offered a broad view of the opinions in the class. The interviews allowed for me to better understand the answers that some of the students gave in their questionnaires, as well as have a discussion with them that helped them reflect and expand on their comfort and growth of their incorporation of sources into their writing. The interviews also served as a way for me to measure the students’ fears with the activity and with their writing. It was also another chance for me to gauge the effectiveness of the in-class activity. While I feel that the survey was well presented and offered insight into the activity, the interviews allowed me to focus on some indicators (inflection, nervous answers, and other emotional clues) that may not come through in the survey.

**PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES**

On the suggestion of one of my committee members, I used the initial stages of this study to contact a four-year college and three community colleges in both San Diego County and Orange County that have a wide selection of developmental writing classes. I sought the permission of the chairs of each of the writing programs at the various campuses to email the developmental writing teachers at each campus. Once I had obtained permission, I sent out an email to the instructors explaining who I was and what I was hoping to accomplish. I also asked them about the classes they taught and their pedagogical approach to the classroom. The criteria for selecting a course was as follows: first, it was important that it was a basic skills or developmental writing course that acted as a prerequisite for Freshman Composition; second, there needed to be a wide variety of readings presented in the course of the semester; third, it was important that those readings were referenced in writing assignments that the students would be completing; and, finally, it was important for the instructor to have an open, reflective dialogue with the students.
After careful review of the courses as well as my own work and school schedule, I approached one of the instructors about allowing me access to her class. I chose her not only because she met all of the aforementioned criteria, but also because she has been teaching developmental writing for twenty-three years at Fullerton College, serves as an AVID coordinator and has been active in the AVID program for the last ten years. She offered unique insight into both fields that I was working to combine. Her knowledge of the AVID program, and the way in which the activities are taught in the program, was an added bonus to the way in which the activity was taught to the college students. After she readily granted me access to her class, I obtained a consent form (see Appendix C) allowing me to conduct my study in her classroom. I then obtained consent from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at San Diego State University (See Appendix D), and then collected some of the articles that the instructor had prepared for the course. After being cleared by the IRB to proceed with my project, I sat down with the instructor in order to fully explore what I wanted to get out of the activity and how to bring my goals in line with the objectives that she had for her class.

The class I selected for the study was a lower division developmental writing class at Fullerton College. It serves as one of the prerequisites for Freshman English for the students who score low on the English placement exam, or scores well enough to take freshman English, but are not confident enough in their ability to go straight into the freshman class. The following is the “course description” section from the course catalog (see Appendix E).

During the spring semester of 2010, I attended several sessions of the English 60 class that I selected. I started out in the class introducing myself and the project and gave the students a consent form from the IRB as well as their first survey. I read the directions for the survey aloud, which allowed me a chance to answer the students questions that the students had about my project, their role in it, privacy concerns, as well as what would happen with the results. The meeting allowed me to get to know the students and their attitudes toward writing and toward working with academic sources in their writing. I stepped out of the room so that the instructor could assign numbers to the students for privacy, and then I collected all
of the consent forms and surveys from the students. All of the students were willing to participate and seemed generally excited at the idea of being able to act as subjects for the study.

The students and the instructor were kind enough to give me samples of their writing that had been produced prior to the in-class activity (the names on the essays were replaced with the number that the teacher has assigned to the student for the course of this study), and I used those as well as the questionnaires that I collected to assess the level of preparedness for the activity. I then went back to the class and observed the well-trained instructor lead the class through the activity. I sat outside of both circles and recorded careful observations about how students responded to the work, the level of participation in the activity, and which students seemed to be getting the most out of it. After the activity I consulted the instructor on which of the students might be best suited for follow-up interviews. She gave me the names of four students who she felt not only represented a diverse population of the class, but also had various levels of comfort within their writing.

With the instructor’s permission, I contacted the suggested students via email to ask if they were interested in further participation in the study. I relied heavily on the observations and recommendation of the instructor when deciding which students to approach for follow-up interviews, but the students did have to meet the following criteria: they had to be willing and interested in participating in a follow-up interview; had answered the questions on the questionnaire honestly and thoughtfully; and had not been in college for more than a year. The criteria were important because they allowed me to not only have a chance to speak with students who I felt would be honest and candid, but their level of schooling allowed me some insight into what would help them as they moved further along in their program.

The class met Tuesdays and Thursdays from five to seven in the evening. The activity was scheduled for a Tuesday, so that the students would have at least four days to read and process the readings that they would be working with in class. This also allowed for questions and follow-up to be done Thursday if needed. At the start of the semester the
students were told about my project, and I explained in further detail when I met with them to sign the consent forms (see Appendix F), so all of them were well aware of the activity and what was expected of them. During the course of the activity I took notes on student involvement, how they answered questions, how they participated, and I also made notes of questions that I had for the students as well as the instructor. The purpose of my observation was to see how well students interacted with the texts they read and how well they were able to articulate what they read, and what they knew, to their peers.

The observations also allowed me to see any potential flaws or challenges that the activity presented for college-level students.

The study ultimately focused on a class that is still in the early stages of their academic writing career. The students have been identified as needing additional help to hone their skills before they are released into Freshman English. Some of them were second language learners; some of them simply lack the skills that are needed to write well at the college level; and some were older adults that returned to academia for the first time after a stint in the working world. For the interviews, students who were young (eighteen to twenty-three years in age) were singled out because of their higher frequency in these types of classes.

Throughout the course of my work with the English 60 class, I held several interviews with the instructor. Ms. Fine* and I met several times face to face and traded several emails. She was extremely helpful in answering all of my questions and making sure that she did everything she could to help me in the course of the study. My meetings with Ms. Fine helped me not only better understand the students, but also communicated to me some ideas about the activity that I had not considered. Her insights helped me garner a better understanding of the importance of the activity, and on a much larger scale, the importance of the course objectives in her class. We discussed her teaching philosophy, her teaching practices inside the classroom, course objectives, as well as her knowledge and background of both the AVID program and developmental writing students. Based on the
insights she shared about her work in the AVID program, I hoped that I might learn just how beneficial techniques and activities like the Citation Circles could be for college level writers who require extra instruction.

The insights of the instructor and the feedback from the students are very important in the context of this study because the multiple viewpoints provide a broad perspective on the impacts of the in-class activity. In her study, “Ethnography and Composition: Studying Language at Home,” Beverly Moss notes that acculturating data is “one of the keys to success” in ethnographic research (Moss 168). Although her research is for a case study, using the various informants allowed the project to become more than broad in scope than it would have been with the use of a single informant.

This is an important feature of my study because I believe that all of the people involved in the study had distinct roles to play in the assessment process. Each individual opinion, insight, or question greatly added to the overall effectiveness of the study. Through the open dialogue with the instructor and the students in the course, I was able to gain a strong perspective that allowed me to best interpret my findings. I feel that my findings are more fairly and accurately reported because of the varying viewpoints and opinions presented in the course of the study. As Parker Palmer wrote in his 1997 book The Courage to Teach, “we invite diversity into our community . . . because diverse viewpoints are demanded by the manifold mysteries of great things” (Palmer 107). The varying viewpoints, as well as the varying levels of experience, made the most valuable contributions to this study. It is through the data I collected from the participants in this study that allowed me to make the recommendations that I believe will be most beneficial to the success of this activity.

While conducting each of the interviews and questionnaires, I made sure I followed a strict set of guidelines that I had developed prior to starting the study. While the guidelines were not modeled after one specific expert, I made sure that I followed the guide to the letter with each of the participants interviewed, including the instructor. I made sure that all of the questionnaires looked the same and were presented in the same manner. I made sure that when I scheduled the interviews that the student or the instructor knew not only the purpose
of the interview, but also what types of questions I was going to be asking. Careful consideration was made to remind the students that all of the answers would be confidential and that they could opt out of the study at any time, and if they did so, any data that was connected directly to them would be destroyed. For my part, I made sure that I arrived on time for the days I was scheduled to be in class, as well as for the interviews conducted outside of class. During all of these sessions I tried to keep my comments and observations to myself unless they directly related to information that I was trying to gather from the participants.

**METHODS OF ASSESSMENT**

After being granted permission from both the students and the instructor of the course, I performed an analysis of the in-class activity, sample papers and questionnaire responses, as well as the follow-up interviews conducted with the instructor and selected students. I relied on the theoretical considerations of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and Ira Shor’s *When Students have Power* as well as the assessment methods advocated by Barry M. Kroll and John C. Schafer in their article published in 1978, *Error-Analysis and the Teaching of Composition*. They take the approach to error-analysis that suggests that “instead of viewings as pathologies to be eradicated or diseases to be healed, the error-analyst views errors as necessary stages in all language learning, as the product of intelligent cognitive strategies and therefore potentially useful indicators of what processes the student is using” (Kroll & Schafer 209). This approach becomes especially useful for basic skills learners because it allows the instructor to not only identify the errors that the students are making, but to open up a path for a dialogue about why the student is making them, and how to correct them: “When students can make sense of their errors, coming to terms with them as a result of consistent and understandable strategies, they are more likely to try and change (without demolishing their self concept)” (Kroll and Schafer 215). The change in the students comes in the form of more confidence in documenting, paraphrasing and summarizing academic sources in their writing. When the students learn how to properly incorporate someone else’s words into their own writing, they will stop resorting to plagiarism as a means of writing a paper.
I launched my analysis of the data by grouping the writing samples, questionnaires, and activity responses for each member of the class. In total there were two writing assignments, the in-class worksheet, two questionnaires (one filled out before the activity and one filled out after the activity), and transcripts of my observations of the activity and additional transcripts from the follow-up interviews. I noted the students that felt uncomfortable with using sources in their writing, and their responses to the activity, as well as compared the papers written before the activity to the ones written after to see if there was any chartable growth or changes with the way they used academic sources in their writing. I then studied the follow-up questionnaires and the interviews to try to determine what parts of the activity worked and what parts did not in order to help me offer further suggestions for improving the activity.

LIMITATIONS

There were several obvious limitations to the study. The first limitation to this study was the sample size. Since the study was limited to one class in Fullerton, California, it would be very difficult to generalize from the results. The timeline of the study is also a limitation. Although most of the students grew tremendously as writers, sixteen weeks is not enough time to fully study the evolution of a student writer, especially one who starts out in a developmental course. The long-term benefits of the study remain unknown. Another major limitation of this study is that this was my first attempt at conducting a case study on my own. While I have previous experience as a research assistant, my role was limited to coding only, so as the study progressed, I had to learn a lot about the methodology.

A potential drawback of this study was my presence as an outside observer and interviewer. There were two factors that I worried about in this role. First, that given my young age and my appearance, the students might not take the activity or my questions seriously. Since I was only a few years older than most of them, I was worried that they would fail to see the importance of what I was trying to do. Second, that given my role as an outsider, the students might see me as an authority, and in turn connect me with the
instructor. My fear with that was that the students would then worry about how the work with me would affect their grade. I worried that then the comments and responses might not always be the most honest, or they may have exaggerated the comfort they now had with sources because of the study.

The last complication that I was worried about was the possibility of the identity of the instructor and the students may be revealed. I have made every attempt to conceal the identities, but there is always the possibility that their identities could be exposed because of their association with the study.

**Reciprocity**

I feel that I was extremely fortunate to meet the participants that helped me with the study. Because I met with the instructor before she had finalized her syllabus, she was able to schedule the activity during a class time that aligned with her own discussion of proper citation and plagiarism, and she generously explained to her students that what they were doing for me was no different from what they would have already been doing with and for her, so there would be no extra work involved for them. The students themselves were more than willing to not only participate in the activity, but did so without expectation of some sort of reward, be it extra credit or a gift from me. To show my gratitude, I offered to assist the instructor as a tutor in the AVID class that she teaches at the local junior high, and I gave the students a copy of the book *They Say/I Say*, by Gerald Graff and Cathy Birkenstein, since it was recommended to all of the students at the start of the semester, and it directly relates to the class activities. I have found the book to be very helpful in my academic career, and I am hoping the same for the students.

**Self-Reflexivity**

As a student, an English tutor, and now a college instructor, I believe strongly in not only critical thinking, reading and writing, but also in the value of reflection (and by extension, self-reflexivity). Because I am just entering the instructor side of academia, I am constantly trying to better myself and my technique by being aware of my own bias and
position within the field of writing. Because of this, I will describe myself in hopes that it will grant the readers with a framework to better understand and interpret the results presented in the next chapter.

I am a 24-year-old, white, Jewish, middle-class, heterosexual female who was born in Fullerton, California. I have chosen to become a writing teacher because of my experience during my undergraduate education. I completed my first degree at the University of California, Merced, in California’s Central Valley. While I was there I was amazed that students who grew up there, and were now going to college at UC Merced, were completely unprepared for writing at the college level. The college is a strong proponent of critical pedagogy and works hard to not only foster trust between students and teachers, but also to help radically transform the educational level of the people who will live and work in the area. I spent two years doing research that would help the university benefit to the students of the area. A major finding of the research was the lack of critical writing skills that would be essential to not only an academic career, but also serve them well in their given vocation after college.

I encountered a similar set of circumstances when I moved to San Diego to pursue my graduate degree. The first class I taught was a developmental level reading and writing class. I was both amazed and saddened that students had been admitted to college. Without a class like the one I was teaching, the likelihood of their being able to keep up with all of their course work was slim. It was because of that class that I decided that given my love for writing, and my strong belief that a school should do its best to help the students that attend it, I could make the most of my degrees by helping underprepared students become better writers. It is my hope that these students will then go into the world and be active agents in the public realm.
CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the study’s findings and provides recommendations that will hopefully guide writing instructors of developmental and basic skills level writing courses to help their students become more comfortable and confident in their writing to avoid problems like plagiarism. Through the discussion that follows, I hope to connect the relevant literature reviewed to my findings in an effort to address the questions and concerns that inform this study.

First, I will provide context for the study through the interviews with the instructor, the questionnaires with the students, and my observation and analysis of the in-class activity and the writing assignments that the students did throughout the semester involving documenting and summarizing academic sources. I do this several ways: First, I will outline and review the activity as well as the writing assignments that the students from Fullerton College completed in greater detail. I will also describe the students themselves. Second, I will address the instructor’s concerns about plagiarism, and how she used the activity to help the students feel more comfortable about their writing. I will present the instructor’s background, teaching philosophy, teaching practices, and course objectives, and involvement in the in-class activity presented to the students.

CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Below is the description of the in-class activity that was done with the students. (see Appendix G).

The Students

As noted in Chapter III, this study focused on a developmental English class, English 60 at Fullerton College. The class is the third and final class in a series of prerequisites for
students who did not meet the qualifications for freshman English. As noted on the
instructor’s syllabus:

This course is designed to meet the needs of students who are developing the
writing and editing skills necessary for college writing. Students will review
English fundamentals, read and analyze professional essays, and write essays
with an emphasis on exposition and critical thinking.

There are several ways that a student may have ended up in English 60: (1) The
student took the mandatory placement test, scored low (See Appendix E), started with the
first class in the series (English 39) and has worked through that class and the second one in
the series (English 59), and is now in English 60 working their way to English 100 (freshman
English); (2) the student scored low on the placement exam, was placed in English 59, but
challenged the score, and with the help of the instructor and a counselor was bumped into
English 60; (3) the score on the placement exam placed them in English 60; or (4) the student
tested into English 100, but was unsure about their own skills and registered for English 60
as a way to build their skills before taking freshman English. The three classes in this series
are all taken Pass/No Pass with the student needing a 70% or better in the class to move on.
Of the twenty-seven students enrolled in this class, seven of them had previously passed
from English 59.

More than half the class is of Hispanic descent, one student is of Asian descent, and
the rest are Caucasian. Eleven of the twenty seven students are female, sixteen are male. One
of the Caucasian males is an international student. Twelve of the students are eighteen years
old, five are nineteen, five are twenty, two are twenty-two, one is twenty-five, one is twenty-
seven, and one is twenty-nine years old. Only one of the students had participated in the
AVID program in high school, but had not participated in the Citation Circle activity. Of the
twenty-seven students, only one opted not to participate in the activity. The student gave no
reason for not wanting to participate, and none was asked of him. Only four of the students
had written a paper thus far in their college career that involved working with citations,
although one of the students thought that using citation meant making a bibliography, and mentioning the title of the book in the opening paragraph of a paper.

The students who had used citations in previous papers did so for classes in the Humanities department. One student had to cite academic sources for a paper written for a life and career planning class, but the rest of the papers were written for Reading, Economics, History, and International Business. Of the three that had previous experience, only one of them actually felt comfortable using the sources in their paper. When asked about his comfort level with sources, he said, “I spent quite some time on it. I feel very confident with it” (February 15, 2011). The other two students both noted that they were not very comfortable with using sources in their paper because as one of them wrote, “there are many ways you can use citations. Specifically because it is differ (sic) in certain answers” (February 15, 2011). That student also noted that although she is comfortable with using sources, she would like to be able to have a chance to practice using them more in order to better understand not only when to use them, but how to use them in a variety of paper types.

At the start of the course, all of the students expressed in their journals that they were hoping to become better writers, and they were not sure what their strengths and weakness were, but that they needed help writing papers (journal questions).

The five students who chose to participate in the interview will be known throughout the rest of this study as Jessie, Joe, Karl, Amy and Frank. Jessie is an eighteen-year-old female from Orange County. She is a first-year college student, and admitted to me that she knew nothing about sources or how to properly use them in her papers. She said that there were a few times that she had to use citations in high school, but she did not know if she did it correctly, and does not remember ever being taught how to do it. Joe is also eighteen, and he was able to tell me a lot about the use of citations, and was able to explain how to properly cite in multiple formats, as well as how to paraphrase and summarize article. He also stated more than once that he did not believe plagiarism was acceptable and that he wanted to learn as much as he could to make sure that he never did it. Karl is a nineteen-
year-old male who claimed that he understood citations, but also admitted that he had plagiarized a few times because “it was easier to finish the paper” (Joe, personal communication, February 23, 2011). Amy is a twenty-two-year-old female. Her mother is an AVID coordinator, so she was familiar with the activity, although she herself had never done it. She did not know a lot at the start of the course, but also could not think of any real specific problems that she had with citations. She was really quiet, and sometimes she was not particularly forthcoming with information. Frank, the last student who volunteered, is a twenty-year-old male. He also felt very confident in using citations in his papers, but was hoping that he could learn how to paraphrase and summarize more effectively. “I don’t always just want to quote everything that is said, but I never know how to just make it shorter, or use my words for it” (Frank, personal communication, February 23, 2011).

In this section, I have provided some information and examples about the students who participated in the study in hopes that it will provide a framework for the analysis that follows about the activity and its strengths and weaknesses. To conclude this section, I will discuss the interview with the instructor and the setup of the class beyond the activity that I did with them.

**Instructor Interview**

The interview with the instructor proved to be one of the most valuable resources in this project. Although reading about different theories about teaching basic skills students, and how to get them to take control of their education was helpful, it was not until I was able to sit down face-to-face with someone who has been teaching basic skills students for twenty-three years that I was able to actually better understand how to be an effective teacher. Through the interviews, I was able to learn valuable information about the instructor’s teaching philosophy, teaching practices in the classroom, and knowledge about basic skills and developmental students. Since I started the background for the study before the instructor had started planning for the class, I was also able to see the instructor’s
preparation and planning prior to the course, and a sense of what the instructor hoped to help the student’s with throughout the semester.

As noted before, Ms. Fine is an instructor in the Department of English at Fullerton College. She has been a part-time instructor there for twenty-three years and she has taught all levels of the writing course, but a majority of her teaching assignments have been the developmental courses (English 39, 59 and 60). She also teaches at the local middle school, where she has worked for the AVID program for eleven years and has been single handedly running the program for the last ten.

Ms. Fine has published several articles about classroom assessment, and has presented at several conferences. She regularly teaches seminars and classes for the AVID program, and has served as a model classroom for new programs. Ms. Fine does her best to stay current by attending conferences and lectures, and in the fall of 2010 she participated in a basic skills class offered by Fullerton College to all part-time instructors. She is also constantly revising and re-evaluating her handouts, activities, and teaching methods.

In the course of my interview with Miss Fine, she stated more than once that she feels that it is her job to make sure that her students are prepared to write not only in her class, but also in any class that they will encounter in the rest of their academic career: “By the time the students leave my class, I want them to have the skills to not only write a great paper for me, but for any class they should have to write a paper in for the rest of their academic career. The skills they learn with me should not be limited to just one classroom” (Fine, personal communication, December 20, 2010). For Ms. Fine, that means teaching some elements of writing that may not be so popular with her colleagues. She starts each class with a warm-up. This usually consists of a sentence or two riddled with grammatical errors, or practice formatting a paragraph, doing a bibliography in the various citation styles, or a journal entry allowing them to reflect on problems with their writing, issues with the readings for class, or simply a chance to get some of their thoughts on paper:
I use these warm-ups as a springboard into mini lessons to help the students. A lot of the warm-ups are geared to whatever issue I notice in their papers. Fragments and run-ons are common problems in their papers, so many of my warm-ups have run-ons or are fragments so that the students can learn how to recognize them, and correct them. I can also use these warm-ups to lead into a little lesson about how to avoid these grammatical errors, and even, what the errors are. Many of the students come to my class unaware that they are even making an error. The whole thing takes less than ten minutes. I do not want to spend my whole class time lecturing, but part of being a good writer is being able to write without grammatical mistakes. (Fine, personal communication, November 15, 2010)

Ms. Fine said that in the lower level classes she often spends a little more time on some of the grammatical errors rather than reflexive journal prompts because the students need that more. She notes that for many of these students, it is that consistent practice and repetition that will help them avoid the mistakes in their papers. She believes that although the writing process is important, it is also a product that, and she wants to make sure that the students are putting forth their best products. She wants them to be able to feel comfortable using academic vocabulary, and writing within the academic discourse community.

When introducing a new concept or genre to the student, Ms. Fine will lecture with the aid of a Powerpoint, and then the students will read an article or short essay in class together in the type of essay she has just introduced, and discuss it as a group. Those discussions are the main focus of the class. She asks a lot of questions, not only about the readings, but about the connections that the students can make to their own lives. She asks a lot of open ended questions, and often stresses to the students that there is no right or wrong answer. This is important because it illustrates that her teaching philosophy is in line with critical thinking and critical reading skills.

In her course, the instructor uses two textbooks, *Steps to Writing Well*, 11th edition, and *Steps to Writing With Additional Readings*, 8th edition. Since Ms. Fine is an adjunct professor, she cannot use any book of her choosing, but she is allowed to make recommendations to the department committee, and the committee offers a wide variety of
books for the instructors to choose from. Ms. Fine explained how she decided what type of book would be right for her class:

The committee offers us part timers several types of books. Some of them are just field guides, some are straight textbooks, and some have readings and supplemental books. Since I am working with the developmental writers, there are several things that I look for in a book. The most important feature of the book is the discussion on rhetorical patterns. Those chapters are very important for the students. I also try to choose a book that has a large selection of readings. Most of my students are on financial aid, so I look for a book that will offer them plenty of readings so that they do not have to buy a lot of textbooks for my class. The last feature of the book that I think is important is a handbook with grammatical and mechanical help. Those give the students something to refer back to when they are working on their papers. The visuals are important for a lot of the students as they move through the class. (Fine, personal communication, December 20, 2010)

Ms. Fine also notes that she keeps many of the books that are sent to her from the various academic publishing houses. She said that she uses those as supplements in her lectures so that the students are exposed to a variety of examples. During the course of a lecture, she also tries to encourage the students to come up with their own examples in order to better understand the process.

While the goals are expressly stated (see Appendix E), the way that the class gets to these goals is entirely a group effort. The objectives will evolve and reconstruct themselves throughout the course, and what is on the syllabus is merely a starting point and guideline for what the students should be able to accomplish with the instructor throughout the semester. There are a lot of goals, but they are not meant to be seen as unattainable. As Paulo Freire notes, teachers and students have to perceive “their state not as fated and unalterable, but as merely limiting—and therefore challenging” (Freire 85). He felt that if students take on the fatalistic approach in the classroom, seeing it as a place that is set with its rules, guidelines of what can and cannot be accomplished, then those students “cannot truly be human” (Freire 83). It should not be surprising, then, that the instructor is doing all she can to help the students make strides in their critical thinking and writing skills.
Ms. Fine makes sure that her students are encouraged to feel comfortable in her classroom by scaffolding her assignments so that they build from one another. She starts the semester asking the students a series of questions serve as a way for her to get to know her students and to get samples of their writing. The questions are fairly simple: (1) what are your strengths and weakness in English? (2) What are your goals for the semester? (3) What types of things do you need from the instructor in order to succeed in the class? These questions are important because they allow for Ms. Fine a chance to clarify the scope of the class, and adjust the syllabus to better meet the needs of the students. If all of her students are worried about writing papers that are more than twenty pages, then she can assure them that they will not have to write a paper of more than ten pages, and that they will be doing it in steps, during class, with the instructor. If the students are worried about in-class writing exams, Ms. Fine can spend build in some extra practice sessions into her lesson plans before the midterm and the final.

From there, the rest of the essays work in a similar manner. All of the essay topics that the students get to choose from come from the book. The essay prompts are tied to the readings that the students have completed within the unit, and there are ten to twelve essay prompts in a given chapter, allowing the student an ample selection. Before each essay is assigned, Ms. Fine goes through each of the prompts with the students, allowing them to ask questions, and discuss each of the prompts before they choose one. The first essay is an autobiographical incident, and the second essay deals with narration. According to Ms. Fine:

These essays are place markers. The questions they fill out on the first day of class are helpful, but having actual essays to grade allows me to see where their skill sets are. These essays allow me to review and teach MLA format, as well as walk the students through the peer edit sessions that will become a center piece of the class. The first couple of essays are not mean to be challenging for the students, but serve as good visuals for what will be expected as the essays get more challenging. At this level, the students need to be eased into academic writing. I start with form and structure, and work them to the academic language, proper citation methods, and the other parts of academic writing. The whole semester is working them towards the mini research paper. By the time they are
ready to put that together, they will be able to use everything they have learned in my class. (Fine, personal communication, December 20, 2010)

She also notes that the peer edit sessions serve as a good way for the students to not only get comfortable interacting with their peers, but it also helps them become better critical thinkers: “Critical thinking (and these peer edit sessions) allows the student to reflect on what they do, what they think, and what they say. It allows them to take other people’s ideas into consideration, and recognizing the differences and similarities of those ideas to their own” (Fine, personal communication, December 20, 2010). This important for the class because it allows the students to find their own voice within the academic community, which will help keep them from resorting to plagiarism.

Ms. Fine set up the in-class activity at a time when she usually holds a discussion with her students about plagiarism and how to work with academic sources. She feels that with students who are at the developmental level, plagiarism is merely the only way they know how to enter the academic discourse community.

We live in a cut and paste society. With the internet and Wikipedia, it is very easy for a student to say, “Well, here is someone who is saying the exact same thing that I am trying to say, only they said it better” and then copy and paste that into their paper without the proper citation. The student is not trying to cheat, or to take credit for someone else’s work, but they do not know how to properly cite the work they have put into their paper. They also have no idea how to paraphrase or summarize. While I do occasionally see instances of deliberate plagiarism in papers, I think, for the most part, that what I see comes from a sheer lack of understanding of the process. The student thinks that they have to impress me when writing a paper, and that the only way they can do that is to use big words, or in this case, plagiarize. (Fine, personal communication, November 15, 2011)

The examples of plagiarism that Ms. Fine encounters with her students becomes, as Kathryn Valentine explains, “. . . plagiarism as part of a practice that involves participants' values, attitudes, and feelings as well as their social relationships to each other and to the institutions in which they work” (Valentine 90). The pressure that the students feel to become a member of the discourse community leads them to plagiarize in order to fit in. The students become more concerned with writing a paper that “sounds smart” or fits the expectation of the instructor for a given assignment. Valentine goes on to write:“What makes plagiarism
even more complicated is that it is embedded in an ethical discourse, a discourse about what is ethical or honest within the academy” (Valentine 90). The way in which the students define the term “plagiarism,” the policy that the campus adheres to when dealing with instances of plagiarism, and the instructor’s policy all effect the way in which the student will interact with the sources in their writing. Alastair Pennycook describes the problem another way:

> Given the difficulties in establishing any clear sense of authoriality, it is important to understand authorship, authority, and plagiarism within some objectively describable system of textual relations but rather in an historically established system for the distribution of social power and privilege (Pennycook 227)

The instructors must recognize that the students often resort to plagiarism because they are unclear about when they need to give credit to another’s work. The students are more concerned with being able to enter into the academic community. The need to fit in, to earn their share of the power goes above and beyond the rules of properly documenting and citing sources.

The citation circle activity was scheduled for a point in the semester when Ms. Fine was going to present a lecture on plagiarism using academic sources in their papers. The activity will served as a starting point for the introduction into a comparative essay. Ms. Fine hoped that the activity would not only get the students comfortable discussing the readings with each other, but also being able to go back to the text to cite examples and evidence for the answers that they gave. Her hope was that if the students saw how easy it was to do in the course of the activity, that they would be able to do the same in the context of their paper.

**Students’ Initial Assumptions**

The students were introduced to the project on the first day of the semester. While going over the syllabus, the instructor let the students know that she had agreed to participate in my study. Without giving them too much detail, she told the students that a graduate student would be coming to the class to do an activity with them, and the results and observations would be used in the thesis. There was only one question raised by the class regarding the project. One student, Jessie, wanted to know if it was going to be a lot of work,
and whether or not it was going to affect their grades. Ms. Fine assured the students that the activity was not anything above and beyond what she would have already done with the class, and any work completed for the activity would count as a homework assignment. With that initial worry out of the way, the instructor felt that the students were all receptive and enthusiastic to the idea of participating in some research. In the weeks leading up to the activity, the instructor assured me that the students were great during the in-class discussions, actively participated in class, and were great at following directions and completing assignments. Three days before the activity she emailed the students a reminder to review and reread two stories that would be used in the activity and come prepared to discuss them.

What I got from the students was very different. Although they were all polite and respectful while I went through the project with them and what we would be doing, no one asked any questions, more than half of them barely bothered to fill out the pre-activity questionnaire. When asked what they know about documenting sources in their papers, one student wrote, “I am pretty confident in it, do I need to be more specific?” (February 15, 2011). Several students left the question blanks or simply wrote, “don’t know” in the provided space, and one student wrote that without documenting sources “everything you write is plagiarism” (February 15, 2011). One student, Karl, was able to give a complete answer detailing what he knew about using sources. He wrote about using quotes and examples from articles and essays that he has read in the past, and being able to make a proper work cited page with all the necessary information. He was able to get the basics of MLA format written down in the space, and was the only student who demonstrated any understanding of the process. He was also the only one who answered all of the questions with more than just one word answers.

When asked about their initial comfort level with citation, I was again surprised by the answers that I got. One student wrote that she had no idea what citations were, and several of the responses were left blank, or filled in with “don’t know” of “n/a”. The most surprising answer came from the oldest member of the class. When describing his comfort
level with citations he wrote, “Well, if referring to a parking citation, I don’t like them” (February 15, 2011). It is interesting to note that he left most of the other questions blank, or wrote “n/a” in the spaces provided for the answers. One of the most honest answers came from another one of the older students in the class. He was able to answer the question about using citations, but when describing his comfort level, he wrote, “I wouldn’t say that I am comfortable at all. I’m not always sure on how to cite things correctly, and I also have a problem knowing when and where to use them” (February 15, 2011). It was hard to judge from the amount of “I don’t knows” that I got to properly infer that the students struggle with citations, but I feel with that last answer that I had really gotten to the root of the problem in this class, and with most developmental writing students. They can define citations, but they do not know how to use them in the paper.

The lack of understanding is what leads to plagiarism, whether intentional or not. The next question on the survey asked the students if they could define plagiarism, and if, in the course of their school career, they had ever plagiarized. Like their responses to the questions regarding their knowledge of citations, the answers the students gave varied widely. Two of the students left the space completely blank, while one just wrote “?” Three of the students wrote, “I don’t know what plagiarism is” or “Don’t know how to define it,” and “It is something bad.” The students who were able to define plagiarism gave very similar answers. As one of the girls in the class wrote, “Plagiarism is using someone else’s work as your own without giving credit” (February 15, 2011). Another one of the students wrote, “Plagiarism is turning in someone else’s work and putting it under your name” (February 15, 2011). All of the students who were able to define it mentioned that it had to do with taking someone else’s work and claiming it as your own, but only one student wrote that it was a form of cheating.

The fact that only one student wrote that plagiarism was a form of cheating made the answers that I got to the second part of the question about whether or not the students had ever plagiarized less of a shock. One third of the class admitted to plagiarizing in both high
school and college. One student admitted that he did, but “only as a last resort option” (February 15, 2011). On the previous question about the comfort level with using citations, this student answered that they felt extremely confident with it, yet sometimes having to use different formatting styles for different classes was hard for them to keep straight. Another student echoed that answer, saying that they did not know how to cite properly, and because of that, they were sure “that I had [plagiarized]” (February 15, 2011). This student answered that they were not comfortable with using citations because they did not know how to do so properly.

The oldest student in the class admitted to plagiarizing when he was in high school. He wrote, “I have plagiarized, back when I was in high school. I used to use song lyrics when I was making music with my band. That was how we showed the music that we liked, by copying their lyrics” (February 15, 2011). His answer, coupled with his flip response about not being comfortable with parking citations (and completely ignoring the question), led me to believe that he did not see that what he did was wrong. He was not the only student who felt that plagiarism was not necessarily a bad thing. Another student was just as forthcoming about his thoughts on plagiarism. He wrote:

I plagiarize all the time from sparknotes (sic) and wikipdiea (sic). because is easier and quicker to just copy and paste from the internet and sound smart. Sidenote: My teacher once told me like 99% of everything is plagiarized because if you write some thing (sic) chances are some one (sic) already said it or used it. So that means I am ok doing it because every one (sic) does it or did it. (February 15, 2011).

It is important to note that this was the only question of the nine asked that this student actually answered. In every other blank he either wrote, “No” or “N/A.” He was not the only student that answered this way. Another student also wrote that he had plagiarized before, but it was okay because “I’ve only done it twice in my first year in college but it wasn’t only about three or four sentences” (February 15, 2011).

Not all of the students in the class had plagiarized though. One woman wrote that she did not plagiarize because “it’s pretty easy to tell when someone plagiarizes. I would not get
in trouble for it” (February 15, 2011). A few of the other students echoed that sentiment, writing that they were too afraid of getting in trouble with the instructor. One wrote, “I was told that if someone ever plagiarized they could have really bad problems” (February 15, 2011). The student went on to write about seeing the plagiarism policy on another syllabus for another class. Two other students wrote that they had seen the academic honesty policy on other syllabi, and were told that if they violated that policy they would not only get an F in the class, they could also be subject to a review board. According to the Fullerton College, the following action will be taken for violations of student conduct: “Student conduct must conform to Board Policy and college regulations and procedures. As cited in BP5500, ‘A student who violates the standards of student conduct shall be subject to disciplinary action including, but not limited to, the removal, suspension or expulsion of the student’” (Fullerton College 38).

The purpose of this section and the examination of the pre-activity questionnaire is to establish a baseline for the students’ comfort and understanding of citations. The questionnaire provided insight into the feelings and attitudes about plagiarism, as well as the students’ ability to define the relevant academic vocabulary that was being used. In reading on, it will be important to keep in mind the students’ lack of participation in the questionnaire, and their lack of the understanding of the terms used in the questionnaire, which then created confusion about the activity. It is also important to note that these questionnaires set a negative tone for the rest of the activity.

Problems Along the Way

There were several problems throughout the course of the activity. The first round of the activity failed in large part because of an error that I made. The introduction to the activity is supposed to be questions about familiar problem/solution topics, or issues about which a claim can be made (trash on campus, causes of drug use, cheating, etc…). I assumed that because Ms. Fine usually has her students discuss the readings in small groups, the Citation Circle activity would not require the introduction. I initially felt that the general
questions were too childish for the college level and could be skipped. I knew that the class only met twice a week for two hours at a time, and I was worried that the warm-up activity would take too much time away from what I thought were more important steps. I chose instead to start them with a pre-activity questionnaire (See Appendix A) in hopes that that would get the students to start thinking about their writing and about what they know about citations. I thought that the questionnaire would be a suitable segway into the activity. The lack of response to the pre-activity questionnaire, though, carried into the activity itself.

After the questionnaires were collected, the instructor had the students move the desk into two circles, with eight desks in the inner circle, and the rest of the desks creating a larger outer circle. The instructor picked the first four members of the Inner Circle, but then asked for volunteers for the remaining four seats. The class immediately went silent, and not one student was willing to go into the center. When the instructor finally asked one student to go sit in the center, he refused saying, “I don’t have anything to say. I didn’t do the reading” (February 15, 2011).

That answer became a quick theme for the night. The second major problem with the activity was my assumption that the students had actually done the reading. Although both of the stories used in the first round of the activity had been discussed in small groups the week before, it became clear that not many of the students had actually done the reading. Ms. Fine later told me that while she walks around and monitors the small group discussions while the students answer the questions for each of the readings, it is not always clear if the students have done the readings before they came to class, or if one person in the group did the reading and then filled in the rest of the members. Amy confirmed that sometimes that does happen: “I usually do the readings, but sometimes when I don’t and when we answer questions in groups, I usually just either look for the section to answer the story, or ask someone who read it to fill me in” (Amy, personal communication, February 23, 2011).

Once it was clear that not many of the students had done the reading, Miss Fine took a few minutes to review the article before she asked the first question to the Inner Circle.
Once the Inner Circle was taken care of, problems with the Outer Circle surfaced. Each member of the Outer Circle was given an observation form worksheet (see Appendix G). The students had a hard time figuring out what they were supposed to do with each of the boxes. As Frank later explained, “I didn’t know what a leader was, or what I was supposed to do about the leader’s actions or characteristics. Until Miss Fine said something, I didn’t even know what the claim was” (Fine, personal communication, February 23, 2011). When it became clear that the students were confused, Ms. Fine stopped the activity again and drew the worksheet on the board and wrote in the names of the people in the Inner Circle and an example of what to write in the “claim” section. She decided for the sake of clarity to only have the students write the name of the students in the Inner Circle and record the things that they said about the reading. The other boxes with the characteristics, goals, and actions were just too confusing and time consuming, and time was being wasted with all of the interruptions to explain the readings, explain the worksheet, and to get students to participate. Frank and Jessie were both much more relieved when the worksheet was simplified. As Frank explained, “It was much easier to just write down what each of the people in the middle said. I just crossed out the rest of it” (Frank, personal communication, February 23, 2011). Jessie felt the same way, “That worksheet was pointless. I didn’t even write barely anything down” (Jessie, personal communication, February 24, 2011). Many of the worksheets that were collected along with their homework had nothing written on them, or strange observations written on them that had nothing to do with the activity or the questions asked during the course of the activity.

Another serious problem with the first round of the activity was that the students did not understand some of the academic vocabulary that was used in both the questionnaire and the activity worksheet. After the pre-activity questionnaire was passed out, two students asked what citations were, and another student asked about plagiarism. As Amy explained it, “We know the words, well, kinda. We know what using quotes are and we know about not giving credit, but we don’t really know it by those words. Some of the first questions were confusing because I didn’t understand what it was asking” (Amy, personal communication,
February 23, 2011). Although I thought I had answered all of the questions and made everything clear when I went over all of the questions with the students before they filled out the questionnaire, it was obvious from the lack of response that the students just chose to not ask questions when they did not understand a word or phrase.

Ms. Fine headed off the second problem with academic vocabulary when she put the sample of the worksheet on the board. For the box labeled “claim,” she asked them a few questions about it, and worked with them to develop a simple definition to help remind them throughout the activity what they would need to be writing down while taking notes while they were listening to the Inner Circle. It was clear, though, that the students were confused at the beginning, but the gentle reminders from Miss Fine throughout the activity were enough to help them stay on track.

The last potential problem with this activity was the amount of time it took to actually do it successfully. Since the activity is designed for a high school class that meets every day, it would be easy to take the time needed to properly run through several different versions of the activity. The first time that I did the activity with the class, I used half the class just getting the students ready for the activity and the second half of the class getting them to discuss the readings and talk to each other. We did not get nearly the amount of work done that we could have, and having to repeat the process two more times would take at least two more class sessions. The other concern with time was getting the students to do the reading. The only way this activity would work only if the students did the reading, and were able to discuss it in class with the instructor before the activity takes place. This would be the only way to make sure that the level of participation was high enough to make the circles worth it. It would also be the only way to guarantee that the students understood what they were talking about and would feel comfortable discussing it with the group. This becomes difficult at the college level because most college classes meet either two days a week for two hours, or one day a week for three hours. Add to that these classes only meet for a total of sixteen weeks, and it is very easy to spend a third of the class just trying to get one level of the
activity done with the students. After my observations of the first round of the activity, it was clear that taking shortcuts with the activity would guarantee that it would not be a success.

Although there were several issues during the first run of the activity, Ms. Fine was able to work in a second go-round with the first round that yielded much better results. After a long discussion with her, she decided that it was worth it to do a general question that did not involve any readings for the first round. She allowed the students to get to know each other, and allowed this round to serve as a “get to know you” type of activity so that not only would the students feel more comfortable sitting in the inner circle, but they would also remember the names of the students that they just learned about. The first round of the activity was slowed down a bit because many of the students did not know each other by name, and had to constantly interrupt the flow of the activity to clarify who was speaking and then have them repeat what they said. This only added to the overall confusion of the activity.

**Students’ Suggestions for Improving the Activity**

At the end of the first round of the activity, the students had only one suggestion for the activity: change the worksheet. Karl was the first person to express his displeasure: “I didn’t write anything on the worksheet because there were too many boxes on the paper and too many things to try to figure out. I couldn’t keep track of who was talking and what they said if I had to pay attention to the boxes” (Karl, personal communication, February 23, 2011). Frank and Amy felt the same way. As Amy put it, “I started to get a little confused when everyone was talking and I was trying to make sure I was writing everything in the correct box. I would have been happy with the activity if we didn’t have to fill out that worksheet” (Amy, personal communication, February 23, 2011).

The students’ problem with the observation form was both expected and insightful. It came as no shock to me that the students would take issue with having to do actual work (given the struggle that they had doing the homework), but the reasoning that some of the students gave seemed to suggest that they wanted to be able to control what kinds of observations they recorded and how much detail they would provide for each comment.
Although the observation form provides the students with the structure that they need, it is a promising sign that they would rather be able to make their own decisions about how to best record the information that will be presented to them.

I am not saying that the basic skills student necessarily has all of the tools that they need to be able to handle an activity like this without a little help from the instructor, but the fact that the students want the chance to be able to take notes the way they most feel comfortable suggests that they are taking the steps needed to assume a more active role in their education. Allowing the students to be able to try, fail, and try again is part of the mutual collaboration that Ira Shor advocates.

**The Instructor’s Suggestions for Improving the Activity**

The instructor had several suggestions for improving the Citation Circle activity. Ms. Fine was quick to advocate taking the extra class time to do the first round of the activity. She felt that it was crucial for students to get acclimated to the process of a large group discussion that was focused around a few students. She felt that a general question that at least related topically to the readings would serve as a good warm-up for the actual Citation Circle activity: “The students need time to get used to an idea, or a task, and by having a warm-up that is closely related to what you actually want them to do, you are allowing their brains to get into the mindset of learning” (Fine, personal communication, March 15, 2011). The students would become comfortable answering questions and discussing topics and questions as a group, but since the answers would be more opinion based, the students would not be as shy as they might when having to discuss the readings.

Ms. Fine would run the general question section of the activity a little differently than the activity done with the readings. For the warm-up, she would have all the students gather in the center of the room. She would then ask them a question that allows them to either be for or against something. To gauge the group’s answers, she would have them go to one side if they answered positively, and the other side if they answered in the negative. Once everyone had moved to one side of the room or the other, she would ask for two or three
volunteers who would be comfortable discussing why they choose the side that they did. Each of the people would speak one at a time, while those who were not speaking would take notes on what each person said. When the speakers had finished, she would then open up the discussion to the rest of the class and had them summarize what each of the people said throughout the discussion on the given topic. Once they have completed that activity, they would then be ready to move into the phase of the activity that is geared toward the readings.

As Ms. Fine explained:

As the instructor, once I have them loosened up with an example of what I want them to do; it is easier to get them to volunteer for to sit in the center, or to give a brief summary before we start asking questions. When the students are comfortable with what they are learning, they will do a lot for you. One of the most important parts of that first round is to get the students comfortable speaking. Once they understand that there is no wrong answer then they are more confident and willing to speak up during the activity. (Fine, personal communication, March 15, 2011)

Once the Inner Circle is chosen and, if necessary, a brief summary of the readings is given, then the Inner circle can get ready for the questions, and the Outer Circle can prepare to take notes on what is said during the discussion.

The other suggestion that Ms. Fine had for the activity was in regards to the observation form that the students in the Outer Circle use to record the Inner Circle during the second round of the activity. She was aware that many of the students had a hard time with the observation form during the first try at the activity. She suggested that during the first round of general questioning, since only one student would be speaking at a time, the students taking notes could write down the name of the speaker, as well as take notes about the answers given, one at a time. As Ms. Fine explained:

having them do the process one person at a time is serving as the warm-up for those students who will not be in the Inner Circle. They get used to listening carefully and taking notes on what is being said, but because there is no confusion since they are only listening to one person at a time. By the time they sit down to do the circle activity, they are then focused on careful listening. It will then build them up to being able to listen to a couple of people speaking and summarize what they are saying without getting confused.” (Fine, personal communication, March 11, 2011)
The observation form that she gave her students for the second round of the activity would have the boxes to differentiate between the different speakers in the Inner Circle with space to record what each of them says during the activity, but it did not have all of the extra boxes that confused the students and kept them from filling out the observation form the first time they did the activity:

I know that some of the students had a hard time knowing the name of the student who was talking, and that the point of the boxes on the [original] observation form were supposed to help with that confusion, in the end, it just added more chaos to the activity. That problem can be avoided with name cards for the speakers in the Inner Circle so that the Outer Circle can constantly see the names of the speakers. It is better to keep the worksheet simple. (Fine, personal communication, March 11, 2011)

Ms. Fine gently reminded me that although many of the students think that they are perfectly capable of taking notes on their own, they still need some guidance, so giving up the observation form completely would not be a good idea. Consequently Ms. Fine is trying to work the Citation Circle activity into her syllabus at least once during the semester with both her developmental writing students and her Freshman English class.

SUCCESS OF THE PROJECT

At the start of the study, Ms. Fine warned me that I might not get the results that I was expecting the activity to produce in terms of improvement in the student’s writing. “Learning to write takes time,” Ms. Fine explained to me:

Don’t worry if you read the essays and you do not think they have dramatically improved from the first essays that you collected. I will keep reinforcing the ideas that are essential to the activity, even doing the activity again where time permits. I will remind them to keep using the sentence template handout that you passed out (See Appendix H). They will get it. Even if it isn’t today, or tomorrow, or during this semester, this activity is good for the students and will help them become better students and writers (Fine, personal communication, December 20, 2010)

Although it was exceedingly difficult to get the students to turn in the homework that was part of the activity, in response to a follow-up question in their journal, the students all expressed their enjoyment of the activity. The real success of the project did not come from
the essays collected right after the activity, but from a journal question that came three weeks later. In preparation for the research paper, Ms. Fine asked the students if they had any questions, or there was anything that they needed help with. One of the students in the class wrote that he wanted to do another round of the Citation Circle so that he would have a chance to practice citations a little more before he had to use them in his research paper. What was most surprising (and encouraging) about this was that the student was not one of the five that had volunteered to talk with me.

Luckily Ms. Fine built in time at this point in the semester to go over the research paper, so she was able to build in a second round of the activity. For this round, she decided to adjust the way she ran the activity so that the students could learn as much as possible from it. This time she gave the students a short story called “Love is a Fallacy,” by Max Shulman (See Appendix I). To start the activity, Ms. Fine had all the students stand in the center of the room. She then asked the students whether or not they felt that online dating worked. She asked the people who were for online dating to step to one side of the room, and those who favored more traditional methods of meeting someone (blind dates, meeting them through friends, etc.) to step to the other side of the room. Once the students had moved to one side or the other, Ms. Fine asked for two volunteers from each side to explain their opinion on the subject. This time around she was quickly able to get four students willing to share. Before she allowed each student to answer, she had them give their names so that the other students would know who was speaking. The discussion for this part of the activity went so well that some of the students who had not volunteered to speak raised their hands to share their opinions and offer some insights into the world of dating.

When the class had worked through that question, they moved into the Citation Circle activity to discuss the story. The five students who agreed to be interviewed for this project volunteered to be the Inner Circle. As Amy later told me, “We kinda figured it would be easier if we sat in the center of the circle. That way we could discuss the story and move past the part of no one wanting to be in the middle” (Amy, personal communication, March 20,
2011). With the inner circle taken care of, Ms. Fine was able to spend a little more time at
the start of the activity making sure that the students would not be confused while trying to
take notes during this run of the activity. Instead of having a handout with many boxes for
the students, Ms. Fine went with a more simple design. Using regular binder paper, she had
the students in the outer circle write the names of the students in the inner circle, leaving
several lines between each of the names so that they could take notes on what was being said.
The students had a much better reaction to taking notes this way than they did during the first
round of the activity.

The increase and strength of the discussion was not the only success in the project.
The summaries that the students wrote after the activity also improved. This time the
students produced more than two or three sentences, and they used more of the sentence
stems to explain what the various members of the circle said during the course of the activity.
They even started using the higher level comparative stems to talk about their classmates
various views on dating. As one student wrote, “While I would not try internet dating, I
could see why many people would choose to use the internet as a way of dating because as
Catherine mentioned, many people are very connected to their computers and technology,
and busy lifestyles make it easier to get to know people over the computer” (March 30,
2011). Many of the students also tried to use a variety of the sentence stems when trying to
summarize the activity. Overall, the quality of the writing that was turned in was much better
than the first time the activity was done.

The quality of the writing also improved in the students’ papers. The summaries of
the readings were better, and the students made more of an effort to paraphrase and use their
own words rather than just use direct quotes from the readings as much as possible. Frank
felt that the activity helped him articulate his thoughts in his writing: “Doing the activity
helped my writing a lot. When I was trying to write the paper, I just thought about what we
would have said in the group. The sentence stems were helpful to. Then I didn’t have to
repeat myself all the time” (Frank, personal communication, March 20, 2011).
CHAPTER 5

RECOMMENDATIONS, NEW POSSIBILITES AND CONCLUSIONS

PERSONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

In addition to the suggestions offered in the previous chapter of this study—starting with a general question for the first round of the activity and modifying the observation form—I would like to propose several recommendations that have developed during the course of the project which I believe will further aid the instructors when using the Citation Circle activity. As noted throughout this study, it is important for students to take control of their learning and become critically and actively engaged in class. Except for the five students who agreed to sit down and talk to me during the weeks between the first and second round of the activity, the students did not really have any input into the activity. Although the students were told about the study I was doing before I came to their class the first time, they were not given the details of how it would be run until right before the activity took place. The whole scope of the circle may have been different the first time around if the students had been able to voice their concerns about the observation form before the actual activity took place. By allowing the students to have some initial agency over the activity, they might have been more willing to volunteer to sit in the inner circle and respond more positively to the activity the first time they encountered it.

By allowing the students to take charge of their learning in this way, the hope is that it would carry over into all aspects of their work, and most importantly, their writing. My hope was that the students would feel more confident in their ability to summarize, paraphrase, and work with the academic sources that they will encounter in their college career. Therefore, I submit that this activity might be improved by allowing the students to be more actively involved in the set-up of the activity, by either being allowed to pick the
readings that will be discussed or by being able to discuss how they will take notes on what they observe during the discussion. The activity is already heavily dependent on student involvement, and having the students involved in the entire process, and not just the discussion part of the activity, might encourage them to put more effort into the later (and more important) part of the activity. While I understand that this suggestion is potentially problematic because it gives the students a lot of responsibility that they might not be ready for, I believe that under the guidance and supervision of the instructor, the students can actively and critically engage in the activity.

In addition to having students more actively involved in the process, another recommendation would be to build in some more writing assignments for the end of the activity. The drafted model includes a short set of questions that sums up the activity, but that seems to be better suited for high school students. The college students should be challenged to use the tools that they learned in the activity more actively in their writing. This part of the activity closely resembles activities that basic skills students are already doing, and it is time to challenge the students to work beyond their comfort zone. Ms. Fine was able to redo the activity as a refresher on how to use sources in their research paper, but this only happened because the students asked to do the activity again. After the first round of the activity, Ms. Fine had the students complete the follow-up activity, but many of them only wrote one or two sentences and did not put a lot of effort into it. The essay that she assigned after the activity did not expressly correlate to the activity, so there was little proof the students took anything away from the activity. If the students were given a prompt, or a small selection of prompts that not only related to the readings, but also required the students to quote, summarize, paraphrase and discuss the readings that they encountered during the activity then they would be able to better demonstrate the concepts that they learned during the activity. While I recognize that this creates some extra work for the instructor, I believe that the extra reinforcement of the activity will greatly improve the students’ chance of being able to really use the tools that the activity is trying to instill in them.
My last recommendation comes from my failure during the activity. As noted in Chapter IV, I chose to skip what turned out to be a vital part of the activity. I chose to skip the first round of the circle that dealt with a more general question and gave the students a chance to get used to answering questions and talking in front of a group. The first time the students did the activity, they were not comfortable with the amount or the format of discussion that I was required. I tried to skip the first two rounds of the activity and go straight to the comparing of two readings. I thought I could push the students into a higher level of discussion right from the start because they are in college. Because of their discomfort, they did not participate or actively engage in the activity. Although it was my intent to give the students more power and agency in the activity, I ended up overwhelming the students and causing them to shut down and disengage from their learning. A better way to approach this would have been to scaffold the activity as suggested in the *AVID College Readiness* and work the students gradually to a higher degree of difficulty. In doing this, the students are allowed to gain power and agency over their learning, but they also can do so at a pace that will not overwhelm them. Getting the students to the critical-democratic power-sharing mode will take time, and students will need to be worked into it a little more. It would also be a mistake to try to force the students to try to see the world (and the class) exactly the way I see it, or the way the theorists envisioned it. To force the students to speak, learn and interact in this way would undermine the very principles of critical pedagogy that underlies this study. The students will benefit from being exposed to theorists like Shor and Freire, but the goal of the class should not be to make the students models of what these theorists advocate, but rather to help these students learn to become more competent and engaging writers and thinkers. To help students along in this process, instructors must not be quick to dismiss the questions, suggestions and thoughts offered by the students merely because they are not presented the way in which we (as instructors) think they should be. By allowing the students to believe they have some authority in the classroom, and have a space
where they can discuss their concerns and ideas, the students will be more likely to ask for help, and less likely to resort to plagiarism in their writing.

Throughout the course of this research I have experienced my own growth and critical consciousness. At the start of this project, I had very limited knowledge and experience with case studies. While I had previously served as a research assistant on a case study, I had never run one on my own. The processes of creating interview questions, instrument selection, selecting subjects, selecting the readings, interviewing the students, transcribing and assessing the data, modifying the activities, and reporting the findings were extremely daunting. For many of these steps, I was forced to learn as the study progressed. I did a considerable amount of reading about plagiarism, and a lot of reading about getting students to actively engage in their learning, but I found that when working with an activity that has not previously tested at the college level, the outcome cannot be predicted, and, therefore, it is best to remain open-minded to whatever conclusions the research might lead me to. In other words, being willing to respond and adapt to the specific context; the distinctive qualities of each of the students in the class; the unforeseen questions raised by the activity; and the unanticipated responses to not only the activity, but also to the interview questions would not only make the process easier for the students, but also for me. After reviewing the first round of the activity, I realized that I missed several very good critical learning moments by trying to control every aspect of the activity. In the first round of the activity I could have adjusted the worksheet amidst the students’ confusion and allowed them a chance to take notes and proceed the way in which they were comfortable. Instead, I was so focused on running the activity that I not only ended up ignoring a chance for critical student engagement; I also ended up with little to no data to use. If the students had not asked for a second round of the activity, allowing me to make adjustments based on my observations, as well as their comments, I may have written off this study as a failure.

If I were going to do this study again, in addition to doing the warm-up general question to allow the students to get situated in the activity, I would take more time to set-up
the activity with the students and reviewed the observation form and the readings with the students. Much of the confusion could have been avoided the first time the activity was done if the students had been more aware of what was expected of them. The observation form could have been adjusted before the activity, which would have saved time during the activity, but also would have made the students more comfortable with participating and recording their observations of the Inner Circle. Additionally, I would do interviews with the students rather than a pre-activity questionnaire. The students did not give me the answers that I expected on the questionnaire, and had I been interacting with them face to face, I would have been able to clear up any misunderstanding that the students had about vocabulary and gain a better understanding of the students’ skill level and comfort when dealing with academic sources. I could have also asked a few more follow-up questions that arose once I was reviewing the questionnaires. I would have also done another round of interviews after the final research paper was completed to check the comfort level of the students. I have the research papers to compare to the other writing samples collected throughout the course, but I did not interview the students again, and did not have Ms. Fine ask the students to journal about their thoughts and feelings about the research paper after it was completed. If someone wished to replicate this study, I would suggest doing away with the pre and post activity questionnaires and using the first round of the activity to ask about plagiarism and how comfortable students feel working with sources. This revision would serve a dual purpose; it would not only allow the researcher to get the background on the students that is needed to gauge the comfort level of the students, but it would also serve as a way to introduce the students to the Citation Circle activity before they had to add the layer of working with texts into the mix. Students would be able to get comfortable with the idea of having a discussion rather than a debate and could get used to having support their answers with examples. The conversation and discussion is more valuable than the few short sentences that the students will write on the questionnaires. The interviews also allow for follow-up questions if particularly insightful answers are given or if something that a student says requires clarification. Although it may seem more time consuming, the benefits of being able to ask follow-up questions, clarify meaning, and follow-up on particularly insightful
observations from the students will benefit the outcome and evolution of the study in the long run.

A second suggestion that I have for this study would be to allow the students more active roles in the write-up of the project. Throughout the course of the study, I have advocated for the use of a classroom that promoted critical thinking and active engagement in learning and work, but I did not allow the students to read and comment on what I had written, allowing them a chance to make sure that I represented them in the most honest way possible. I deeply regret not following one of the principles that I advocate in this study (power-sharing), and I will make sure that in future case studies I will do my best to be a better collaborator at all levels of research.

CONCLUSIONS

Throughout the course of this study I have sought to re-examine the way that academic sources are dealt with in a basic skills’ classroom in terms of critical pedagogy and power-sharing practices between instructor and student. The findings in this study suggest that while it takes more than just one activity to help basic skills students become more critically engaged in their learning, the activity can help students develop a more active critical consciousness, and it can help change the way that they interact with academic sources. When the students become more comfortable working with and discussing sources with their peers, they will hopefully gain the confidence needed to do so in an academic essay. This study also works as an attempt at establishing a theoretical justification for, and evidence in support of, utilizing the activity from the AVID College Readiness Handbook to boost critical teaching practices in composition studies.

Although the research that has been done on how well this activity works in the college classroom is limited to this study, I believe that my results are promising. There are not only several areas that could be further examined, but this study also seems to suggest that the potential for significant growth from the students is there, waiting underneath the surface. At the early stages of this research, it seems that the Socratic Method, as well as some more collaborative teaching, will allow students to become more actively involved as co-subject for change. The potential for future study is wide open and suggests a wide variety of benefits to both students and teachers alike. It is because of this belief that I hope that
further research will be done and that this study can serve as a starting point for those in the field who wish to change the function of basic skills curriculum.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

A-G REQUIREMENTS
A-G Requirements

In order to be eligible to attend any school in the University of California (UC) or the California State University (CSU) systems as a freshman, you must take certain classes in high school. These classes are known as the "A-G Subjects:"

a. **History/Social Science - 2 years required**: One year of U.S. History or ½ year of U.S. History and ½ year of civics or American Government. CSU requires one additional year of Social Science. UC requires one year of world history, cultures, and geography.

b. **English - 4 years required**: Four years of college preparatory English

c. **Mathematics - 3 years required, 4 years recommended**: Classes must include the topics of algebra, geometry, and intermediate algebra. Approved integrated math courses can also fulfill this requirement.

d. **Laboratory Science - 2 years required, 3 years recommended**: CSU requires one biological and one physical. UC requires classes in at least two of the following areas: biology, chemistry, and physics.

e. **Language Other Than English (Foreign Language) - 2 years required, 3 years recommended**: At least two years of the same language.

f. **Visual & Performing Arts - 1 year required**: One yearlong course in dance, drama/theatre, music, or visual art.

g. **College Preparatory Electives - 1 year required**: One additional year in any of the above A-F areas or other approved elective.

You must get a "C" or better in each of these classes. Additionally, current freshmen, sophomores, and juniors (classes of 2012-2014) will need to complete eleven of the fifteen a-g requirements by the end of their junior years. Visit the University of California and CSU websites for specific requirements, classes that satisfy each area, and more information. You can also click here for a brochure explaining the new requirements for the class of 2012 and beyond. Many private colleges and universities require similar high school classes, but be sure to check out these schools' websites for specific information. You'll want to work with your Guidance Counselor and MESA Advisor to make sure you're signing up for the right classes and that you're on track to complete all A-G requirements by the time you graduate from high school.

*Taken from the California State University, Fresno website. Last updated 10/06/2010*
APPENDIX B

PRE AND POST ACTIVITY QUESTIONNAIRE
Documenting Sources: Before the Citation Circles

Student Number:

Age:

Gender:

1. What do you know about documenting sources in a paper?

2. In high school, did you write papers that used sources? For what classes?
3. How comfortable are you with citations? Why?

4. Have you had to cite sources in a paper that you have written in college? What type of paper or what type of class did you write a paper where citations were needed?

5. Did you have any problems using sources in your paper? What were they?
6. What would help you feel more comfortable using sources in your paper?

Documenting Sources: After Citation Circle

Student Number:

Age:

Gender:

1. Now that you have gone through several rounds of Citation Circles, how comfortable do you feel being able to cite sources?

2. Did you think the Citation Circle activity was helpful? Why or why not?
3. What was the best part of the activity?

4. If you could change something about the activity, what would it be?

5. Was the second paper easier to write? Why or why not?
APPENDIX C

INSTRUCTOR CONSENT FORM
Ms. Fine
Fullerton College
Humanities Department

I ____________________________, instructor of English at Fullerton College, agree to allow Kimberly Wilder, a graduate student at in the Department of English and comparative Literature at San Diego State University, to observe my English 60 class this semester. I also agree to help Kimberly by teaching an in-class activity, and allowing her to observe and record the process. Further, with voluntary consent from the students in the class, I will allow Kimberly to look at and analyze the work produced by the students, as well as conduct follow-up interviews as needed with the students. All of this will be permitted as long as the students understand that their participation is completely voluntary, and their choice to participate or not will not affect their grade in my class.
APPENDIX D

IRB CONSENT FORM
January 7, 2011

Student Researcher: Kimberly Wilder  
Department: English  
Faculty Sponsor/Thesis Chair: Ann Johns, Ph.D.  
vIRB Number: 613065 Title: Citation Circles and the Effectiveness of Documenting and Integrating Sources  
Risk Level: Minimal  
Exemption: 45 CFR 46.101(b)(1)

Dear Ms. Wilder:

The project referenced was reviewed and verified as exempt in accordance with SDSU’s Assurance and federal requirements pertaining to human subjects protections within the Code of Federal Regulations (45 CFR 46.101). This review applies to the conditions and procedures described in your protocol.

The determination of exemption is final and requests for continuing review (Progress Reports) are not required for this study. However, **if any changes to your study are planned**, you must submit a modification request and receive either IRB approval (per 45 CFR 46.110 or 46.111) or IRB verification that the modification is exempt (per 45 CFR 46.101). To submit a modification request, access the protocol via the WebPortal, on the protocol Main Page, you will need to click on "Modifications" under Protocol Maintenance and enter a report. Once you have filled in your responses on the report form, click "submit". Additionally, notify the IRB office if your status as an SDSU-affiliate changes while conducting this research study (you are no longer an SDSU faculty member, staff member or student).

Please note the following for all exempt studies:

a) If this research involves the use of existing or secondary data sources, information obtained must be recorded so that subjects cannot be identified, either directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

b) If information will be obtained from individual medical records, please check with the organization authorized to provide access to these records to determine whether regulations relating to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) pertain to your research. **Likewise, if academic records are accessed, Federal Education Rights and**
**Privacy Act (FERPA) requirements must be respected.** Notify the SDSU IRB office if protocol revisions are necessary to comply with HIPAA regulations.

b) **As recruitment will take place through an outside agency or organization, confirm with that institution that you have permission to conduct the study prior to initiation of any study activities.** If this research involves the use of existing or secondary data sources, confirm with the data owner that you have permission to access the data. **Graduate and Research Affairs** Division of Research Affairs San Diego State University 5500 Campanile Drive San Diego CA 92182•8220 by all members of the research team. This certification must be renewed every 2 years. For questions related to this correspondence, please contact the IRB office ((619) 594-6622 or email ). To access IRB review application materials, SDSU's Assurance, the 45 CFR 46, the Belmont Report, and/or any other relevant policies and guidelines related to the involvement of human subjects in research, please visit the IRB web site at .

Graduate Students: This notification may be used as documentation to register in Thesis 799A. Attach a hard copy of this notice to your Appointment of Thesis/Project Committee form prior to submitting the completed form to Graduate and Research Affairs - Student Services Division.

Sincerely,

Jeanne Nichols  
Chair, Institutional Review Board

Brianne Larsen-Mongeon  
Regulatory Compliance Analyst

Amy McDaniel  
Regulatory Compliance Analyst

Choya Washington  
Regulatory Compliance Analyst
APPENDIX E

FULLERTON COLLEGE PLACEMENT SCORES
AND CORRESPONDING CLASSES
### Course Placements Using Compass Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course Code</th>
<th>Credits</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Compass Score</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESL 186 (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Composition</td>
<td>190+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Formerly 260-)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 185 (5)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced Reading &amp; Writing</td>
<td>160-</td>
</tr>
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<td>145-159</td>
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<td>89+</td>
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<td>Compass=</td>
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<td>ENGLISH 60 (4)</td>
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<td>ENGLISH 059 (4)</td>
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<td>30-58</td>
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<td>ENGLISH 039 (4)</td>
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<td>Basic Writing</td>
<td>0-29</td>
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<td>READING 142 (3)</td>
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<td>READING 056 (3)</td>
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<td>Developmental Reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>READING 036 (3)</td>
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<td>Basic Reading</td>
<td>0-61</td>
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Rev. 04-18-05
ENGL 060 F Preparation for College Writing (4)
Pass/No Pass only
Prerequisite: ENGL 059 F with a grade of “Pass” or recommended score
Advisory: READ 096 F
Four hours lecture per week. This course is designed to meet the needs of students who are developing the writing and editing skills necessary for college writing. Students will review English fundamentals, read and analyze professional essays, and write essays with an emphasis on exposition and critical thinking.

The instructor objectives for the class were as follows:

**Instructional Objectives:** Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to do the following:

5. Reading
   A. read college level material competently, both silently and aloud
   B. identify main idea and basic methods of development in professional and

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ESL Elective Courses for Advanced Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESL 056 Adv. Conversation: Academic Topics (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 058 Adv. American English Pronunciation (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 045 Adv. English Grammar</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ESL Elective Courses for Intermediate Students</th>
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<td>ESL 046 Intermed Conversation (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 048 Intermed American conversation (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 035 Intermed English Grammar (3)</td>
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<tr>
<td>ESL 50 Occupational English (2)</td>
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<table>
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<th>ESL Electives for Beginning Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ESL 036 Basic Listening and Speaking (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 038 Fund of American Pronunciation (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 025 Basic English Grammar (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL 047 Academic Prep for Am. English Students (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
student writing
C. recognized rhetorical purposes and methods of development in a variety of materials
D. discover in written sources potential writing topics
E. expand vocabulary using the content of the readings
F. practice marking and summarizing text
G. review reading strategies for understanding and retaining college level material.

6. Critical Thinking
A. demonstrate ability to synthesize material covered in readings and discussions
B. accurately paraphrase and summarize passages and short essays by professional writers, distinguishing main ideas and supporting details
C. apply appropriate writing strategies in development of ideas
D. demonstrate understanding of coordination and subordination of Ideas through sentence variety and essay development
E. compare and contrast ideas and essays for informational purposes
F. respond critically to their own and other student writings for evaluation and revision
G. distinguish between facts, inferences, and judgments in professional writing and in their own and other student writing
H. draw conclusions from given data
I. use in-class, journal and informal writings as well as multiple drafts as a means of learning and understanding

7. Writing

• Prewriting
A. discuss and evaluate student generated topics
B. use a variety of prewriting techniques (brainstorming, listing, clustering, looping, freewriting) to: find a usable topic; discover ideas concerning a topic using their own experiences, knowledge, and/or reading; develop fluency; and generate early drafts

• Writing
A. write compositions that develop a topic or thesis in a coherent, logical, and unified manner
B. develop paragraphs that have unity, substance, and clarity
C. write sentences that are varied and appropriate for the topic and audience

• Revising
A. read their own writings to rethink, develop, and reshape ideas and responses
B. work collaboratively with fellow students to develop awareness of the audience
C. make significant changes in drafts, revising, throughout the writing process—adding, deleting, substituting, and rearranging at the level of the word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and essay

• Editing
  A. produce writing that is reasonably free of errors: run-ons, comma splices, fragments, shifts in tense and person, non agreement of subject/verb and noun/pronoun, misspelling, and incorrect usage
  B. incorporate editing as an important step in the writing process

8. Essay Exam

A. learn to use the writing process to answer essay exam questions

The outcomes for Ms. Fine’s class are clearly stated on the syllabus, and are known to the students from the first day of class. They are as follows:

Upon completion of this course, the student will be able to do the following:

1. Reading
   A. read college level material competently, both silently and aloud
   B. identify main idea and basic methods of development in professional and student writing
   C. recognize rhetorical purposes and methods of development in a variety of materials
   D. discover in written sources potential writing topics
   E. expand vocabulary using the content of the readings
   F. practice marking and summarizing text
   G. review reading strategies for understanding and retaining college level material.

2. Critical Thinking
   A. demonstrate ability to synthesize material covered in readings and discussions
B. accurately paraphrase and summarize passages and short essays by professional writers, distinguishing main ideas and supporting details
C. apply appropriate writing strategies in development of ideas
D. demonstrate understanding of coordination and subordination of ideas through sentence variety and essay development
E. compare and contrast ideas and essays for informational purposes
F. respond critically to their own and other student writings for evaluation and revision
G. distinguish between facts, inferences, and judgments in professional writing and in their own and other student writing
H. draw conclusions from given data
I. use in-class, journal and informal writings as well as multiple drafts as a means of learning and understanding

3. Writing
   • Prewriting
     A. discuss and evaluate student generated topics
     B. use a variety of prewriting techniques (brainstorming, listing, clustering, looping, freewriting) to: find a usable topic; discover ideas concerning a topic using their own experiences, knowledge, and/or reading; develop fluency; and generate early drafts
   • Writing
     A. write compositions that develop a topic or thesis in a coherent, logical, and unified manner
     B. develop paragraphs that have unity, substance, and clarity
     C. write sentences that are varied and appropriate for the topic and audience
   • Revising
     A. read their own writings to rethink, develop, and reshape ideas and responses
B. work collaboratively with fellow students to develop awareness of the audience

C. make significant changes in drafts, revising, throughout the writing process adding, deleting, substituting, and rearranging at the level of the word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and essay

• Editing

1. produce writing that is reasonably free of errors: run-ons, comma splices, fragments, shifts in tense and person, non agreement of subject/verb and noun/pronoun, misspelling, and incorrect usage

2. incorporate editing as an important step in the writing process

4. Essay Exam

   A. learn to use the writing process to answer essay exam questions
APPENDIX F

STUDENT CONSENT FORM
Consent Form: Research of Strength in Documenting and Summarizing Sources at the College Level

Dear English 60 students,

A graduate student in the Department of English and Comparative Literature at San Diego State is conducting research in the effectiveness of Citation Circles in helping you learn how to properly summarize and document sources in an academic paper. We are also interested in how well this method can be carried over to the classes outside of the English Department.

This study has three parts:

- A survey given at the start of the class to gauge the initial comfort level of a student when dealing with summarizing and documenting sources
- A structured lesson that will introduce the students to the Citation Circle method
- Follow-up questions for the students after they have completed a writing assignment that involves summarizing and documenting sources.

Your English 60 instructor may also be interviewed about their approach to teaching this method and the progress they see in the writing assignments they receive.

We are interested in the impressions of all students, not individuals, so your names will not be included in the surveys (each survey will be given a student number).

Whether or not you decide to participate will NOT affect your grade or your relationship with your instructor. Our interest is in finding the most effective teaching methods for all students, not in individual students.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact the principle investigator at any time (EMAIL ADDRESS.COM)

Please write “yes” or “no” in the space provided for your response to participating. Also print your name and the date.

__________I’ll participate in the class survey.

Your name (printed)_________________________Date_________Student number
(recorded by the instructor____________________

Kimberly Wilder (researcher)_______________________Date____________________
APPENDIX G

OUTER CIRCLE OBSERVATION FORM
Citation Circle Observation Form

*Instructions:* Record what each of the Inner Circle (IC) says as your teacher asks the questions. You do not need to record exactly what the student says—except for the claim, which should be the student’s exact words.

| Name of IC Speaker (or persona) |  |  | 
|-------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Selected Leader |  |  | 
| Leader’s Characteristics |  |  | 
| Leader’s Goals |  |  | 
| Leader’s Actions |  |  | 
| Claim |  |  | 
| Name of IC Speaker |  |  | 

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(or persona)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selected Leader</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leader’s Characteristics</td>
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<td>Leader’s Goals</td>
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<td>Leader’s Actions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claim</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Activity: *Instructions and example adopted from the *AVID College Readiness Handbook*

General Instructions: The Inner Circle (the experts) and the Outer Circle (the recorders) should all participate actively. Be sure that all of the Inner Circle students are given equal opportunity to answer questions and be cited by the Outer Circle students.
Activity Sequence:

1. The Inner Circle students answer questions posed by the instructor or the Outer Circle. The questions should be based on either the reading (or readings) that the students will be using in their writing, or based on a topic that the instructor has decided on before the activity has begun.

2. Meanwhile, the Outer Circle students record the information on the “Citation Circles Observations Form” which will be provided to them by the instructor. This is what they record:
   - In the first column, they record the last name of the members of the Inner Circle students—or the authors of the text whom the Inner Circle students are representing (see Level 2).
   - In the second column, Outer Circle students briefly note what the Inner Circle student said on behalf of him/herself or the author that he/she is representing.
   - When your questions have been answered by the Inner Circle students, the Outer Circle students use sentence templates (handout provided by instructor) to write full-sentence citation in the third column of the handout, expanding upon what they recorded in the second column.

3. Next, ask the Outer Circle students to use the full citation sentences in the third column to cite orally the Inner Circle students or the authors they represent. (Be sure that all of the Inner Circle students are cited at least once.)

4. After each of the Inner Circle students are cited by the Outer Circle students, Inner Circle students respond, saying whether the citations were accurate for what they had originally said—or not.

5. When the activity is over, the instructor can hold a debriefing, asking the Outer Circle who in the Inner Circle was most participatory, who had the most convincing argument, or whose texts appear to be the most interesting.

6. Then, all students can be asked to summarize one or more of the Inner Circle students’ statements in writing.
Level One: *Let's Get Personal*

*Where do we begin?*

*Topics:* When initially introducing Citation Circles, select questions about familiar problem/solution topics, or issues about which a claim can be made (trash on campus, causes of drug use, cheating, etc.). This gives students instant access to topics that can be discussed easily.

*Persona:* At this level, the Inner Circle students will speak for themselves: thus their own last names will be recorded in the first column of the Citation Circles Observation Form, and in the second and third column they will be speaking for themselves.

*Procedure:*

1. Ask students in the Inner Circle to spell their last names for you. Put these on the board. Tell the Outer Circle students to record these names in the first column of their Citation Circle Observation Form.

2. Next, begin questioning the Inner Circle Students

   - For example, if you decide that you will be working with a problem/solution question sequence, ask one Inner Circle student: “What is the biggest academic problem that your school faces?”
   - A student named Holly Cunningham might answer: “I believe that cheating on exams is our most pressing problem here.”
   - The Outer Circle students will immediately note what this student (“Cunningham” in the first column) has said in the second column of the Citation Circle Observation Form. They might take these notes: “problem: cheating.”
   - Later, using the sentence templates in ACR, the Outer Circle students might write something like this for the full citation in the third column: “Cunningham argues that cheating on exams is the biggest problem that Fullerton College faces.”
3. Next, ask other Inner Circle students a follow-up question, such as the following: “What do you think are the causes of the cheating problem?”

   - Several Inner Circle students might answer
   - Notes on the Citation Circles Observation Form are recorded for each Inner Circle response by the Outer Circle students.

4. A third set of questions posed focuses on solutions to the problem. Ask several students this question: “So how can we solve the cheating problem?” (Again, what they say is noted by the Outer Circle students).

5. A final question, asked of one (or more) student(s), could deal with a critique of the solution offered. The instructor could follow up with: “Which of the solutions is most viable (or possible) and why?

6. As noted earlier, Outer Circle students note what is said by the Inner Circle students in the second column.

7. Then, when the question and answer session for the Inner Circle students is over (be sure to ask questions of all the Inner Circle students), the Outer Circle students write—and then read—their complete citation sentences from the third column of the observation form.

8. The Inner Circle students can respond by telling Outer Circle students how accurate their citations were.

9. This is a good place for a summary, so the instructor could put a visual on the board and ask all the students to complete it, using the last names of those in the Inner Circle who responded. The Inner Circle students can respond by telling the Outer Circle students how accurate their citations were.

10. Using the chart and template below, ask students to complete a summary of the Inner Circle comments:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Causes</th>
<th>Solution(s)</th>
<th>Evaluation/Critique</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cunningham: Cheating on exams</td>
<td>Rios: The tests are too hard</td>
<td>Calica: Create easier tests.</td>
<td>Cruz: The best solution is to make a test room because that would mean that the teachers don’t have to change very much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Martin: It is easy to cheat</td>
<td>Villalobos: Make a test room where student’s can’t cheat</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sinclair: Teachers don’t make up new tests</td>
<td>Padilla: Give teachers time to make up tests.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One important problem that our school faces, according to Cunningham, is cheating on exams. Rios (citation verb) that one of the causes of that problem is ____________________. Another possible cause, (another citation verb) by Martin, is ____________________. Sinclair (citation verb) that_____________________. How can this problem be solved? A solution________________ by Calica is _____________________________. Villalobos, on the other hand, (citation verb)_________________________. Padilla (citation verb)___________________________. Which is the best solution? Cruz supports __________________ because____________________________.

As students become comfortable with this level of speaker citation about topics with which they are familiar, they are ready to move on to the next level.

Level Two: *You Gotta Be the Writer!*

Selective and purpose-driven reading of complex texts is a central student success in college. At level 2 of this exercise, all of the students in the class have read the same text.

*Preparation:* Jigsaw the source assigned, asking the students to read independently with the prompt in mind.
**Persona:** Rather than using their own names and voices, Inner Circle students will be speaking on behalf of the writer of the text, either the leader him/herself or someone discussing the leader or the leader’s context. Therefore, your questions will be addressed to the Inner Circle students, who at this point, are taking on the persona of the text they have selected.

**Procedure:**

1. The Inner Circle students bring the texts with them to the Inner Circle so that they can cite their texts when you ask them to.

2. Ask each of the Inner Circle students to give you the last name of the author of the text. Record the author’s last name on the board. For example, if the students are reading Dr. King’s “Letter from the Birmingham Jail,” then “King” will be recorded on the board.

3. Then you direct all questions to the text that the Inner Circle students are citing. You might ask:
   - What is the title (or genre) of the text you will be using
   - After telling the students to speak in the voice of the author of the text they have read, ask questions related to the prompt they are working on.
   - Inner Circle students respond using the “voice” of the text writer. Thus, a student in your class might answer the questions asked to them directly quoting the text that they read.

4. Ask students to return to the text when giving their answers. After the Inner Circle student responds, the instructor might ask: “Where do you see that answer in the text?”

5. Outer Circle students briefly note in the second column of the observation form what this student said as he/she represented the author of the text.
6. Later, Outer Circle students write a full citation in the third column. An example might be: “King contends that the most important problem faced by African Americans is that they cannot practice their God-given civil rights.”

7. The instructor could follow up on the Inner Circle students’ citations by asking: “What evidence does Dr. King use to show that African Americans have not been granted these rights?”

8. Then, using the text she has read, a student would provide evidence.

9. The instructor can then move to the next student in the Inner Circle and ask the same question.

10. Each time an Inner Circle student speaks, Outer Circle students note what was said on the Citation Circles Observation Form in the second column.

11. Later, the Outer Circle students write a complete citation, using the templates or the other sentences, for the Inner Circle student “voice,” using the third column.

As students become more adept at this level of citation, they are ready to tackle the more difficult challenges in Level 3.

Level 3: Bringing it Together: Synthesis

In college, students will be asked to compare or synthesize two or more sources. Citation Circles can also be used for these purposes.

Persona: At this level, the Inner Circle students step outside of the sources and act as writers/speakers for their own talks or papers.

Procedures:

1. Ask the Inner Circle students to bring two texts that they have read for class. Write the last names of both the authors on the board in pairs (with the last name of the student who will speak about them).

2. Tell the Outer Circle students to look at the bottom part of the “Sentence Templates—Citation” handout. They will be using these or related synthesizing sentences to bring together what they hear from the Inner Circle.
3. The instructor, or the students will ask the Inner Circle students synthesis questions like the following:

- On what issues relating to the prompt we are studying do the authors of both texts agree?
- The instructor would follow up by saying: “Where in the two texts do you find this information?” (The Inner Circle students would answer this question).
- Students in the Outer Circle follow the same procedure as described in Level 1 and 2, using the Citation Circles Observation Form to make their notes and to complete their full citation.

4. The instructor can then ask the students about issues upon which the authors disagree, and students in the Outer Circle might write there from the Handout #11.
APPENDIX H

SENTENCE TEMPLATES
Sentence Templates – Citation

**Citing one source**

1. X (argues, maintains, insists) that

   ____________________________________________

   ____________________________________________

   ___

2. According to X,

   ____________________________________________

3. [Your leader]______________________________, X points out, is________

   ____________________________________________

   ___

4. This test, by X, is focused upon________________________________________

   ____________________________________________

   ___

5. In this (editorial, article, op-ed piece, essay), the author (argues, states, claims, notes…) that________________________________________

   ____________________________________________

   ___

6. The principle claim that X makes in this (editorial, essay, article) is that________

   ____________________________________________

   ___

7. As X notes,

   ____________________________________________

   ____________________________________________

   ___

8. It can be argued that________________________________________
9. The three authors consulted agree

10. Though X points out that

11. X agrees with Y about however, X disagrees with Y about
APPENDIX I

LOVE IS A FALLACY
Cool was I and logical. Keen, calculating, perspicacious, acute and astute—I was all of these. My brain was as powerful as a dynamo, precise as a chemist’s scales, as penetrating as a scalpel. And—think of it!—I only eighteen.

It is not often that one so young has such a giant intellect. Take, for example, Petey Bellows, my roommate at the university. Same age, same background, but dumb as an ox. A nice enough fellow, you understand, but nothing upstairs. Emotional type. Unstable. Impressionable. Worst of all, a faddist. Fads, I submit, are the very negation of reason. To be swept up in every new craze that comes along, to surrender oneself to idiocy just because everybody else is doing it—this, to me, is the acme of mindlessness. Not, however, to Petey.

One afternoon I found Petey lying on his bed with an expression of such distress on his face that I immediately diagnosed appendicitis. “Don’t move,” I said, “Don’t take a laxative. I’ll get a doctor.”

“Raccoon,” he mumbled thickly.

“Raccoon?” I said, pausing in my flight.

“I want a raccoon coat,” he wailed.

I perceived that his trouble was not physical, but mental. “Why do you want a raccoon coat?”

“I should have known it,” he cried, pounding his temples. “I should have known they’d come back when the Charleston came back. Like a fool I spent all my money for textbooks, and now I can’t get a raccoon coat.”

“Can you mean,” I said incredulously, “that people are actually wearing raccoon coats again?”

“All the Big Men on Campus are wearing them. Where’ve you been?”

“In the library,” I said, naming a place not frequented by Big Men on Campus.

He leaped from the bed and paced the room. “I’ve got to have a raccoon coat,” he said passionately. “I’ve got to!”
“Petey, why? Look at it rationally. Raccoon coats are unsanitary. They shed. They smell bad. They weigh too much. They’re unsightly. They—”

“You don’t understand,” he interrupted impatiently. “It’s the thing to do. Don’t you want to be in the swim?”

“No,” I said truthfully.

“Well, I do,” he declared. “I’d give anything for a raccoon coat. Anything!”

My brain, that precision instrument, slipped into high gear. “Anything?” I asked, looking at him narrowly.

“Anything,” he affirmed in ringing tones.

I stroked my chin thoughtfully. It so happened that I knew where to get my hands on a raccoon coat. My father had had one in his undergraduate days; it lay now in a trunk in the attic back home. It also happened that Petey had something I wanted. He didn’t have it exactly, but at least he had first rights on it. I refer to his girl, Polly Espy.

I had long coveted Polly Espy. Let me emphasize that my desire for this young woman was not emotional in nature. She was, to be sure, a girl who excited the emotions, but I was not one to let my heart rule my head. I wanted Polly for a shrewdly calculated, entirely cerebral reason.

I was a freshman in law school. In a few years I would be out in practice. I was well aware of the importance of the right kind of wife in furthering a lawyer’s career. The successful lawyers I had observed were, almost without exception, married to beautiful, gracious, intelligent women. With one omission, Polly fitted these specifications perfectly.

Beautiful she was. She was not yet of pin-up proportions, but I felt that time would supply the lack. She already had the makings.

Gracious she was. By gracious I mean full of graces. She had an erectness of carriage, an ease of bearing, a poise that clearly indicated the best of breeding. At table her manners were exquisite. I had seen her at the Kozy Kampus Korner eating the specialty of the house—a sandwich that contained scraps of pot roast, gravy, chopped nuts, and a dipper of sauerkraut—without even getting her fingers moist.

Intelligent she was not. In fact, she veered in the opposite direction. But I believed that under my guidance she would smarten up. At any rate, it was worth a try. It is, after all, easier to make a beautiful dumb girl smart than to make an ugly smart girl beautiful.

“Petey,” I said, “are you in love with Polly Espy?”
“I think she’s a keen kid,” he replied, “but I don’t know if you’d call it love. Why?”

“Do you,” I asked, “have any kind of formal arrangement with her? I mean are you going steady or anything like that?”

“No. We see each other quite a bit, but we both have other dates. Why?”

“Is there,” I asked, “any other man for whom she has a particular fondness?”

“Not that I know of. Why?”

I nodded with satisfaction. “In other words, if you were out of the picture, the field would be open. Is that right?”

“I guess so. What are you getting at?”

“Nothing, nothing,” I said innocently, and took my suitcase out the closet.

“Where are you going?” asked Petey.

“Home for weekend.” I threw a few things into the bag.

“Listen,” he said, clutching my arm eagerly, “while you’re home, you couldn’t get some money from your old man, could you, and lend it to me so I can buy a raccoon coat?”

“I may do better than that,” I said with a mysterious wink and closed my bag and left.

“Look,” I said to Petey when I got back Monday morning. I threw open the suitcase and revealed the huge, hairy, gamy object that my father had worn in his Stutz Bearcat in 1925.

“Holy Toledo!” said Petey reverently. He plunged his hands into the raccoon coat and then his face. “Holy Toledo!” he repeated fifteen or twenty times.

“Would you like it?” I asked.

“Oh yes!” he cried, clutching the greasy pelt to him. Then a canny look came into his eyes. “What do you want for it?”

“Your girl.” I said, mincing no words.

“Polly?” he said in a horrified whisper. “You want Polly?”

“That’s right.”
He flung the coat from him. “Never,” he said stoutly.

I shrugged. “Okay. If you don’t want to be in the swim, I guess it’s your business.”

I sat down in a chair and pretended to read a book, but out of the corner of my eye I kept watching Petey. He was a torn man. First he looked at the coat with the expression of a waif at a bakery window. Then he turned away and set his jaw resolutely. Then he looked back at the coat, with even more longing in his face. Then he turned away, but with not so much resolution this time. Back and forth his head swiveled, desire waxing, resolution waning. Finally he didn’t turn away at all; he just stood and stared with mad lust at the coat.

“It isn’t as though I was in love with Polly,” he said thickly. “Or going steady or anything like that.”

“That’s right,” I murmured.

“What’s Polly to me, or me to Polly?”

“Not a thing,” said I.

“It’s just been a casual kick—just a few laughs, that’s all.”

“Try on the coat,” said I.

He complied. The coat bunched high over his ears and dropped all the way down to his shoe tops. He looked like a mound of dead raccoons. “Fits fine,” he said happily.

I rose from my chair. “Is it a deal?” I asked, extending my hand.

He swallowed. “It’s a deal,” he said and shook my hand.

I had my first date with Polly the following evening. This was in the nature of a survey; I wanted to find out just how much work I had to do to get her mind up to the standard I required. I took her first to dinner. “Gee, that was a delish dinner,” she said as we left the restaurant. Then I took her to a movie. “Gee, that was a marvy movie,” she said as we left the theatre. And then I took her home. “Gee, I had a sensaysh time,” she said as she bade me good night.

I went back to my room with a heavy heart. I had gravely underestimated the size of my task. This girl’s lack of information was terrifying. Nor would it be enough merely to supply her with information. First she had to be taught to think. This loomed as a project of no small dimensions, and at first I was tempted to give her back to Petey. But then I got to
thinking about her abundant physical charms and about the way she entered a room and the
way she handled a knife and fork, and I decided to make an effort.

I went about it, as in all things, systematically. I gave her a course in logic. It
happened that I, as a law student, was taking a course in logic myself, so I had all the facts at
my fingertips. “Poll?” I said to her when I picked her up on our next date, “tonight we are
going over to the Knoll and talk.”

“Oh, terrif,” she replied. One thing I will say for this girl: you would go far to find
another so agreeable.

We went to the Knoll, the campus trysting place, and we sat down under an old oak,
and she looked at me expectantly. “What are we going to talk about?” she asked.

“Logic.”

She thought this over for a minute and decided she liked it. “Magnif,” she said.

“Logic,” I said, clearing my throat, “is the science of thinking. Before we can think
correctly, we must first learn to recognize the common fallacies of logic. These we will take
up tonight.”

“Wow-dow!” she cried, clapping her hands delightedly.

I winced, but went bravely on. “First let us examine the fallacy called Dicto
Simpliciter.”

“By all means,” she urged, batting her lashes eagerly.

“Dicto Simpliciter means an argument based on an unqualified generalization. For
example: Exercise is good. Therefore everybody should exercise.”

“I agree,” said Polly earnestly. “I mean exercise is wonderful. I mean it builds the
body and everything.”

“Polly,” I said gently, “the argument is a fallacy. Exercise is good is an unqualified
generalization. For instance, if you have heart disease, exercise is bad, not good. Many
people are ordered by their doctors not to exercise. You must qualify the generalization. You
must say exercise is usually good, or exercise is good for most people. Otherwise you have
committed a Dicto Simpliciter. Do you see?”

“No,” she confessed. “But this is marvy. Do more! Do more!”

“It will be better if you stop tugging at my sleeve,” I told her, and when she desisted,
I continued. “Next we take up a fallacy called Hasty Generalization. Listen carefully: You
can’t speak French. Petey Bellows can’t speak French. I must therefore conclude that nobody at the University of Minnesota can speak French.”

“Really?” said Polly, amazed. “Nobody?”

I hid my exasperation. “Polly, it’s a fallacy. The generalization is reached too hastily. There are too few instances to support such a conclusion.”

“Know any more fallacies?” she asked breathlessly. “This is more fun than dancing even.”

I fought off a wave of despair. I was getting nowhere with this girl, absolutely nowhere. Still, I am nothing if not persistent. I continued. “Next comes Post Hoc. Listen to this: Let’s not take Bill on our picnic. Every time we take him out with us, it rains.”

“I know somebody just like that,” she exclaimed. “A girl back home—Eula Becker, her name is. It never fails. Every single time we take her on a picnic—”

“Polly,” I said sharply, “it’s a fallacy. Eula Becker doesn’t cause the rain. She has no connection with the rain. You are guilty of Post Hoc if you blame Eula Becker.”

“I’ll never do it again,” she promised contritely. “Are you mad at me?”

I sighed. “No, Polly, I’m not mad.”

“Then tell me some more fallacies.”

“All right. Let’s try Contradictory Premises.”

“Yes, let’s,” she chirped, blinking her eyes happily.

I frowned, but plunged ahead. “Here’s an example of Contradictory Premises: If God can do anything, can He make a stone so heavy that He won’t be able to lift it?”

“Of course,” she replied promptly.

“But if He can do anything, He can lift the stone,” I pointed out.

“Yeah,” she said thoughtfully. “Well, then I guess He can’t make the stone.”

“But He can do anything,” I reminded her.

She scratched her pretty, empty head. “I’m all confused,” she admitted.
“Of course you are. Because when the premises of an argument contradict each other, there can be no argument. If there is an irresistible force, there can be no immovable object. If there is an immovable object, there can be no irresistible force. Get it?”

“Tell me more of this keen stuff,” she said eagerly.

I consulted my watch. “I think we’d better call it a night. I’ll take you home now, and you go over all the things you’ve learned. We’ll have another session tomorrow night.”

I deposited her at the girls’ dormitory, where she assured me that she had had a perfectly terrific evening, and I went glumly home to my room. Petey lay snoring in his bed, the raccoon coat huddled like a great hairy beast at his feet. For a moment I considered waking him and telling him that he could have his girl back. It seemed clear that my project was doomed to failure. The girl simply had a logic-proof head.

But then I reconsidered. I had wasted one evening; I might as well waste another. Who knew? Maybe somewhere in the extinct crater of her mind a few members still smoldered. Maybe somehow I could fan them into flame. Admittedly it was not a prospect fraught with hope, but I decided to give it one more try.

Seated under the oak the next evening I said, “Our first fallacy tonight is called Ad Misericordiam.”

She quivered with delight.

“Listen closely,” I said. “A man applies for a job. When the boss asks him what his qualifications are, he replies that he has a wife and six children at home, the wife is a helpless cripple, the children have nothing to eat, no clothes to wear, no shoes on their feet, there are no beds in the house, no coal in the cellar, and winter is coming.”

A tear rolled down each of Polly’s pink cheeks. “Oh, this is awful, awful,” she sobbed.

“Yes, it’s awful,” I agreed, “but it’s no argument. The man never answered the boss’s question about his qualifications. Instead he appealed to the boss’s sympathy. He committed the fallacy of Ad Misericordiam. Do you understand?”

“Have you got a handkerchief?” she blubbered.

I handed her a handkerchief and tried to keep from screaming while she wiped her eyes. “Next,” I said in a carefully controlled tone, “we will discuss False Analogy. Here is an example: Students should be allowed to look at their textbooks during examinations. After all, surgeons have X-rays to guide them during an operation, lawyers have briefs to guide
them during a trial, carpenters have blueprints to guide them when they are building a house. Why, then, shouldn’t students be allowed to look at their textbooks during an examination?”

“There now,” she said enthusiastically, “is the most marvy idea I’ve heard in years.”

“Polly,” I said testily, “the argument is all wrong. Doctors, lawyers, and carpenters aren’t taking a test to see how much they have learned, but students are. The situations are altogether different, and you can’t make an analogy between them.”

“I still think it’s a good idea,” said Polly.

“Nuts,” I muttered. Doggedly I pressed on. “Next we’ll try Hypothesis Contrary to Fact.”

“Sounds yummy,” was Polly’s reaction.

“Listen: If Madame Curie had not happened to leave a photographic plate in a drawer with a chunk of pitchblende, the world today would not know about radium.”

“True, true,” said Polly, nodding her head “Did you see the movie? Oh, it just knocked me out. That Walter Pidgeon is so dreamy. I mean he fractures me.”

“If you can forget Mr. Pidgeon for a moment,” I said coldly, “I would like to point out that statement is a fallacy. Maybe Madame Curie would have discovered radium at some later date. Maybe somebody else would have discovered it. Maybe any number of things would have happened. You can’t start with a hypothesis that is not true and then draw any supportable conclusions from it.”

“They ought to put Walter Pidgeon in more pictures,” said Polly, “I hardly ever see him any more.”

One more chance, I decided. But just one more. There is a limit to what flesh and blood can bear. “The next fallacy is called Poisoning the Well.”

“How cute!” she gurgled.

“Two men are having a debate. The first one gets up and says, ‘My opponent is a notorious liar. You can’t believe a word that he is going to say.’ ... Now, Polly, think. Think hard. What’s wrong?”

I watched her closely as she knit her creamy brow in concentration. Suddenly a glimmer of intelligence—the first I had seen—came into her eyes. “It’s not fair,” she said with indignation. “It’s not a bit fair. What chance has the second man got if the first man calls him a liar before he even begins talking?”
“Right!” I cried exultantly. “One hundred per cent right. It’s not fair. The first man has poisoned the well before anybody could drink from it. He has hamstrung his opponent before he could even start ... Polly, I’m proud of you.”

“Pshaws,” she murmured, blushing with pleasure.

“You see, my dear, these things aren’t so hard. All you have to do is concentrate. Think—examine—evaluate. Come now, let’s review everything we have learned.”

“Fire away,” she said with an airy wave of her hand.

Heartened by the knowledge that Polly was not altogether a cretin, I began a long, patient review of all I had told her. Over and over and over again I cited instances, pointed out flaws, kept hammering away without letup. It was like digging a tunnel. At first, everything was work, sweat, and darkness. I had no idea when I would reach the light, or even if I would. But I persisted. I pounded and clawed and scraped, and finally I was rewarded. I saw a chink of light. And then the chink got bigger and the sun came pouring in and all was bright.

Five grueling nights with this took, but it was worth it. I had made a logician out of Polly; I had taught her to think. My job was done. She was worthy of me, at last. She was a fit wife for me, a proper hostess for my many mansions, a suitable mother for my well-heeled children.

It must not be thought that I was without love for this girl. Quite the contrary. Just as Pygmalion loved the perfect woman he had fashioned, so I loved mine. I decided to acquaint her with my feelings at our very next meeting. The time had come to change our relationship from academic to romantic.

“Polly,” I said when next we sat beneath our oak, “tonight we will not discuss fallacies.”

“Aw, gee,” she said, disappointed.

“My dear,” I said, favoring her with a smile, “we have now spent five evenings together. We have gotten along splendidly. It is clear that we are well matched.”

“Hasty Generalization,” said Polly brightly.

“I beg your pardon,” said I.

“Hasty Generalization,” she repeated. “How can you say that we are well matched on the basis of only five dates?”
I chuckled with amusement. The dear child had learned her lessons well. “My dear,” I said, patting her hand in a tolerant manner, “five dates is plenty. After all, you don’t have to eat a whole cake to know that it’s good.”

“False Analogy,” said Polly promptly. “I’m not a cake. I’m a girl.”

I chuckled with somewhat less amusement. The dear child had learned her lessons perhaps too well. I decided to change tactics. Obviously the best approach was a simple, strong, direct declaration of love. I paused for a moment while my massive brain chose the proper word. Then I began:

“Polly, I love you. You are the whole world to me, the moon and the stars and the constellations of outer space. Please, my darling, say that you will go steady with me, for if you will not, life will be meaningless. I will languish. I will refuse my meals. I will wander the face of the earth, a shambling, hollow-eyed hulk.”

There, I thought, folding my arms, that ought to do it.

“Ad Misericordiam,” said Polly.

I ground my teeth. I was not Pygmalion; I was Frankenstein, and my monster had me by the throat. Frantically I fought back the tide of panic surging through me; at all costs I had to keep cool.

“Well, Polly,” I said, forcing a smile, “you certainly have learned your fallacies.”

“You’re darn right,” she said with a vigorous nod.

“And who taught them to you, Polly?”

“You did.”

“That’s right. So you do owe me something, don’t you, my dear? If I hadn’t come along you never would have learned about fallacies.”

“Hypothesis Contrary to Fact,” she said instantly.

I dashed perspiration from my brow. “Polly,” I croaked, “you mustn’t take all these things so literally. I mean this is just classroom stuff. You know that the things you learn in school don’t have anything to do with life.”

“Dicto Simpliciter,” she said, wagging her finger at me playfully.

That did it. I leaped to my feet, bellowing like a bull. “Will you or will you not go steady with me?”
“I will not,” she replied.

“Why not?” I demanded.

“Because this afternoon I promised Petey Bellows that I would go steady with him.”

I reeled back, overcome with the infamy of it. After he promised, after he made a deal, after he shook my hand! “The rat!” I shrieked, kicking up great chunks of turf. “You can’t go with him, Polly. He’s a liar. He’s a cheat. He’s a rat.”

“Poisoning the Well,” said Polly, “and stop shouting. I think shouting must be a fallacy too.”

With an immense effort of will, I modulated my voice. “All right,” I said. “You’re a logician. Let’s look at this thing logically. How could you choose Petey Bellows over me? Look at me—a brilliant student, a tremendous intellectual, a man with an assured future. Look at Petey—a knothead, a jitterbug, a guy who’ll never know where his next meal is coming from. Can you give me one logical reason why you should go steady with Petey Bellows?”

“I certainly can,” declared Polly. “He’s got a raccoon coat.”