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CONTENT AND CONTEXT: OBJECTIVE FORMATION IN FYC ACTIVITY SYSTEMS

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by

Peter Brooks

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ABSTRACT

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Context is key. We as First Year Composition (FYC) teachers focus on context when teaching the rhetorical situation as a reading and writing tool. Contexts influence the systems we teach within as well as how and why we teach, and determine students' experiences and perspectives as writers. A required course, FYC acts as a contextual nexus: we help students bridge high school writing to college writing; we assign more generalized essays and research papers to prepare students for more discipline-specific genres in advanced writing courses; and we have activities that (un)intentionally develop "soft skills" in preparation for upper level courses or future professional work. When students take knowledge, skills, and experiences about writing from FYC contexts to future ones, they're enacting the often practiced yet not overtly discussed phenomena of **writing transfer**. In addition to (un)knowingly employing writing transfer in FYC curricular design and teaching, we draw from a wide range of Composition scholarship. However, where do we start when considering what writing knowledge and skills students should learn in FYC contexts to use in future, unrelated contexts? To explore this curiosity, I conducted a qualitative research study of FYC administrators and teachers at three different universities in a major, midwestern, metropolitan city to answer my central research question: **What influences writing program administrators and teachers**

when they form and communicate FYC objectives? Couching this research in scholarly discussions about writing transfer, and using Activity Theory as a methodology, I discovered—via interviews, observations, and artifact analysis—how and why administrators and teachers design FYC programs and personal pedagogy. My findings determined that administrators and teachers tend to consider more non-scholarly influences (e.g. labor, administrative expectations, empathy, etc.), yet rely on one or two specific scholarly approach. Likewise, the data reaffirmed how teachers enact transfer, although not in those terms, and valorize specific FYC objectives more than teaching all of them equally. I conclude this work on a discussion of King Beach's Mediational Transition, a writing transfer scenario, that aids in learning by using simulated contexts in assignments and activities.

In remembrance of and dedicated to

two inspirational women and compassionate teachers:

Eleanore Fischer and Julia Brooks.

go do be

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After attending the NACURH conference in 1997, I made a list of 101 things I wanted to accomplish; earning a Ph.D. is one, and one that took longer than planned. And thus, the following is also a lengthy attempt to bring closure and celebration to this journey.

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<center>**Chapter 1: Contexts & Curiosities**</center>

Context #1: Early Learning Experiences With Writing

Even though they were in middle school and high school, two English class experiences, one negative and one positive, linger in my head, sparking my curiosity about why we choose certain educational approaches. As I've learned more about FYC scholarship and systems theories like Activity Theory (AT), I've started to see potential hidden objectives behind the stated objectives of the activities my two teachers created. Ultimately, the emotional resonance and resistance of these two stories have had a greater impact on me as a teacher, scholar, and writer than any of the knowledge or skills they were trying to have me attain.

The Spelling Test

My middle school writing teacher conducted weekly 20-word spelling tests. Before we took our first test, our teacher had us format the loose leaf paper we were to use, and instructed us to follow these rules:

- Draw a one-inch margin, in pencil only, on the right side of the paper.

- Write, in blue or black pen only, our name, her name, our class title, and the date, in the upper right-hand corner to the left of the pencil drawn margin.

- Write the word test and the number, in pen, on the first line of the paper.

- Write the numbers 1-20, in pen, on the right side of the left-hand margin line, making sure those numbers did not cross over the line.

- When spelling words, write only in pen.

The instructions were easy enough, and when we were through, we took our first spelling test. I turned in my test feeling pretty good about my spelling. The next day, when I saw that I earned an "F" on the test, I felt sick. I had not failed at anything before this moment. Moreover, when I

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scanned through the test, I noticed only three words were misspelled (indicated by circles), yet I had several other red checks by words whether spelled correctly or incorrectly. I was well aware of our teacher's grading scale: 0-2 points off was an A; 3-4 was a B; 5-6 was a C; 7-8 was a D; 9 or more points were an F. However, I was very unsure about why I lost 10 points. When I asked my teacher after class she stated: "you cannot cross-out or scribble out words."

Those spelling tests absolutely wrecked my confidence. The next few tests, I averaged about 4-5 points off due to the "cross-out rule," which wasn't even mentioned on the day we practiced formatting. My struggle with the cross-out rule was due to the mandatory blue or black pen. As a student who was once "hooked on phonics" I needed to sound out and rewrite words in order to spell them correctly. I hoped for some leniency and received none. After a while, my anxiety consumed me. To compensate, I avoided crossing out words, but then my spelling errors increased.

About halfway through the semester, a friend of mine heard of my frustration and told me she used an erasable pen (she was in a different class section). I'm not quite sure if she had the same problems I did, but she responded to the rules of the spelling test by gaming the system. Jan Rue Holmevik, new media and video game scholar, points out, "players, to a large extent, [can] charge the game with their own ethics" (146). When I first saw this quote, I immediately thought of my friend and how she found a way to change the spelling test game. I bought an erasable pen, strolled into class confidently, and took the test, freely erasing what I needed to erase. The next day, I found out I had improved, yet only to a D. Again, feeling confused, I spoke with my teacher. She explained that she had instituted a new rule: erasure marks must not be visible.

As a writing teacher, I don't teach spelling or have spelling tests. Later, I learned that scholarship recommends against the skill and drill pedagogical approach when we read Mina Shaughnessey's *Errors and Omissions* (1977). Both the scholarship and my experience suggest avoiding rote tests in writing classes is a "no duh" choice. Yet, I do have formatting guidelines for my classes.

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Despite knowing that some writing teachers, FYC or otherwise, may not care about font choice or margin formatting, I know many professional contexts where formatting matters a lot. Moreover, other academic contexts also have strict formatting guidelines (e.g., this dissertation). And thus, I realized that, as FYC teachers, we're considering these potential contexts in our teaching, and the rules within said contexts, whether with positive intent and purpose or negative enforcement. I think we have to offer a good balance of support with expectations that, to some students, may seem challenging. Ultimately, formatting rules aren't a problem unto themselves; but when they're overly strict, not aligned with educational objectives, poorly explained, and have moving goalposts, then they become inequitable, and risk losing educational value.

The Short Story

Thankfully, not all my early writing experiences were as obtuse as the spelling test. In high school, we had an eccentric English teacher, Ms. Berterello, who created unique ways to immerse us into the contexts we read about. The class had an American lit theme and in addition to class discussions we'd do some role-playing of characters or have meals themed to what we read; the meal for *The Grapes of Wrath* was especially eye-opening. For me, the most memorable immersion was a field trip of historical buildings and landmarks in a culturally rich part of Milwaukee. Her aim was to immerse us in living history and, afterwards, require students to include observations about real locales while writing a short, fictional detective piece. The assignment required we follow the genre conventions found in early 20th century American Detective Fiction, which we also read for class. Feeling inspired, I wrote a 30-page double-spaced story. In addition to not realizing there was a page limit of 10 pages, I also finished it a week early. Like all papers in her class, we received two grades: Content and Mechanics. My overall grade was an "A" on the paper, with an "A+" for Content and

an "A-" for Mechanics. Throughout the paper, there were a smattering of red marks, yet I was very happy with both the grade and how she spoke highly of the story to other teachers.

From Ms. Berterello's positive feedback, I wanted family and friends to read the story. Many friends liked it, or playfully teased me for including my then-girlfriend as a character; I didn't receive any negative or critical feedback. Then there was my friend Sarah. She quickly pointed out that Ms. Berterello's red marks accounted for about one third of the total mechanical errors she noticed. Sarah said she still liked the story, but really took time to highlight what she saw: routine mistakes and poor style choices, passive voice, confusing pronouns, incorrect punctuation, etc. Maybe it was Sarah's style, yet her emphasis on mechanical issues definitely dented my enthusiasm and confidence.

When I was a neophyte writing scholar, this story bounced back into my memory. I recalled this story when reading about Peter Elbow and the expressivist movement. I recalled this story when participating in the National Writing Project at New Mexico State University where we focused on free writing without the concern of heavy revision or becoming too mentally wrapped up with constant revising. I recalled this story when reading Bartholomae's "Inventing the University." Was it possible that Ms. Berterello was influenced by these pedagogical methods? Upon reading these authors, I saw their "so what?" as an emphasis on building confidence and validating voice over rigid grammatical rules. When I later studied emotional labor and writing transfer, I wondered the same: Was it possible Ms. Berterello wanted my bigger takeaway to be creative self-confidence in future writing situations? At the same time, was she risking me devaluing thorough editing as a process?

As a writer, I've improved on my own in that I now have some semblance of a revision plan, yet as a teacher I find myself in Ms. Berterello's shoes constantly. I teach in an FYC program with a significant number of international students, most of whom could be characterized as English

Language Learners (ELLs). I've erred on the side of providing strong feedback on their content and idea generation over mechanical structure, grammar, etc. Yet, I also know that I would do a disservice if I never pointed out any potential recurring writing choices that may be seen as problematic by other teachers or professionals. Just like with formatting guidelines, I've found ways to prepare students for other writing contexts, while validating their thoughts and voices through their own style. Yet, this story raised a new question for me: how and why do teachers valorize certain writing pedagogies and learning outcomes for students over others? Especially if there are cultural or emotional stakes.

Context #1 Coda

Pedagogical choices are legion and ever evolving. And until I started teaching and taking classes on pedagogy, I had never considered what influenced such decisions. Was my spelling teacher somehow influenced by other professional contexts? Or was there some other takeaway she wanted us to have from the experience? Why did Ms. Berterello conduct the feedback the way she did? I'm ultimately grateful and humbled by both of these experiences in how they've influenced my teaching; I ask myself what my students may be emotionally experiencing any time I design an assignment, in addition to following my own objectives. Yet, despite taking and teaching similar FYC classes with my FYC colleagues, we're all not the same, and don't do similar things. Thus, I've always wondered why teachers choose to teach the way they do; furthermore, having worked in multiple systems that impact student learning, I wonder how they negotiate those systems as well.

Context #2: Educational Systems as Hairballs

FYC Systems

As an educator I'm grateful that I learned, very early on, about how bigger educational systems—universities, departments, etc.—are still systems. And not all systems of a certain kind are

the same. To those reading this, I understand this may feel like another "no duh" statement. Yet, I surmise the realization systems are different comes with age, experience, and working at different places. Well before I became fascinated with the phenomena of how FYC educators make pedagogical choices, my first professional experience resulted in my fascination with organizational "hairballs."

Despite loving my undergraduate majors in English, Film, and Philosophy, my first graduate school experience was earning a Master's of Education in Higher Education Adminitration and Student development so I could become a Residence Hall Director or related position working with first year students. I attended Arizona State University, and my rose-colored view of residence life was challenged within the first weeks of my training as a Graduate Hall Director. One particular example I share with business writing students was the difficulty of making bulk copies at ASU, due to the many steps in the process.

1. Students and I filled out the standard bulk copying form.

2. Students or I went to document services and received a copy quote that we put on the form.

3. Students or I traveled to two different offices, on far sides of ASU's large campus, to get two more signatures from other administrators (if they were available).

4. With a completed form, I turned the form into Nadine, our comptroller.

5. Nadine submitted the form to a budgetary office where it took five or more business days to receive approval.

6. When she received approval, she e-mailed me to pick up the form.

7. I picked up the form and turned it into document services.

When I first experienced this process, I was very frustrated as to why it took so long to simply make copies. Even the document services workers would comment to us about why we did what we did. I had some understanding on budgetary oversight, but this was ridiculous.

The copying process was far simpler at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, where I cut my teeth in residence life by participating in almost every volunteer or paid role an undergraduate could. For copies at Oshkosh, I filled out one form, needed one signature, and could submit it directly to document services. I went from a process that only took two-to-three business days to one that took six-to-ten business days at ASU. The copying process was the tip of the iceberg at ASU and after my first semester of being there, I seriously questioned if I wanted to stay in student affairs. I learned that our director at the time tried to run the department like he was the CEO, attempting to turn a profit for investors who didn't exist. We also weren't in any financial trouble, yet there was a money-first mindset. This was my first lesson in how administrators and the educators who work under them may have different professional objectives and values.

Thankfully, I worked with a great bunch of students, one of whom gave me a book that forever changed how I see all professional organizations: *Orbiting the Giant Hairball.* The book is authored by Gordon MacKenzie, a former artist, writer, and manager at Hallmark, who had a similar existential crisis but after a much longer time on the job. He wondered: "I'm doing creative work and still feel unhappy at my job; why?" Through conversations with friends and reflecting on his experiences, he realized that what kept him down were the invisible aspects of an organization: politics, red tape, and bureaucracy. I finished the book within a day. Once I had the terms to characterize the invisible (sometimes negative) practices of a larger system like ASU's Residence Life, my own resolve started to improve.

The great thing about MacKenzie's theory though, is that instead of dismissing the invisible rules, roles, tools, etc. of an organizational system (or hairball as he terms it), he provided strategies

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about how to navigate them (aka to achieve orbit). For MacKenzie, achieving orbit is our ability to thrive within a system's rules, via strategic interpretation, relationship building, and creative problem solving. He discusses that even good ideas need "this and that": the little rules and roles that make up how an organization functions (30). Furthermore, most of the time, "this and that" are created without malicious intention, especially for older organizations and/or ones with high leadership turnover. To him, the hairball never shrinks, it only accumulates, showing that an organization's history affects the present, in small, invisible ways. With that knowledge, I was able to challenge my rose-colored view of housing into a more realistic, yet hopeful, approach.

I started with the damn copying process.

I met with Nadine and asked questions and shared thoughts about the larger purchasing processes. What initially surprised me was that she felt the same way. She dedicated an entire afternoon teaching me about all the processes she had to deal with as well, which in turn affected how we did things at our level as young professionals. I never became the budgetary expert she was, yet I was able to see a bigger systematic picture of how the rules and roles of the people involved in the purchasing process worked as a complex web (and also learned a little more on why things were the way they were). Those hours resulted in her and I realizing that we could make a blanket purchase order for the copying center, which did still follow the same process as before, yet we only needed to complete that process once an academic year. The blanket purchase order allowed us to create a yearly account with document services, where they provided us a code that we used to make copies going forward. Other residence halls soon caught on, and the bulk copy process shrunk to two-to-three days.

Just as the first contextual stories returned when I began teaching, so did my fascination with the hairball. Really my fascination with all systems never went away, yet now that I was learning from writing scholarship, I soon came upon a scholarly theory that provided terminology and a

heuristic- to-hairball analysis. Almost a decade after I read MacKenzie, I discovered that Activity

Theory (AT) was incredibly similar. Originally designed as a theory to understand how educational

experiences function, AT is a critical lens used to study organizations, activities, and processes,

known in the theory as Activity Systems (AS or simply systems). Each AS is relationship between a

subject (a single participant in the AS) and the **objective(s)** of the system. As the theory evolved

over the past 100 years, scholars studied how that relationship is further mediated by a web of four

influences: the **tools** we use to accomplish the objectives; the **rules** we follow; the **community** of

people that make up the system; and the **roles** of those community members. Some models also

include **outcomes,** as a way to measure the success or failure of a system in consideration of its

objectives. AT's categorization helps us better understand hairballs whether they are larger

organizations or smaller tasks. Furthermore, for the past few decades, AT has been an integral part

of studies that look at writing transfer: what writing knowledge, skills, and experiences students

attain from one context to the next. I go into more detail about this relationship in Chapter 2 and in

Chapter 3, show why AT became my key methodology.

However, I didn't learn about AT until after I experienced training and initiation into my

first two FYC systems. Likewise, my first foray into those mezzo-level systems meant my first

exposure to the macro-system of academia. And even though Student affairs is another macro-

system within the same context, there are distinctive differences beyond the obvious. There were

definitely growing pains. MacKenzie's second objective is to encourage us to "orbit" the hairball.

Interpretively, it's more than surviving within a professional system, it's thriving. Despite many of

MacKenzie's maxims being helpful with the transition from Student affairs to Academic Affairs, I

still encountered many "copy process" moments at both schools where I learned more about FYC.

Probably the biggest process I wanted demystified was how FYC programs choose their objectives,

and in turn, function as a program. Especially since, as I stated in my first contexts, it seemed to me

that teachers had more freedom than administrators. And, because of the different role scholarship has between Student and Academic Affairs, I wanted a better understanding how administrators amd teachers negotiated the absolute vastness of writing pedagogy scholarship.

FYC Scholarship

Even though I was working on an MFA in Creative Writing at New Mexico State University (NMSU), I was very excited to teach FYC. In the first month, including a week of training, I saw many parallels between FYC and Student affairs' First Year Experience (FYE). Both are designed to help transition students from the more rigid systems of high school, where there are more black-and-white rules, to the more expansive world of higher education, where there are still rules, yet room for students to interpret and use their own ethics to play their own game. As FYC instructors, we have small class sizes and more opportunities for one-on-one student-teacher interactions. Similarly, in FYE, most functions are designed to make a campus feel small: orientation programs break students into smaller groups, housing programs include initiatives for student staff to meet one-on-one with residents, etc. FYE provides opportunities that bridge incoming students to multiple campus resources like Academic Advising, Career Services, Health & Wellness, etc. FYC provides a course (or series of courses), where an overall, unstated objective is to bridge writing knowledge, skills, and experiences to other academic contexts. I noticed that even political pressures are the same. When I worked in housing, we were constantly being asked by other divisions to recruit students to work in their offices or in student programs. FYC is often asked by other academic departments to focus on a particular set of writing skills. However, the role scholarship plays in FYC and FYE actually added another level of mystery to my professional transition, despite many of the practices I listed being quite similar. That sort of secondary hairball presented new challenges and curiosities for me as an FYC teacher.

During my first composition pedagogy class at NMSU, I realized the scholarly scope and decision-making influence between Composition Theory and Student Development Theory were different. I explore the wide scope of Composition Theory more in Chapter 2, but its vastness definitely complicates the role I noticed scholarship plays in FYC, which is quite different from FYE. Just as I've taught FYC at three different institutions, so have I worked in Student affairs at three different institutions. FYC seems like it draws so much more from scholarship and theory than Student affairs does. Not to say that FYE programs never regarded the importance of theories or research, yet many initiatives were either designed intuitively, with little theory, or referenced some assessment data to make more reactive decisions (for example, the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE)). When I started in FYC, I found folks constantly asking what theory influenced my pedagogical strategies. I admit, this frustrated me a little both due to me being unfamiliar (which would very slowly change with more classes), but also because I had many pedagogical activities that were effective and supported by in-class assessment. Why did I need to justify what I did with scholarship? I didn't forsake FYE's scholarly arm, Student Development Theory, yet I was never asked what theory I was using when going up for review.

Related, there seemed to be a "competitiveness" that I observed within Composition Theory that I did not see in Student Development theory. Student affairs scholarship contains a little more than a dozen central theories that are standard in any graduate level class. There is literally a single book *The Guide to College Student Development*, even if the book itself is a nexus for multiple, separately published articles and books over its 70ish year history. When I started learning about Composition Theory, I was instantly overwhelmed. There were not only a wide array of macro-level pedagogical approaches (Writing in the Disciplines, Writing Across Curriculum, Writing About Writing, as a small sample), but it seemed like many major theoretical movements are responses to previous theoretical movements: the Expressivists responding to the Cognitivists, for example. Even within

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those approaches, different scholars held different beliefs from one another. And while I recognize that updating, revisiting, or antagonizing previous theories can be done for the benefit of changing student demographics, even panels at academic conferences felt like Thunderdome, the brutal battle arena from the original Mad Max movies where "two men enter, one man leave" was the rule of law. Because of this contentiousness, as well as the vastness of FYC, I wanted to better understand how and why teachers and administrators select and justify their pedagogical choices. How does what feels like a secondary hairball of Composition Studies impact the primary hairball of an FYC program?

A Coda of Contexts

The contexts here provide the overall exigency for this project: put simply, I wanted to have a better understanding of why decisions are made within FYC at an administrative and teacher level. Beyond reading similar narratives or explanations from scholarly articles and books, I wanted to meet the people within these systems and probe deeper. I wanted to know how and why administrators and teachers picked the scholarship and pedagogical approaches that they did for their FYC programs and classrooms. I wanted to know what, how, and why non-academic factors impacted their decision making. Some of this I hope is to help others like me who are entering this field. And some of this is to better understand the role writing transfer plays into these decisions.

I'm certain you're wondering where the heck writing transfer came from. I intentionally picked these contexts to share because each are aspects of taking knowledge, skills, and experiences from one context and hoping to apply them successfully to future contexts. Ultimately, as educators, learning transfer underpins all that we do because we're hoping to prepare students for thier own future contexts: academic, professional, and sometimes personal. As a writing teacher, there's a more finite list of knowledge, skills, and experiences regarding writing students could apply later.

However, as writing is a complex art that has many tensions--common writing conventions vs. subjective style preferences; presence of a lingua franca vs. cultivating one's own voice; etc.-- choosing what to teach students, and understanding why we choose, is a likewise complex task. I'm sure even my 7th grade teacher thought she was preparing us for a future system's spelling expectations.

Research Questions & Methods

Curriculum design and pedagogical choices, obviously, do not exist within a vacuum. Context matters on an organizational level whether we're focusing on a department-wide writing program design or individual courses. Administrators consider macro-level elements like budgets, student enrollments, instructor availability, physical resources (classroom availability, office space, etc.), course schedule, and other administrative functions that keep a writing program afloat (Bergquist, et al, 1981). Teachers care about those items too, yet, due to being on the front lines, focus more on the immediate space and population of their classroom. Departmental and/or writing program administrators play an important role in shaping the curriculum that teachers utilize.

And yet, there is another layer of complexity to the system of FYC: from all the possible tools and rules available to design our FYC programs—theories, pedagogies, training initiatives, administrative policies, assumptions on student learning, personal experiences, etc.—what do we choose from and why? Are objectives formed first and the rest of the system falls into place, or vice versa? Having worked in three different FYC programs, I see the complexity in regards to forming and following objectives. I also understand the need, as a teacher, to adapt and change and diverge from those objectives; so, at what point, and why, might individual teachers diverge from an FYC system created by program administrators? Most importantly, how can learning about these complex systems and potential divergences help us as teacher-scholars in order to tweak our materials and

design our curriculum and courses to better meet the needs of our students while also addressing intuitional expectations? Synthesizing these questions, my central research question is what influences FYC decision-making agents' (administrators and teachers) curricular and pedagogical choices?

The intent of this dissertation is to better understand these questions and complexities, using how and why we form and share FYC objectives as a focal point. Throughout all of the experiences I mentioned above, whether in FYC or FYE, whether as a teacher, administrator, or student, I was always asking "Why?" In some cases, I received answers. In others, not so much. When designing this research project I wanted to be able to trace FYC objective formation through a department's roots, if knowable, to see how theory played a role, and how previous experiences influence decisions. I wanted to learn about how communication of those objectives functioned from WPAs to instructors, and instructors to students. Moreover, like other qualitative research projects using interviews as a primary tool, I hoped that by digging deeper and dialoguing with educational stakeholders (administrators and instructors) I was able to provide some space for reflection, and possibly helping them find the language or terms or theories to define and clarify the things they do, just as learning Activity Theory terms did for me in relationship to the hairball.

My central research question is: How and why do certain influences impact Writing Program administrators and teachers when they form and communicate FYC objectives? Using AT parlance, objective formation and communication, to me, are two different systems. To define both, I considered all processes and activities where objectives were created or revised as one activity system; when objectives were shared with, trained on, or discussed after internal publication of a finalized document, I considered those communicative activity systems. I separated these because they are two different systems, sometimes with different players, sometimes following different rules. Consider it, in an odd way, a critical analysis on a professional game of telephone. Likewise,

given the range of freedom FYC instructors have, I wanted to see how and why, even if objective communication was clear, teachers translated FYC objectives in classroom assignments and activities.

To study FYC objective formation and communication, I researched the practices of writing program administrators and teachers at three institutions of higher education within a large metropolitan area. I specifically targeted multiple schools within this city because I hoped to gain some contrast between large and small programs, public and private schools, and traditional four year institutions and technical colleges. Additionally, the geographic placement of all three institutions allowed me to see how administrators and teachers responded to diverse student communities and different university organizational structures. My methods included interviewing WPA members and teachers, studying materials related to objective formation and communication, and observing professional development meetings that discussed programmatic objectives.

AT aids in showing how systems are perceived differently among participants within an AS, and how those perceptions can create informational connections and disconnections. Thus, while AT was helpful in analyzing and categorizing the two systems—by using the six main components of subject, object, tools, rules, roles, and community—the theory also helped show how administrators and teachers valorized certain objectives over others (or at all). The combination of interviewing, analyzing documents, and observing professional meetings provided contrasts between participants' verbal and written descriptions and interpretations of FYC objectives.

Chapters

Chapter 2, first, explores a brief history of Composition Studies highlighting major shifts in theory and practice in order to show how much there's to consider when forming FYC objectives. Following, I survey objective formation scholarship to explore a "chicken and egg" polemic; what

comes first: objective creation and the system around it; system first and finesse objective language second? Discovering it's both, the collection provides a helpful overview of what contexts WPAs consider academically and non-academically. I then end the chapter on writing transfer scholarship to establish the discussion I see my work fitting into, and to (re)educate us as FYC teachers on how writing transfer is an act we're all aiming for, yet may not fully understand. The third section ends by highlighting specific transfer terminology that is helpful to know, some of what I found in the teaching and administrative decisions of those participating in the study. Just like when I discovered I was talking about AT concepts when initially learning about MacKenzie's hairball, so too did I discover many teachers were focused on various writing transfer aims even if they weren't using the terminology.

 Chapter 3 introduces the methods and methodology that guided my design of this study and helped me answer my central research question. I discuss how AT and aspects of ethnography (yet note that this is not an ethnographic study) established my research methods of one-on-one interviews, observations, and document analysis. Following, I provide an overview of how I contacted schools, and an introduction of the three schools participating in this study. I also discuss some learned lessons and reflective moments for possibly future studies.

 Chapter 4 analyzes the objective formation from the three FYC programs. For each school, I provide detailed organizational structures including objective formation procedures, the role assessment plays in decision making, and the training of said objectives. The overview is mostly from the perspective of a lead writing program administrator, or co-leads; I choose to present the information that way because I wanted to establish how the champion of each system sees their programmatic structure (regardless of how much or how little collaboration took place from other stakeholders). My aim was to provide as thick a description as possible of the key historical moments, influences, and decisions these leaders made. In addition to providing critical observations

from what I learned, I end the chapter with specific stances regarding FYC objective formation (for example, why we should lean away from verbose objectives).

If chapter 4 represents more administrative perspectives, then **chapter 5** brings us to teacher perspectives. The overall aim is to show how individual teachers navigate their respective FYC hairballs. First, I present how and why certain objectives are valorized over others; not all objectives are 100% cleanly followed by the participants at each school. Second, just as I do with administrators in chapter 4, I provide what also influences, academic and non-academic, teachers' pedagogical decisions; if they're not following all the guidelines, either because they have to requisite freedom to do so, or because they simply choose to go against their program, I wanted to see what motivated such decisions. Throughout this part, I also apply writing transfer terminology, introduced in chapter 2, to what certain teachers were doing, even if they themselves didn't use that language. Then I present a smaller case study of one particular program and how it possesses characteristics of what King Beach calls a Mediational Transition, a kind of writing transfer structure that uses simulation. Finally, I end the chapter revisiting my research questions and assumptions by sharing my final thoughts and what research awaits.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

Despite having a self-assigned "Masters in Hairballs," Activity Theory (AT) helped me better understand the role objectives play in activity systems. According to AT, the tools and rules we use to achieve objectives affect how we approach said objectives. In FYE, it felt like our theoretical tools were fewer and our training more precise to help us achieve our objectives, even if our main objective was "to help students." First Year Composition (FYC) feels like a Cheesecake-Factory-sized menu of theoretical possibilities, some of which align well with one another, some don't, some which seem to rise with the tides of pedagogical fascination, and some fall off because they're outdated and don't change with changing student demographics. Moving from an academically small pond to a more vast ocean, when I started teaching in FYC, I thought: how in the world does a department settle on objectives and get teachers on the same page?

Oddly enough, I couldn't find literature that directly answers this question, despite knowing the aim of my qualitative study was to gain a clearer picture. The 60-year modern history of Composition Studies, to me, is a deeply rich, yet objectively omnidirectional community. This diversity in thinking or teaching is not bad, and I'm sure others would say that the variety increases the opportunity for critical dialogue. But because theory feels like it's at the crux of decision making in FYC, I want know why certain theories take center stage in an FYC program over others.

Other composition theorists have commented on this vast objective ocean before. I've always found this litany of objectives from Sharon Crowley's *Composition in the University* to illustrate the possibilities and, to me, challenges of deciding how to guide an FYC program:

"[FYC aims] to develop taste, to improve [students'] grasp of formal and mechanical correctness, to become liberally educated, to prepare for jobs or professions, to develop their

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personalities, to become able citizens of a democracy, to become skilled communicators, to be develop skill in textual analysis, **[etc. etc. etc.]**" (6, my addition, emphasis).

Crowley admits that this is an incomplete list, hence my brackets at the end. But again, where do we start? How do we whittle down this list? To further complicate how administrators and teachers select objectives, Crowley reminds us of a common perception from other university stakeholders (and, likely, post-college ones): "the instrumental service ethic of the required composition course: to make student writing available for surveillance until it can be certified to conform to whatever standards are deemed to mark it, and its authors, as suitable for admission to the discourses of the academy" (253). Two obstacles are identified within this quote that FYC program creators must navigate: the mandatory course, and a gateway mechanism that evaluates when a student's deemed ready to go from Context A to Context B. Crowley's overall argument is to do away with the mandatory writing course. I disagree on a few levels, but will lazily retort that the U.S. higher education system isn't ready for such a change. I do agree, however, that any mandatory course automatically adds a certain level of student anxiety and detracts from motivation. Coupled with the second obstacle of designing courses that satisfy expectations of other academics (and future bosses), we have an objective that isn't always stated on syllabi: you, the students, must prove yourselves to us via this course you may likely dread. I believe this tricky objective places a silent pressure on the salient objectives that form any FYC curriculum due to its inherent emotional labor, specifically students need to complete this class or else. Finally, the required FYC course, and its perception as a service class, is another reason why analyzing FYC objectives is valid fit for writing transfer scholarship, the discourse I feel fits this discussion best.

     In this chapter I explore two majors areas of scholarship (objective formation and writing transfer), across three parts. First, I focus on curricular wide objective formation. As I found, there

are few "how to" sources from an entirely FYC perspective, and even more peculiar, almost no

apparent narratives. By narratives, I was hoping to find first person perspectives from an FYC

administrator who could walk us through the ins and outs of their decision making. Instead, I

cobbled together the most informative resources and extrapolated key lessons about objective

formation. Because I believe these decisions are guided by underpinned writing transfer objectives, I

present a history of writing transfer second. However, I recategorize key texts in a way that shows

writing transfer progression from proving transfer to contemporary discussions that not only see

transfer as an omnidirectional phenomena between multiple Contexts A and B, but also an emphasis

on the emotional/experiential components of transfer. Finally, I zero in on a few transfer terms that

I think help us better understand transfer as the complex concept it is, seeing it as a movement or

carrying of information from context to context. This last section also establishes terminology I use

in chapter 5 to categorize my findings of teacher strategies working within FYC systems.

Part 1: Crafting FYC Objectives

Throughout five total years of academic training in FYC (via graduate course work through

two different English Departments) I only had one course focused on objective design. It was not

required. The course and related in-class activities were beneficial, and the materials we read were

more of a "how to" than what was more common in other pedagogical courses: a deeply theoretical

book or series of articles. Most helpful to me was the concept of working backwards. First, we asked

ourselves "what kinds of learning outcomes do we want to see our students achieve by the end of

the semester?" Then, we designed assessments that would measure those student outcomes. We

ended by creating activities to prepare students for those assessments. The only other time I did

something like this, was through an (again) optional professional development seminar run by

another department that also lasted one semester. Outside of these two experiences, I have no other

procedural familiarity, academic or professional, with how to formulate objectives and course design.

As I began researching books to create a dialogue about objective design, I immediately felt better (or worse?) that my lack of experience was commonplace. Unable to find books specifically focused on FYC objectives, I turned to general educational resources focused on curricular design. These books were sufficient in constructing the following dialogue regarding what FYC leaders might consider. First, in *Creating Significant Learning Experience*, Albert Fink states the following:

> "Design of instruction, in contrast to interacting with students, is a skill in which few college-level teachers have extensive training...most faculty members simply follow the traditional ways of teaching in their particular disciplines. They lack the conceptual tools they need to significantly rethink and reconstruct the set of teaching and learning activities they use." (27)

The scope of his quote and research includes multiple disciplines, not just FYC. Yet, while I feel that graduate Composition programs have more academic and professional training than other disciplines (except maybe Education, I suspect), it wasn't until conducting both the primary and secondary research for this dissertation that I discovered how true Fink's claims are; we don't really spend a lot of time preparing ourselves--and I include disciplines outside of FYC--to know how to formulate programmatic and course objectives. Anecdotally, I would say this could be for two reasons. First, we likely enact previously designed objectives when we come into an FYC program. This possibility means that we spend more time coming up with the structure to meet said objectives, with little-to-no input on how the objectives are framed. Second, we've likely come into an FYC program that has all course structure in place, dictating what is specifically taught in lieu of objectives. These could be FYC programs that place more emphasis on those requirements and

expectations from the university as a whole. For example, I think of part-time instructors who are hired to fill classes at the last minute and are told "you can/must/should teach X reading and Y genres" instead of "well, we need to make sure you meet these objectives." Of course, since most of us are teachers when assuming these rules, that may be another reason why there's not a wealth of literature and discussion regarding objective formation: very few of us are in a position where we have to create macro-level objectives.

Fink's definition of significant learning helps points to another invisible objective, just as Crowley does with reminding us that FYC is a mandatory, gatekeeping curricula at most universities:

> "Significant learning requires that we help students connect what they learn in our courses with their 'life file' rather than just with their 'course file.'...the course file is where [students] put everything they learn in school or in the university; they draw on this file only when they take tests, do homework, and so on. The other is their life file; this where they put the lessons from their everyday life, and they draw on this file for all their life decisions, questions, actions, and so on." (7)

This very student-centric view is refreshing and reinforces educational interest in learning transfer, placing a premium on what we would call Far transfer which applies learning from an educational context that is very different to a future context. Fink's quote also raises question: whose objectives are they? If Crowley's assertion that the objectives are for academic administrators, due to the invisible objective regarding its mandatory/gatekeeping quality, Fink's telling us that these are student objectives; they're formed around student growth for their whole life, not just an academic one. While I hope/assume that Crowley is pro-student growth, she is correct that it's impossible to consider FYC objectives without considering the academic expectations of the university, be they curricular oversight for accreditation or other, non-English department requirements to help prepare

students for a specific discipline, as I'm sure Fink does too. Yet, which take precedent? Even before considering more specific objective language, we have two potentially competing invisible objectives: what's good for the students vs. what's good for the university.

Perhaps they can be both students' and administrators' objectives. In *Designing Undergraduate Education*, William H. Bergquist et al. revisit his previous curricular taxonomies in order to provide a framework that helps define a university's identity breaking it down into digestible, systemic parts. The authors' take is very much "it can be both" with an added third area to consider: "Ultimately, each college or university must create its own list of outcomes that accurately and explicitly reflects its underlying assumptions and educational ideals as well as the realities of the institution..." (279). A key point to extract: "the realities of the institution" represents the limitations and possibilities of additional structural areas beyond what students, administrators, and faculty want. Bergquist et al identify a handful of structural elements like time and space. Indeed, at UW-Bothell we've recently experienced a sudden shift with our BWRIT 135: Research Writing course, the second of two FYC classes. Because we are a geographically small institution, we do not have enough classroom space. Thus, the powers-that-be have changed multiple sections of BWRIT 135 to hybrid courses, causing us to adapt a curriculum that had primarily been face-to-face. Therefore the third answer to "Whose objectives are they?" is the institution as a structure.

While Berguist et al.'s book has some interesting nuggets regarding objective design, it feels overly lofty and theoretical, compared to Fink's grounded but more localized-to-the-classroom approach. The strongest resource I found that thinks large and small, despite it being older, is *Designing and Improving Courses and Curricula in Higher Education* by Robert M. Diamond. The book is a step-by-step process for creating or redesigning objectives at multiple levels of the university. Like our other authors, Diamond delineates key considerations when designing curricula:

"The process of designing, implementing, and evaluating a course or curriculum is complex. It requires (1) a sensitivity to the academic setting of the project, (2) an awareness of the capabilities, interests, and priorities of the students the program is designed to serve, (3) a knowledge and appreciation of the discipline, (4) an understanding of the resources and options available to the faculty involved, (5) an understanding of those instructional goals that are required of all students, regardless of their major and long-term personal goals." (5-6)

Diamond's answer to "whose objective are they?" is "everyone." Yet, even though the writing and advice feel more appropriate for administrators compared to Fink, "Chapter 7: Clarifying Instructional Objectives and Assessing Outcomes" provides three considerations for the individual instructor. **First,** he indicates that all objective sets have invisible, unstated ones: "These non-discipline-specific objectives exist within every course and focus on those skills and competencies that every student needs to succeed after graduation—the ability to write and speak effectively, the ability to work well with others, and so on" (123). Knowing that there are unsaid objectives is very key to our understanding of objective formation and, as teachers, objective navigation when we deal with a pre-established FYC model.

Related, and to reframe what I've been trying to illustrate with other authors, to me that means there are three categories of invisible objectives: mandatory, motivated, and micro. **Invisible mandatory objectives** come from policies and procedures within the university or department that enforce some type of gatekeeping event. For example, students must take three credits of FYC and pass in order to take other courses. Put more bluntly: you can feel mandatory objectives' foot through salient objectives' buttocks. **Invisible motivated objectives** are more thematic, since they describe, in a general way, audience(s) FYC is trying to serve. These objectives are not as concretized

as mandatory ones, yet they have enough influence that they guide purpose and language within the design. For example, objectives may serve specific student populations, or faculty expectations of writing in post-FYC courses. Finally, the third category, **invisible micro objectives**, characterize objectives that are commonplace in any learning environment: clear communication, completion, routine participation, etc. My use of micro is not to lower the importance of these unstated objectives, rather they are so ubiquitous and assume a level of tacit understanding from the students and teachers that they should be taught and achieved.

Diamond's **second consideration** is something we've only just touched on with developing objectives: language construction. In our pedagogy course and the professional development seminar where we had to design a class, we were presented with action verbs related to Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning and told to construct statements with the starting phrase: "By the end of the course, students will…". Fink, Diamond, and Bergquist offer similar advice. Diamond offers a solid best practice: "However important course and curricular goals may be, the need is to develop statements that are useful to the faculty member and to the student: objectives that are *clear and concise* and that can be measured within the framework of the instructional unit" (128-129, my emphasis). Here, Diamond reinforces that objectives are for all stakeholders including and especially students. I return to "clear and concise" in chapter 4, since I noticed that most FYC objectives were neither, something corroborated by many of the teachers and administrators I interviewed.

Finally, the third consideration raised by Diamond, and echoed more succinctly by Bergquist, is the exhausting mental and emotional labor behind creating objectives. When Bergquist states "The task of creating one's own statements of educational outcomes is often tiresome and seemingly without immediate benefit" he is, from my experience, accurately describing what I felt in three Student affairs scenarios (279). One experience was in Residence Life, over a long weekend, where we came up with two dozen statements eventually whittled down to a few major pillars.

Another was for a student governance organization that was also revising their constitution. That process involved several small and large group meetings over the course of twoish semesters and ended in a contentious vote among student representatives. The third, was at a beginning-of-the-year, professional training session where we revisited and revised learning outcomes for our residence hall Living-Learning Communities (this was a process done every year). Important though it may be, Bergquist's emphasis on the emotional labor necessary for objective formation is one I feel is overlooked.

To wrap up this section and transition to how all of this fits into Writing Transfer, I end on two summative thoughts. **First,** from the limited and not often taught literature I analyzed above, four questions commonly occur across these texts that need to be asked when beginning to formulate or revise FYC objectives:

- Who is served by these objectives?
- What real structural limitations and possibilities affect our ideals within these objectives?
- What hidden and unstated objectives impact our salient ones?
- What mental and emotional labor is necessary to complete objectives?

While these are not the questions I directly ask participants in my study, there is qualitative data to support that these questions were either considered in whole or part, or else, based upon what respondents said, enacted in various ways.

The **second** is more of a clarification going forward. Throughout the literature and even many of the FYC documents I looked at, there are several terms that are used to describe objectives. They include outcome, goal, milestone, and pillar (just to name a few). For the sake of consistency, and in consideration of Bergquist and AT, I define these terms in the following way for our conversation. An objective to me is a projected ideal. While clear, high, and reasonable language can be used to define an objective, and is achievable, it is still considered an idealized state for students.

Regardless of whether the term is goal, outcome, milestone, or other, if the written description's aim is a final idealized state, then it's an objective. However, after measuring objectives, we then arrive at outcomes. These realized, evidence driven results may, may not, or somewhere in between *meet* the idealized standard in an objective. All the documents and stakeholder discussions I analyze in Chapters 4 and 5, are again, idealized statements for students to achieve. I do not, unfortunately, analyze formalized outcomes, only anecdotal ones provided via interviews of stakeholders.

Part 2: Writing Transfer History, Reconfigured

As I pointed out earlier, writing transfer research contains its own challenges to prove what (if any) transfer takes place. First, the research of writing transfer is a painstaking process since, to get true data of how students are affected, we need to be routinely conducting longitudinal studies. These are practically and financially difficult to conduct, even if they would be very beneficial. Second, the few longitudinal studies that are conducted show that transfer happens in some scenarios but not others. Moreover, the inconsistencies between those scenarios don't allow us to firm up or create any set of standards or best practices at the moment. Finally, and one problem I hope to assuage, very few folks understand writing transfer terminology even in the basic sense. This last concept is touched upon briefly in the scholarship yet affirmed in my research given how many folks did not use explicitly use transfer terms while describing how they approached teaching but did use language that would characterize that one of their unstated objectives was hoping that students would leave their classrooms with something.

The scholarship of transfer began with research from those who were in educational psychology and is referred to more generally as learning transfer. This initial term was more broad, including studies in mathematics, science, etc. The studies I'll focus on here may come from that era, using that terminology, yet fit within the lineage of writing transfer because they're solely focused on

students carrying knowledge, skills, and experiences concerning writing from context to context. Over its 100 plus year history, learning transfer was influenced by sociological perspectives as well. The inclusion of social learning coincided with theorists like Lev Vygotsky and concepts like his Zone of Proximal Development to show that learning was as much social phenomena as it is an individual cognitive experience. Transfer researchers have traditionally been interested in addressing two questions concerning formal (classrooms, schools) and informal learning contexts:

- What knowledge, skill, and experience, if any, do students take with them from the classroom context to other contexts, and why?
- What qualities of instruction and curriculum design help or hinder transfer?

Moreover, early scholarship researched younger student populations instead of collegiate level learners; this was surprising to me since I feel that the post-secondary educational experience is a nexus of multiple contexts and transitions. Yet, the past twenty years more research has emerged regarding college-level learning including a smallish group interested in the transfer of writing, with a smaller sub-section of that group becoming more focused on FYC transfer.

As it relates to FYC, writing transfer tackles what skills, knowledge, and experiences are potentially transferred from FYC contexts to others. Scholars attempt to uncover how/if traditional and non-traditional FYC models help students prepare for other writing contexts in college (Russell, Nowacek). Leading FYC writing transfer scholar Elizabeth Wardle notes that "there is no evidence that FYC has taught students to write for the university...[because] the rhetorical situation, ***the context***, of any writing task in FYC is fundamentally different from the rhetorical situation of a writing task in another activity system" (784, 781, my emphasis). Later in this chapter, I explore her research, arguments, and viewpoints more, as well as show how they've helped guide this study.

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Wardle's work is highly indicative of most transfer research, in that she demonstrates, ultimately, there is little evidence to show transfer happens at all. My study is not an attempt to find what has or has not transferred from the three institutions I studied; my study is aimed at getting us to think about the word I highlighted above—context—and how/why stakeholders use written objectives to design their learning contexts to work toward transfer to other contexts.

Basic Transfer Terms

Before heading deeper into the history of writing transfer and how it relates to FYC programs, a basic understanding of terms is important. First, to provide a conceptual definition, people who study transfer are interested in how participants in one context (Context A) apply or use knowledge, skills, or experiences in another context (Context B). In most transfer scholarship, Context A is school or a class or any formalized educational environment where the primary service is teaching and learning. However, it is possible that Context A can be any space where (in)formal learning takes place. Likewise, Context B can be any space where previous learning has the opportunity to be applied and, hopefully, evaluated. I say hopefully since it's possible, especially in today's workforce, that formalized feedback loops (e.g. performance reviews), do not occur as frequently. While self-evaluation can always take place (and I would argue should) a true assessment of transfer needs some external outcomes in order to evaluate any learning disconnects between the two contexts. Additionally, the two contexts where transfer takes place do not have to be logically connected. I can learn skills in a cooking class that may be intended for future cooking contexts, however, those skills have the possibility of being applied to any other context.

And thus, the first set of terms characterize the relationship between Context A and Context B, specifically, how similar or different they are as activity systems. This relationship is characterized by two terms, coined by Perkins and Solomon (1992): **Near Transfer** is when both contexts share

many similarities and **Far Transfer** is when both contexts share few to no characteristics (1). While there isn't a scale or rubric to clearly delineate how many characteristics constitute near versus far transfer, I've provided some general examples that illustrate these concepts within these two tables:

Figure 1: Near Transfer Scenarios
(in order of likely more near to less near)

Context A	Context B
English 101, Composition 100, etc. (any class that constitutes the first required college writing course in a sequence).	English 102, Composition 200, etc. (the second of two required courses in an FYC suite).
English 102, etc. (any class that is the second course in a sequence)	Discipline-specific writing course (upper level courses that have, as a pre-requisite, a lower-level, required course).
English 101 and/or 102, etc. and/or upper-level writing course	Discipline specific non-writing course (a major/minor required course where writing is not a major component but knowledge of some writing genres is still necessary).
Discipline specific writing course	Professional job related to academic major
Undergraduate writing requirements	Graduate program
Graduate program writing requirements	Post-grad position in chosen discipline
Initial or entry-level position at professional organization I	Entry-level position or advanced position at professional organization I or professional organization II (where the organizations do similar things).

The two common patterns emerge from these pairings. First, most Context As are intentionally and explicitly designed to prepare for Context B; for example, English 101 contains objectives that also apply to work English 102. Second, even if the physical context is different (school to work, for example), the transition between contexts is considered a logical and immediate step. For example, earning a degree in human resources should be applied to a human resources position. I delineate the less near transfer scenarios from far transfer ones because, as I point out next, those contextual relationships have greater differences in contextual characteristics.

Figure 2: Far Transfer Scenarios
(in order of least far to most far)

Context A	Context B
Discipline specific writing course	Course in another discipline
Undergraduate writing requirements	Graduate program in different discipline
Undergraduate/graduate writing requirements	Professional job unrelated to degree
Initial or entry-level position at professional crganization I	Entry-level position or advanced position at professional organization I or professional organization II (where the organizations do different things).

Similarly, the far transfer scenarios are ones where, even if there is some preparation, the learning objectives of Context A do not clearly align with the activities in Context B. What I left out of both examples are informal experiences with writing which could be either near or far. For example, personal journaling may be more near transfer for someone who is writing non-fiction narratives, opinion pieces for a news source, or even a therapist (who frequently takes reflective notes). Yet, the same kind of writing would be more far transfer for written work that is research based, more scientific in nature, or needs to be void of emotional characteristics. It is not to say that "reflection" in general can't be a written skill applicable to many different kinds of context which leads us to a premise in Writing Transfer called "generalization" which is the ability for a person to figure out how a skill could be applied to dissimilar contexts.

Historically, transfer scholarship started focusing more on near transfer and in only the past 35 years included more studies regarding Far transfer. Early researchers, like Thorndike and Judd, studied near transfer where learning from one educational setting applied to other educational settings, like from elementary school to high school. Scholars like Beaufort, later focused on the potential transfer that takes place between school and professional/domestic settings.

One important note: most scholars study contexts that would be considered on a macro-level of transfer, meaning, larger contexts like attending school, working a job, participating in an after school activity. Those macro-level activity systems of course contain multiple characteristics and tasks. However, on a micro-level, scholars can (and some do) study transfer that is task-oriented. In an FYC classroom, an example might be, how does reading selections from a writing handbook transfer to the first draft of an essay? Or how does learning how to write memos in a business writing class transfer to a full-time corporate job? For my research, I am more concerned with how knowledge, skills, and experiences transfer closer to the macro-level: an FYC course to either other courses and/or other non-school contexts (although, as we'll see, one school contains an evaluative

procedure that I would classify as an intense, internal micro-level task because the program attempts to create a secondary context, albeit, for only part of the semester).

A third set of terms indicates the potential outcomes of transfer. Also coined by Perkins and Salomon (1992), **Positive and Negative Transfer** indicate whether or not previous knowledge is confirmed (positive) or contradicted (negative). Not that the evaluation here is confirmed or contradicted, not right or wrong; thus, traditional scholastic dichotomies—success/failure, pass/fail, correct/incorrect—wouldn't completely tell us if a student experienced positive or negative transfer. That may seem like a contradiction in and of itself, yet consider taking a test where two answers felt correct, but there's no clear certainty. Upon guessing, and receiving the test back, the chosen answer was incorrect, yet that helped affirm the correct answer previously considered.

For writing situations this is a very important distinction, and one helpful for students who get down on themselves about writing. A student who only learns that all lists contain the Oxford comma, could receive an "A" in a writing course where the teacher valorizes that rule (and would be an example of positive transfer in that context). Yet, upon having a supervisor who practices not including the Oxford comma, would result in negative transfer for the individual. This is neither a failure of the student or educational system (even if my brother asks me all the time why we teach the Oxford comma). Similarly, a student may do very well grade-wise on an essay written in a FYC course, while also receiving written feedback that a five-paragraph organizational structure, likely learned in high school, won't fit well with a longer paper in college. Thus, the student's knowledge from high school is contradicted and results in negative transfer. In summary, near and far transfer categorize the differences/similarities between contexts or activity systems where learning initially takes place and may be applied later. Positive and Negative Transfer describe the confirmation or contradiction of learned knowledge between two contexts or activity systems.

Transfer Scholarship Origins: Looking for Transfer's Holy Grail

The first scholar to discuss learning transfer as it relates to educational contexts is E. L. Thorndike. His article, "The Influence of First Year Latin Upon the Ability to Read English" (1923), is frequently shared by scholars because it's the first to test the notion that one particular experience, in this case learning introductory Latin, could transfer to other academic contexts. His study is also a literacy study in some respects, important to folks who study how reflection impacts transfer. His data concluded that having a basic understanding of Latin *does not* help reading in other situations, yet he felt it was possible that very focused, highly disciplined educational contexts which use skill-and-drill techniques (tests, quizzes) could potentially help students achieve knowledge and skill transfer to more localized or near concepts (168). Another limitation of Thorndike's work is that his quantitative, statistical data follows more educational psychology practices of the early 20th century. Hence, he was more interested in proving how students learned via teaching practices that many writing transfer scholars would not necessarily study today, because they're used rarely, if at all.

These findings fueled Thorndike's future work, though, as he kept trying to prove that repetitive, individualistic learning can strengthen intelligence. In his 1932 article "Intelligence of Animals and Men," he states:

> "Human beings are accustomed to think of the mind, or the intellect, or the ab lity [sic] to learn, as synonymous with the power to have ideas. But learning by manipulating ideas is rare compared with learning by trial and success. Animals learned by trial and success millions of years ago. Most of the animals in the world today do most of their learning in this way. Indeed this same type of learning is found in man. When we learn to drive a golf ball or play tennis or billiards, when we learn to tell the price of tea by tasting it or to strike a certain

note exactly with the voice, we do not learn in the main by virtue of any ideas that are explained to us, by any inferences that we reason out." (pgs. 172-173)

The acquisition of knowledge and skills, for him, anchored heavily on the notion that as human beings are still animals, animalistic behaviors of development are satisfactory for humans, and more successful (even though his data never really proved that). Imagine telling first year students: "if this activity is good enough for a dog, it's good enough for you." Within the context of both writing transfer and composition studies, these findings are troublesome since many scholars feel that learning about writing is not only a more complex mental function but a social act as well.

Thankfully, transfer studies begin to shift away from Thorndike's approaches and hypotheses. An early challenger to his position was Charles H. Judd, another oft-referenced scholar. While Judd does not explicitly use the term "transfer" as Thorndike does, his research expands learning transfer to include subject areas like math and science in addition to language. In *Education as Cultivation of the Higher Mental Processes*, Judd seeks to demonstrate that learning is not as overly-simplistic, biological, and animalistic as Thorndike asserts. As a direct response to "automatistic psychologists" like Thorndike, he presents the consideration that learning is part of a social system. Judd also takes time to critique Thorndike's choice of test subjects, suggesting focusing on all ages of learners, in multiple contexts. "One reason why many academicians are content to see the science of education limit itself to a study of elementary education is that they are afraid of anything that seems to threaten the reduction of the educational process to uniform or mechanical routine" (3). This critique points out that while it may be likelier that younger learners can transfer learning through skill-and-drill techniques, focusing pedagogies on one style of teaching is more likely to reduce complex learning in older learners.

Judd wanted scholars to think of educational research in more socially contextual ways, as he states:

"The view that all mental activities can be explained in terms of elements which are of the simplest and most primitive type overlooks altogether the principle that organic compounds always exhibit qualities different from the qualities of the elements that are synthesized in these compounds...it is the fact of organization which accounts for life. Likewise, a community is something more than the aggregation of individuals. A city is more than houses and streets. A painting is more than canvas and pigment...[Thorndike's research] which describes human mental life as of the same pattern as animal mental life, attempts to explain away the facts which are revealed by [my] investigations...by denying that qualitative differences are significant [to our research]." (154-155)

Judd's usage of social-scientific language is a strong rhetorical response to Thorndike's myopic, machine-like view on human learning. Likewise, as late 20th century compositions scholars analyzed and embraced social learning, Judd's work is more foundationally relevant for transfer studies than Thorndike, and a small inspiration to how I approached this study: wanting to see how the professional community of teachers and administrators affect the contexts where learning occurs.

After Thorndike and Judd, more work emerged, and researchers began to look at transfer in more complex ways. The most common studies still focused on whether or not transfer occurred and, if it did, what are the factors that foster transfer? However, even if the research wasn't clearly (dis)proving transfer, analyzing classroom contexts became more prominent and helpful. Questions like how are classroom contexts structured for other, future contexts; how are contexts in assignments imagined by those who create objectives; and how can we best bridge the distance (time, place, and manner) between two contexts, became more paramount to helping us better

understand the mechanics and possibilities of transfer. This exploration is important to this study since many of those findings help us better see the factors that impact the relationship between Contexts A and B.

Modern Transfer Scholarship: Understanding Contexts

Bransford, et al's *How Learners Learn* begins to move transfer scholarship from the broader learning transfer, to the more specific writing transfer, and eventually, to transfer in FYC. Unlike Thorndike and Judd, the authors depart from the early transfer hypothesis that there is one, magical subject (like Latin) or task (like memorization) that can be taught to students to automatically enact transfer of specific knowledge onward and outward from school. Instead, Bransford and her colleagues focus on teaching and learning techniques toward an "adaptive expertise" or the ability to organize, generalize, and apply knowledge from context to context, regardless of similarities and differences. This move begins to place transfer studies in what I would call a metacognitive phase; we're not proving learning due to subject matter but learning more about learning.

Bransford and her researchers expand transfer research to include non-scholarly contexts. Specifically, they analyze how learning is different between educational and vocational contexts. **Three significant discrepancies** exist between the two contexts:

> The unstated, overall objective for school is learning but the overall objective for work is success. The tools that are used at school are mostly mental, whereas (depending on the work environment) there are likely more physical tools used in a work context. Related, at school, abstract reasoning (learning broader skills) is asked for and utilized more often, yet contextualized reasoning is more common at work (learning more localized, special skills). (74-75)

The **first discrepancy, objectives,** reinforces a claim I make throughout this dissertation in regards to how invisible objectives impact the formation and dissemination of objectives: there is always one, generalized over-arching objective In this case, Bransford's identifying school's broad objective is "to learn" and work's is "to succeed." These permeate into their systems. And yes, it's possible both can exist in either context, however, as we'll see in chapter 5 there's always a valorization of these broad, unstated objectives.

I'll make a similar claim about the **second and third discrepancies: tools and skills.** Yes, as the authors point out the physical and mental tools in each system can be different, yet as work and school evolve, so do the tools, inviting more crossover. In the mid-20th century there were more industrial jobs than white collar, corporate ones. However, because there are tools and skills that traverse the line of abstract and concrete—computers and digital literacy, for instance—to contend that these contexts are far apart may not be as true as we think. And professional writing organizations and their researchers account for these discrepancies. For example, the WPA Outcomes states that it is our responsibility as writing teachers to be aware of such discrepancies especially considering digital technology (2014). At relevance here, and something I discuss more in chapter 5, is the importance of FYC teachers and administrators studying these other contexts, and if possible, re-creating them to give students experience in them, even if it's just simulation.

My emphasis on the transfer of experience corroborates another key point made by Bransford. While Judd touches on how social learning affects transfer, Bransford et al's research strongly emphasizes why previous experiences matter. "Prior knowledge is not simply the individual learning that students bring to the classroom, based on their personal and idiosyncratic experiences...[it] also includes the kind of knowledge that learners acquire because of their social roles" (71-72). Highlighting the social impact of transfer is important for two reasons. First, many FYC composition pedagogy scholars (Jordan, Yi, Rose, DeStigter, just to name a few) write about

how culture likewise impacts learning, emphasizing the importance of FYC instructors prioritizing literacies developed at home. Just as realizing that different post-college stakeholders can, potentially, influence the way we construct our (in)visible learning objectives, so should we realize the different perspectives students will bring with them about learning into our classrooms.

Thankfully, I and other transfer scholars are likewise interested in how outside contexts influence in-school learning. Continuing this tour of modern transfer scholarship, Scribner and Cole, in *The Psychology of Literacy* (1981), provide details about how a classroom space like FYC can be a nexus between previous learning contexts and future contexts where learning is applied. While studying the Vai people of Liberia, Scribner and Cole claim that "school, by representing subject matter outside of its normal contexts of occurrence in a symbolic medium, provides the student with practice in abstract, decontextualized thinking" (13). **Two key terms** here that help us better understand the contextual nexus within FYC courses. **First is "practice."** Here, the authors use the word as an event, a spatial moment where the potential for learning is in a low-stakes environment. Their research helps us understand another broad, unstated objective: failure is an acceptable aspect of learning. The Vai, according to Scribner and Cole, couldn't reapply their professional learning at school, because it didn't contain the same stakes as their professional context, the marketplace.

My assumption here, and the **second term** I wish to focus on, also links to another challenge/opportunity postulated by transfer studies: "decontextualized thinking." The Vai interpreted the classroom space as decontextualized. Applying this concept to FYC as a contextual nexus, I've always wanted to better understand, in terms of objective formation, how is FYC space defined by stakeholders? Taking stock of previous literature, we know it's a mandatory space, where students are bringing in myriad learning experiences in order to gain some knowledge and skill about writing that they (and others) believe will be useful later. And that's it. I argue that FYC

classes are one of the most decontextualized classes (alongside college math). And this allows, for better or worse, teachers to fill in that context with their own experiences and perspectives.

Jean Lave also studied decontextualized thinking. In *Cognition in Practice* (1988), Lave researched what conditions caused middle-class, white adults from Orange County to be able to abstract knowledge and skills between different contexts. "What constitutes 'a problem' in the supermarket or kitchen? What motivates problem solving if not demands for compliance by problem-givers?" (19). Lave's findings in regards to different contexts having different motivations corroborates Scribner and Cole's findings about how learners apply knowledge differently depending on the context. For the middle-class adults Lave studied, they were able to achieve more complex situations because their motivations were different, similar to the Vai who worked in the marketplace. I argue that these motivations are due, in part, to well-defined contexts, whereas Contexts A and B may not be clearly defined in an FYC class.

Moreover, Lave identifies two different yet connected roles necessary for transfer: the problem-giver and the problem-solver. The middle-class suburbanites and the Vai are problem-givers and problem-solvers. They've created their own objectives for successfully raising a family, and running a successful business respectively. Thus, they fully understand and respect the stakes within their contexts. However, in the classroom, teachers are typically the problem-givers and students problem-solvers. These roles mean FYC teachers, whether they establish their own classroom objectives, use pre-established departmental ones, or somewhere in between, must create educational "problems" for students to solve through writing assignments. The responsibility of the problem-giver is one of the motivations for this study. If we as instructors have to juggle/create/follow objectives, both stated and unstated, while also considering future, outside contexts of the post-collegiate world and the pre-collegiate contexts of our students, what do we choose to include in our classrooms, what do we avoid, and why?

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The work of these three scholars—Bransford et al, Scribner and Cole, and Lave—further scholarly conversations about transfer as well as begin to illustrate transfer's complexity. They contributed by studying academic and non-academic settings, and how transfer may have worked between them. And even though they didn't study FYC contexts specifically, they provide three considerations. First, the FYC classroom is a contextual nexus not just between Context A (the classroom or learning space) and Context B (post-class or application space), but also previous or simultaneous contexts where students develop literacy. Second, broad unstated objectives impact stated ones. For an FYC classroom, these may be mandatory requirements, outside stakeholder expectations, and governmental perspectives about education. Third, and finally, there is a mostly unilateral relationship between teachers, who are problem-givers, and students, who are problem-solvers. While I think the other two concepts help our understanding with FYC systems and the potential of writing transfer, this last concept, to me, is the most important for us to understand and embrace. We must be *ethical* problem-givers, in terms of establishing learning activities that aren't objectiveless, inequitable, or harmful, like my 7th grade teacher. I return to this thought in chapter 5 when unpacking teacher choices to support their students.

Writing Transfer Scholarship Phase I: PTW

Professional-Technical Writing (PTW) studies focus on the relationship between Writing in the Disciplines (WID) style classes and post-collegiate settings that typically include corporate and STEM systems. In this section, I touch on specific works that continue the more ethnographic research of modern transfer scholars, yet specifically focusing on writing, which then paves the way for our FYC writing transfer scholars. These approaches inspire FYC transfer scholars' calls-to-action. Later, I revisit some of these scholars' terminology because I apply it to the teacher interviews discussed in chapter 5 and because I feel better understanding the more complex aspects

of writing transfer can help us be more aware teachers. Beaufort's work paints a more narrative, big picture view of writing transfer, setting up Perkins, Salomon, and Beach who provide us the most clear terminology of transfer.

Beaufort, in *Writing in the Real World* (1999) conducted an in-depth, longitudinal study on several women who worked in various professional contexts to see what kind of writing knowledge, skills, and experience transferred from their undergraduate and, in some cases, graduate classes. Her main research questions were:

- What are the distinct and overlapping knowledge domains an expert writer draws upon in a given writing situation? And what does a fuller explication of these knowledge domains add to theories of composing?

- How can transfer of learning be fostered to give writer flexibility and versatility in handling a variety of occasions for writing? What can aid writers in grasping local conditions for writing?

- What are the individual traits and environmental conditions that foster ongoing development of writing skills in informal and formal settings for learning? What helps or hinders achieving expert writing performance in new discourse communities? (172, 179, 189)

These questions show how transfer studies moved from discussing whether or not transfer happens, to how and why transfer happens, and what conditions may increase the possibility of transfer. Her conclusions are similar to what we've seen in other transfer scholars: positive transfer occurs more frequently in formalized training settings in professional environments due to the reflective and simulated nature typically found in such sessions and not because of the "context neutral" writing courses that focus on basic writing skills and knowledge (178). However, there were some instances

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where subjects referenced knowledge from their scholastic career, as a result of two concepts Beaufort champions: active reflection and metacognition. The former occurred when folks were asked about their writing by someone else (in their case, her as the researcher) thereby enabling subjects to realize said connections; the latter occurred when subjects exhibited a self-awareness from pausing, or stepping out of the situation mentally, seeing it in a safe self-reflective space (186-189). These concepts are both important, especially the latter, as we want students to be able to develop this awareness on their own.

Another pair of scholars who help us bridge PTW transfer to FYC transfer are David N. Perkins and Gavriel Salomon. Much of their co-authored work (1987a, 1988, 1989a, 1989b, 2012) focuses on why educators prioritize transfer, how to understand the way transfer works (when it does), why/when transfer doesn't work, and how to apply transfer to teaching. Primarily, their work discusses transfer broadly, covering how transfer functions in multiple disciplines. Like other researchers who use Activity Theory as a methodology, some of their co-authored (1987b) and individually written work (Salomon et al 1989) locates itself within computer programming and if/how practicing those skills helps in other disciplinary areas. In more recent work (Perkins and Salomon 2012), Perkins and Salomon have taken on how a student's disposition (or attitude) can affect their own learning transfer, something that came up unexpectedly in my research. I revisit this wide breadth of work later in this chapter.

In his contribution to *Between School and Work: New Perspectives on Transfer and Boundary-crossing*, King Beach points out the flaws in our understanding of transfer and then re-defines the term for a more reliable definition, and one relevant to the chaos inherent to living/working in multiple contexts. After explaining six reasons for why our understanding of transfer was limited, Beach reframes the concept into four types he calls Consequential Transitions. His aim is twofold: first, these expansive definitions allow us to see transfer as a *movement* of knowledge between and within

ever changing social contexts. I feel we need his work because he increases our awareness of the different ways contexts change and how those changes can be opportunities for learning. Second, he suggests instructors teach the concept of generalization, wherein, students can recognize activity systems at each different context. I believe this helps us better see the big picture relationship between multiple contexts. Later, I also return to Consequential Transitions, since one of the schools I studied invertedly formed an FYC program resembling Beach's Mediational Transition.

The final link in our bridge between PTW transfer scholarship and FYC transfer scholarship, comes from David Russell. In "Activity Theory and Its Implications in Writing Instruction" from *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction* (1995), Russell explores the common, unstated objectives that FYC focus on writing skill improvement and enables students to fully, immediately understand academic discourse for future courses. Having previously studied the ways college writing tends to not connect well to professional settings (1991), Russel revisits arguments made that FYC should ultimately be abolished. His counter: adaptation not abolishment. Using Activity Theory as an analytical lens, he concludes that FYC's general objectives are accepted myths, not proven results, due in part to the context-less nature of FYC courses. To him—and I would agree—they do not rely on a specific discursive or activity system that places students in writing situations where they have to consider the components of why we write the way we do in more specified contexts. He therefore supports and suggests two types of curricula that will better prepare students for the complex, multi-layered activity systems that they will eventually come across, in and out of college.

First, he (re)supports Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) because it focuses on "the study and improvement of the roles writing plays in teaching and learning in specific disciplines and professions...bringing to light the differences among disciplinary discourses...[and] helping students choose, enter, become full participants in, and eventually transform for the better activity systems"

(71). Given his argument that exploring more specific contexts will help students better see how writing performs in those scenarios, WAC makes complete sense. These courses are traditionally upper-level and are taught or co-taught with faculty who have the experience necessary to help unpack related activity systems. However, he acknowledges that while WAC may help students better adapt to writing situations in future contexts, there's still the challenge of what to teach first year students. Therefore, and second, he proposes a curriculum where the main objective is "to teach students what has been learned about writing in those activity systems that make the role of writing in society the object of their study" (73). Essentially, this is the same metacognitive approach suggested by other writing transfer scholars where the aim is not just to practice, practice, practice, but to dig deeper into how genres function, how writing can change a system, and how the main kinds of writing change over time. And, after a fashion, this curriculum emerges and introduces us to writing transfer scholars who now focus more on FYC transfer than PTW transfer.

Writing Transfer Scholarship Phase II: FYC

In response to Russell's work, Elizabeth Wardle embraced his call to action and is one of the first scholars who started to tackle writing transfer in FYC. First, in "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC" (2009), she analyzes the one mostly unstated yet very common FYC objective discussed previously: FYC is meant to teach a generalized knowledge of writing, while practicing some composing skills, in order for students to transfer those skills and knowledge from a suite of first year courses to other courses including more discipline specific writing courses. Her optimistic stance, like Russell, is that FYC can teach writing that is transferable so long as the teaching "clearly and directly relate[s] to the university genres that follow, and...include[s] activities that will encourage transfer, such as reflection, explicit abstract of principles about those genres, and mindfulness" (782). Her claim here is based upon her longitudinal work in several studies she conducted (2004,

2005, 2007). These last three concepts/skills--reflection, abstraction, and mindfulness--have appeared frequently, in different forms and terminology across transfer scholarship. Reflection, as other scholars have shown, can increase the likelihood that an individual realizes what learning has been transferred. Mindfulness is akin to metacognition, the ability to look at the (in)visible components of an activity system, transcending the simple completion of a writing assignment for students to better understand how their writing has been influenced by systems and can influence systems. Explicit abstraction of principles is a concept I dive into later as I analyze and discuss the different kinds of relationships that exist between Contexts A and B. What's important in Wardle's findings are both the reinforcement of activities that ask students to step outside of themselves and their learning contexts in order to foster transfer and how she transforms her findings and theories into practice. Likewise, this work leads to the formation of a first year curriculum Russell calls for, giving it the formal name Writing About Writing (WAW).

WAW's foundations begin around 2007, where Downs and Wardle, at their respective institutions, taught pilot courses titled "Introduction to Writing Studies." Instead of students writing rhetorical essays related to specific topic areas or themes (e.g. sustainability, social justice, socioeconomic status,.), they read scholarly articles about writing in the university including work by composition scholars like Perl, Flower and Hayes, Murray, Gee, etc. The authors also conducted assessment of this course in real-time, using AT as a guide, and discovered three outcomes beneficial to the students: increased self-awareness about the writing process, improved abilities and confidence with reading, and realization that research writing can be a conversation (572-573). The awareness across all these outcomes is also connected to the mindfulness Wardle discusses in her other work, guided heavily by AT.

The genesis of using AT for FYC begins with Wardle's previous teaching and research. In "Building Context: Using Activity Theory to Teach About Genre in Multi-Major Professional

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Communication Courses" Wardle, along with Kain, introduced AT to professional writing students with the objective of increasing mindfulness in regards to how the documents students utilized and created in class, such as curricular items like syllabi, functioned in two contexts: their class and other professional settings Wardle and Kain found that "...when students begin their analyses with a suitable framework [like AT] for studying context, they move toward developing the mindfulness required to assess different situations and thus the role of texts within those situations" (15). Here, AT was able to provide both a theoretical and visual structure for students to realize that written documents could be tools that they use to achieve objectives, or rules to follow within respective contexts, or even an objective when considering a writing assignment as a product. The roots of this work grow into what ultimately becomes WAW. Soon after this work, Wardle partners up with Downs and develops a textbook for Writing About Writing-style courses. To paraphrase the main WAW practices from the book, students will:

- Read research about writing: students are encouraged to read scholarship regarding college writing.

- Conduct reading and writing auto-ethnographies: initial assignments are designed to help students focus on their various reading and writing literacies.

- Identify writing-related problems that interest them: instead of writing about any topic that could impact society, students specifically investigate problems where the act of writing is central to the issue.

- Write reviews of existing literature on chosen problems: after consuming reading about writing, students then perform scholarly reviews on the writing itself, using a contextual academic frame.

- Conduct primary research (reported orally and in writing): in addition to reviewing scholarship about writing, students also interview and interact with other writing professionals. (23-26)

Per these objectives, the curriculum helps expand our understanding of writing transfer because it immerses students in multiple contexts in addition to reflecting on some common FYC practices like process reflection, peer review, and literacy development. Just like in the professional writing courses, writing is a product, and a tool, and a set of rules within the curriculum; yet, at each step, students are challenged to become aware of how writing functions that way.

What separates the curriculum is that writing and discourse about writing is the focus. However, and I expand more on this later via my interviewing teachers and administrators, while I appreciate the intense metacognitive approach within WAW's structure, I am also concerned that the curriculum places students in roles as potential composition scholars. Most of our students are not going to be composition scholars, and my mild fear is that WAW creates a scholarly ouroboros over challenging students to take metacognitive risks within their future professional discourses. Regardless, this viewpoint does not discount Wardle's massive and important contribution to writing transfer, and to my own develop as a teacher and a scholar.

One contemporary, and complementary scholar to Wardle's work is Rebecca Nowacek who also studied FYC Writing transfer. In *Agents of Integration: Understanding Transfer as a Rhetorical Act*, Nowacek (2011) conducted a study on how transfer functions in first year, team-taught, interdisciplinary courses. Her interest coincides with other transfer scholars' questions—when and how does transfer occur; how can we foster transfer—yet her reframe is to discuss how students foster and achieve integration among themselves. In many ways, her work doesn't discount what teachers can do, yet reemphasizes students' own learning agency including both cognitive and

emotional successes. Hence, her definition of integration "is an act of transfer that assumes some degree of metacognitive awareness and a positive outcome for the student" (54). Here, Nowacek isn't using positive in the way we've come to understand it within transfer studies: the affirmation of learning. To her, the metacognitive awareness is the achievement of positive transfer, because the student recognizes that learning has taken place within themselves. Yet, she reminds us that students have an emotional agency toward their own success whether it's a high grade, completed course, or successful graduation; the transfer of experience is just as important as the transfer of skills and abilities. I boomerang back to this in chapter 5 as it emerged as an influence of teacher pedagogy.

Because she repositions transfer as an emotional act, she is even more concerned with how and when negative transfer occurs between contexts. In her conclusions she discusses the importance of understanding two transfer concepts: dialogization and double binds. The first is the moment when two incompatible activity systems come in contact with one another for the student. The range of this can be common macro-contexts, like work and school, or uncommon micro-contexts, like writing an essay for two different teachers where the expectations are different. For Nowacek, the latter of these examples occurred often in the classes she studied due to the team-teaching characteristic: one teacher had different expectations of writing than their partner. She recognizes that these occurrences are not rare, but that students do not see them in the metacognitive way that we might as teachers or older adults. Her fear is that students do realize the problem when they experience a double-bind, the second transfer concept, and one that AT scholars write about. Nowacek's double-blind description accurately characterizes what our students think/feel (and we we've likely thought/felt when we were students too): "uncomfortable and perhaps inevitable situations in which individuals experience contradictions within or between activity systems but cannot articulate any meta-awareness of those contradictions" (32). Here, she is emphasizing the frustration felt when the learning in one context has failed the application in

another context, with the student not understand that the cause for such an occurrence is very much not their fault, and could be due to any number of factors.

To help teachers create structures to enable students to avoid double-binds, or at least be aware as to why the contexts are incompatible, Nowacek reframes transfer as recontextualization, the ability for a student to pause and see the invisible, possibly incongruent activity systems at play. For her, there are five principles for teachers to see and frame for students how transfer works as recontextualization:

- Contexts are potentially connected through multiple pathways; not simply objectives, but also epistemologies, participants, cognitive tools, behaviors, etc.
- Because contexts and their connections are multi-connective, successful transfer is not just successful application, but successful reconstruction of both contexts.
- Successful transfer is both emotionally positive and negative (again, regardless positive confirmation or negative contradiction) and understanding that relationship is important.
- All genres that use language, written or spoken, provide an opportunity for transfer and should be studied as systems unto themselves.
- While meta-awareness is important function of transfer, it is not necessary for transfer. (20-30)

Wardle and Nowacek made direct and thought-provoking contributions to writing transfer as it applies to FYC. And even though I disagree with duplicating academic contexts for students only we, as academics, experience, I believe that Wardle's research corroborates Nowacek's findings in regards to both understanding the importance of contextual construction and the role mindfulness/metacognition plays in transfer.

Transfer History Coda

The overall arc of transfer scholarship from its early educational beginnings to scientifically "prove" it happens, to the more holistic understanding of conditions that support transfer, to its influence in PTW and FYC studies helps us see the importance of seeing this mostly invisible structure at play. Writing transfer helps us see how reflection on learning and analysis of contexts may not guarantee positive transfer in all scenarios, but can help students see the potential ways to connect knowledge, skills, and experiences. Writing transfer scholarship regarding FYC is off to a good start in helping us better understand how these concepts work with first year writing. And while I think both WAW, interdisciplinary teaching, and other creative curriculums may increase the likelihood of writing transfer, at least within university contexts, most FYC departments don't have the resources to construct those curricula. However, one critical aspect that Nowacek emphasized, and earlier scholars like Perkins, Salomon, and Beach discussed is emotion. The latter referred to it as motivation, but altogether, these scholars state that writing transfer is as much an emotional experience as it is a psychological and social one.

Expanding Transfer Terminology I: Perkins and Salomon

In "Teaching for Transfer" (2002), Perkins and Salomon expand transfer by characterizing our cognitive processes within these moments. In order of how I cover them, our new terms are **low/high road transfer**, **forward/backward reaching transfer**, and **hugging/bridging**. While these transfer concepts treads into psychology, understanding these cognitive processes helps FYC instructors in two ways. First, when designing connected assignments and/or preparing students for other contexts, we can consider what potential mental gymnastics we ask students to complete within our class, and what students/adults might experience in future contexts. Two, sharing, and explaining these terms with our students helps them better understand their own learning processes.

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Teaching students about these are akin to utilizing and explaining Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning: learning and transfer are always occurring, yet we're not actively thinking about it and/or aren't actively ascribing terminology when we know it's happening.

Similar to Bloom's Taxonomy, and lower versus higher order writing concerns, **low and high road transfer** aren't characteristics of intellectual prowess, yet designate the procedural complexity when we connect knowledge, skills, or experiences between contexts. "Low road transfer reflects the automatic triggering of well-practiced routines in circumstances where there is considerable perceptual similarity to the original learning context" (25). An easy summation is muscle memory: the occurrence of practicing a skill so frequently that, in highly similar contexts, we unconsciously recognize what we need to do, and often act without thought. This also entails no outside prompting is necessary because an individual perceives a situation to be similar. Other transfer researchers, like King Beach, refer to triggers as **affordances** and further suggest students can be taught to identify them, instead of a teacher using an assignment to prompt them, or when researchers are conducting interviews. Likewise, what sparks the triggered reaction is a person recognizing similar characteristics between the two contexts.

However, as Perkins and Salomon point out, most students aren't actively looking for similar characteristics within the classroom, or beyond. I raise this problem because it ties back to the roles objectives play within systems. All activity systems have objectives, yet how often are said objectives published or stated? Likewise, how many participants within a systems are aware of even where to look? And for smaller task-oriented transfer opportunities, it's not as if every task has immediately discernable objectives. From anecdotal observations from my teaching, students tend to valorize getting a good grade as their own personal objective, missing other key objectives and/or experiences that expand critical awareness. When I taught a technical writing course, students were tasked with revising a scholarship application. They did well in pointing out design and writing

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mechanic strengths/weaknesses, yet missed racist and sexist language within the document. After I pointed out one example, the students immediately identified other inequitable wording. Thus, their inability to do so was not due to preparedness, but where they were focusing.

Low road transfer is a more automatic process, yet **high road transfer** is where cognitive dexterity comes into play. High road transfer "depend[s] on deliberate mindful abstraction of skill or knowledge from one context for application in another" (25). Mindful abstraction is the process of breaking down two contexts in order to see what possible similarities exist, yet also enables someone to see that a tool may have additional uses in a different context, not matter how dissimilar. Mindfulness is one of five characteristics that Perkins and Salomon discuss in helping teachers understand how to create these scenarios and/or teach students how to achieve transfer. I touch more on these later. In the meantime, high transfer doesn't mean the problem in Context B isn't more complex than it was in Context A, but that the individual is actively, mindfully, and nimbly pulling apart contextual characteristics, and creatively thinking about how various knowledge and skills can align. Perkins and Salomon identify two sub-classifications of high road transfer that explain when a student can practice mindful abstraction: forward reaching and backward reaching.

I'll use two FYC examples to help illustrate. If a student's Context A is a Composition I class—and as my research has shown, typical curriculum is on essay writing, analysis, and rhetoric—and is actively, consciously aware their learning is "in *preparation* for application elsewhere" in a Context B, then the student is practicing **forward reaching**, high road transfer (26, my emphasis). I italicized preparation because, somehow, the student is aware (or emotionally believes) that said skill or knowledge is useful in a future context. For example, a student practicing the "Quote Sandwich" in shorter essays in a Composition I class, may have been taught that for Composition II—typically focused on research writing—they'll be expected to use a lot of direct quotations. Ideally, the student themselves would need to see and understand the value. Yet, this raises multiple challenges,

since students often receive vast information and need to prioritize what they'll retain and why. Hence why we all hear, even in writing courses: *is this going to be on the test?*

Briefly, another way to understand this is what I call "Dad's Car Advice." My father is a "gearhead" having worked as a mechanic in his young years, and doing some mild engineering (without a degree) in his first full-time job. When I go to him for car advice, I do so because of his ethos. However, he's not fully aware of the specific car situation I have, in addition to the fact that he's not the one who will fix it. Thus, anything that he tells me may be contradicted by the mechanic who's working on my car. I value the knowledge, but I also risk that it will be wrong.

Conversely, if the student is in Composition II, and when assigned a research paper *realizes* the "Quote Sandwich" activity in Composition I may be helpful, without being told, then they're experiencing **backward reaching**, high road transfer (26). Just as low road transfer is akin to muscle memory, this kind of high road transfer is the "Ah-ha Moment." The connection occurs because the student has seen common connections between experiences, and also explored their own catalog of tools and knowledge (from many Context As) enough to assume said tool or knowledge will solve a task or problem in Context B. Both backward and forward reaching transfer require some combination of pausing, critical reflection, and/or awareness. "High road transfer always involves reflective thought in abstracting from one context and *seeking* connections with other" (26, my emphasis). Again, the student must be actively trying to find connections.

In the spirit of praxis, Perkins and Salomon provide one last set of related terms characterizing exercises instructors can do to help facilitate both low road and high road transfer. **Hugging** activities are ones where student learn knowledge in Context A (or Task A), and when provided with an immediate Context B (or Task B), recognize that both contexts (or tasks) are very similar (28). It's essentially, practice. It may even be a skill and drill style activity. Yet, hugging activities allow students to affirm learned information in a new activity systems, be it task or context.

However, the act of **bridging** requires "teaching so as to meet better the conditions for high road transfer"; these "conditions" are intentional gaps of information between two activities, hoping that the students see the differences (28). Hugging is syllogistic: Context A is similar to Context B, and Skill 1 works in Context A, therefore Skill 1 is likely to work in Context B. However, bridging is more enthymematic, in the sense that the missing premise is connective tissue between disparate contexts or tasks. And hence, bridging leads to developing high road transfer. However, the aims of both exercises is really for high and low road transfer to become second nature. The difference is that practicing bridging exercises frequently, allows students to practice abstraction more often.

Perkins and Salomon's "Teaching for Transfer" provides terminology to better understand scenarios of transfer. Outcome terminology shapes the end result: has the student experienced positive transfer where feedback provided them with an affirmation of learning? Or negative transfer where the feedback contradicts knowledge? Related, this terminology characters how that outcome occurred cognitively. Was it muscle memory, a subconscious act, perceiving similar characteristics? Or did the student do additional abstraction to see similarities, drawing from areas of knowledge and skills that weren't overtly stated as being applicable? Scenario terminology frames the relationship between two contexts: are context A and B mostly different in their structures, creating a far transfer scenario, or are they mostly similar, creating near transfer scenarios?

Here's a summation and categorization of key transfer terms I'll use going forward.

Outcomes of Transfer
> **Positive:** learned knowledge/skills from Context A are applied and confirmed in Context B.
> **Negative:** learned knowledge/skills from Context A are applied and contradicted in Context B.

Relationship Between Transfer Contexts
> **Near:** Context A (learning) and Context B (application) possess mostly similar characteristics.
> **Far:** Context A (learning) and Context B (application) possess mostly different characteristics.

Modifying Relationship Between Transfer Contexts
    Hugging: teacher creates activities close in knowledge skills to apply
    Bridging: teacher leaves a gap for the student to apply knowledge.

Cognitive Processes During Transfer
    Low Road: Minimal critical thinking necessary because Contexts A & B seem similar.
    High Road: Deeper critical thinking necessary because Contexts A & B seem different.

High Road Transfer Sub-Categories
    Forward Reaching: Subject abstracts knowledge/skill in preparation for Context B, because the knowledge/skills seem pertinent to an inevitable future context.
    Backward Reaching: Subject abstracts knowledge/skill from previous Contexts A, that didn't seem pertinent at the time of learning.

We're already thinking about and discussing transfer in our objective formation and implementation, however, we may not know we're using these terms. By revealing these, Perkins and Salomon are making an argument to become aware of this meta-level pedagogical design, and aid in students' awareness. Moreover, high road transfer provides us terminology on the conditions of the journey that gets us to further think of the relationship between two contexts, whether we want students to draw from experience prior to our course (backward reaching) or from our course to future scenarios (forward reaching). The sole limitation in Perkins and Salomon's work, as I see it, is that the assumption is that characteristics of contexts, that students are learning in or learning for, are static and stable.

Expanding Transfer Terminology II: King Beach

In his contribution to the book *Between School and Work: New Perspectives on Transfer and Boundary-crossing*, King Beach (2003) confirms what I've argued previously: as educators, we're all interested in transfer, yet trying to achieve transfer feels like catching lightning in a bottle.

"As a construct in educational psychology, [transfer] refers to the appearance of a person carrying the product of learning from one task, problem, situation, or intuition to

another…[it's] distinguished from run-of-the-mill learning by virtue of its distinct tasks and situations, yet it does not include the genesis of tasks and situations as a part of the process…[it's] part of our moment-to-moment lives, yet seems difficult to study and even more difficult to foster intentionally" (101).

In the latter part of this quote, Beach reaffirms what other scholars consider regarding the difficulty with proving transfer—Nowacek's (2011) claim that accurate transfer data needs longitudinal studies; Wardle (2007a, 2007b), who does longitudinal studies, claims even if we have the data, it'll likely show positive transfer doesn't always occurs. In addition, Beach shows we don't consider the whole mechanics of transfer, including but not limited to, how we create occasions where learners will have "ah-ha!" moments.

Transfer is meant to be unpredictable and fluid. And multiple contexts may serve as Context A in relation to a single Context B where a student has an "ah-ha" moment, not because (former) students were "right" because we were "right," but because students discovered how they *can* connect knowledge, skills, and experiences. Therefore, Beach reframes transfer into **consequential transitions,** embracing fluidity and motion**,** identifying four scenarios—which all contain combinations of near/far, high/low road, etc. transfer characteristics—that account for how contexts change, and how people can be agents of their own learning, preparing students for the occasion of transfer, but not a specified outcome.

Before talking about these four, Beach stresses a concept students need to learn, that we've seen other transfer scholars discuss: generalization. "Generalization is defined as the continuity and transformation of knowledge, skill, and *identity* across various forms of social organizations, involves multiple interrelated processes rather than a single general procedure" (112, my emphasis). Wardle, and others, also refer to this act as "abstracting concepts," however, King Beach's definition is best,

because it considers how the common factor in all transfer scenarios is the identity, or experience, of the person moving between multiple contexts. The aim is not just for teachers to help create contexts for learning and preparation, yet for us to help students develop a meta-tool to unpack their own (dis)connections between contexts.

I find Beach's use of "continuity and transformation" reassuring as an educator, and highly applicable for our students. Part of why is due to its similarities with Schlossberg's Theory of Transition (1998), a student development theory focused on unpacking how students experience various events in their life. In brief, the theory is aimed at teaching college professionals how to help students thread out various tools and coping mechanisms during a traumatic event. Similar to Beach's use of "carrying" to discussing knowledge and skills, Schlossberg makes use of the term "moving through" also indicating motion (111-114). For both, students' previously gained knowledge, skills, and experiences are all important to help deal with a new context or event, yet also recognize that these three items can change.

For Beach, generalization is the flexible tool that helps students stretch and adapt regardless of how chaotic contexts, or their relationships to one another, are. And thus, and similar to language that Schlossberg uses, Beach uses the term consequential transition as opposed to transfer. I find this both developmentally encompassing for students, and loosens the rigidity other how scholars identify transfer scenarios. Beach identifies four kinds of consequential transitions that reshape the relationship between the standard Context A and Context B:

- Lateral Transitions

- Collateral Transitions

- Encompassing Transitions

- Mediational Transitions

These four characterizations of transition help use see transfer as omnidirectional instead of bidirectional, continuous instead of climactic, and threshold-bearing—the latter is important for all educational stakeholders to keep in mind: just because there's fluidity, doesn't mean learning is regressive. "Transitions are consequential when they are consciously reflected on, often struggled with, and the eventual outcome changes one's sense of self and social positioning" (114). Within this definition we see familiar themes—reflection, awareness—now coupled with language showing transfer isn't easy, and is dependent on social systems as much as individual learning (a clear departure from original transfer theorists like Thorndike, Judd, Lave, etc.). Beach developed these four moments via previous longitudinal studies he and others conducted, including ones where student subjects were enrolled in school and work simultaneously.

 Lateral and Collateral Transitions are most closely related to the traditional definitions of transfer, yet with modifications concerning the way we move between activities and contexts. For example, the **Lateral Transition** still "involves some notion of progress embedded in the particular sequence" of interrelated activities, indicating most transfer situations are considered forward reaching (115). However, Beach indicates that these kinds of transitions also have a "threshold of learning," opening them up to irreversible identity or experience configuration (115). Beach's example is someone who acknowledges their alcoholism in an AA meeting is using backward reaching, high road transfer to see how their behavior impacted their life. That is a threshold. For me, a more FYC related example relates to Crowley's (and our) concern about the mandatory requirement; completing any mandatory or required course, especially one that most students have to take, creates a shared experience, a rite of passage if you will. What we need to do, is not see FYC space as Context A, or even Context B, but a nexus with a shared relationship among many contexts. This also aligns with how students see college progression: getting into a major, completing a senior project, graduating, etc.

Beach's second transition deconstructs how we've come to see transfer: a singular, forward journey between two contexts. With **Collateral Transitions**, Beach reconsiders how transfer is an ongoing, omni-directional process, involving multiple, simultaneous contexts and activities. "Examples of collateral transitions are daily movement between home and school, participating in part-time work after school, and moving between language arts and science classes during the school week" (115). This expansion opens us to transfer happening at any time and/or space. Beach opened this up due to his studies (1995a, 1995b) as well as others (Moll 1992, Lareau 1989) all with the common theme of studying transfer between classroom space and non-classroom space (i.e. work, home, etc.). For example, Beach reflected on how the Nepali students he researched seemed to increase their ratio of positive to negative transfer outcomes, due to their realization of the high stakes within the marketplace; thus their written/verbal communication was stronger compared to in-class (121-122). Akin to my FYC exploration, more teachers indicated higher emotional labor at Lake City State because they had to prep students for the pass/fail blind portfolio process. Adding activities in FYC classes where students consider what learning is happening in current contexts, will help them build a network of transfer, showing they can have multiple Context As and Bs. Additionally, this transition reinforces how experience is just as transferrable as knowledge and skills.

Whereas lateral and collateral transitions run closer to traditional transfer understanding, Beach then introduces two more terms—**encompassing transition and mediational transition**—that take into consideration how contexts are always changing. First, to address the ways contexts specifically change, he introduces the concept of **encompassing transition**. "Individuals participating in encompassing transitions often experience the process as adapting to existing or changing circumstances in order to continue participation within the boundaries of the activity" (118). The phrase "experience the process as adapting" stands out because it emphasizes that

experiencing change, in and of itself, is an important condition for transfer. In many ways, this experience includes both near and far transfer qualities because if our current context changes, we have to adapt both in the short term and long. In my research, I observed this at Lake City Sate. Given that their FYC objectives changed every two years, but their blind portfolio process stayed the same, teachers had to make adjustments to their teaching. This resulted in new valorization of certain objectives, and in turn, caused pedagogical strategy to change.

The final transfer scenarios is akin to the simulations I've used in class: **mediational transition**. This occurs when an inner-context is created with a current context that is meant to be separate, yet still connects to knowledge, skills, or experience in the original context and a future one. "Mediational transitions exist along a continuum from classroom-based activities that have 'as if' or simulated relations to the world beyond the school, to partial or peripheral participation in the activities themselves" (118). The example Beach uses is from research he conducted on Technical Colleges where students enrolled in a culinary or food service program had to also run a kitchen with real customers. Simulations within FYC courses are few and far between, despite instructors somewhat often mentioning a future, far Context B to provide a rhetorical context to their assignments. For example, any FYC assignment that asks students to "imagine that they are X in Y context" would count as a potential mediational transition. However, I contend that while those basic assignments can count for mediational transitions, they are not getting at the robust learning experience that can be attached to an in-class simulation. A true simulation is different because, like all game-like activities, consequences must be and feel consequential with the newly created context, even if they are not consequential to the larger external context. These simulations can be one singular activity or a few activities that make up a larger simulation for a class meant to represent something in the real world; at the end of this chapter I discuss both how Lake City State's program has Mediational qualities, as well as some of my experiences teaching simulation.

Beach's work on consequential transitions is important to studying FYC transfer because it breaks traditional transfer understandings, moving from the more rigid, linear relationships, into more open organic ones. Lateral Transitions highlight that, regardless of the relationship between contexts A and B, there's still a threshold students experience. Collateral Transitions show how transfer can happen between any two concurrent contexts. Encompassing Transitions highlight an important, not often discussed phenomena: systems do change while subjects are in them. And how adapting, is another aspect of transfer, even if the participant hasn't left the context. Finally, Mediational Transitions create a space within a space, that opens the door for creative pedagogy. All four of these drastically shift how we see Context A and B, moving them from static concepts, to flexible ones.

For King Beach's Consequential Transitions, here are summaries and visuals; the latter I'm adding to emphasize the importance of how knowledge and skills are seen as movement between contexts:

Figure 1: Lateral Transitions: a "standard" transfer situation between two contexts with the recognition that there is a learning "point of no return" experienced by the student.
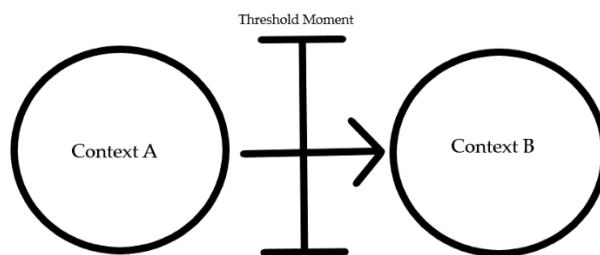
Figure 2: Collateral Transitions: multiple concurrent contexts are both drawn from and applied to by the student, breaking the traditional binary context relationship.
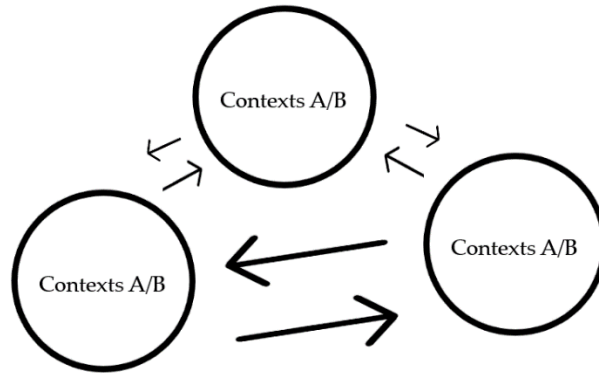
Figure 3: Encompassing Transitions: The context within knowledge and skills are being learned changes, potentially altering what is learned.
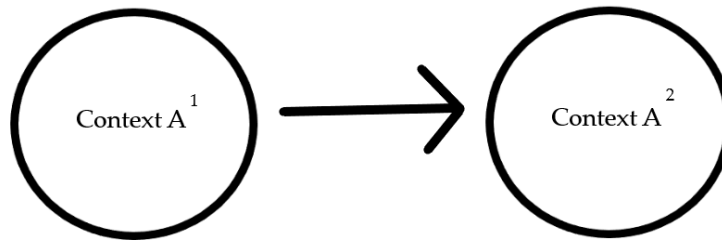
Figure 4: Mediational Transitions: A third context is created within a learning context, where knowledge and skills gained in that third context can then be applied to a future context.
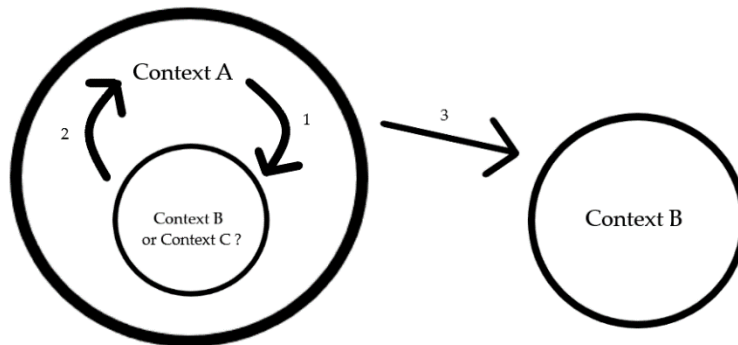
Conclusion

We are all concerned with transfer, even if specific objectives in FYC don't always state so directly. Furthermore, scholars have their own views on transfer's possibilities and how to create/construct them within the context we have the most control over: the classroom. Yet, our mindset needs to incorporate both the best practices that Composition scholarship provides and a meta-awareness of the various contexts that exist in relation to our classroom or Context A. This means further pushing ourselves to explore and research characteristics found in many Context Bs (regardless of similarities and differences) and also considering how to form a Context C, the transitional spaces Beach characterizes, within our classrooms. Finally, I believe that through forming and making students aware of Context C, we can likewise aid them in both generalization and any other metacognition they need to keep being ongoing learners, the most important outcome of any first year class, writing or otherwise. I revisit Context C in chapter 5, discussing the Mediational Transitions a couple teachers and one FYC program enacts. In chapter 4, I showcase how all three program are concerned with transfer, in general, yet address more particular challenges for teachers and students when forming their curriculum. Next, I characterize my methodology and methods that yielded those narratives.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology & Methods

Introduction

Attempting to answer my research question—how and why do certain influences impact Writing Program administrators and teachers when they form and communicate FYC objectives?—I used Activity Theory (AT) as a methodology and included three qualitative methods: interviews, observations, and artifact analysis. Using AT mirrors fellow writing transfer scholars. Likewise, when reviewing writing transfer research, I felt the most the rich data came from stakeholder interviews; participants reflecting on what they've learned in Context A and how it applied to Context B was informative. And even though my central focus was on the formation of FYC objectives, I wanted to expand my methodologies and methods in order follow objectives from administrator creation to teacher dissemination to student actualization. In short, I wanted my study to reflect the game of telephone, seeing if/how the FYC objectives administrators designed were enacted or considered by the FYC students they were aimed at.

Unfortunately, that didn't work out. I won't belabor all that went wrong, yet before getting into what I ultimately chose and why, I wanted to acknowledge that original plan. Two reasons for doing so. First, I still think that kind of in depth study would be beneficial to our curricular and pedagogical planning. Yes, technically this is what programmatic assessment is supposed to achieve. However, as I show in chapter 4, those results often aren't as clear cut or as narratively rich as they could be to see what objectives, or parts of objectives, trickle down to students.

Second, as this was my first qualitative study, I learned a lot from the mistakes and missteps in my planning and execution. Many of those shortcomings are examples of productive struggle, and will help me when I plan future primary research. For example, I learned that playtesting student surveys and being patient/persistent with finding participants will alleviate a lot of issues. Likewise, that grander project could utilize assistants. At the same time, there were some accidental discoveries

I'll likely write about in another forum. For example, I'm fascinated why many schools were hesitant or reluctant to participate in the study. They had every right to decline, of course, yet in one case, the school itself was just starting to pilot their FYC program; following those administrators and teachers over the course of the year was exactly the narrative I was hoping for.

Ultimately, I still stayed within the path of fellow transfer researchers using AT and qualitative methods in order to learn more about FYC objective formation. In this chapter, first I provide an anonymized overview of the three schools I studied for the narratives I share in chapters 4 and 5. I include my rationale for why those settings were important to my study. Second, I explain my methodological influence and methods. Finally, I end on a researcher narrative that establishes bias checks and ethical rules. In addition to sharing three research assumptions, for transparency, I also discuss any potential validity issues.

Part 1: Schools & Programs

First, it's important to establish what kinds of schools/FYC programs I sought. The metropolitan area in question, which I'll refer to as Lake City, offered a wide variety of higher education institutions: public, private, Research I, Liberal Arts, Technical, Community College, large, small, etc. Diversity of institutional type was a focus. Related, I wanted to see how diverse student populations were impacted by different systems. If part of understanding transfer is considering backwards reaching transfer activities, we should understand what contexts our students draw knowledge, skills, and experiences from, as seen in pedagogical studies regarding different cultures like Yi, Rose, DeStigter.

Second, while the range of possible universities were wide, and their respective FYC program types varied (I assumed), I established guidelines for programmatic parameters. They needed to have a first year writing program, with at least one mandatory class, and majority

enrollment of first year students. Likewise, I preferred FYC programs who had a second writing course students likely took soon after the first. My reasoning for both characteristics relates to the postulate from chapter 2, about the major unstated objective being related to transfer.

Outside of these conditions, I was open to other qualities, and gave myself some scope limitations when it came other classes that may have been a part of the FYC curriculum. I was open to the history and size of the FYC program. I very much wanted to have a range of established and new or emerging FYC programs, or ones in transition, etc. I was likewise open to number and aggregate instructors employed. And finally, I was open to wherever the FYC program was housed. The two programs I've been a part of were both housed within an English Department, and employed a significant amount of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs), yet had different leadership structures.

My scope limitations avoided other classes even if somewhat related to FYC programs. For example, I wanted to see how FYC connected to other writing courses, I chose not to consider advanced writing courses typically found in Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) programs. Therefore I didn't interview any stakeholders in charge of designing or teaching classes that weren't primarily aimed at first year students (even in cases where most students could take those classes in their first year). Additionally, I eliminated online courses, and those once classified for "basic" writing. For online courses, while objectives were likely the same, the pedagogy would be different. An FYC program could have an online component, yet if it was a majority of the FYC classes, then I avoided interviewing those faculty. I had a similar approach with "Basic" writing courses. Those classes are not necessarily mandatory and often carry different objectives. I was interested in the courses everyone had to take (to me, seen as educational thresholds). However, I did include any class that had an ESL/ELL special designation, but were not considered a precursor to the first FYC class in a suite. And yet, from the noticeable data I received in regards to ESL/ELL students and

teachers, I think a follow up study should focus solely on those experiences! There are clear, additional challenges ESL/ELL students face, and a better understanding of said challenges, as well the emotional roadblocks those students experience, would be valuable information for all FYC programs.

Clover University

Clover University (aka Clover) is a 4 year, religiously affiliated private university located a few miles north of Lake City's downtown area, in a more suburban area. The school has an approximate enrollment of 2500 students: 2/3s are undergraduates and 1/3 graduate or post-graduate. When founded, the university was designated as a college yet changed its designation after the 21st century's start, in order expand curricular options for students. Within that expansion are multiple majors across larger subject areas such as Business, Education, Arts, Criminal Justice, and Nursing. The school's diversity index is average according to US News and World Report.

Admittedly, I didn't know much about Clover, and what I did know was anecdotal at best. Hence, going into the school without any prior knowledge was exciting. When I started meeting participants I was instantly glad and grateful they consented to be studied. Their FYC program is small yet proportional to their student enrollment, yielding only one administrator and a handful of faculty, both tenure and teaching track as well as part-time. The program has been established for a while now and is housed within their English Department. Many faculty who teach FYC courses also teach other English courses. They conduct an internal assessment at least once year, involving most of their faculty. In summation, they are unique to this study because they are the "smallest" program and one that has the fewest amount of curricular changes.

South Harmon Technical Institute

South Harmon Technical Institution (aka South Harmon) is one of a state-wide publicly supported technical college system within the Midwestern state it resides. It's located in the heart of Lake City within a small geographical space; less than a few buildings make up the school, even if the buildings themselves are fairly large. However, they have smaller campuses throughout the Lake City metro area. Considered to be a 100% commuter institution, the total enrollment of South Harmon is above 35,000. South Harmon offers traditional, online, and hybrid instruction (pre-pandemic) in order to serve its population of mostly part-time, non-traditional, and continuing education students, in concentrations totaling over 170. According to the diversity index, South Harmon is well above average. In addition to majors seen at traditional four year institutions, South Harmon also offers majors and degrees in culinary arts, engineering, hospitality, and other hands on, onsite educational experiences.

While not the only technical college in the area, I was excited they agreed to participate given their size and longevity. Their writing program employs a range of teachers part-time to full-time, tenure to teaching track. The WPA is made up of administrator-teachers, with shared power, although one participant is seen as the central leader. They also conduct assessment but the assessment, and its FYC objectives, are dictated by the statewide technical college system. Since they also have satellite campuses, their assessment is overseen by an assessment specialist (who also teaches), yet all the WPA and some faculty participate in the process. Finally, what makes them the most unique compared to the other two schools is that the WPA doesn't have a say in its objectives. They can make some internal modifications to content and assignments, but not to the language of its objectives.

Lake City State University

Lake City State University (aka Lake City State) was, at the time, gaining Research I designation, and is part of the state-wide higher education system that includes traditional 4 year and 2 year community college institutions. However, this system is separate from the one South Harmon belongs to. Enrollment-wise, it's the second largest university in the state system with a total enrollment of over 26,000 students: about 80% undergraduates and 20% graduates. It includes five different schools with a wide range of majors including Business Administration, Fine Arts, Nursing, and Education, to name a few. Compared to other 4 year, Research I institutions of its size, it's missing a Law or Medical School, but is otherwise very comprehensive and academically competitive. While it offers on-campus housing, it's located in a predominantly residential neighborhood on a border shared between Lake City proper and northeast suburbs. Yet, it has a significant number of commuting students and offers online instruction as well (pre-pandemic).

My draw to Lake City State's program was its size and its unique operations. Not only does the program, housed in an English Department, serve a large group of students, but it employs a large and wide group of instructors. There's a proportional amount of graduate students and teaching track faculty who teach FYC classes, meaning the range of teaching experiences within this pool goes from no previous teaching to those who've taught for almost two decades. Tenure track faculty have been known to teach FYC courses, yet it's rare. Instructors within the program typically teach upper level writing courses as well, including graduate students. The program's unique operations are twofold: first, their WPA team is a communal mentor-style design, and includes graduate students, teaching track faculty, and tenure track faculty as key decision makers. Additionally, students are evaluated via an internal, blind portfolio process, and don't receive grades until after the process is completed. This internal process is also separate from, but evaluated by, two different assessments: an internal one ran by the WPA, and one by the larger school it falls

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under. Finally, given the amount of control they have over their program, they can modify their FYC objectives as often as they'd like.

Part 2: Theory & Methodological Influence

Activity Theory as Methodology

Three reasons Activity Theory (AT) influenced my methods. First, as I mentioned in Chapter 2, it's commonly used in writing transfer studies. In addition to the contemporary use of AT by Russell, Wardle, and Nowacek, early transfer scholars Scribner and Cole characterized the need for a theory that would help articulate a complex system including the relationship between cognitive and social learning. The authors stated that they wanted to "draw on some well-specified theory of cognition, especially a theory spelling out the mechanisms by which social factors affect cognitive variation" (234). This is not far from AT's origins, where early models only focused on the relationship between subject/participant and object/objective. Some scholars added tools as a third component, recognizing that our experiences achieving objectives are mediated by tools and may vary the ways we complete said tasks.

The model expanded throughout the 20th century, coinciding with our understanding that educational systems are social systems unto themselves. Social components (Rules, Community, and Roles) were added by Leontiev (1978) in order to explain how tasks and systems are socially impacted/influenced/created. Likewise, Scribner and Cole's writings acknowledge the critical place Lev Vygotsky, another foundational scholar, holds within both literacy and transfer studies. In their literacy forming definition—"a recurrent, goal-directed sequence of activities using a particular technology and particular systems of knowledge"—a connection can be made between what they wanted in a theory and how Vygotsky evolved it (236). Moreover, the authors argue that "in order to identify the consequences of literacy, [literacy researchers] need to consider the specific

characteristics of specific practices. And, in order to conduct such an analysis, we need to understand the larger social system that generates certain kinds of practices..." (237). Here, they suggest that to best understand effective transfer, a model must include the full system. Contemporary AT provides that structure, showing the complexity of social influence on individual participants.

Second, AT is a flexible tool, wherein some scholars make modifications to AT in ways that help analysis, not to "fudge" data, rather to show how systems are not static. For example, Wardle uses AT as a methodological frame for a two-year study on an FYC course because it was a flexible frame to scrutinize FYC objectives. Wardle picked it since many lenses fell short: "methods for analyzing assignments on genre and rhetorical situation [were] not available" (773). Nowacek, in *Agents of Integration*, uses AT to analyze first year interdisciplinary courses. In her study analyzing three team-taught classes on history, literature, and religious studies, she used AT to unpack the writing done in all three courses. Nowacek similarly embraces AT's flexibility. She isolated the webbed-relationship between Subject/Object/Tools; while not eschewing the Rules/Community/Roles relationship, she argued that those areas are often intrinsically intertwined with Tools and Objectives. Nowacek's use has some similarities to Wardle and Russell, because she's reframing various collegiate writing activity systems, and using AT to model them in her book. These examples support AT's versatility in categorization.

A third reason is the familiarity I spoke about in regards to the hairball. Much like how I characterized the way Student Development Theory codified what we were intuitively practicing as Student affairs professionals, AT's done the same for my understanding of systems (or hairballs). Nowacek showed how AT works with her methods because it "provides a vocabulary and a unit of analysis that highlight the connections that result when multiple activity systems intersect" (21). As Nowacek points out, AT looks at the intersection of multiple users, unlike a standard TQM

approach, where only one model is created for analysis. In other words, a student may see the system functioning differently than teachers, and teachers differently than administrators; those comparisons help with categorizing the valorization of certain model components, not often found in TQM. This mechanism is why AT is so useful for a study like mine: AT is not all problem finding, it also validates successful connections.

Part 3: Methods

Method #1: Stakeholder Interviews

Interviewing folks brings out the nectar of experiential information. My original focus was to use interviews to triangulate the different perspectives that administrators, teachers, and students had about their particular FYC program, objectives, and training. With that, I was hoping to interview close to 100% of those who held a position on their WPA, as well as a good sample size of instructors. I managed to get up to 100% of key WPA leaders at all three institutions, yet only at one institution was I able to interview instructors that would've provided a decent sample. Due to lack of teacher interviews, I relied on Administrator-Teachers to help me paint a larger picture of how instructors navigated FYC objectives.

For teachers, I hoped to talk with at least 5 instructors per school, or about 50% of instructional staff for smaller departments. I had two participant requirements: the teacher needed to be teaching a face-to-face, FYC class within the academic year, and the teacher must be considered full-time in some fashion. This means, graduate students were perfectly acceptable so long as they held a graduate teaching assistantship (since that also meant they were full-time students in addition to "full-time" teachers, even if that was a legal designation some schools avoid). I wanted to avoid talking with any instructor who was part-time, and only casually taught at the school. Contingent faculty that were brought in to teach one or two courses on a temporary basis were not considered,

although I do think that would be a fascinating and relevant study given the increase in labor related issues in writing.

To solicit interviews, and any methods, I first contacted whomever was considered the lead or solitary Writing Program Administrator (herein referred to as WPA lead or WPA team if I'm referring to the whole group or program). After a lead granted me permission, I sent an e-mail out to stakeholders, via the lead or e-mail list-serv, with my contact information and a release form. I informed folks that each interview would take about an hour. Interviews were conducted in their office and, after seeking permission to do so, I recorded them using a digital recorder, as well as took notes. I likewise followed all IRB requirements in conjunction with data collection and privacy.

I followed Yin's suggestion to differentiate and use Level 1 and Level 2 question types. Level 2 are research questions that guide the design of my study (see chapter 2), and Level 1 are the direct questions participants answer; the aim is not to guide participants into a line of thought, but let them naturally respond and use follow ups to dig deeper, revealing relevant data (87). Moreover, Yin proposes effective interviews are more conversational in nature (106-107). I concur. And, the case made throughout chapters 4 and 5, is that an emotional component is necessary within conversational interviews that result in positively impacting participants via reassurance and validation. Many folks shared appreciation regarding how much they liked reflecting on and talking about their administrative roles and/or teaching.

Another caution that proved helpful was Yin's suggestion about phrasing. "Specific questions must be carefully worded, so that [the investigator] appears genuinely naïve about the topic and allows the interviewee to provide a fresh commentary…" (107). Given that I was very familiar with at least one schools (because I had taught there), I made sure to ask all questions, neer modifying or skipping over them even if I knew potential answers about FYC structure. I needed fresh and honest perspectives. I even reinforced and reminded any participant who knew me to

explain things as if I didn't know them. I was very diligent in my conversational approach that if a participant glossed over something I may have known, I politely asked them to clarify as if I didn't know. Admittedly, this is easier than it sounds, yet I held fast.

The questions designed for each interview group were mostly the same because they would help me conduct a comparative analysis on how each stakeholder saw their respective FYC system. The only variations between question sets related to what procedural access participants had. For example, administrators were asked more directly about the complete WPA and FYC structure, whereas teachers what they knew from outsider positions. If an administrator or teacher held dual roles, I interviewed them within their capacity as their "highest" role; in most cases, hybrid participants were interviewed as administrators. Almost all administrators were currently teaching, and with that, I also made sure had ample conversational spots regarding their teacher in addition to administrative responsibilities. Here are teacher and administrator question sets, with an overall rationale to follow.

Figure 5: WPA Stakeholder Questions

1. Could you please provide a brief background on your experience as an administrator and FYC instructor?

2. Could you please provide an organizational structure of your Writing Program including any departmental or university influences?

3. Could you please provide a brief background discussing how the FYC objectives were formed including what stakeholders were involved?
Potential Follow Up: What Composition or writing theories (if any) guide these decisions?

4. Walk me through the language of your common FYC objectives explaining the rationale behind your word choice, phrasing, order, etc.?

5. What parts of your curriculum design are tied into these objectives whether directly or indirectly? What is the relationship of the curriculum to the objectives?

6. How do you introduce these objectives to all FYC instructors?
Potential Follow Up: What is the experience make up of your FYC instructors?

7. What liberties do FYC instructors have in introducing these objectives to students or modifying the language?

8. What liberties do FYC instructors have in forming the curriculum of their specific FYC section?

9. What kind of follow up, if any, do you coordinate with FYC instructors concerning these objectives and/or curriculum items related to the objectives?

10. How are these objectives evaluated in FYC courses? How are these objectives assessed on a larger scale for your department?

11. Based upon your experiences thus far in this course, rank order the objectives you feel you most focus on to least. Why do you feel this order is this way?

12. Is there anything else related to your creation, information, and evaluation of the FYC objectives that you will feel would be pertinent to this study?

Figure 6: Teacher Stakeholder Questions

1. Could you please provide a brief background on your experience as an FYC instructor and your position here at the university?

2. Could you please provide what you know about how the FYC objectives were formed for your department including what stakeholders were involved?

3. How were you introduced to these objectives?

4. Walk me through the language of your common FYC objectives explaining their rationale. **Potential Follow Up:** Is this how you convey these FYC objectives to your students? Or do you use a different approach? If different, how different?

5. What parts of your curriculum design are tied into these objectives whether directly or indirectly?

6. What liberties are you allowed with describing FYC objectives and/or modifying your curriculum (if any)? Why do you make changes?

7. How do you evaluate how these FYC objectives are met?

8. Does your department assess these FYC objectives on a larger scale (e.g. for accreditation)?

9. What kinds of follow up, if any, do you receive from the WPA concerning these objectives and/or curriculum items related to the objectives?

10. Based upon your experiences thus far in this course, rank order the objectives you feel you most focus on to least. Why do you feel this order is this way?

11. Is there anything else related to your creation, information, and evaluation of the FYC objectives that you will feel would be pertinent to this study?

Every system question except for one was duplicated in both WPA and Teacher question sets. The parallel questions either addressed Objective Formation Processes (WPA #3, Teacher #2), Objective Rational (both #4), Objective Influence on Teaching (both #5), Objective Training (WPA #6, Teacher #3), and Objective Evaluation/Assessment (WPA #10, Teacher #s 8, 7). For reference, I considered Objective Evaluation related to any grading or procedure ending in a grade for students, and Objective Assessment as the separate process measuring how well/much individual classes and the FYC program as a whole is meeting its objectives. WPA questions 7, 8 and Teacher question 6 are also systems questions, but were probably the most personal, since both talk about where, when, why, and how much teachers can make adjustments to their teaching. In addition, here are four caveats regarding my own question formation.

First, within the objective formation process (WPA #3, Teacher #2) I had a preplanned follow up with regard to potential Composition, or other academic theory influence for WPA participants only. I did consider also having a question for teachers, since that's one my assumptions and curiosities. Ultimately, I chose not to include a specific academic theory question, however, almost all teachers stated that they subscribed to certain theories without. Many teachers raised scholarly points and influences in questions 1, 5, and 6. It may seem odd, yet I didn't want to lead teachers into academic theories artificially or force them to think about something that wasn't within their immediate purview on how/why they taught.

Second, two sets of questions I'm glad I asked, but I think weren't strong questions in hindsight. Question 4 (both sets) where I ask about the rationale behind each objective, could and should have been a research project unto itself. At least two schools FYC objectives were laundry lists. In most cases, participants and I had a fair amount of time to get through all questions, and/or

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make follow up arrangements to continue if we didn't complete the whole set. However, to realistically go line by line and attempt to either explain (from the WPA perspective) why the objective existed, or divine (from the Teacher perspective) why the objective was present would've taken forever. Many participants' responses weren't necessarily specific, often grouping certain objectives together, usually by the sub-heading they fell under, and then providing a generalized rationale. While I didn't get the kind of data in the way I imagined—detailed unpacking of each objective—the many responses I received from WPA question #11 and Teacher question #10, helped explain if/how/why certain objectives were valorized. I present those results in chapter 5.

Related, question 9 (for both) was also an odd/weak question in hindsight. The question actually makes the assumption that after departmental or programmatic assessment, teachers are followed up with. Yes, this does connect to and attempt to resolve my third assumption regarding consistency (or accountability, really). While the question does pair well with WPA questions #7/8 and Teacher question #6—both regarding what leeway teachers have—on its own, the question didn't yield much data. The most consistent role I discovered about assessment among all three schools was that it was completed, yet rarely was it used to follow up with teachers and/or change objectives.

Third, WPA question #11 and Teacher question #10 were the only questions influenced by game scholarship in addition to AT. Under AT, the original aim was similar to other questions: based upon different stakeholders, what congruencies or incongruencies exist among their perspectives? However, unlike question 4 (from both) which focuses on rationale, the aim was to measure valorization. Jesper Juul, in Half-Real (2005), synthesizes a highly important set of readings that attempt to define what a game is. He presents a list of six qualities, three of which I feel are important to this discussion of stakeholder perception.

- Games are guided by objectives

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- Some objectives are valorized more than others

- Players invent their own objectives

I knew, even before I analyzed FYC objective artifacts, that objective lists were fairly long. Given that a semester contains a finite temporality, I was very curious to know if, how, and why administrators, teachers, and students focused on certain objectives. Not to extricate administrators from this discussion, but teachers and students only have so much time—and likely feel the most stakes—within a semester to fulfill course objectives. For teachers, they can only afford so much labor to spend explaining, discussing, clarifying, evaluating objectives, that I thought it difficult to believe they can focus on all of them equally.

In game scholarship, this is an important consideration since game designers see the game in a particular way that is often different from players. For example, the most powerful item in a game, may not be the most commonly used item among players. For you "gaming-muggles" I'll explain in another way. In the boardgame Monopoly, it's not uncommon for folks to valorize Boardwalk and Park Place because they're the two most expensive properties; yes, if folks land on them, the rent is the highest. But those spaces aren't the "best" if you consider that A. they're more expensive to buy and build with houses and hotels, and B. they are not as frequently landed on as other spaces are. While I can't speak to Monopoly designers' original motives, they may have unintentionally valorized those spaces due to their financial significance.

Fourth, WPA questions #7/8 and Teacher question #6 about what limitations and curricular freedoms administrators allow and teachers employ, were originally meant to help explore the consistency assumption I stated earlier. However, it was often within said responses where real teaching narratives were explored. While the two WPA questions seem pretty similar the data yielded painted a picture of system navigation, and, when coupled with responses from the valorization questions, further demonstrated that teachers commit a fair amount of labor, as sort of educational

middle managers, balancing the administrative expectations with student needs. To me, this discovery was a happy accident. I still had enough data for systems analysis (showing potential incongruencies between stakeholders), while also showcasing the good work teachers were doing in their respective classes.

Interviews ended up being the most utilized of all three sources. Responses often cross-referenced multiple questions. The conversational nature helped support and reinforce participants required anonymity, while also providing space for them to be human, to be represented as people and educators, and not just subjects. Likewise, these questions helped build what I've stated is missing from FYC and Composition scholarship in general: narratives regarding how FYC programs are formed.

Method #2: Observations

Observations help characterize activity systems and provide less filtered qualitative data. When interviews follow observations—a pairing frequently seen in writing transfer research—participants are afforded a helpful reflection of their experiences, likewise enriching data. For this project I aimed for that pairing as much as possible when it came to classroom observations for teachers who agreed to be interviewed. Likewise, I wanted to also be in spaces where multiple stakeholders were discussing objectives in some capacity. When students were initially within the scope of this project, that would be classroom space and individual conferences. For administrators and teachers, professional development seminars, trainings, and related meetings. I didn't have a set number of these events I was hoping to attend, yet intended to at least hit "major" ones (for example, pre-fall semester trainings).

Procedurally, I coordinated with the WPA leads at each school over when these took place, always after initially interviewing the WPA lead. For all observations, I informed participants ahead

of time via e-mail, usually sent through the WPA lead or an e-mail list-serv to all teachers and administrators. I included the release form for reference, yet disseminated the form at the start of the meetings, taking careful note who wanted to participate in the study or not. For those who didn't, even if I picked them upon a recording (there was no way to anticipate enough to pause or stop the recording) I omitted them from transcriptions and, in turn, dissertation. If a larger group wished to break into smaller groups, I re-asked those participants in smaller groups and only recorded a group if 100% of the participants said yes. I followed these procedures similarly for class sessions and students as well.

Ultimately, and unfortunately, I received a smattering of observations, and all from only one of three schools. This occurred for two reasons. First, only so many teachers were interested in being interviewed, and even from that pile, only a handful were comfortable with me doing a classroom observation. Related, I wasn't able to attend any one-on-one sessions, mostly due to availability. Thus, student/teacher events were few and far between. Second, while Lake City State had a treasure trove of teacher/administrator meetings (and solo-stakeholder meetings), the other two schools didn't have them as frequently and/or were not talking about FYC objectives in any capacity. Finally, from the few meetings I did get, some of that data was lost when I lost a flash drive where I kept audio files and transcripts. Thus, I'll mention some of what I observed, but note that I'm paraphrasing or talking in generalities (from the written notes I do have), while trying to be respectful and not interjecting things I can't quote specifically.

Method #3: Artifact Collection

Again, I think my eyes were bigger than my stomach. I initially started off wanting to track student writing, a very common practice in Writing Transfer scholarship. That plus observations plus (hopefully) any student interviews were meant to help portray any (in)congruencies among how

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FYC objectives were perceives and/or how valorized some were over others. I then focused

primarily on teaching documents: handouts, syllabi, any supplemental material. But again, I also

wanted to contrast that data with what I learned from interviews and observations. While I did get

some materials from teachers, I ultimately ended up only using/referencing a couple items, only

when teachers spoke to them.

From administrators, the most important artifact was the current list of FYC objectives. As I

stated above, I used these documents in all my interviews in order talk with other stakeholders about

how they interpreted objective language. From there, my second goal was to collect as many FYC

objective communication documents as possible, which included any materials from training or

professional development sessions. If a school provided their staff with a handbook, I'd take the

handbook (only one school had them, Lake City State). Finally, for assessment data, I was hoping to

get a statistical snapshot. I again encountered two issues: first, the only assessment data helpful for

systems analysis would have come at the end of the academic year; and second, the WPA would

have to be ok with publishing it. The former was an odd oversight on my part; again, with potential

graduation and leaving the area for a job across the country, I wouldn't have received that data on

time. The latter was more of an obstacle I expected, although at least one administrator did walk

through and provide some data (which was another casualty in my flash drive fiasco; I mention one

thing I found, but it could still be considered anecdotal).

Methods Coda

My wide range of data gathering tactics was whittled down to three still important methods.

Ultimately, while I rely mostly on interviews in chapters 4 and 5, they were solid in-depth

interactions; what little data I had from the last two methods were also sufficient enough to help

characterize FYC objective creation and dissemination. Likewise, I acknowledge in chapters 4 and 5

where missing data would've helped, or acknowledge the limitations of certain claims. To end this chapter, I share my researcher narrative to address any bias and discuss assumptions I had before collecting any data.

Part 4: Researcher Narrative: Assumptions, Biases, and Validity

> "As a preface to the discussion of establishing the reliability and validity of an ethnographic study, I want to note that in the early stages of research design an ethnographer must rely in part on hunches. Going into a site, the ethnographer has some idea of the material she may gather but will not know what material she really has at hand until she is deep into the process." (Beaufort 199)

While I wasn't attempting an ethnographic study at all, I found Beaufort's thoughts here relevant to my research plan and experience. There aren't scholarly narratives about FYC objective formation to pattern other studies off of. However, Beaufort's work, among others, did help me work through a lot of the challenges I faced: too many methods initially planned for; unexpected rejection from schools/administrators/teachers; survey design errors. Beaufort's quote characterizes my experience: I didn't know until I was knee deep in the study that some plans weren't feasible.

However, my hunches were alive and well. And so I continued on my deep dive trying to understand how FYC programs formed and trained on their objectives: FYC programs, and the teachers who teach within them, need their stories to be heard. I also believe that my investigation could should be done with respect and care, especially since I would be an outsider to some of these programs. Patricia Sullivan supports this reflective approach as an outsider using ethnographic methods:

"I would argue for [critical self-reflexivity] in composition studies of writing communities, that is, studies in which cultural similarities seem more marked than differences. For once again, composition researchers most often undertake ethnographies that are closer to home, if not at home…when studying literacy or pedagogy in such contexts, it is easy to forget that our own status as researchers, as academics, is itself a social location invested with diverse and contestable meanings." (Sullivan 106-107)

I think my position as a graduate student conducting research encouraged the three departments that ultimately agreed to share their stories. I adhered to that trust and mutual respect with every interaction. Many participants expressed joy at having an opportunity to reflect on their own work or teaching, with interviews often dovetailing into conversations. And while I have considered myself an empath, validating their experiences by sharing an occasional story or two, I never deviated too far from my aim of unpacking these FYC systems, and understanding the people who worked within them.

Likewise, I established reflective subjectivity checks, using Alan Peshkin's "In Search of Subjectivity" (1988), creating rules for myself. First, like many graduate researchers, I sought council when faced with potentially controversial discoveries. Second, I kept a professional literacy dossier of previous professional experiences that may have elicited any bias in my methods or observations. For example, as someone interested in the "hairball," and as noted in previous stories, I know it's easy for me to notice flaws or missteps in processes. Again, I sought consultation when I felt my hunches were going too far into areas that were overly critical.

Third, and finally, I wanted to work out, and be transparent about my bias. Researchers using ethnographic methods are not free from identity, experiences, or perspectives when conducting a semi-deep dive into a system. As Brenda Jo Brueggemann states "We can neither be

exclusively participant nor wholly observer because, in order to be reflective in our roles and representations as qualitative researchers, our frames must always be ready to shift; they cannot be contained in any of these entities. We must instead 'work the hyphen,' traverse the terrain of what is 'happening between' participant and observer, learn to negotiate the 'zippered borders' of our various roles and representations (Fine 70)" (19-20). As an outsider-insider, I felt I was traversing such a space. In addition to needing to recognize my privileged position, both as a researcher and person, I created three assumptions (modified from Dr. Rachel Spilka's "propositions"), to reveal potential bias in my design and implementation.

Assumption One: Scholarship Has a Required, Undefined Role in Curriculum and Pedagogy

Every decision made within an FYC system feels like it must be grounded in and/or supported by some scholarship, whether from peer-reviewed journals or books, ranging from pedagogical theories, to qualitative/quantitative research studies, to conference think-pieces, or any combination therein. Ultimately, I know scholarship had some role, yet that role (or roles) didn't seem consistently used. I already introduced the narrative in chapter 2 that explains my confusion, yet in brief, here's the gist. Student affairs professionals don't eschew scholarship, yet don't wield it like a cudgel (often but not always) when talking with fellow professionals. In academia, conversations somewhat consistently circle back to scholarship. Folks expressed either a connective "oh, did you get that from such-and-such the FYC scholar?" or a more confrontational "what scholarship is backing up your choice?" In short, unclear what the exact aim is, or really, more curious as to why, and this may be my sole experience, there've been more off-putting conversations than illuminating ones?

Confessionally, throughout my grad experience, I had other project ideas shot down because I couldn't provide an immediate scholarly reference. Many of these interactions, whether I was

participant or witness, felt like the Doubting Game from Peter Elbow's *Writing Without Teachers* (1973). The Doubting Game, as Elbow sees it, is a common academic practice where instead of supporting a students' initial ideas, faculty question them to death, albeit with the intent of old school discourse (171-172). And while participatory activities that elicit critical discussion are important in FYC spaces (e.g. peer reviews, individual conferences.), when it came to seminar papers and/or other research projects, rejections and feedback felt more like the negative power moves MacKenzie saw in corporations: "Ideas most often don't get off the ground because in corporate culture, we kill them instantly" (144).

However, not all experiences were awful, and I could clearly see positive roles scholarship played. A faculty member once referred to my Preliminary Exam as an "Activity Theory lovefest." All of my teaching includes AT in some way, as I believe in its power to deconstruct the invisible characteristics of systems. Coupled with many video game scholars (Bogost, Holmevik, Juul), I often characterize my teaching as ludological pedagogy. Even when I was still in Student affairs, some scholarship ended up being wholly illuminating. When I earned an optional post-masters certificate via joint program between the American College Personnel Associate (ACPA) and the University of Missouri, I came in contact with scholarship like *Once Upon a Campus* (Seymour, 1995), and *The Educational Potential of Residence Halls* (Schroeder, Mabel). They both shifted my perspective on work I'd done for years, and I've been eternally grateful to Dr. Charles Schroeder who challenged us to read them.

Unfortunately, with both positive and negative scholarship experiences, the role is still unclear. Given the lack of narrative scholarship regarding WPA processes with FYC objective formation, and the declination of schools and FYC programs, I've felt like understanding how and why scholarship is used would bring into some club I was not initially invited to as a graduate student. Thus, I recognize I have a little cynical perspective, however, throughout my interviews,

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observations, and artifact analyses, I always kept an open mind. Even in the moments where subjects were cagey, unknowing, unsure, or minimalistic about their academic influences, I still probed, yet didn't force folks to come up with answers.

Assumption Two: FYC Assessment is More Data Gathering, Less Taking Action

Daniel Seymour in *Once Upon a Campus* (1995) explores Higher Education as an activity system (while not using Activity Theory), providing strategic lessons on how to function within them. Two lessons from his book illustrate how I've seen assessment function in FYC, prior to my study's research. First, in Chapter 7 "Measurement Without Feedback is Just Data; Feedback Without Measurement is Just Opinion" Seymour emphasizes the important relationship between qualitative and quantitative data, with both being necessary for decision making (81-82). From my limited anecdotal experience prior to this study—I served on three assessment teams—I knew assessment was necessary for accreditation, but 100% of that assessment was quantitative with no qualitative component. Therefore, I was also uncertain how that data was reflexively applicable to FYC administrators and teachers.

My second curiosity is how (if at all) FYC administrators implement changes via assessment results. Admittedly, this is an area I've seen Student affairs struggle with too. I've seen professionals make reactive decisions focusing on one finding. Chapter 10 from Seymour addresses this issue: "Universal Solutions to Exceptional Problems Create Universal Problems." I acknowledge my negative experiences with Student affairs professionals mishandling data have me likewise skeptical of what FYC leaders do with their own data. I knew, in general, that assessment was valorized in FYC to some extent, but outside of those espoused values, I hadn't seen data in action. I very much value assessment. Since I started teaching, and due to the assessment class I took during that ACPA joint program, I use both formal and informal methods in my classroom, with a mix of

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qualitative/quantitative data. I know assessment can be useful! And so, similar to the above assumption, when gathering information assessment process, I asked questions to help gain a big picture understanding of usage.

Assumption Three: FYC WPAs Care About Consistency?

Whether an FYC program has five instructors or fifty, full-time or part-time, teaching track or tenure track, I'm fascinated with what expectations, if any, a WPA has regarding instructor pedagogical consistency. And, does it really matter to said leadership? Or teachers for that matter? My first two FYC programs, despite being curricular contrasts, felt noticeably, inconsistent. To specify, in my first program, there didn't seem to be concerns over variations among FYC instructors' pedagogy. Whereas, in my second experience, the highly-structured program's leadership seemed to care if any teachers deviated from core assignments, readings, etc. I don't believe either system expected teachers to be 100% on the same page. Likewise, from casual conversations with fellow teachers at both schools, we all seemed to appreciate the autonomy associated with teaching. For me personally, that freedom invites pedagogical experimentation over stagnation, yet, I can also understand why any program wouldn't want instructors to teach out-of-bounds.

This last assumption is likely less a bias, and more a curiosity, hence why it ends with the question mark. My vote for consistency one way or the other would be, please let us all teach how we want, yet I hope that there aren't any deviations that negatively impact students. As I've taught more, I noticed that, even in strict FYC programs, instructors do what they want, by hook or by crook, sometimes for the sake of students, and sometimes not. And, it's probably the potential impact of students that has me most curious: what happens when a teacher's approach adversely affects learning? In my student affairs experience, I have seen professionals reprimanded, and in some cases fired, for deviating from expectations. And maybe this does happen in FYC programs,

but more behind the scenes? But again, there's the whole academic freedom aspect that is linked to our teaching as well as our research. Ultimately, I'm on the fence about consistency.

Validity and Research Narrative Coda

These three assumptions helped me check any bias, as well as stayed within compassionate, careful approaches when dealing with my subjects. Even though I shifted focus to only three methods, I maintained these research principles, and transparencies. I hope this isn't perceived as trying to dodge responsibility (or mask irresponsibility) in terms of biting off more than I could chew and/or falling short of my grander research plan. In addition to how writing this research narrative helped with self-reflexivity, I've learned a great deal, and feel more confident that I have important info to share. Alas, I feel it's imperative to address one last insecurity and/or shortcoming that others may express concerned with in relation to my methods: the role of validity.

Joe Kincheloe and Peter L. McLaren's chapter in the *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (1994), helped me better understand an unfamiliar (to me) debate over validity between research positivists and pluralists. Two passages stood out, which I've abridged here:

> "Another example of the problematic nature of empirical validation of research on teaching involves inquiries into the relationship connecting teaching style and student performance...Critical researches make the argument that the attempt to reduce teaching styles to, say, two or three categories is futile. In practice, no teacher will clearly represent one category. In other word, no teacher will display only the characteristics of a formal teacher as opposed to an informal teacher. All teachers to some extent are formal in some regards and informal in others....While it may be profitable to classify cars or hats in terms of styles, it is probably unwise to classify loving or teaching in such a manner—especially when we feel the necessity to lay out only two or three types." (165-166)

Validity was initially a concern of mine, which is why I cast such a wide range of methods and was hoping to gain an equally deeper pool of data. But again, I was thinking in the mindset that certain combinations of data would result in significant conclusions about the objective lifecycle from administrators to teachers to students. For example, in my imagination, I was excited to see how FYC objectives were talked about in training sessions, then infused in teaching materials, and then responded to by students via surveys.

Related, I think even initially, I wasn't really sure of what I was categorizing even if I had all that data. Would it be higher or lower levels of congruence? I feel like that is potentially insulting to an FYC program (and likely why FYC programs choose to remain silent). And really, how does such a categorization further elucidate all the factors WPAs must consider? It's like Langston Hughes (1921) says about Harlem Renaissance poets: "we're beautiful, but we're ugly too." FYC programs are both organized and messy. Kincheloe illustrates this further:

> "Our goal in research is not merely to validate the statistical relationship of variables, but to understand, to make intelligible, and to preserve the cohesiveness of the phenomena being studied. This process may better be accomplished by portraying patterns rather than by discovering causes...Proponents of research pluralism are less concerned with reducing the world to quantifiable atomistic parts than with the attempt to create a social synthesis which leads to a new level of understanding." (166)

Maybe more excuse making? Possibly. However, all the adjustments I made still run parallel to my original research question. By sifting through what I did receive, I'm grateful I can discuss two key concepts regarding FYC objectives. First, how/why objective creation and dissemination is influenced by both academic and non-academic factors. Second, how/why teachers (un)intended

valorization of objectives are likewise influenced by academic and non-academic factors. Ultimately, there's more than one way to make chili, and in the next two chapters, I'm analyzing those ingredients and recipes.

Chapter 4: Formation of FYC Objectives by WPAs

Introduction

This chapter shares data-as-narrative of the three FYC programs I researched, from an administrative perspective. Each school's narratives contain two sections: FYC Structure (history, current structure, and objective processes) and FYC Assessment/Training, as a way to show the different processes used for FYC objective creation and FYC objective dissemination. I chose to characterize these narratives from the perspectives of a single stakeholder who, in my interpretation, carries the most decision making power within their FYC program. For example, a lead Writing Program Administrator (WPA) who oversees all operations and decision making. Since it's clear a leader's experience and perspective matter in curricular design, I wanted to learn about their vision unfiltered from other perspectives. Likewise, establishing this viewpoint will help provide a systems contrast with those who work with and in the FYC programs characterized here. What I learned from these leaders is the difficulty and complexity within their FYC program plans; as scholarship suggested, they followed both academic and non-academic influences, however, there was a clear imbalance in those two categories with the latter most impactful.

School 1: Clover University

History, Structure, & FYC Objective Formation

Cindy, the WPA Lead at Clover University (or Clover, hereafter) began her program characterization with when she arrived in 2008 as a teacher, then walked through the steps she took when she became FYC Director (my title) in 2013.

> *[When I first arrived in 2008, the FYC] was a little bit of a "Wild West" about these comp classes…there was nothing on paper handed to me or anything like that. [Fellow instructors would suggest] "make sure you*

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get [students] through research using APA and MLA…and don't use literature." So that still seems to be

the thing that I thought had been a thing for at least a decade everywhere all over. But apparently it was still

enough of a thing [here] that they said to be sure they had to tell people "it's not a literature based writing

course" it's something different. But other than that, anything goes.

First, notice how other faculty delineated to Cindy what the program was and wasn't. As I learned, some of this was due to lack of a formal report or overview from previous leadership. However, the fact that their voices stand out so much in her recall tells me that the current teaching community can play a key role in programmatic building, even if the leader is new. Second, sensing that influence during the interview, I asked Cindy why teachers were vociferous about not focusing on literature. Having taught there first, she knew it was a common feeling, yet didn't know the larger concern. She wondered if a lack of standardization was the bigger issue, since there were some teachers who were literature "holdouts."

When Cindy made broader changes to the FYC program, she had the following aims, synthesized/paraphrased here from her interview:

1. Make clear, curricular distinctions between Composition 1 and Composition 2.

2. Utilize outside resources (scholarship, conferences, etc.), and form a committee to clarify objectives for both classes.

3. Utilize assessment to determine future changes.

4. Create a unifying document for training and classroom implementation.

One major result came from the last goal: there are now two 5-6 page documents that serve as an overview for new instructors in training.[1] These documents address Clover's two FYC classes—Composition 1 and Composition 2—and contain the following sections: an overall course description and four class objectives; six course outcomes that link to the school's core outcomes; general guidelines for both classes; and an explanation of required assignment sequences. There are also appendices serving as a repository of assignment samples. When training new instructors, Cindy provides and covers this document, much like we did during the interview.

The two courses from Clover are anonymized as Composition 1 and Composition 2. They are mandatory and traditionally taken in the first year. Composition 1 focuses mostly on rhetoric and persuasive writing. From the Clover Instructor Guide:

> The course is the first part of a two-part sequence. The course provides study and practice in rhetoric and essay writing, emphasizing writing as a process of invention, drafting, revising, and editing. The main goal of the course is to encourage good habits of writing for students' lives in and out of college. Effective reading strategies and critical thinking skills are also key components of the course. Standard written English is required.

Clearly, writing knowledge and skills gained are meant to connect to at least two future contexts: an immediate follow up class (Composition 2), and contexts beyond, including those post-college. The objective gist is for students to be aware of their overall writing process and develop critical thinking. Conversely, Composition 2's overview is more brief, and less specific:

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[1] I only possess the paper copies of these documents, and they have both my own markings on them, and identifiers of the school. Thus, I have not included them in the appendix, but do my best to replicate important language here.

This course is the second part of a two-part sequence. The course will build on the writing, reading, and critical thinking skills begun in [Composition 1]. Students also will study and practice primary and/or secondary research, incorporating the results of the research into their papers. Standard written English is required. Prerequisite: [Composition 1]

The brevity is due to the course description leaning on what is learned and gained in the first course. Not only does this reaffirm the Near transfer objective between the classes, but assumes enough teaching consistency that any Comp 1 class will prepare students for any Comp 2 class. However, according to Cindy, while both classes are mandatory, it's possible for students to test out of Comp 1, or transfer it from another institution, possibly disrupting that transfer congruence.

The aim to separate their identity was key. Cindy explained that Composition 1 is used to work on the finer details of rhetoric, synthesis, and persuasion in short essay writing, whereas Composition 2 focuses more on conducting research and writing a research paper. Referring to what she inherited when she became WPA Lead, Cindy characterized these two courses as "very similar" due to the common assignment sets:

> *We've really tried to look at [differentiating] because you can imagine the problems with [students] looking at the same assignments or same topics or something depending on how the teacher treated it. Or two dorm-mates/roommates being in [Composition 1] and having a very different or maybe more rigorous experience than the other. So with no standardization those are the kind of problems we are running into.*

> *Over the last three years we started kind of trying to envision what really is the difference between [Comp 1 and 2] assignment sequence; how is what happens within the course of sequence (you know scaffolding of*

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assignments and things like that) and we renamed the courses as Persuasive Writing and Research Writing,

[respectively,] so that just with the renaming we clarified the purpose.

After making the courses more distinct, Cindy formed FYC Objectives. When she arrived , there were none. Two influences helped form Clover's objectives. First, was Cindy's own investigation into composition scholarship (Cindy has an educational background, not a composition one). Her exploration made immediate impact, whereas the second influence was a larger institutional shift: programmatic assessment became more rigorous. I discuss how assessment impacts objectives later, since the foundation was primarily from Cindy's research.

When Cindy standardized the program, she used the CCCC's and WPA resources to help finalize their objectives. She mentioned the position statement on First Year Writing. Using those guidelines as a common document, she formed a committee with instructors, and cultivated these objectives for the whole FYC program:

1. Rhetoric: Students will demonstrate an understanding of how context, including audience, purpose and genre, influence the way texts are written and will be able to apply this knowledge to their own writing.

2. Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing: Students employ reading and writing as a means of questioning and responding to the world. Students will practice writing persuasively, which involves finding, evaluating, analyzing, and synthesizing texts and incorporating their own ideas into larger conversations.

3. Writing Processes: Students will participate in writing as multi-stage process, and will learn to engage in pre-writing, drafting, revision, etc. Students will also practice giving and receiving feedback on writing.

4. Writing Conventions: Students will employ standard citation formats, organizational structures, grammar, spelling, and style appropriate for various writing situations.

Her goal when creating these goals was with "the idea of what a good writer going forward for the rest of their coursework should be able to do." A couple important notes here. First, Cindy didn't define "good writer" other than to emphasize a preparedness for further classes. However, this does reinforce a near transfer aim. Second, while she stated she was following "CCCC's standard language on their website" I believe that she ultimately two documents based upon the final version of these objectives. The document I believe she's referencing here specifically is CCCC's position on Writing Assessment from November 2006 (see appendix A). This document helps WPA leaders form classroom and programmatic assessment. Given that document, I can see how two best practices guided her decision making process:

- Writing tasks and assessment criteria should be informed and motivated **by the goals of the institution, the program, the curriculum, and the student communities** that the program serves.
- Writing products should be measured against a clearly defined set of criteria **developed in conversation with instructors of record** to ensure the criteria align with the goals of the program and/or the differences between the courses into which students might be placed.

My emphasis within these lines show how, as a new WPA Director, Cindy thought long term about the importance of the FYC objectives aligning with Clover University, and having instructor buy-in from the start of objective formation.

However, she also must have referenced the Council of Writing Program Administrators "WPA Outcomes State for First-Year Composition" (appendix B) given the language within their final set of objectives. I make this clarifying observation based upon how the outcomes, at the time she would've referenced them, had four categories where the language mirrors Clover's four objectives. The four original categories were: Rhetorical Knowledge; Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing; Compositing Processes; and Knowledge of Conventions.[2] Not only are these the same four categories Cindy has for Clover, but her team synthesized the various sub-objectives on the WPA document under each category into a single line. Ultimately, and gleaning more from the WPA outcomes and Clover's final objective list, I can see good writing defined as analyzing the rhetorical situation of when writing is needed, which again emphasizes a near transfer objective.

Preparing students for future classes was also a part of Clover's writing program history. Before she was in charge, Cindy indicated that different schools at Clover housed their own advanced, subject-specific writing courses. Some willingly let her school/program take over those classes, yet others remained defiant until her Dean stepped in. I followed up on how she included other academic subjects, courses, etc. when FYC took over. She stated that, during their last major objectives revision, she didn't want the other schools to feel left out. Thus, she met with and found ways to align the assignment sequence in Composition 1 and 2 with, at the time, College of Nursing. This shows another example of how outside constituents can impact objective formation.

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[2] Current WPA Outcomes listed a fifth category titled "Composing in Electronic Environments" that was added after Sharon formed their objectives.

Collegiality aside, incorporating what other departments see as good writing, is a clear influence, and one that brings with it some complexity: STEM writers are different than Humanities writers.

Cindy acknowledged the objectives are not perfect. And transparently discussed a small issue that confused mostly new instructors:

> *And while we realized all four of these [core objectives] would be happening in both [courses], we really wanted to focus on rhetoric in [Comp 1] and research in [Comp 2] so that it seems to kind of separate these two, and we'll put writing process with [Comp 2] because a longer paper is a longer process of drafting.*

For reference, when she says "happening in both" she means the objectives are included on both syllabi; however, the first two have more focus in Comp 1, and the second two more focus in Comp 2. This was when I followed up with what leeway and freedom instructors have with the objectives.

> *[Teachers] need to list the core outcomes. And these are the specific outcomes. You can pick your text and the content that they all start reading together then we have a standard writer's reference every [class]. Then you have the freedom to build assignments that way but...these can change up; but you know most people keep them pretty much the same. So what you want the analysis of the paper to be is up to you; the specifics on how you set up the research paper; etc. But everybody needs to do a research paper in [Composition 2]. [Composition 1] has a little more choice because, you're choosing between a visual rhetoric and other rhetoric, but this [handout] describes the objectives.*

In my handwritten notes I took during the interview, I indicated that, when she was explaining this procedure, she provided me with a sample syllabus that had blank, grey areas indicating where

instructors input their own information. This template is shared alongside the Instructor Manual when new faculty are hired; consistency is clearly an invisible objective for her as WPA lead.

Returning to discussing the freedom that is offered, per her words and the document, on paper, it seems like there's not much freedom. Most of the options center around course readings (although every course does have to use a writer's manual), choices between particular assignments within the sequence (for example, for Composition 1, either a rhetorical analysis of an artifact or a rhetorical persuasive argument), and other smaller activities that get students to achieve the major objectives. Since literature-based content was removed, I queried Cindy on what kind of themes/topics have come up and she stated: environment, social justice, and even ones that could be considered hobbyist, like cooking.

Assessment & Training

Even though it didn't happen until after Clover's FYC objectives had been established, the second major influence was an administrative mandate for more institution-wide assessment. The assessment process she described, to me, sounded overly complex; yet, on her aim to make sure teachers were being more consistent, Cindy found the data beneficial. Before getting into why, it's important to note that students see three total sets of objectives/outcomes on all syllabi. First is the four FYC Objectives I stated above, referred to on the syllabus as "Written Communication Program Outcomes" (and referred to on official documentation as WCPO). Second, is a list of 11 outcomes labeled as CORE Curriculum Student Learning Outcomes, separated under three sections.

> Students will acquire knowledge of:
> 1. Aesthetic Values: Critical reflection on art, culture, and nature
> 2. Physical & Natural World: The natural order, including earth and its systems
> 3. Human Societies: Values and histories underlying cultures, societies, their traditions, and the relationships between them
> 4. Cultural Awareness: Cross-cultural knowledge to interact effectively with people from diverse communities

5. Spiritual Understanding: Reflection on the relationship between personal and communal faith and life choices that support justice, reconciliation and peace.

Students will cultivate the following intellectual and practical skills:
6. Effective Communication: Oral, Reading and Writing
7. Quantitative and technological literacy
8. Critical and reflective thinking, program-solving and decision-making

Students will demonstrate personal and social responsibility for:
9. Franciscan heritage and values
10. Moral and ethical reasoning
11. Local and global community

Finally, there are six outcomes titled "Measurable Course Learning Outcomes Covered in

[Composition 2],"[3] that are used for one of the two assessments Cindy and the department conduct.

The bracketed areas following each outcome are verbatim from the syllabus and indicate

connections to the other two sets of objectives:

1. Formulate a viable research question of sufficient depth, complexity, and relevance to support a long-term project [connects to Core Course Learning Outcome 8 and WCPO 2];
2. Sustain an arguable controlling idea throughout a lengthy, well-supported, persuasive argument that takes counterarguments into account [connects to Core Course Learning Outcomes 6, 8 and WCPO 1,2,3,4];
3. Conduct primary and secondary academic research using the library database and other research tools and evaluate sources objectively and accurately for depth and credibility [connects to Core Course Learning Outcome 8 and WCPO 2];
4. Employ both MLA and APA formats correctly to incorporate textual support in the form of summary, paraphrase and direction quotation as appropriate [connects to Core Course Learning Outcomes 6,8 and WCPO 4];
5. Construct a clear organizational framework for a longer paper, making use of paragraph and section breaks as appropriate for reader's ease of comprehension [connects to Core Course Learning Outcome 6, 8 and WCPO 4];
6. Edit a paper for grammatical, mechanical, and stylistic clarity [connects to Core Course Learning Outcome 6 and WCPO 4.]

Cindy indicated that she doesn't read these line-by-line when covering the syllabus for her first year

classes. However, she does for upper level classes, believing that older students benefited from

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[3] The sample syllabus Sharon provided was for Composition 2 only, hence the references to writing a research paper. Remember, the four main FYC Objectives are used, unchanged, for both courses.

understanding how organizations worked, specifically that professionals are required to do "close reading." I include this moment because a) it reinforces a concern I have about cumbersomely and verbosely phrased objectives for a student audience; and b) Cindy sees a Far transfer value in talking about the role of objectives for soon-to-be professionals.

The three sets of outcomes are all evaluated by the institution but used in different contexts. The six measurable learning outcomes are used for student grading purposes. The outcomes are placed on a matrix, used as a rubric for particular assignments. I glanced at the rubric but wasn't given a copy; from the notes I took, it looked like any standard writing assignment rubric with columns designating what A, B, C, etc. outcomes are, and rows representing the nine learning outcomes. Likewise, according to Cindy, it was the Higher Learning Commission who helped Clover's FYC program develop the six outcomes (hence why the brackets were included: they show the synthesized work). However, this was not an entirely smooth process since many teachers were used to how/what they were teaching/grading. Attempting consistency was met with some resistance:

> *First of all nobody could agree on the [rubric] language. Somebody would think "are you upset with me?" if something was changed or eliminated that they taught…however we settled on a good set. And we rewrote them again about a year-and-a-half ago but due to a drop in enrollment, we started seeing new challenges as other schools had concerns about what we were teaching…even though we talked with them previously. However, we were able to take into account some [new] considerations.*

Similar to how Cindy's Dean needed to step in, one discovery I had was the role group politicking plays within this particular FYC objective process. Cindy, to her credit, always spoke positively and

with hope that everyone could get on the same page, yet this was not information I found in my literature review in chapter 2. Do we need a book on office politics for FYC WPAs?

Clover's other two outcome sets are used for larger-scale assessment. The student artifacts assessed across all three are a Persuasive Essay for Composition 1, and Research Essay for Composition 2. Because Composition 2 is the only of the two that is firmly required (students can't test out or transfer in credits), those papers are sent in for institutional assessment, but Composition 1 papers are not. The process is months long, both full-time and part-time instructors are involved, and the information is used internally for the FYC program. Cindy reflected:

We're an assessment heavy culture around here, so it turned into a lot longer documents. Previously, many didn't care about stuff. And the Higher Learning Commission came in…which is where the shift came in…as someone with an Education background, I appreciate all our assessment.

The 11 CORE outcomes were previously established by Clover, and only used for institutional assessment. Cindy indicated that their teachers don't have any role in that process, and said she only knew bits and pieces of the process. However, she is aware that it's a high stakes component, as she said she's received feedback from administrators regarding outcomes that haven't been met as strongly. She's also aware of how some faculty feel about assessment:

And then last, but not least, the perception…even of our small faculty, some people just hate the assessment stuff, [they] think it's fake and stupid and right, you know, and other people are like no, we should be about showing where the holes are. I mentioned this because, yeah, I don't have any immediate hypotheses on why the perceptions are different; we're, just different people.

I was only able to chat with one faculty member's experience, and they were ok with assessment, yet

admitted the process was a fair amount of labor. I appreciate Cindy's awareness and transparency.

As I mentioned in chapter 3, I was surprised how many schools declined to participate in this study.

I don't see what Cindy's saying as anything controversial, but I can understand why some

administrators may not be straightforward about faculty disdain.

Other than what's already been stated about what teachers can and can't do in their

classrooms, there's not much to expand with Clover's training. Since, as Cindy pointed out, turnover

is not incredibly frequent at Clover, and other than regularly staff meetings, there aren't any

additional training programs. When a new faculty member arrives, Cindy spends about a half day

covering the Instructor Guide and sample syllabi. But there are no other additional readings,

scholarly or otherwise, the latter being due to the fact that instructors can pick their own materials

save a writing reference handbook.

Concluding Thoughts on Clover University

At face value, it seems as if Cindy achieved the four unstated goals I paraphrased above,

during her time as WPA lead at Clover. I was only able to interview one other instructor, so it's

difficult to fully validate how true that is from the perspective of those who work with her. Yet, she

had also been the one WPA lead that I interviewed who said the quiet part out loud, in terms of how

invisible objectives influence a program:

> *I think that it would be interesting to know what different schools think, but my perception is that whoever's*
>
> *in charge of writing…whether a formal writing program or informal writing program director…I feel like*
>
> *whoever that person is has a lot of sway over what does research mean? [For example] my training in [my*

PhD program] was that research writing should begin query based, with a real big stress on the research question. That was a value of our program head.

While the most valorized invisible objective of the program may be consistency, and how results impact assessment, the most valorized stated objective seems to be persuasion. Oddly enough, and as I pointed out earlier, while all three sets of objectives include some language about the lower order concerns of writing, as well as the course description itself, that focus didn't come up at all in my interview with Cindy. It was neither a concern or celebration. This is also interesting since Clover's program has Near Transfer motives, whether for the next class, or future classes outside of FYC. As Cindy pointed out, the writing expectations of other departments have not been met, causing a potential disconnect between their respective institutional systems.

School 2: Lake City State University

History, Structure, & FYC Objective Formation

Lake City State's FYC program serves 1000 plus students a semester and consists of three total classes: Composition A: Basic Writing; Composition I: Introduction to College Writing; and Composition II: Research Writing.[4] Steven, the Writing Program Director (WPD)[5] from Lake City State University (Lake City State hereafter), inherited an FYC program that started over 25 plus years from before the time of our interview. Likewise, it's been run by three previous full-time faculty before Steven assumed the mantle. He characterizes the program as:

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[4] Again, my questions and methods focused primarily on Comp I and II, yet I did speak with some who either taught or contributed to Comp A.

[5] Previously, I stated that I'd use the term WPA Lead for the lead writing program administrator; given that Lake City State's structure technically includes multiple leads, with different areas of focus, I choose to refer to Steven as Writing Program Director instead.

…a very traditional one. When writing programs started to really become strong entities within English

departments, the first model that emerged was to have a writing program director who was a tenured professor

was the ideal. And that's the same model that we have.

Another descriptive phrase Steven used was "deep tension." However, from his perspective, Steven doesn't see this tension as negative, but as an opportunity to support the other WPA team members, offering unique yet real professional opportunities.

And that's the tension at the heart of it, is that on the one hand you we have a director who is singly

responsible for all the decisions, and then a really interesting apparatus with a long history that to some extent

has been designed to work against that hierarchy. And so the language that I inherited, and that we've used

for many, many years in the writing program is that we have collaborative administration. I pointed out this

tension with our program because while at the end of the day on paper it is not a collaborative administration

because I am the writing program director and that's why I was handed the job.

Before elaborating on that structure, it's important to note two items. First, Steven didn't make any revolutionary changes to the WPA structure, and his words acknowledge there are many cooks in the FYC kitchen. Second, he affirmed in many stories that he is the leader. I don't interpret this to mean the collaborative system is a farce, and/or that he didn't appreciate his team's perspectives—he does especially when talking about any teacher or student problems. Observationally, at best, this is a highly aware leader; at worst, this is a highly bureaucratic system.

Lake City State's WPA is made up of nine total positions including Steven's. The team members include positions who oversee the three core classes mentioned above, including online classes. In addition to curricular advisors, the team has mentors for their large Graduate Teaching

Assistants (GTAs), and an administrative role responsible for scheduling, among other items. All nine team members are teachers, whether full-time teaching track faculty, or GTAs. During the interview, Steven drew the following organizational chart to characterize the relationship between the members, including himself (note: the original drawing was a series of non-connected dots the formation below; I added titles after verbally confirming with him this structure).[6]

Figure 7: Lake City State WPA Structure

● Steven, WPD

● WPA Asst. Director

● Comp A Coordinator ● Comp I Coordinator ● Comp II Coordinator ● Online Coordinator

●Comp I Mentor ●Comp I Mentor ● Comp II Mentor
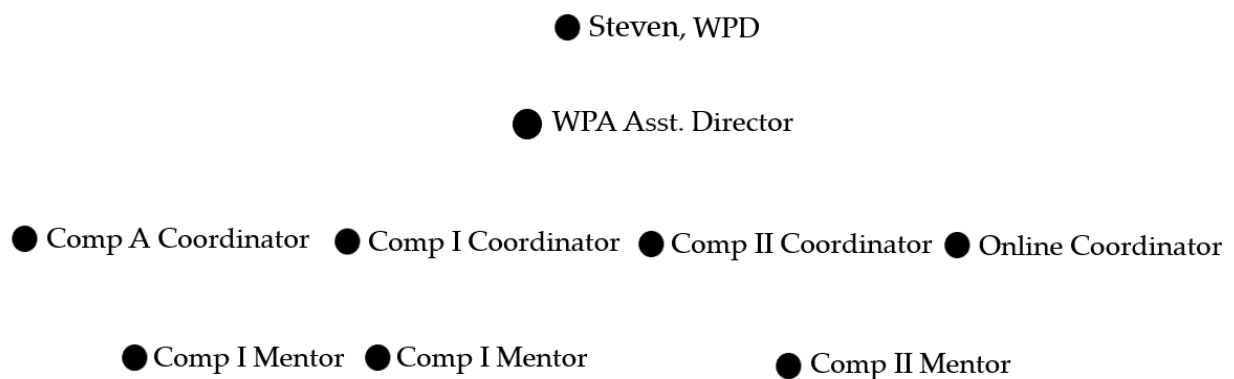
Steven feels this collaborative leadership model works well with Lake City State's FYC objectives, which, among administrators and teachers, are (in)formally called "Goals and Outcomes." These FYC objectives are the major focal point for all three classes: students create a writing portfolio all semester long and are evaluated in a double-blind, end-of-the-semester, pass/fail review. For reference, within the portfolio, students write a specified number of finalized documents: Comp I—two interpretive essays; for Comp II—a research paper; for both—student reflection on their process and final work. Here they are for Comp I[7] and Comp II:

Goals and Outcomes for Portfolio Assessment in Comp I and Comp I (ESL)

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[6] Not included within this structure, even though they do work with Lake City State's WPA, is the ESL Coordinator position who is technically employed by the English Dept. but supervised by the Center for Teaching and Learning. I did interview them and included them since ESL students are evaluated within the same end-of-the semester portfolio review as other students.

[7] Note that the Comp I Goals and Outcomes are also for ESL sections of the course.

With the INTERPRETIVE ESSAYS in the portfolio, you will:

Maintain a controlling purpose that...
- reflections what matters to or is at stake for you in your rhetorical situation.
- responds to what matters to those addressed and affected by your writing.
- creates and maintains coherence and clarity for the intended audience(s) by shaping patterns of arrangement and design.

Critically interpret course texts by...
- incorporating, contextualizing, examining, and connecting multiple passages from or across the text(s) being addressed.
- identifying and analyzing strategies and choice, including key terms, distinctions and questions being asked within the text(s).
- describing and evaluating how the arrangement, design choice, and other material conditions of the text(s) shape an audience's understanding.

Make use of academic conventions for writing by...
- providing relevant context of the texts being interpreted, such as background information, brief summaries, definitions of key terms, and examples.
- integrating and documenting all summaries, paraphrases, and direct quotations accurately and fairly and by following current MLA guidelines.
- demonstrating an ability to meet academic expectations for grammar and mechanics in final drafts.

With the REFLECTIVE PROJECT in the portfolio, you will account for and evaluate the choices made in the essays by...
- explaining how your rhetorical situation influenced the discovery, reconsideration, and development of your writing strategies throughout your successive revisions.
- explaining how the collaborative process and social nature of writing helped to shape your composing and design decisions.
- describing how your writing responds ethically to what matters to those addressed and affected by your writing.

GOALS AND OUTCOMES FOR PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT IN COMP II

In the portfolio, you will:

Present AN INQUIRY-BASED RESEARCH PROJECT

Maintain a controlling purpose that...
- creates coherence and clarity for your intended audience(s) through arrangement and design.
- responds ethically to the concerns and interests of the project's stakeholders.

Critically engage scholarly and other sources by...
- going beyond summary through interpretation, analysis, and critique.

- developing knowledge, insight, or perspective about the matter being researched.
- using sources to frame or critically question other sources or issues.
- situating sources relative to each other, to your ideas, and to the broader discussion on the matter being researched.

Follow writing conventions appropriate to your project's rhetorical situation by...
- providing relevant context such as background information, examples, and definitions.
- integrating the ideas of others accurately and fairly through summary, paraphrase, and quotation.
- documenting all sources with in-text citations and a bibliography following current MLA, APA, or Chicago Manual of Style guidelines.
- meeting expectations for grammar and mechanics.

Present REFLECTIVE WRITING that...
- discusses the evolution of your project in relation to the project's audience(s), its stakeholders, inquiry, and exigency.
- analyzes and evaluates composing and design strategies given your rhetorical situation and understanding of academic writing and research.
- explains how and why sources were chosen and used in the project.

According to Steven, the Goals and Outcomes change about every two to three years. I asked about

key changes during his time, or before.

> *There's been changes of wording and over time and some of them have been a little bit more substance than*
>
> *others. But that's hard to remember because we've had to try and reconstruct this in our WPA meetings.*
>
> *We'll come back and...we might, together, pull out the goals at one of our meetings and somebody will say*
>
> *"like why did we change that word I remember we had a big discussion about it," and some of it will get lost*
>
> *in the haze of history.*

WPA members wish to recall why things changed, but no formal record keeping exists to explain

how/why changes were made. In regards to keeping track of changes I can see why having it is

useful, but also problematic. As a purveyor of Activity Theory, history is important. Understanding

what's come before may illuminate key changes, in addition to assessment and other data. At the

same time, the adaptability of the program, because it's influenced by assessment, forgoing (or forgetting?) the past allows the program to avoid stagnation.

Sticking with history, I wanted to know about the program's foundational and current influence from scholarship. When I initially asked the question, Steven rephrased it for me in consideration of how their objectives fit within the larger frame of the university (in a way, this both did, and did not answer the question):

> *These learning outcomes and goals have been a part of our program for around 25-30 years and then, overtime, come to play like many several different roles, all equally important. The most important one for us as a program was important role is a heuristic that is that because they are so woven into our program. Our teachers are trained in the way to actually teach in class on a daily basis using these goals, as a kind of tools and material for class. And it's always interesting to hear even new instructors kind of, couple like, they'll be about three-quarters the way through their first semester, and they'll say "well it's really weird and I find myself pulling out the student guy almost every day and looking at the goals and outcomes and stuff" as a way to check in with what they're doing.*

Outside of specific context and/or scholarly influence, Steven characterizes a curricular compass. Given how rigid the assignment sequence is for both Composition I and II, I can see this as very helpful, in terms of the coaching and mentoring theme that arises. He elaborated on this as a sort of zone of proximal pedagogical development:

You know the [experienced] instructor is it supposed to help other instructors who have been teaching because a lot of [the experienced teacher's] teaching has become kind of unconscious or even invisible to themselves.[8]

Steven's expectation—a veteran teacher would know, understand, and interpret the FYC objectives well enough to aid younger, less experienced teachers—reinforces the communal, collaborative, and developmental approach that arose in other Lake City responses. Given that I started to see this mentorship pattern emerge within Lake City's program, I boomeranged back to my question about academic influences. Specifically, since Steven framed the WPA as open to inexperienced instructors within Composition Studies, I asked "If a student in your pedagogy class (which is mandatory to take for all graduate teaching assistants) asked what, if any, scholarship supports what the FYC program does, is there something specific you'd point them too?"

Yeah that is a good question and the short answer is no, in the sense that I don't have like lists of all the readings that I choose from and use [for the pedagogy class]. I have a section where we talk about scholarship of assessment, and things like that…I see things and think "maybe that should be one of our readings for [the pedagogy class]" to look at. But no, I tended to just work within the parameters of the history of the program, and then what I've seen, but also what I've learned from everyone else in the program about what the value of this is to us as a program but you're right that there's something to be worked on there.

Interestingly, as I mentioned before, part of this study was to better understand how FYC stakeholders choose from Composition's deep scholarship pool. Am I disappointed at the lack of a clear answer? Not necessarily. Given all three programs, they each have unique student bodies,

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[8] If this is a qualitative faux pas on my part, I'll take it. I added "experienced" here to help the reader delineate what Steven was saying. It's important to note he did not explicitly say experienced, yet, given the context of the interview, he was clearly referencing how more experienced instructors help out newer instructors.

infrastructure challenges, and WPA leads with various backgrounds. As I reveal the rest of Lake City State, and South Harmon Tech following, I learned about many influences, seeing that scholarship is but one part, even if surprisingly the smallest.

If scholarship wasn't a main focus for Lake City's WPA, then labor was, both opportunities and support. The structure is expansive, wherein at least 2 leaders are overseeing/mentoring Composition I and II, as well as an additional leader dedicated to online teaching. Unstated, an aim is that instructors will have someone within the WPA to ask and/or connect. Related, Steven did not detail much how the program changed from WPD to WPD, but indicated he made a significant change concerning labor:

> *Because of good fortune over the years—most of this [program], really prior to my coming here—we were able to construct...in terribly non-exploitive ways, [course] release time [for the other 8 members of the WPA] and for putting together a writing program administration that worked with me, around me, but not under me.*

Steven's choice to create what, on paper, seems like a hegemonic structure, can more positively be seen in a similar leadership approach from *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*. MacKenzie describes an organizational system called the "Plum Tree" which is meant to be different from the traditional "Pyramid" structure (54-60). Even though Steven drew a traditional pyramid, what he verbally characterized, especially with phrases like "worked with me, etc.," sound like a Plum Tree. To paraphrase MacKenzie: the pyramid structure, like a pyramid itself, relies on lower level folks to support leaders and middle managers. Likewise, only those at the top can see the horizon, and plot the course. A plum tree places every non-chief officer role at the top—leaves, branches, fruit—and the main leaders are the trunk, supporting their work. This also means a collective vision is shared among workers, who can see the horizon; and those perspectives are listened to via the chief officer.

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The choice to do this is impressive, and per the interviews of other WPA members, seems to be supported as they all felt like they had a say.

As labor supportive, and professionally developmental as this structure is, when it comes to FYC objectives, I was curious as to how it helps or hinders their creation. Because the objectives are revised about every 2 years and since there is semi-frequent turnover of some WPA members (as most of them are graduate students).

> *When I got here the director would work with each of the coordinators independently to draft and redraft the learning outcomes that went into the student guide, and one of the things that came up as a kind of issue...the second year I was here was they started talking about how far [Comp I] and drifted from [Comp II] and there was not much commerce between them. And so as a writing program team, we took that as an issue and said "What can we do?" and we just started having joint meetings.*

> *[Now] the [Comp II] coordinator brings a draft of goals to a WPA meeting with a change in it. Every other coordinator looks at that change and says "all that make sense to me" or "that's better." Another [example] was related to the rhetorical situation...when it was introduced into the goals in [Comp II] but was not yet embraced in the [Comp I] description. And it stayed that way for a year or two and...people thought it might be worth embracing and putting it in the language of [Comp I] goals.*

Curricular communication was an aim for Steven to fix/improve. The siloed characterization he describes is not unfamiliar inside higher education in general. However, by following an undercurrent of efficiency that resolves these communication barriers, he created another invisible objective related to transfer, specifically, closing the objective gap between the two classes.

According to Steven, the Goals and Outcomes achieve three total functions. First, is to reaffirm how they're used for the portfolio process:

> *The primary [goal] of which is that it does show ourselves and show the rest of the university that we're taking...the evaluation of student success--that is the passing and failing of students--seriously... and so it becomes a way of kind of ensuring a certain kind of validity*

He sees the Goals and Outcome lending themselves to programmatic credibility, in addition to their pragmatic role. Portfolios as end projects, in general, have been an emerging choice of FYC programs since the 21st century.

Second, Steven sees the objectives as a common language. Instructor freedom wasn't high, an observation supported by the programmatic artifacts everyone at Lake City State must use: the same syllabus, assignment sequence, and readings. Only the last of these had some flexibility as teachers matriculated through the program. The more senior a teacher, the more flexibility with reading selection. And yet, Steven felt the objective's language provided additional consistency:

> *They are there to help us...not only for individual instructors [to] evaluate student success but also when we have our end of the semester portfolio day: some instructors read other instructors and students portfolios then that becomes the kind of thing that holds us [as an FYC program] all together by the lens through which I might look at your students' work and then decide whether the student passes her portfolio.*

In chapter 5, utilizing interviews from other administrators and teachers, I explore this consistency and found, that while much structural consistency existed (i.e. course documents), there was variable valorization of objectives.

The third and final function Steven sees the Goals and Outcomes fulfilling is that of programmatic assessment. To delineate assessments here, because the language in the documents above use the term assessment: the FYC administrators and instructors refer to the end of the semester blind portfolio review, where students pass or fail, simply as "portfolio review." Yet, here Steven refers to their internal, yet separate assessment of portfolio review itself. To frame it chronologically: programmatic assessment happens at the end of the academic year, compared to the portfolio reviews which happen at the end of each semester. Only a few instructors of the FYC program (both WPA and non-WPA members) participate in end-of-the-year programmatic assessment, whereas all instructors participate in end-of-the-semester portfolio review.

Assessment & Training

According to Steven, programmatic assessment has only occurred since 2010. He stated they willingly chose to conduct assessment. Like most official assessments, the results are reported to various university officials who use the information for accreditation and other related practices. But the results are also shown to all FYC instructors and WPA members in order to make future decisions regarding potential objective language or related pedagogical changes.

Unlike the portfolio process for students, the rubric they used for assessment is different with different aims. Steven stated:

> …*[assessment is] more fine grain. We're not addressing pass/fail [but] "Is the program meeting the goals?" And so we get statistically significant samples, and we distill them down into the three basic goals [because] we need it to be more fine grain: are we not meeting, sort of meeting, barely meeting, etc.*

He shared the language they use when assessing:

For Comp I:
- Maintain a controlling purpose.
- Critically interpret course texts.
- Make use of academic conventions for writing.

For Comp II:
- Maintain a controlling purpose.
- Critically engage scholarly and other sources.
- Follow writing conventions appropriate to your project's rhetorical situation.

Note the language is significantly whittled down compared to their standard FYC Objectives. Most other assessments I saw, or learned about, used objective language word for word, or else used outcomes that were posted, accessible, and synthesized into the curriculum. The most noticeable item missing on the assessment rubric concerns the reflective paper, which Steven said was important pedagogically, but wasn't as important in the data scheme. Regardless, Steven emphasized the important role the assessment provides ongoing development of the goals and outcomes:

[They] give us something concrete for us to talk about as we ask ourselves...What are we doing? What seems to be working? What do we want to fix and make better? Where do we want to go from here? What do we want the program to look like in five years?

These questions are not solely discussed within the administrative leadership at Lake City State. In fact, from what I observed they permeate through their various trainings and professional development sessions. To finish Lake City state, here's an overview of their training, broken down by what the event/activity is, who is typically present, when it occurs, and, per administrative interviews, what function it serves.

Table 3: Lake City State Training Sessions & Professional Development

Event/Activity	When? Who's Present?	Aim?
Summer Training (aka "Comp Camp")	Mid-August, about two weeks before the first day of class;	Through a combination of readings, discussions, and

	lasts five days; all new Graduate Teaching Assistants must attend.	presentations, new teachers learn about the FYC objectives, guidelines, and structure, while guest instructors (veteran teachers, grads and full-time) share pedagogical strategies. All of these goals are stated in the materials. Primarily covers Composition I, but touches on Composition II.
Summer Orientation for Composition I and II	Mid-August, about a week before the first day of class; lasts three hours; all instructors must attend.	Brief meetings where the primary goal is to introduce the updated FYC Objective language.
Pedagogy Class	Fall Semester, weekly; all new Graduate Teaching Assistants must take for graded credit.	Three major goals: first (stated), to align with the assignment sequence schedule, preparing for the upcoming week; second (unstated), to provide "group therapy" for instructors, and discuss what they're seeing day-to-day; third (stated), introduce students to key articles within Composition studies (which somewhat line up with Composition I). Some discussion of Composition II.
Weekly Mentor Meetings	Weekly during Fall Semester, bi-weekly Spring Semester, for about one hour; all new Graduate Teaching Assistants.	The low grad to leader ratio (about 5 to 1) allows for bridging between items learned in Pedagogy Class, items discussed in the Monthly Meetings, and other related programmatic items (policy, problems, etc.). Only focused on Composition I.
FYC Monthly Meeting	During Fall and Spring semesters, monthly meeting that lasts about two hours; all instructors must attend.	Two objectives: first, to discuss any current events, issues, changes in policy or objectives, etc. Second, in relation to the portfolio process, discuss portfolios that are either

		"borderline" or raise important issues when grading. There are separate meetings for Composition I and Composition II.
Winter Orientation	Mid-January, about a week before the first day, usually just a day-long meeting. All instructors must attend.	Curriculum and planning may vary, yet typically includes: updated policies/procedure; small and large group discussions related to an important FYC topic; and breakout sessions for Composition I and II.

Steven's discussion of the FYC Objectives serving as a common language is most applicable to how training is conducted. Schedule wise, the items discussed at the monthly meetings, weekly mentor meetings, and pedagogy class align with where students of Composition I are in the assignment sequence. Steven sees training as serving two overall purposes. The first is on-boarding, primarily for the new Graduate Teaching Assistants.

> *[Training is] very specific and very, very general at the same time…we train them through all of the sort of programmatic structures that are in place for helping train new instructors and starts sending them the [FYC] student guide in the mail; it starts with them and having them read it before they come to [Comp Camp] and continues with mentor meetings and [pedagogy class], but it also continues with are all composition structure meetings we hold three times…during which the goals and outcomes are usually a central part of the discussion, in conjunction with where we are…the program early in the semester, or whether we're getting ready for end of semester portfolio evaluation.*

The FYC Student Guide is one of three required texts students have to purchase for Composition I, in addition to a Course Reader, and Writer's Handbook. The guide provides students with the FYC

objectives, course policies, a detailed description of the blind portfolio review, and, most recently, advice from students who have already taken the courses.9 Steven again recognizes how all training activities are ultimately tied together, fused into the curriculum's calendar.

The second major purpose is, to use Steven's word, consensus. I interpreted this more as consistency, since what Steven explained followed my training and instructor flexibility questions.

> *Because we want a program that has a degree of coherence and consistency, and yet it doesn't…there doesn't need to be something that [instructors are] so obsessed with that you kind of shut the conversation down and…all [they] have to do is have a conversation with a group of people who are teaching the goals and discover that there are some slight variations on the way people interpret the goals…everybody sees it differently it's not blurry, but everybody sees it differently. There are some very clear differences in the way [instructors] interpret the goals and those differences usually don't hurt anybody, they don't harm the students they don't they don't make the learning confused…the learning continues to be very clear, and then the program gets on fine, and my argument would be that it's healthier for allowing it to be that way.*

The differences Steven characterizes are a common occurrence in each of the three monthly meetings, some of which I attended. Those debates/discussion regarding how individual teachers interpreted the FYC objectives were, at times, heated. Steven attached the term "deep tension" to multiple aspects of Lake City's FYC program. However, I can't help but think that these disagreements also fall under that description. And, for the record, he does see the tension as productive and helpful.

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9 An interesting aspect was this new initiative to solicit advice from students since it turned into somewhat, anecdotal information compiled in a spreadsheet that I was given access to. Just because I was curious, using basic adjectives measuring emotional language students used, about two-thirds of respondents expressed a small to significant amount of anxiety over the blind portfolio process. However, further follow up and investigation would've taken my research off track.

Concluding Thoughts on Lake City State

Ultimately, the FYC objectives for Lake City State, according to their WPA Director, serve multiple functions beyond curricular guidance, they have a long history, and play a vital role for many stakeholders, not just in their system, but above. Moreover, he sees the whole program and structure as an important space for WPA members to be respected for their labor, and have an opportunity to practice their administrative craft. The structure likewise provides community support to all instructors.

School 3: South Harmon Technical Institute

History, Structure, & FYC Objective Formation

South Harmon Technical Institute may have the most complex FYC program of the three institutions, or really, their equivalent FYC program, as one WPA lead suggested. In addition to having two "first year" writing program tracks to address students' different academic degree options, they also have three WPA Leads (Andy, Dwight, and Pam) who all work in concert with one another, despite different foci and responsibilities. These positions, at the time, were new and still evolving, yet there's enough delineation for each lead's responsibilities. South Harmon is the most beholden to an outside, administrative body (a state body) and must show, via South Harmon's assessment, how well students achieve objectives (which they call outcomes). These objective documents are referred to as Course Outcome Summaries (COS), and are shown/given to students, despite being rather lengthy and verbose. They also employ a high number of part-time instructors: about 55%-65% depending on the year/semester.

Before explaining South Harmon's FYC objectives, two key qualitative items to note. First, there are three WPA Leads who have their own purview, and are technically on the same

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hierarchical level. However, Andy, the WPA lead in charge of Composition I and II curriculum, is considered the Chair and leader. I lean mostly on his perspective to formulate South Harmon's structure, although Dwight and Pam confirmed his depiction when I interviewed them. Second, because there are multiple degree programs, I considered only two sets of writing courses. The first set, Composition I and II are the anonymized designations for their two required writing courses students take to complete an Associate's degree (in turn, many then transfer those credits to other institutions for a Bachelor's degree). The second set is South Harmon's Writing I, a mandatory course for their Professional Trade programs (like nursing and business) that students take in their first year. While there are other writing courses that three co-leads teach, and will mention, the three classes listed here best align with the FYC scope I've established.

Within this complexity, Andy valorized the importance of these various options:

The English Department teaches a combination of written and oral communication…our 300 level courses are communication courses written and oral…designed to provide a technical diploma to students primarily in Tech and Applied Science (plumbers, carpenters, welders, etc.); to provide those students with workplace communication skills. I teach one of those courses myself, and it's preparing a resume, cover letter, thank you letter doing the demonstration doing the doing an interview, interviewing for a job…those kind of communication skills.

Writing is housed within the English Department, however there is a noticeable focus on workplace contexts, whether as job preparation documents (resumes, cover letters, etc.), and verbal skills (interviewing). Still, these early paths of preparation begin with classes focused on more traditional academic environments:

Our courses' skills are designed to provide written…primarily written but also oral communication skills to students who are pursuing Associate degree programs…the written skills look like a more traditional composition course: essays, documented essays, we will work with them and documenting source material. We will focus on the persuasive essay in that class. In fact a documented persuasive essay is the artifact that the department uses to assess student learning…[later courses] focus on group writing assignments, business writing, and group oral presentations.

In addition to reaffirming an unstated objective of professional preparation, Andy's words here highlight a key component in their structure, noted in the bolded language. South Harmon's writing program breaks from traditional FYC programs in many ways yet they curiously choose a very traditional genre with which to assess their program.

Another interesting aspect of their structure is how they see their school relating to other colleges and universities. Dwight, who oversees Writing I, stated the following about their structure:

[As WPA Lead] I focus on communication skills which is a little bit different than a lot of other places, it's a technical college so the track that I'm responsible for is for the technical college students who don't plan to go on for a four-year degree, so there's a more traditional [Comp I, II] track for students that plan to go on for the 4 year degree, and that's not my role. I oversee communication skills which are Writing I and II.

Dwight's perspective aligns with Andy's. His quote adds that they're focused on the context of other schools, something Andy confirmed. Observationally, the WPA Leads at South Harmon take into consideration three different contexts, each at variable transfer distance from their FYC courses: other classes within South Harmon; professional contexts; academic contexts at other institutions.

And yet, these contexts are only somewhat reflected in what represents as a long list of objectives for these particular FYC classes. Given the sheer length of these objectives, I've included , for reference, in appendices C and D. For dissertation and anonymization purposes, I reconstructed the Course Outcome Summaries "as is." The language is 100% verbatim (including typos). Moreover, I maintained the basic formatting of the document in regards to bolding, italicizing, and spacing (or lack thereof), which includes bulleting that wasn't there and/or inconsistent, hence why there's numbers on the one set of objectives, but not the other two.

For reference, keep in mind two contextual notes, as I start to weave in WPA perspectives on these objectives. First, these Course Outcomes Summaries (COS) documents are mandated by an official statewide body to ensure that Core Abilities, the larger objectives within the state's technical school system, are being met. However, the individual schools and their designated writing programs/departments formulate written objectives. Andy explained this concept when discussing how the COS are constructed: "[South Harmon] has 9 core abilities, [for Composition I] these are the five core abilities that we thought were applicable to that course." From there they write/formulate specific objectives, called Course Competencies (the numbered ones in bold on each document).[10] For example, the first Course Competency for Writing I is "Apply the conventions of academic essay writing." From there, the WPA leads (sometimes with feedback from other faculty/administrators) write the language for the remaining categories. Assessment Strategies indicate what documents will be assessed, while the Criteria category shows on the documents what will be assessed. The Learning Objectives are meant to be a more student friendly framing of the COS. According to the WPA Leads, the COS are revised every 2-3 years, but assessed every semester.

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[10] The numbering and bolding was a pre-formatted component of the document, not any additional emphasis on my part.

A second contextual point is that once the COS are established, the language cannot be changed or modified by the teacher teaching the course. And, the whole document, as is, must be included in the teacher's syllabi. As Andy and Dwight, who are responsible for the recruitment and training of new instructors informed me, they're anecdotally aware that some teachers verbally cover all the language, some don't, and some are in between. Given, the COS are, in a word, cumbersome. Pam, the WPA lead in charge of assessment characterized them as "intense." Additionally perplexing, despite Andy and Dwight designing the COS with professional context preparation in mind, there isn't apparent language addressing those contexts. The conflux of contexts is something Dwight mentioned as being a lot to deal with, as an administrator and instructor:

> [Writing I & II are] odd because it's a grab bag…a little of everything, it's some comp, some business, some speech...and I think that's a lot to cover in two semesters. But I think it's a strength and a weakness [because] it covers a lot of bases for students start of the typical college four year track. Students are also moving toward employment quickly and so it's got some employment communication both written and oral and listening skills in critical thinking.

Pam also mentions another context challenge from her perspective as Assessment Coordinator:

> But what's frustrating is that in spite of outcomes assessment, in spite of all of this, and changing teaching and improving teaching and better pedagogy…you still get the History Department, for example, who says "students can't write what are you guys doing over there?"

Pam's anecdotal information here is fairly commonplace at most institutions, yet underscores that South Harmon's FYC program juggles multiple context considerations.

Furthermore, these three administrators offer unique perspectives because they also teach at South Harmon. They're in the trenches just as much as they're overseeing the battlefield. There's a lot of labor given these dual roles, and how they're negotiating two kinds of writing tracks, that consider multiple contexts, and lengthy objective documents. And because they sometimes have last minute hires, all these factors amplified my curiosity about potential standardization and valorization of their COS. When I asked questions regarding what leeway teachers have, Pam replied:

[Teacher pedagogy is] 100% malleable, and we have no standardization, and I think that's unfortunate. But I think that the purpose of the course outcome summary is to achieve more standardization. [We're] going to be very different yet still get to the same place so I guess that's fine…however, that's our struggle with [Composition II], some of us really wanted it to be an intro to [literature] class because its fulfilling for us personally, but are we doing the students a disservice.

According to Dwight, some of that consistency challenge is because a majority of faculty who are hired have backgrounds in literature: they're teaching what they're familiar with. He also stated this is a challenge with speech requirements: "I think many English instructors don't have much training in speech so that they don't particularly emphasize that in [Writing I]." Andy also states that there are ongoing discussions regarding how much of these courses should focus on the verbal activities/assignments compared to the written ones:

I was having this conversation with the part-time instructor yesterday concerning the weight given to certain skills and competencies, and it's applying the conventions of academic essay writing. As a department we have been talking about how much emphasis in this particular course, since it's writing and speech, should go on writing and what on speech. We haven't come up with definite answers yet. I mean we seem to be hovering

somewhere in the neighborhood of 40% of the grade [or] 40-50% being writing. Personally I have 45% on

formal writing 25% on informal writing and the remaining 30% on the speech assignment…because this

course with it being a primary course, or the primary communications course for our associate degree programs,

the writing skills will play a very important role in their careers in nursing.

For the record, Andy defines "informal writing" as smaller homework assignments, peer review, and online discussion posts. When talking about his own teaching, Andy chose to emphasize writing more than speaking since these courses are meant to connect with other courses and contexts where written communication is paramount. When I asked which objectives he saw as being valorized more or less, Andy stated he felt Critical Reading is vital, but all objectives are important:

All of these are important concepts. I start with the reading because it's something that I start with in order

to get students to a place where they can develop the rest of these skills [these courses] are about introducing

[students] to the demands of college-level writing, so I mean another important element is the focus on

Research using sources to support their discussion so that that's another important one using source material

effectively.

While Dwight valorized speech a little more, he also stated all objectives were equally important. From the three WPA perspectives, it seems the consistent focus is preparing students for other contexts, be they academic or professional contexts, with a heavy emphasis on general communication skills.

Throughout the history of Composition Studies, reading and writing about Literature has played a key, yet often debated role. Somewhat similar for South Harmon, the inclusion of one objective regarding Literature for both Composition II (Objective #6) and Writing I (Objective #7)

seemed to linger as a mild yet noticeable debate amongst the leaders. While there aren't heavy disagreements, Andy seemed to be the most aware of the potential challenges.

> *I would probably get rid of or modify [the literary component]…because I just don't see it being used in the context of workplace communication. How does that connect to an applied communication degree? I could live with it being modified, but my default would be to just get rid of it, and focus more on using these courses as reinforcement for basic writing skills and then use [future writing courses] as a contextualized course for occupational specific writing.*

First, it's important to note he sees this being a larger struggle in Writing I, than in Composition II (although that has different challenges, which I mention next). Second, he didn't have hard data to show how much of an issue it is among students and faculty, yet did say he's had constructive conversations when, for example, faculty tried to weave in "poetry and homelessness" into courses focused more on general, rhetorical communication. Given that Writing I is the first writing class in the professional programs track, I see how this is problematic.

For Composition II, and objective #6 specifically, Andy indicated that there are two distinct challenges. First, he stated that he felt asking first year students to write a literary analysis may be too much for them to handle.

> *Number six, which is to write the research driven essay—okay fine I want them to write a research driven essay—but the full competency on a literary subject, author, and text using persuasion and/or literary analysis…I'll focus actually on neither of those. Writing a research driven essay on a literary subject, doing literary research is a task…a skill too far, for the students. Not just our students, but I think any second-semester, first-year writing students getting them to read and understand literary criticism.*

I will frequently get them to talk about the literary text as a springboard to talk about, you know, a relevant contemporary issue…racism, and what you see in society today, or war, father-son relationships, or family structures. Something like that. And then what happens is the discussion within the paper is less on the literary text, then it is on the issue. [I tell them to] write using literary texts as just one form of support.

Like many teachers I interviewed, Andy's story mirrored choices by teachers to navigate objectives to better supported students, as a way to consider the possibilities of writing transfer. In this case, Andy doesn't eschew Literature, yet recognizes many of his students will not likely use literary analysis in future contexts.

A secondary, yet smaller, issue related to the role literature plays in these courses concerns credit transfer. As a reminder, students enrolled in the Associate's degree track, are likely transferring to other schools to complete their Bachelor's. According to Andy:

[Composition I] transfers to all [4 year, state] system schools and actually all of the [2 year, state] colleges for sure, and many other colleges…as an equivalent of your first semester of the first year writing program. [Composition II], because here we teach it as a literature based writing course, it depends on the school. [Lake City State University] for example accepts [Composition II] as equivalent credit for [their Composition II]. Other schools don't. They'll give students a literature credit for it, but it's not a universally accepted course. We've designed it to be more focused on the writing and literature.

Andy didn't have hard data to show how much, or even if, this caused challenges for students who are transferring, I can say from my current perspective in helping develop an FYC program that this matters greatly.

And while the potential problems which classes properly transfer or not is endemic to all universities across the country, I can see how this can be an issue at schools like South Harmon who are focused on helping students bridge their futures. In consideration, this one objective about literature, seems to hamstring students on a skill/knowledge level as well as on a practical level concerning their academic pathways. And it's just a single line. Andy's concern, to me, is founded, and I followed up with him to see if there were larger discussions, given that they're allowed to change the language of COS every couple years. He first provided some history when he arrived at South Harmon and took over the FYC program:

> *The argument was if students at this level are not exposed to literature and poetry they may never get the opportunity and it will make them well-rounded, and the discussion, as I remember it, was that superficial unfortunately…[I understand why] analyzing poetry and/or drama and/or creative nonfiction is a form of communication. And I'm a literature guy, that's my background. But I think that what we're doing is we're cramming something into a course that really isn't relevant in courses designed exclusively for workplace communications.*

Andy, Dwight, and Pam all have literature backgrounds, in addition to most of the faculty they hire at South Harmon. I don't think it's unreasonable to claim that the maintenance of the literature goals in both courses coincide with a dominant academic background. What we see here is a confluence of contexts. The familiar contexts of the faculty's academic (and really, professional) backgrounds, versus South Harmon's overall contextual aim of providing workplace preparation, versus the multiple paths of students, some of whom may transfer to a more traditional four-year institution.

One final point about literature's influence here. All three WPA leads did mention their openness to change the COS to address these concerns concern those two objectives. Andy stated

that they're "currently looking at de-coupling those courses. And making Writing I a more contextualized set of courses, for Health Sciences, and for Business, [etc.]." However, what I found super interesting is that despite being very aware, and wanting to address those future professional contexts, the WPA Leads are not the ones who speak with local businesses to gain an understanding of what writing skills and knowledge should fit into the COS. Dwight confirmed as much when he stated that they "dabble with innovations" but only "the deans" connect with local businesses.

The creation of South Harmon's FYC objectives follow a path from state-mandated directions to establish a COS, wherein, the three WPA leads meet every couple years to flesh out the language to show how they connect to South Harmon's Core Abilities, define course level specific objectives, and language to aid in assessment. In this final section, I discuss how scholarship functions at South Harmon. As I indicated, the leads all come from literature backgrounds, not composition. Among all three, scholarship didn't influence how they fleshed out the COS, regardless of any scholarship impacting day-to-day teaching. Dwight's experience sums up best what they all said:

> *I was exposed to comp theory [in graduate school] so I have the textbook around here somewhere, but majored in American Literature. So I took the [required composition pedagogy] class but I don't think I committed myself to composition. I don't think that influences my curriculum hat. As a teacher it does. [As an admin] I have been looking at it more practical pragmatic rather than theory and it's probably a result of being in an administrative position.*

South Harmon, had to fight to have some sort of structure in the first place. When speaking with all three of the WPA Leads about what they do, they each offered a different piece of the structural puzzle. According to Andy:

[My position] started off as a kind of taking stuff off the desk of the [English Department] chair; the chair was responsible for a lot of stuff. And our associate dean fought for these positions. Given our budget, I'm surprised we got paid anything. But, the focus was to share responsibilities among [us three] so we can foster the relationship between part-time instructors, full-time instructors, and administration.

While Andy, Pam, and Dwight acknowledged that their responsibilities can potentially shift (Andy himself stated that "the job description is being developed as we go along"), at the time of interviewing here's what everyone is responsible for:

Andy
-Overseeing Composition I and II curriculum
-Administrative Tasks: ordering textbooks[11], scheduling, etc.
-Training part-time faculty for Comp. I & II
-Representing the program by sitting on various committees.

Dwight
-Overseeing Writing I and II (and 300 level writing courses) curriculum
-Crafting program policy (in coordination with English Dept. council)
-Training part-time faculty for Writing I & II (and other courses)

Pam
-Overseeing the Assessment process
-Professional development resources

Initially, when I had first learned of their structure via Andy's interview, I had imagined the parable of the three blind men examining an elephant. However, that is a gross mischaracterization. They are not wholly unaware, nor uncommunicative. They are in constant communication with one another. Yet, there are (re)forming the elephant. From their perspective, it didn't sound as if it was a major issue, any more than any organization with new positions. And since I wasn't able to get any other

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[11] Since it didn't sound like it played a huge role in their courses, the three of us didn't talk much about textbooks; however, it's important to note that they do have an in-house textbook—Andy is in charge of overseeing its development—in addition to other items they use.

instructor interviews, I'm not sure if that transition has created any more or less for the teachers. However, I did find it a little interesting that Andy and Dwight are only consultants in regards to hiring, despite being the main contact for new part-time instructors and the main trainers. Again, this is a mechanism of the size of their university as well as the precarious nature of items like enrollment.

Assessment & Training

Training for new instructors resembles the theme that South Harmon's FYC program is focused on the needs and milieu of the institution, not as much as anything theoretically influenced. While Andy provides new instructors with sample syllabi, assignment handouts, etc. he characterized training as "a real simple meet and greet in person, and sometimes it's not even that; sometimes it's just email." Dwight explained a similar situation, again referencing that the major priority is to ensure classes even have an instructor in the first place. Pam explained that while their ongoing professional development system improved since she first arrived (ten years previous to our interview), she wasn't certain regarding any training specifics. Again, this may seem like an "elephant" situation, yet my interpretation was more that there are two other full-time faculty who primarily oversee those processes, and all three use Pam's assessment, a major undertaking.

When the three positions were created, Pam gained sole responsibility to oversee assessment. The 6-7 month process, according to her (again, corroborated by the other two), begins in early fall semester with planning. One-third of the way into the semester, about early October, the FYC program randomly selects about 250-300 students, for faculty to collect and submit work for assessment, uploading everything digitally. The assignment in question is up to specific teachers, however, it has to be a "capstone" style assignment, collected at the end of the semester. This is one

reason Pam believes there's been inconsistency among the teachers: there is no common assignment across all sections.

Then, teams of three receive papers, and have from December to January to complete assessment. They use language from the COS to formulate a rubric, evaluating work on a scale of 1 to 5; five indicates a student fully achieving said outcome. Pam gathers all the results and submits the info to South Harmon's Office of Institutional Research (OIR), who compiles the information into a report, and submits it to the Deans overseeing the program. Each program/department can request specific information, and focus on different classes; Pam stated "we've chosen to work on courses that are required like [Writing I] and [Composition I & II], also because they're gatekeeping courses." The assessment process, like the COS, is also state mandated. Internally, Pam uses the data to make adjustments, which typically results in professional development.

> *At the next department meeting, after which we have received the results, and I've gone through them, I'll put it into a format that I think would be understanding to faculty, who really now care about it. Then we talk about it as a group. And look for the where the weaknesses are, where are the gaps. We look for patterns. Never single out instructors…and so we do best practices workshops, we do other things to kind of make sure that faculty have the tools to teach the students, and if someone is doing something that works for her students or his students make sure that other people have access to that. [Additionally] this year we do Tuesday teaching tips; and every Tuesday I email to faculty a teaching plan or an idea or way to use technology to achieve an outcome that they were interested in. So we'd like to say that we're one of the few departments that really cares about [instructors] the most.*

Reflected in Pam's explanation is a reinforcement of how the three WPA positions can impact faculty and students. Interesting to see that, while initial training is minimal, professional

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development utilizes assessment to make adjustments. Unlike Lake City State however, assessment does not cause macro-level changes impacting FYC Objectives.

The role South Harmon's OIR plays in the assessment process was intriguing too, because, of all three schools, it sounded the most engaged with the results. Part of this could be the mechanism that South Harmon must report all assessment results to a state board; and I'm conjecturing here, yet I imagine that South Harmon's upper leadership serve as a sort of "middle management" and have to balance explaining the results to their superiors, while working with those "below" them to make sure Core Abilities are being met. Pam said the office always follows up with some concerns, even when data says less than 10% of students aren't meeting criteria. Pam also noted that even if assessment data shows students meeting COS criteria, the FYC program still receives "complaints" from other departments regarding students' writing abilities.

I asked Pam if she was worried that the office was looking for change for the sake of change. She stated no, however, she understands why some faculty feel nervous at times:

> *It's at a good point, but there's always room to do some really interesting things with [the data]. For example, one of the things that we're interested in [making the data more useful] is that when the teacher submits the essay [for assessment] the teacher also provides a [graded] assessment of the essay. We can tend to learn a lot. However, since not all of the papers are "good", some [faculty] say "you always pick my ["worst"] students like this one" but we're interested in seeing how [their rating] compares with the two other ratings.*

Likewise, when the randomized students are identified, and instructors are notified, Pam is aware that some teachers may help those specific students more, to ensure their class's data meets the COS criteria. Dwight and Andy likewise felt assessment data has been helpful for internal purposes, but acknowledged some limitations. Dwight stated "We were noticing that MLA documentation was

one of the lower-ranking things, and so we spent department times on that specifically in a workshop…[so] I see the value in it, [yet] there isn't a whole lot of consistency from year to year because the questions change, the rubrics change…it makes it difficult to see long-term impact."

Andy rated the helpfulness of the data as a "six, maybe seven [on a scale of 1-10], in that I'm not a big numbers guy…if 75% of our students are doing this at a proficient level, do we really need to address that problem? How much better are we going to get? I do think the COS could have a great role…I'd like to see them used with part-timers too, but they're not required to participate." While I wouldn't classify Dwight and Andy's thoughts as antithetical toward assessment, they both indicate challenges with consistency, a theme that has come up in other areas of South Harmon's FYC program. Without knowing how they would each respond, as a follow up during my assessment questions, I did ask each of the three WPA-leads if they did norming; at the time, they did not, a possible contribution to the inconsistency? But again, without observing the process in great detail—which would've been difficult since assessment is completed individually—I'm unable to make an observation on how far apart they all are without norming.

Concluding Thoughts on South Harmon

Despite potential inconsistencies, and even some pressure from administration, the WPA leads don't single out teachers and are open to what might be need to be improved within the curriculum. At the same time, the literature debate was not a result of lower assessment scores, reinforcing an observation that decisions regarding FYC curriculum are influenced by a myriad of factors, and not just assessment. Unfortunately, since I wasn't able to secure additional interviews with non-administrative faculty, I'm unsure how other instructors feel about assessment, and/or the curriculum. Among all three schools in my study, South Harmon's assessment processes are laborious, and may cause some anxiety for teachers. This is not a stance to eliminate assessment; I've

mentioned before how my own professional world was blown wide open when I learned how much assessment, informal and formal, can help.

Concluding Observations on Three FYC Programs

FYC Objectives, their creation, assessment, and dissemination (in the form of training) are complex. Each of the three systems I observed are a complex push-pull of influences of internal and external contexts. Some of these contexts are to bridge learning via near transfer: a suite of two FYC classes where one prepares students for the next. Some of these contexts considered are attempts by WPA leads to think big picture, knowing that students won't be students forever. Those visions are underpinned by WPA leads individual, invisible objectives. Some of those objectives attempt to create consistency, as we've seen with Clover University. Some attempt to provide opportunities and fair labor standards for Writing Program Administrators, as we've seen with Lake City State. Some attempt to clarify teachers' own invisible objectives, as we've seen in the discussions at South Harmon. For me personally, I see three key takeaways.

First, I'm unsure why FYC Objectives need to be verbose. At all three institutions, each had some struggle due to the length and wordiness of objectives. South Harmon's WPA leads indicated how the sheer dearth of objectives made assessment a laborious process, sometimes leading to additional yet unhelpful feedback from upper administration when student achievement was off by a fraction. Lake City State's objectives were consistently debated among teachers. While leaders provided support in the form of mentorship, it seemed to me that a lot of training and professional development time was spent getting teachers on the same page. Clover University's objectives, actually, felt the most easy to understand and navigate. In addition to their guidelines being the only set directly influenced by composition scholarship (via CCC), they managed to pare them down to a simple set of four items. However, because they can't escape the institutional mandate to assess

those four objectives, alongside their university's core outcomes, their grading, assessment, and visual representation of the objectives feel more cumbersome than they are.

Second, assessment is important. However, just as teachers must negotiate, for their students, how FYC objectives impact learning, administrators clearly have a difficult hill to climb in terms of negotiating and how, when, and what will be assessed. Among all three institutions, Lake City State seemed to have the most freedom with assessment. But, I found their process to be unconvincing as far as validating what their program achieved. Although, my opinion here may not matter, as no one indicated any problems from their larger administration. Their assessment process was the most pragmatic in terms of modifying objectives, even if the frequency seemed to frustrate teachers and, in turn, causing that "deep tension" to exist and need resolution. The other two schools not only had cumbersome assessment processes, but were also held accountable for their results. That fascinated me because, I'm not familiar with an FYC program shutting down because institutional assessment showed the program didn't meet its own standards. For the (broken) record, I am a proponent of assessment. All three schools ultimately indicated how assessment told them something. And yet, just as I believe we should KISS for objectives, so should we find sustainable ways to conduct assessment.

Making objectives and assessment more manageable holds a key connection for my final observation: WPAs are middle-managers. WPA leads, across all three schools, all inherited a system that, for them, was somehow broken. Each group or individual tried to provide some level of consistency from the previous chaos they felt. For South Harmon, the WPA leads were expected to oversee two sets of FYC classes, in addition to other writing classes, and assessment. All while they taught! Lake City State has a team of nine administrators. All of them teach. Some are full-time, some graduate students. Though their main lead holds a tenure-track position, even he recognizes the labor needed to run a program their size and had to ask for more financial support. Clover

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University has only one WPA Lead, and while a much smaller program, dealt with an undefined system and administrative expectations to perform when assessment became king. And yet, all three, had some level of concern in regards to consistency, even if they weren't overly vigilant about achieving it. They each had their own pedagogical viewpoints and values. Some of those influenced their invisible objectives. And yet, the negotiation of proving their program to their superiors, while ensuring that those they supervise stay within stated guidelines, must be maddening. The next chapter explores these experience from teacher perspectives.

Chapter 5: Teachers, Objectives, & Transfer

Introduction

"We seek to understand literacy events and writing contexts that are at least once removed

from our own occasions and contexts for writing; we desire to learn more about discursive

practices and discourse communities other than our own" (Sullivan 98).

While Patricia Sullivan uses this quote in reference to ethnographic studies, it characterizes

an arc and argument put forth in this dissertation. I sought to better understand how FYC programs

cultivated their objectives, guided by my central research question: How and why do certain

influences impact Writing Program administrators and teachers when they form and communicate

FYC objectives? From our WPA leaders we've learned that objective formation is influenced by

internal factors, such as WPA lead's scholarly background, professional aims for their teachers, and

institutional expectations be they from other departments and/or the university as a whole. External

factors include future professional contexts' expectations of writing, and larger institutional bodies

requiring assessment, whether government or organizational based (e.g. accreditation). Finally, we've

learned about how invisible, or unstated, objectives informed objective creation within FYC

programs. More specifically, a key invisible objective permeating all three programs is a focus on

writing transfer, and the near/far contexts with which transfer is aimed. However, WPA leadership

aren't the only ones who work with objectives, nor do the solely consider transfer.

Where the previous chapter's focus was on how WPAs form their FYC objectives, this

chapter focuses on how teachers navigate those FYC objectives, and why, As most of us are

teachers, and not as many administrators or teacher-administrators, I wanted teachers' voices to be

heard last. To be clear, these are not foreboding or angsty stories, or any underpinned "us vs. them"

motif. Yet, because FYC serves as a nexus point for students' academic, professional, and personal

goals, teachers must address those student needs, simultaneously negotiating the invisible objectives of their FYC programs.

Ultimately, we as teachers are negotiating multiple contexts, and I wanted to better understand that negotiation. As Herndl states "in composition studies 'context' has become a strategic term associated with other concepts such as the 'discourse community'" (324-325). I use context similarly, and expansively: a place to apply knowledge, or a place to learn, or a place to reflect. This chapter is an extension of the FYC hairball analysis I did in Chapter 4, but via teacher and teacher-administrator perspectives, using transfer terminology and Activity Theory.

I found four conclusions when I analyzed pedagogy and applied transfer terms. I divided up the four into sections. First, I wanted to better understand what perspectives teachers had on the FYC objectives within their respective programs. From schools with smaller sample sizes, there seemed to be more agreement; one objective wasn't distinctively more important than others. However, in the larger participant pool, what emerged was a combination of highly valorized objectives and many objectives teachers valorized lower and/or scrutinized right out. Note, my use of the term valorization here, and going forward, is borrowed from Game Studies. Within each system players valorize certain rules, tools (or strategies), and, sometimes, objectives, especially if a game has multiple objectives. Thus, my use of the term can be seen as synonymous with prioritization, and I may use that term as well.

Second, since I asked administrators what academic and non-academic items influenced their FYC objective creation, I did the same for teachers' pedagogy. Similar to my findings in Chapter 4, more non-academic influences informed teacher approaches than academic ones. For both sections, I found a distinct push-pull between what teachers wanted to do, and what their FYC objectives required. Not that objectives were ignored wholesale, nor were teachers cavalier in their educational

approaches, but there wasn't clear departmental synergy or even a common focus among the teachers.

Regardless of teacher (in)congruence among objectives or influences, I observed that all teachers were including some aspect of writing transfer within their pedagogy, even if they didn't state those terms directly. However, instead of focusing on every writing transfer scenario, I'm only focusing on two sets of terms I feel are important to our understanding: King Beach's Collateral Transitions and Mediational Transitions. The third section discusses near or far transfer observations. Context B, where we want students to apply knowledge, should be an important consideration for teachers whether near or far. While I found most teachers focused on near transfer—choosing to prepare students for the next course in an FYC suite, or other college courses later in a student's career—we should also take into consideration other, farther contexts. Finally, in my fourth section, I selected teaching activities and approaches that were examples of Collateral Transitions and Mediational Transitions. I did so because they were noticeably prevalent, and the most important transfer scenarios to design pedagogy around in FYC. They're robust learning experiences for students because they take into consideration student experience and challenge students beyond simply getting an assignment done.

Likewise, this sets up the second part of this chapter: a Mediational Transition analysis of Lake City State's FYC program. My intent in zeroing in on one program was to walk through how Mediational Transition can work, even if Lake City didn't self-identify this writing transfer approach. Mediational Transition is complex, and Lake City's blind portfolio process is a good case study for seeing possibilities and pitfalls. Additionally, hearing participants speak on the emotional labor exerted to both teach within and help teachers to teach within the program, I wanted to highlight that invisible labor, showing why experience matters to writing transfer studies just as much as skills

and knowledge. I end the second part linking Mediational Transitions to game simulations, stating we should consider using more of these structures in FYC curriculum.

To wrap up this chapter, and this dissertation, I revisit my research questions and assumptions, reflecting on what I learned, and what could be further explored. Overall, while I feel I gained a solid picture of how departments create FYC objectives, the various ways teachers negotiate those objectives, and the role transfer plays within both processes, I also feel more can be learned. Obvious, student impact, as I stated in chapter 3, would've been a key perspective to have, insofar as telling us if/how objectives matriculate from administrators to teachers to students. However, moving beyond that original idea, I indicate exploring areas of FYC training and assessment more, yet on a qualitative, narrative level like I did FYC objective creation.

Part 1: Teacher Responses

Section 1: Valorizing FYC Objectives

Of the three programs, as I stated before, South Harmon seemed to have the most synergy regarding which objectives were valorized over others. Keep in mind that the three participants were also administrators. The biggest variance among Andy, Pam, and Dwight was regarding the role literature should play in the curriculum. However, from their perspective, teachers didn't eschew, ignore, or greatly modify objectives linked to literature when teaching. Additionally, according to Andy, most teachers hired have literature backgrounds, so it's unsurprising that there wasn't stark variance. The only mild indication that differing valorization may have occurred is based upon programmatic assessment which showed some students achieved objectives better than others; for example, all three mentioned the results showing low scores in MLA and APA formatting.

At Clover University, only one teacher volunteered to be interviewed. Jane is a full-time, tenure track instructor who primarily teaches first year writing, and also teaches some literature

courses. While Jane's insight doesn't speak for all teachers at Clover, her perspective was unique because she started at Clover before Cindy, the WPA lead, was hired and revamped the program. During the revamping, Jane, like other instructors, was an active participant in revising FYC objectives. Jane's relationship with the objectives is interesting because they're actually not a central focus of her teaching, however, for the sake of departmental assessment, she does make sure students address them in their writing, and uses a Mediational Transition-type exercise to facilitate that aim. As I explained in chapter 2, Beach's Mediational Transition is a transfer scenario where a third context acts as both a context of knowledge and application. This allows students to practice a skill or apply knowledge within the smaller context (for example, an in-class activity), receive feedback to close the transfer loop for said activity, and then return to the main context in order to discuss what students learned or experienced and how to apply it to other contexts. I denoted that transfer scenario with the following visual:

Figure 8: Mediational Transitions Diagram
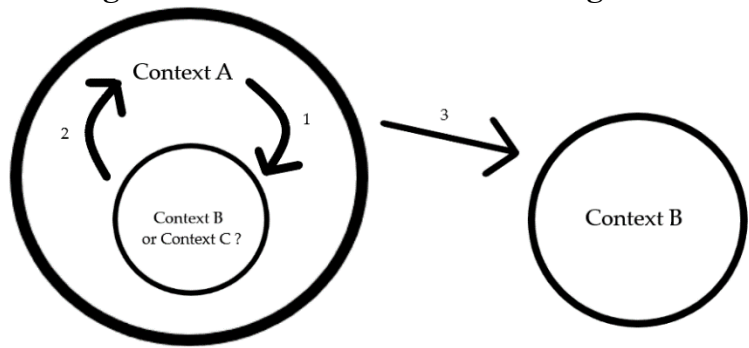
In the initial day class, Jane introduces objectives but doesn't cover them in detail. She reprints the core objectives on each major writing assignment handout, but when I asked if she reviews the objectives, or if her students ask her to do so, she stated:

Never…we've got the core [university] outcomes, and that's required to be listed; and then you've got the

writing program['s objectives]…there are so many layers that are here…but I talk about if you [the students]

look at the measurable course outcomes, you can see how, you know, the outcome number links back to these

larger [objectives]…[and they] allow us as a program to assess whether we're doing that use well or not.

[And] what I do often do, is when I'm talking through the assignment, I [say] "here's why we're doing this"

as like a sort of rationale for them about what is it I'm trying to get them to get out of [the assignment].

Here, she's primarily using objectives as rationale and justification, in a transparent way, but isn't overly emphasizing them as a monolithic practice or goal to achieve.

Jane also uses a Mediational Transition practice mid-semester: she creates a small, high-stakes portfolio assignment. I unpack how portfolio assignments are Mediational in a later section. However, that assignment helps her and her students collectively negotiate Clover's FYC objectives. According to her, the activity allows students to gain valuable feedback, and ensures students they're including writing conventions that meet outcomes. When I asked what she prioritizes, she stated that since grading and assessment are separate processes, it's possible she subconsciously valorizes other good writing conventions in grading, but knows they may not matter in assessment.

If I find this group of students really didn't do something I know is important, the next time we meet, I really

make sure that we're paying attention to it. For example: one of the things I want to see is a summary of a

source. I don't know that I necessarily prioritize that more in grading, but if they're missing it from last time,

next time I make sure. [I know] this great summery would penalize them [in assessment] but [I tell the

student] it's not that the piece is more or less significant. (Jane's emphasis)

Jane isn't the only instructor interviewed who had to find balance between helping students with writing and being aware how objectives are or aren't being met for the department. Overall, South Harmon and Clover, where I had fewer participants, didn't show much variance in valorization, but some still occurred. At the same time, the folks I interviewed at both places did prioritize some non-objectives in order to prepare students for post-school contexts (I discuss those strategies in the near/far transfer section next).

In the largest group of participants who taught, the valorization of FYC objectives presented an interesting paradox at Lake City State. On the one hand, the whole document was highly valorized because of the pass/fail portfolio system. And yet, individual objectives were prioritized differently by instructors. This paradox is summed up best by Carol, a teaching track professor who had been teaching at Lake City State for a while, under three different WPA Leads. During our discussion on objectives, she referred to inherent challenges within the program:

> *Because [students write] differently if it's a performance…I think we're doing the same thing that the [K-12] common core is doing. I think these goals are totally way too powerful. I think we teach to the goals…I feel like the goals and expectations like the "maintaining a controlling purpose," and the writing conventions, and sometimes how we judge papers is based on an audience of people who read hundreds of papers, you know? [She reads through a few more objectives, paraphrasing.] I feel like we're sort of skewing them towards [student] writing for someone who has to read 100 pages over the weekend. So [students] better be clear about what this paragraph is about because [the evaluating teachers] don't have time to figure it out. (my emphasis)*

Carol's perspective is not different from the teachers I spoke with, including those who served on the WPA. Instructor concerns included confusing objective language, continuous debates over objective definitions, an inequitable structure for English as a Second Language and English

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Language Learning (ESL & ELL) students, and an higher emphasis on getting students to pass the final portfolio more than achieving any other stated, or unstated objective. In consideration of these concerns, and because the process is an (un)intended Mediational Transition scenario, I revisit Carol's thoughts, and others, below in Part 2: Lake City as Mediational Transition.

Exploring individual valorization at Lake City State, here I provide a brief semi-quantitative overview, followed by more qualitative descriptors of teachers' perspectives. Of the 11 teachers I interviewed, two stated that they didn't valorize any objective higher or lower; with one of those two slowly sharing/showing why each objective matter, and the other not expanding on why all were equally important. The remaining nine stated at least one highly valorized objective, and at least one less valorized, or in their words "lower," objective. The two most commonly, highly valorized or emphasized objectives were:[12]

> Maintain a controlling purpose that...
> - reflections what matters to or is at stake for you in your rhetorical situation.
> - responds to what matters to those addressed and affected by your writing.
> - creates and maintains coherence and clarity for the intended audience(s) by shaping patterns of arrangement and design.
>
> With the REFLECTIVE PROJECT in the portfolio, you will account for and evaluate the choices made in the essays by...
> - explaining how your rhetorical situation influenced the discovery, reconsideration, and development of your writing strategies throughout your successive revisions.

Most commonly, the two least valorized were:

> Make use of academic conventions for writing by...
> - demonstrating an ability to meet academic expectations for grammar and mechanics in final drafts.

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[12] Important to note that when Lake City subjects spoke on specific objectives, they did see all the goals and outcomes on the document as individual objectives, sometimes grouping them together under a major category or statement, sometimes delineating them. In training materials, or interviews, nothing is clearly stated about how or if these objectives and sub-objectives should be seen or delineated. Furthermore, according to the WPA leaders, each objective, whether a major line or bullet point beneath it, were all taken into consideration for the Final Port Review. And thus, what I'm including here are the specific lines teachers spoke to and/or demarcated on the paper copy I offered them.

With the REFLECTIVE PROJECT in the portfolio, you will account for and evaluate the choices made in the essays by...
- describing how your writing responds ethically to what matters to those addressed and affected by your writing.

The following responses start with highly valorized comments from teachers and gradually move to least valorized ones. I start with Larry, a second year graduate student who had previous college teaching experience before attending/working at Lake City. Overall, Larry was open to the objectives, yet reflected how he saw the controlling purpose objective as an anchor to the rest. He also indicated his valorization influence was due to Lake City's training.

> *I've spent a lot of time considering [this], because it occurred to me that early on, and from training, this first goal of maintaining a controlling purpose was like the all-important goal. Everybody talked about that was the central thing…this idea of academic discourse [in the] third goal we didn't hear anything about. I recall some [talk] about conventions for writing by providing relevant context, integrating and documenting summaries, demonstrating ability to meet academic expectations for grammar and mechanics…from the start I felt that controlling purpose was the most important thing. [Eventually,] as we went in our Mentor group, I came to really see just how much overlap there was between goals, and that by focusing on one, you know, if a student was only focused on one, they wouldn't necessarily be doing other things as well.*

Tim, a graduate student and WPA mentor—who train and regularly meet with small groups of first year graduate students—also emphasized the controlling purpose objective:

> *As a port assessor, I guess I definitely value the controlling purpose more than I probably do the academic conventions. [The objective language of] what matters to or is what is at stake, if it's organized around one idea, I have no idea why I think that matters or like what's the point of you writing this essay? Like why should I read this? And I'm stressing to my students that they need to find ways of making it clear why they*

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wrote this paper beyond the fact that I told them; like there's just got to be a reason this [paper] exists beyond

"you were just told to do this."

Both teachers speak from the context of Composition I, wherein students write at least three essays and a reflective paper, choosing two essays to submit with their final portfolio in addition to the reflective essay. Three key observations. First, the mentor group plays a role in what objectives are most valued. For Larry, the objective was highlighted by his mentor, and for Tim, as a mentor he highlighted the objective for his group.13 Second, both reference objectives in relation to the final portfolio and why it matters for students to pass. For Larry, he was aware of the expectation that all objectives needed attention, yet felt students could only focus on one at a time. Tim acknowledged his high valorization was based upon being a portfolio evaluator. Both echo a rationale to emphasize controlling purpose similar to many other teachers: the controlling purpose guides, organizes, and often ties together the whole paper. Additionally, it appears the instructor community impacts how teachers valorize objectives in Lake City's FYC activity system.

The importance of teaching/discussing a controlling purpose, from Lake City's objectives, also emerged instructors teaching or talking about Composition II, the research writing course. Herman was a graduate instructor in his third year, and never served on the WPA. He saw how the controlling purpose tied into other objectives; the only difference between his valorization and others was that, for Composition II, he felt it better to revisit later in the semester instead of early on:

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13 Richard was not a mentor of Larry.

Controlling purpose is obviously quite important to create coherence and clarity…I bring it up and I talk

about it but maybe later in the semester than other people would [for Composition II]…it's a goal that I focus

on way sooner in teaching [Composition I], because for the research project [students' research] purpose will

change and evolve. Here we start with the central research question, and the purpose [students] don't have to

mold initially. I feel as though the emphasis needs to be placed on controlling purpose on engaging with their

scholarly sources and on the reflective writing [because] it's about the content, and how [students are]

analyzing and how [they're] engaging with the sources.

This stance is somewhat similar to Larry's position of FYC objectives connecting to one another; here, Herman uses controlling purpose as a reflective tool.14 And that's in addition to the reflective goal, which, from this sample of teachers, was the second most valorized goal.

Theodosia, a graduate student who also served as mentor and Composition I coordinator, spoke on why Controlling Purpose and Reflective objectives were a higher priority for her as teacher and trainer. She also mentions revision which isn't listed on the objectives:

Controlling purpose because they're, like, really looking close at the various text; I think that that's such a

hard thing to do. And also revision, like, if anything I prioritize revision of my classes because that's a skill

that is not I think often taught in high school or an even K12 education generally given the resources [K12

teachers have] and I think it's just such an important skill in a lot of years to come. [Students] don't get to

think of their vision in the types of much more large-scale projects that we want them [in college] to think of

which I think is why the goals of the reflective essay are important…both in terms of the finalization in the

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14 While Herman was not the person I interviewed who felt all FYC Objectives were equally important, he did circle back through the whole list finding something of merit in each objective, despite picking the controlling purpose and reflective goals as the most important. For example, he more than other teachers discussed the importance, at great length, of using sources properly, including introducing a clear context, and formatting citations.

progress of revision that leads to being completed that so yeah definitely prioritize revision of reflective goal and

less so the grammatical stuff.

Theodosia's valorization is influenced by two contexts, past and future. Theodosia is one of the few teachers who directly brought up near or far transfer, albeit without using the specific terminology. In this case, she references near transfer per her emphasis on preparing students for revision asked of them in other college classes. Conversely, she's one of the only instructors to reference K-12 education as a contextual consideration of her teaching.

Finally, within Theodosia's initial response, we begin to see how the more mechanical goals are prioritized, often lower. Her fellow mentor Tim stated:

As far as the academic conventions of writing I do feel like I probably prioritize the context above, you know, whether or not it's documented correctly, or if there are [sic] grammar/mechanics issues. So I threw those much, much lower.

Ultimately, responses indicating higher valorization of certain goals seemed to help stage lower prioritized objectives. Lower ones came across as items achieved at a later stage.

Instructors who valued reflection did so because it helped provide a secondary space (i.e. the reflective essay) where students could explain what they were trying to do within their document, free from academic writing style expectations. Larry discussed how prioritizing certain goals were a result of being told by his mentor Kelsey, another graduate teacher, who prioritized items for similar reasons:

[Kelsey] was very explicit on her focus on that ethical goal, and reflective project, and how much weight that would carry in her evaluation of a [final] portfolio…in my mind as being significantly more important than the ability to meet academic expectations for grammar mechanics, and presumably with the understanding that the third goal develops expectations for grammar mechanics over time. Because it's part of the reflective project goals, the third one describing how [student] writing responds rapidly to what matters to those addressed and affected by your writing. That was a tricky one and [our mentor group] commented in our meetings near the end of the semester that we wish we could started talking about that much earlier in the semester because [students] needed more time with it and they needed to understand and not just in the reflective…[Kelsey would] have a hard time passing a port that didn't have it. And I think I was affected by that.

The reflective project Larry references is the reflective essay. Furthermore, Larry's explanation echoes a value other teachers saw: the reflective goals, in general, use rhetorical terminology to help students think about what they were writing and why. The reflective essay goals and expectations seem to offer students an easier way to convey their ideas, likely minus the pressure of formalized writing. While he didn't explicitly make that connection, Larry wished that the objective was discussed in weekly training sessions much earlier in the semester. Moreover, his perspective here emphasizes what I brought up earlier: the community influences valorization.

However, the ethical objective came with some scrutiny. Khris, a graduate instructor, expressed how the goal's language obfuscated what he felt the FYC program was really trying to say (and given his initial impassioned response, I asked him to expand more):

*So the only outcome I think is stupid is the ethical one. I think it's stupid. I think that's nonsense. I think it should just be, I mean, like, they use the word ethically but they're really just like don't be an a******.*

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*What they really want is for the [students] to explain their writing. [By don't be an a****** I mean:] Don't misuse sources. Don't insult anyone, don't be racist. Which is 88% of the ethical problems I have is [students] being racist in their writing.*

Again, Khris felt all goals were important. And in fact, unlike other instructors, didn't think FYC objectives needed overly thorough explanation or discussion for students. However, his response points to disconnects that existed among instructors. First, some instructors saw the ethics goal as more or less important than others. Those who saw it as less important, had already been through the portfolio process as reviewers. Second, even if teachers share valorization of objectives, they may interpret language differently. Indeed, Khris's correct that no Lake City objectives refer to plagiarism outright (although the handbook students pay for does, in addition to syllabi).

Also, not all WPA mentors and leaders, save one, felt all objectives were equally important for various reasons. Theodosia stated:

Probably the goals that are lowest, even though we [the WPA] encourage folks not to read it that way…the grammar one is low is because it can fail students as writers [in the final portfolio process]. I try to give proofreading strategies . (my emphasis)

Theodosia was the only WPA member to state both the expectation I highlighted above, and the cause/effect relationship of writing mechanics and the final portfolio explicitly. Mostly, non-administrative teachers were straightforward about how they saw the process working out for students. Yet, both teachers and Theodosia shared the same motive: avoid setting up students to fail the portfolio due to their writing mechanics. Their valorization is paradoxical. On the one hand, it's clear they felt it was important to focus more on higher order objectives like rhetorical thinking.

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However, they knew that some instructors, but not necessarily all, within the portfolio process would solely focus on grammar and mechanics.

Related, two instructors I interviewed, who primarily worked with ELL/ESL students, shared either specific strategies to help students circumvent these issues and/or expressed disdain regarding the structure. Grace, a teaching track faculty member, walked me through how she approaches valorizes objectives for students; she personally valorized some writing ones less, yet she knew others saw them as important for the final portfolio:

> *I use these like a checklist [shows me a diagram she uses for her students written on a whiteboard in her office]. They also get the sequence on paper, but this stuff I put on the board. On our page six day, I say everyone put a star next to goal 2.3, this is the have to have one. I really micromanage. I make sure everyone marks it. If it's millennials or internationals. I make it a course goal. Knowing how to be a university student is something that is not taught in other cultures.*

Grace's personally lower valorization of some goals, yet higher emphasis all around for students is an interesting paradox for me as an instructor. While I don't have to negotiate the same portfolio group and process she does, I admit I would likewise be conflicted with overly emphasizing—per my limited ELL/ESL training—writing mechanics to students who would struggle with those concepts. At the same time, I agree that I wouldn't want them to fail. Likewise, I try not to be overly prescriptive of such items if I introduce them; this is not a condemnation of Grace's teaching, and in fact, other Lake City teachers shared things they did to help ELL/ESL students pass. Yet, it does show that Grace valorized students' wellbeing, both academically and emotionally.

The other instructor who advocated for ELL/ESL students, Carol, also expressed misgivings about how FYC objectives functioned. Similar to the quote I introduced earlier, among her concerns here is how objective language was used by instructors/administrators:

I loathe exigency. [her laughter] I can't even talk about it without making fun of it. No one else knows what it means except for us [as teachers]. It's another obstacle. Where's Kairos? Why don't we get that? Do you have to have exigency? Is there? I guess there is for someone. But [students] got to prove it? It's just too much…I don't like composing and design [strategies]. I just want to call them writing [strategies. Or I would prefer to call them reading and writing strategies.

"Develop a knowledge" I say is the goal but I also tell [students] that realistically we know they're not going to cure cancer; but when it comes to grading I really don't apply that [goal]. Instead, I've been using the word investigate a lot, and like I want [students] to take an investigative approach whether or not [they] develop knowledge. I think [the objectives are] more of an approach than a product which is why I don't like these goals.

Carol was one of the few teachers I observed before interviewing. Even though the recording didn't turn out well, I can attest how her approach met students where they were at in regards to their experience and was also verbally positive, stating belief in their abilities. Her comment "we know they're not going to cure cancer" isn't meant to show she believes they won't, she used it contextually within the FYC objectives and what strategies will work best for her students. In this case, more "hugging" transfer strategies than "bridging" ones. At the same time, she was one of the few teachers to use other organizations' objectives for writing, helping students see what contexts beyond college expect.

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Second, Carol raises an issue within transfer I address more in my Mediational Transitions discussion below: skills and knowledge are not the only items potentially transferred; emotions can be transferred too. Both Carol and Grace expressed how international students are used to different academic contexts, and that by providing them with more developmental approaches, they help students' contextual transition. In those developmental strategies, knowledge or skills may not be transferred, but a reassurance for ELL/ESL students to have confidence in their writing. Even though my research wasn't focused on and/or measured what emotional takeaways students had from their FYC classes, I feel this would be helpful for future transfer studies.

After understanding how and why teachers see, interpret, and valorize objectives, I came away with two observations. First, it seems likely teachers will prioritize and spend more or less time on certain objectives, if allowed to do so. Even in a program like Lake City, where the whole set of objectives are used to pass or fail students at the end of the semester, teachers still saw some objectives are more important than others. Second, objectives that had lower valorization seemed to be those of lower-order concerns like formatting, grammar, and mechanics. Not that any one person I spoke saw lower-order writing as not important at all, yet given the time they had teaching, they rather would focus on objectives they felt would benefit students more. From learning more about their backgrounds, my latter observation seemed to be influenced by their own previous experiences as students and/or professionals.

Section 2: Academic & Non-Academic Influences

Just as I learned about the internal/external influences for WPA decision making—a mix of scholarly (somewhat) and structural (mostly) factors—teachers seemed to be similarly influenced. In this section, I introduce and analyze what contexts influenced teachers. Teachers were guided by more non-academic factors than academic ones, in general. While reviewing transcriptions, for

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academic influences, I listened and looked for any theories, scholarship, or authors mentioned. Non-academic influences were trickier. For example, if someone mentioned bell hooks as an influence, they didn't get overly specific on how her work might impact their teaching. Yet, what are the borders of non-academic influences? I started with ideas that didn't fall under the academic rubric I mentioned above. Eventually, I gathered that wily group into similar categories; for example, if participants mentioned how they drew from their undergraduate student experience, I labeled that "Personal Experience as Student" even if the scope of that label could contain other specific influences like empathy.

First, here's a pseudo quantitative overview of all responses, followed by more qualitative quotes. This table includes paraphrased summaries from all participants at all three schools:

Table 4: Primary Academic & Non-Academic Influences

Subject's Role	Academic Influence	Non-Academic Influence
Admin only	Rhetoric, Composition	Staff Professional Development
Admin/Teacher	Education, Composition	University's Influence
Admin/Teacher	Literature	Job Preparation for Students
Admin/Teacher	Literature	Programmatic Function
Admin/Teacher	Literature	Proper Communication
Admin/Teacher	Feminism	Personal Experience as Student & Graduate Student Support
Admin/Teacher	Composition, Literature	Programmatic Function
Admin/Teacher	Feminism	Student Empathy
Admin/Teacher	Composition	Graduate Student Support
Admin/Teacher	Literature	Instructor Support
Teacher only	Education, Constructivism	Personal Experience as Student
Teacher only	Literature, Mixed Media	New Challenges
Teacher only	Composition (post-process)	Personal Experience as Student
Teacher only	ELL/ESL Pedagogy	Student Empathy
Teacher only	ELL/ESL Pedagogy	Previous Professional Experience
Teacher only	Media	Personal Experience as Student
Teacher only	Film, Queer Theory	Personal Experience as Student

For both categories, the items listed here are items that either came up most frequently, or were the only influence mentioned. Like I said, it was easier identifying academic influences, despite those disclosures being brief, even with follow up questions asking for expansion. Almost every teacher

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only brought up a single name or over-arching theory/discourse. I followed the same reasoning for which non-academic influence to include, which was much more difficult to synthesize and paraphrase since, without prompting, instructors shared many non-academic influences. And thus, an important caveat to take into consideration when viewing this chart: just because I didn't list secondary or tertiary influences for non-academic influences, doesn't mean teachers didn't discuss them. Or lese, just because a teacher didn't mention an influence at all, doesn't mean it may not have been a priority for them. For example, I don't believe student empathy was not a priority for all teachers; but if it's not listed then it was not shared as much as others.

Three main observations. First, even though there was minimal mention or indicator of what academic influences impacted teachers, there was a wide variance for how much influence existed. Five of the folks above indicated a specific theory and/or practice from their educational backgrounds (previous or current) that explained why they did what they did. The remaining indicators came from participants providing their background, and/or current major (in the case of graduate teaching assistants).

Second, only two instructors were familiar with the specific scholarship of their respective FYC program. One reason may be that both instructors were heavily involved in the FYC objective creation process. Jane from Clover University was present before lead WPA Cindy's arrival; for Lake City State, Will was also teaching before David took up the WPA mantle. Interestingly, three admin-teachers from Lake City State couldn't identify a specific theory or scholarly influence of their own program. There were some peripheral identifications by others. For example, at least three instructors identified critical thinking as their department's main component, and two others multi-modality, but didn't attach either to specific theories. Critical thinking came about because teachers just believed it was an important programmatic aspect. Other mentions were an awareness that multi-modal portfolios were an option.

Third, much more prominent were non-academic factors impacting how teachers taught and navigated their FYC program. The two most prevalent responses were the two with the most details shared: Student Empathy, and Personal Experience as Student. Student Empathy was tagged when a subject used language showing student support, prioritizing student experience in the classroom (or beyond), and concern for students' lives (whether academic, personal, or professional). For Personal Experience as a Student, I tagged responses where instructors referenced specific stories or experiences they had in similar classes.

> *I am a product of liberal arts in my own education, and so process has always been a big part of how I've understood writing.*
>
> *-Larry*

> *Things that I valued as a student…I just like the idea of transfer is really important to me as well. So I want them to be able to then take the skills in two completely different arenas and then recognize okay in what ways are these still useful what ways do I need to modify them, might there be a particular context or strategy where this isn't you know a productive strategy or something like that so I don't know.*
>
> *-Tim*

> *I go back to empathy and listening, understanding that [students] have huge backgrounds and variety. I think some teachers come in with an attitude that says that students don't wanna work.*
>
> *-Kelsey*

> *I feel like [my teaching choices] come from my own experience; I feel like it's something I may have probably did in my undergrad, at least from time to time, maybe not ending a paragraph [with a quote] but not*

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engaging with the quote after I have used it. Maybe just sticking it in there. And that's definitely something

that I can remember my instructors being conscious of.

-Herman

I am probably one of the few graduate students who has taken a composition class. Or taken a composition

class as an undergraduate. Probably the majority [tested] out or are so far from their undergraduate days that

they don't remember. But that class was fundamental for me in that it defined what I was doing for the rest of

college, because at that point I was still a computer programming major…and the fact I enjoyed my

classroom, in which I feel like our students here struggle to, and see it only as a general education requirement.

And I refuse to think of it that way.

-Khris

One glaring commonality from this cache of non-academic influences is the positive,

emotional experience teachers carried from earlier experiences, more than identifying specific

knowledge or skills. The last teacher, Khris, characterized a common first year student experience

yet was emotionally excited when sharing it with me! He didn't list much of what he learned, but did

indicate how the experience inspired his desire to learn, and find an academic path that was much

more fulfilling for him. Again, we need more research in the area of experiential transfer. Kelsey's

response also made me think of this since she's forecasting other instructors' attitudes (maybe not

within FYC, but in other departments at Lake City State). Only Herman's response indicated more

specific knowledge.

Somewhat related, another factor influencing teacher-administrators, was the emotional

wellbeing of colleagues. I paraphrase their philosophy as "if teachers are prepared, then students will

have more success" in addition to making sure fellow teachers felt supported.

There were certainly things I as an instructor struggled with more. Like the interpretive questions…as a mentor, I think it's helpful because then I can give a slightly different perspective, I can understand sort of like what [our assignment sequence] is and what it's trying to do…I guess it opens up that continued conversation of like helping people to be reflective on their teaching practice and things like that. Especially, for all the new things [in the assignment sequence] as well…it's like both teaching [instructors] what needs to be done in this assignment and why is to be done, in addition to trying to give their students explanations of what they need to be doing for these assignments.

-Tim

I want to be supportive and feel like [graduate instructors are] part of a supportive community…that's definitely a goal I've been trying to put at the forefront of my mind when coordinating [my] duties. If I'm taking care of [graduate instructors] I see it as being related to the goals and outcomes for assessment because if they can't teach, if they're emotionally, physically tired, exhausted, like completely out of your mind, that you'll be glad for support; I understand that most people have those types of anxiety…and I'm there for [them] with the course goals and outcomes. I'd rather not have them feel that they're forced into the goals.

-Theodosia

Concluding, be mindful that when talking with participants about academic influences, I had no specific question for them to mentioning such influence. As I said in chapter 3, I wanted those responses to be organic. If academic influences were shared, I followed up. While each mentioned backgrounds in specific areas, only some instructors stated direct influences, and/or examples of applying said scholarship within their classroom and/or pedagogy. The more apparent, detailed, and emphatic responses were about non-academic experiences and influences, mostly emotional ones.

This, coupled with the similar influences on FYC objective/program creation, is not a call to dich theory, nor an alarm for why we're not using more scholarship in teaching (although I can see why some many have that reaction), rather a reconsideration of the role scholarship plays within our pedagogical choices. Maybe there should be less formal scholarly aspects of training, replaced by hands-on, practical, and developmental kinds of training.

Section 3: Near vs. Far Transfer Focus

In this section, I provide quotes from teachers indicating if their pedagogy leaned more toward near or far transfer, and why. Starting with Near transfer, I show how teacher motivations focused on an introduction to, or preparation for, "Collegiate Writing" or "Academic Writing." Or else, like with most Lake City State teachers, an expressed concern of making sure students passed and could get into the next writing class. Then, , I discuss the handful of teachers focusing on Far transfer. Comparatively fewer, their motivations almost eschew preparing students for academic writing, instead educating on how different professional contexts compared to academic ones. I again present a mix an overall qualitative analysis alongside quotes.

Eight total participants explicitly mentioned a stated or unstated objective related to Near transfer. In addition to looking for language along the lines of "the next course" or "other classes where students write" I also included any activities and assignments where teachers expressed preparation or training of some skill or knowledge that can be used beyond their class, yet still within the university. One such example was Khris, who in Composition II, understood that many students don't have time to fully read their research, whether in his class or others.

I ask them to read [one of their found sources] in 20 minutes quickly, because that's how they're going to be

doing the research [in college:] in 20 minute increments. No one's going to sit down and read 30 pages

thoroughly.

I can see how some academics and teachers may feel about this tactic; does it reinforce a generalized

stereotype that students' predisposition is to do the bare minimum? At the same time, I feel this

choice is brilliant, since, for either a semester long or quarter long class schedule, students don't have

time to completely, thoroughly read a whole article on a level that we might as academics. Similarly

preparing students for academic rigor, Andy had another take:

I am trying to get students to be able to practice thinking in the analysis and the communication required for

them to be successful throughout their college experience…and of course in their careers, rather than simply

doing some of the superficial work [students] may be used to doing in high school: [in a student's voice] I'm

composing you know the five paragraph essay, or just simply regurgitating. I really push them deeper into

different depths.

From both perspectives we see interpretations of student experience. The Hugging activities these

instructors have for students make two assumptions: what students experienced in high school, and

what is most practiced in future college contexts. These teachers are inventing Contexts B, while

interpreting previous Contexts A, somewhat transforming their FYC class into a third context. I

don't have data to know how ubiquitous this thought process is for FYC teachers, however, it does

reinforce the practice that teachers draw from their experiences when making pedagogical decisions.

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Likewise, some Near transfer focus is informed by professional experience. Carol and Grace drew from professional training to create both Hugging and Bridging activities for their international students who were unfamiliar with the American higher education system.

[For Composition II, students are] supposed to focus on a [research] question...but mine don't do that. I use rhetorical analysis. It's great for ESL students who don't have analysis skills. Rhetorical understanding is different for people of Latin American countries; with Asian countries; Middle Eastern countries and how they write is because of culture. American has its own way of reading and writing and communication style because of culture. The American style will then transfer to all the other writing classes…It's unfair if we don't [teach] it. So I try to make sure they know the American-style rhetoric and writing because we're in the United States. ESL students need a lot more explanation for why we do what we do. I stick with rhetorical analysis because it's the one thing that's consistent.

-Grace

I also explain to [students] that [Lake City State] is a research University, what that means, and then I show them these [a primer on American higher education.] I tell them about [our undergraduate research event] or whatever it's called. Every semester I get some student who applies to it. I guess I'm a desperate connector. I don't want them to [practice research] just for this course. I remember asking them what about what [Lake City] does for research?

-Carol

Both use their knowledge, differently, to help connect students to higher education practices. Grace's approach is more Hugging, because she's showing how effective rhetorical analysis is as a tool for college-level readings. Her repetitive activities are an attempt to reinforce said value.

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Conversely, Carol's push for students to participate in an undergraduate research symposium—which is not a requirement of Composition II at Lake City—is considered Bridging. In her method, she's putting student work in a different, more public context, raising the stakes. Carol does provide them strategies, though, not wholly leaving her students to their own devices. Both approaches indicate that Near transfer situations require a certain amount of empathy.

Jane also focused on empathizing with students wanting to feel prepared for the next class. To achieve this, she angled away from her school's FYC objectives, teaching her students important writing skills and knowledge, even if some items weren't being assessed by her department/school.

I glance over [the objectives] and if [students are] interested, then I encourage them ask questions. And if not, I talk more about the class. And while assessment is in the back of my mind, the things I'm really hoping for the class, are as [students are] building these things [they'll] get to a point where [they're] a stronger writer or a stronger reader…I really don't end up like going through, in any extensive way, the outcomes of the class. I started framing that [students are] how to read closely and summarize, and that leads to this, and then that leads to this…more abstract higher level. I was doing it as kind of a genre based class, really about how [writing] matters in the world…as opposed to a really like "so the first thing you will make sure that you're accomplishing is this...etc."

From all the above examples, Near transfer foci seem to also include an assuaging of anxieties. Teachers have bigger picture points of view, and work within, or mostly outside, the scope of their school's respective FYC objectives. To transition, and likewise, Jane's comments here indicate investment in both near and far transfer.

Only a handful of participants discussed far transfer contexts in their teaching, usually more professional than academic (i.e. advanced writing classes). While it could be that they're a technical

college, South Harmon teachers and administrators were very focused on how courses aligned with future professional contexts. Clover University's FYC program wasn't as focused on that kind of far transfer because they wanted students prepared for advanced writing courses within their majors. However Jane made far transfer a priority, as I noted above.

There's not a lot of evidence among Lake City's state objectives and interviews showing Far transfer as a curricular priority, however some teachers did see that potential. Carol and Grace chose many approaches to help ELL/ESL students prepare for predominantly English contexts. Khris had one of the more detailed foci on wanting students to see writing beyond the first year, and even college. He talked about the curricular flexibility teaching Composition II, and referenced one required item—Edmundson's "Who Are You and What Are You Doing Here? / A Message in a Bottle for the Incoming Class" (2011)—but then discussed why he included other readings:

> *The [Edmundson article] is a really easy thing to get them to think about what they're trying to do [in college]. I assign that in relationship to a commencement address by the former Secretary of the Navy, Admiral McRaven. We just talk about sort of like getting your life together…and I did that to sort of think about, not even the rhetorical stuff, but talking about the end of college…I was just trying to get them to think about how they want to use this class to get to the end of their academic career and profession life rather than just think of it as something that has to be done.*

Later, when talking about how he gets students to see their writing, he again shared his aim of getting them to see their learning as tied to more than just the classroom.

> *Usually their attitude toward the [research] essay is just like "here's my 10 pages over 3 weeks, but I really did last weekend." Instead, I have my students producing scripts, they're producing case files; I mean they're*

doing a kind of writing that they could conceivably do elsewhere, that is not just in a genre that exists solely in the composition classroom.

I don't think any program, or instructor, needs to have an "either-or" mentality in regards to Near vs. Far transfer as an objective, stated or otherwise. At the same time, I'm more persuaded by instructors like Khris who focus on Far transfer because I think higher education is already in crisis, and has lost sight of how we have the most potential to connect students to other contexts in active ways. I don't think students should have to wait to do so in upper level courses, either.

Section 4: Collateral & Mediational Transitions

Since of my research questions was learning about how teachers tweak materials and design our individual pedagogy to meet the needs of our students, while still addressing intuitional expectations, this final section came about when I noticed a few instructors incorporate Collateral and Mediational Transition scenarios into their teaching. Again, these teachers didn't use these specific terms, but based upon their characterization of assignments and activities, they met the criteria of these two transfer situations. Among schools and participants, these concepts arose on micro-level scales. In this section, first I show examples of Collateral Transitions, then Mediational ones. Across both, there's some indication of High Road, Backward Reaching transfer; this aspect of transfer denotes when a student is able to now see why a certain knowledge or skill is important. Most often, this takes place in Collateral Transitions where students are accessing learning from a concurrent context (for example a job or hobby). To explain my categorization, if teachers asked students to draw knowledge/skills from other current contexts, I counted those as Collateral, and if they were creating contexts within contexts, Mediational.

For Collateral Transition situations, I found two aims from teachers: 1) trying to understand what students' other experiences are, and how those impact learning; 2) utilizing those other experiences in assignments and activities to show students' lives have relevance to what's being learned in class. Discussing the former first, these teacher quotes indicate that teachers are or should be vigilant in seeing student identities and experiences as a context unto themselves.

[I tell students in class:] "Read so you understand the purpose of this text; read again, now understand who it's written for; now once you have that foundation you can begin to write about the text." Students have to have this kind of foundational knowledge of the text before they begin any critical interpretation…so they can move forward and add their own their own ideas and it works really well. Their ideas and experiences should be seen as a critical interpretation.

-Theodosia

We know our students' backgrounds, and are aware of the stuff they're bringing into the classroom. We have control over how we train our teachers, so a lot of what in-class assessment is about is looking at their work and school relationships to see how students are doing on the whole.

-Will

That is an issue with our students here, is that many of them are dealing with significant work commitments, significant life commitments; and significant in a way that their number one priority isn't necessarily school…here [we] just got a lot more first generation college students, have complicated life issues.

-Jane

Even though all three instructors work at two different institutions, they share a similar pool of high school students, from public school districts with predominantly Black student populations. These teachers, and others, identify the same general challenge: high school teachers often did not address, or take into consideration students' personal lives. In Theodosia's case, she first starts with building a common understanding of texts, through a rhetorical approach, but uses that foundation for students to interpret confidently. Will, who oversees FYC program assessment, also encourages teachers to have in-class surveys or literacy projects. During training, he also uses statistics to emphasize and provide a whole picture of Lake City State's incoming students. Jane, who works at Clover, raised the importance that First Gen students don't have many (or any) resources for the college context. Additional personal commitments, may provide more obstacles for student learning.

These are also great examples of empathy—understanding where our students are at—a key component of Collateral Transition. A teacher has to see the value of student experience, and practices emotional labor to validate such experiences for students. Jane, at a previous institution, utilized a then-current context to draw students in emotionally. Her aim was for students to have more agency and investment, writing about spaces and contexts immediately accessible and familiar, all with the potential to develop research skills.

> *The first paper that I assigned was always like a restaurant review kind of thing, because it was an easy reference for them to look at different types of reviews—and this worked perfectly in [another, larger metropolitan city]. So I had them looking at yelp and I had him looking like actual like published reviews and I had him looking as Zagat and looking at all of these different types. Then started looking at what are the consequences of this kind of writing? Looking at restaurant reviews and ask was the impact of them? For me, it was really tied into writing because it had a significance inclusion of the real world; learning about writing that matters in the real world, and if [students] can figure out the conventions [they] can generally*

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write that way…I liked those assignments because it has a feeling like writing matters, and that words are

powerful, and make a difference, and there's a reason beyond school that this is important.

Within this discussion, Jane pointed out a challenge when she tried to adopt this assignment at Clover University: it didn't work as well because the restaurant scene was very different. I think it's important that any FYC assignment or curriculum considering Collateral Transitions, must do so with care to draw from students' actual experiences, and/or what's available to them. That choice provides students with some confidence in their research/learning/writing. Additionally, and especially in support of DEI initiatives, this ensures we as teachers are not assuming every student is familiar with a scenario that may be seen as privileged.

Another great example of Collateral Transitions was shared by Grace, who brought in actual student writing examples, yet not from assignments, rather non-class writing contexts:

[Shows me an email from a student.] This was an e-mail I got from a student. I was like damn that was a

good email. So I copied it, and then it became an activity in class. We walk through how it just repeats what

we talked about with goals. I have students pick apart, then reconstruct their own version as a way to

understand [the goals associated with audience.]

Similar to Jane's exercise, drawing from real world writing allows students to see a final product. It's writing in action, as opposed to "writing for posterity" or an invisible, unknown, and often ephemeral audience typical of FYC assignments. Additionally, the reverse engineering of a finalized and sent letter, also indicates High Road transfer. Grace had another example of High Road transfer, specifically the act of Bridging, in how she conducted her group conferences.

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During conferences I train them so they run the conference. I have some structure, but if someone in a conference has an awesome question, I validate that…I'll even share those questions with the larger class, so they can see that they're all thinking about writing on a deeper level.

Collateral Transitions allow us, as teachers, to draw from the wealth of student experiences and perspectives. When coupled with High Road, Backward reaching transfer activities, students find and make their own connections between life and class, empowering students to valorize their experiences instead of shunning them. Since identity demographics between teachers and students don't always align at most US institutions, these activities are a way for students to see multiple voices, as opposed to solely the instructor's voice. Finally, students aren't just students, but young adults with various priorities and commitments beyond our classroom. While only a handful of instructors were using Collateral Transitions, these pedagogical choices didn't seem to increase stress of their routine labor.

Some extra labor, however, is required for Mediational Transitions which also provide rich learning experiences for students. In my findings, only a few teachers created scenarios inside of scenarios; these allow students to experience and act within a secondary in-class context, and once finished, students can step outside of said context to discuss how that learning can be used for future contexts. Or, if teachers weren't creating new scenarios—especially in the case of instructors from Lake City State—they utilized their FYC program's structure in a way that embraces the extra context found in Mediational Transition situations. Even though I think a standard Mediational Transition takes extra labor in both context research and activity design, these first few examples are simple, and only require teachers to draw a circle around the activity, having students abstract concepts to understand why certain skills or knowledge are important beyond the classroom.

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For example, in the FYC classes Andy teaches where students will eventually transfer out of South Harmon to another university, instead of only asking students to highlight and underline readings, he takes them through a secondary exercise where they reflect on what they found, and why they think they highlighted certain things.

> *[Students] are not sufficiently encouraged to engage with the ideas in a piece of writing. They're taught to memorize the information in a piece of writing and regurgitate it. Which then means—yeah a lot of them all highlight something—but will they know why they're annotating it beyond being told to? I ask them to reflect on why. Then I talk about reading as a conversation. And then how that conversation later becomes their own writing with somebody else. And that this practice, is something they're going to encounter as they move along their path towards a bachelor's degree, elsewhere.*

I saw this as an example of Mediational Transition because students are under the impression that the objective is simply to show they're engaging the material, via highlighting passages. Yet, Andy moves beyond the performance, challenging students to see why. Once knowing why, shows students more about themselves and how that strategy can help in future courses. Jane has a similar approach with revision, attempting to move students beyond simply fixing what she highlighted.

> *I found this to be really pretty effective, is that I would go ahead and comment extensively on the first draft as if it were a final draft. So I would rate it as if it were what they were turning in was final, now here is what [students] would get. And that seemed to work well because students felt a sense of higher stakes, but had time for revision. After, I did explain to my students about why I was doing it this way. I wanted them to put in the effort up front. I wanted them to turn in the best [final] draft they could.*

Jane said the additional time, which also included at least two more peer review sessions, enabled students to provide better feedback, because now they had a shared reference for what Jane expected. Jane had to create this extra mechanism, which meant more labor on her part. Carol, from Lake City State, used the already high-stakes nature of the pass/fail portfolio process, to help students find revision as a useful skill.

> *I think students have this misconception: "if I fix those 10 things it'll be fine." But that's only because, if the instructor thought you'd better include your thinking, then you're going to fail…I think that [students] have a hard time interpreting our feedback [in this process.] I did this study on student interpretation back in 2006. And a lot of what students said was "I want feedback that tells me precisely what to do to fix my paper…I don't like feedback as ambiguous." So my conclusion from that was we need to give them more opportunity to practice interpreting feedback.*

In contrast to Jane's activity, Carol provides a little less feedback initially, yet creates activities and provides tools to help students deal with ambiguous feedback. Like Jane and Andy, she's taking a small step with her students to ask "what are we doing here? what is the approach we're taking as teachers and you as students and why?" This meta-explanation is Mediational in nature, because it's concluding a smaller activity, extracting said knowledge, in hopes it'll be used for future contexts.

Helping students think metacognitively is the more subtle, smaller Mediational approach. Yet, creating and engaging students with a detailed tertiary context that can be analyzed, picked apart, and discussed is just as important. In short, these examples of Mediational Transitions are where teachers, regardless of the FYC curriculum, are finding ways to actualize students in contexts that represent real life stakes. Jane, who has a wealth of activities that connect to other contexts, did this with a group of students who wanted to write about their passion for architecture.

I had a couple of architecture students, and wanted to create a link between architecture and public housing, and how public housing was constructed. It was amazing because [students] were like they could really find ways interjecting themselves into it.

As previously discussed, within their FYC objectives, South Harmon's most debated objectives circled around whether or not to include literature as something to be analyzed and written about. Andy, like Jane, knew his students weren't going to be literature professors, so he reframed those reading and activities to also create mini-real worlds within the class.

I try to give them some latitude you know, "how is Vonnegut's portrayal of war a possible indication of PTSD?" Getting them to think about issues, and getting them to think about what's being discussed in the novel and how we see those issue form in life moves beyond theory. I see myself as always trying to bridge students. Which then gives them an opportunity to do research that they can access right at the level they're at.

While these two examples include more Far transfer contexts, teachers also used Mediational Transitions for Near contexts. Grace's concern for her ELL/ESL students was that they would likely have future professors who have no background in working with language learners. So, instead teaching a basic overview of writing mechanics, she teaches students how to work with faculty.

That was something that was brought in from [a former WPA Lead] and having students try to "own the conference" and that he didn't want instructors to give feedback, and ask questions…what I like about it, is that I can transition [students] out of the pre-college program. Because then in [Composition II], some

*[teachers] have ESL backgrounds, and some don't. Some teachers have group conferences, and some don't. So
I don't want the ESL student to be deficient. As well as concern about what other departments do.*

This is a key concept in designing Mediational experiences: a tertiary context is meant to create
learning that should be immediately reflected upon, and discussed for future application. This
context should be a low-stakes, safe-space for learning. Students should feel encouraged to take
chances and "failing" should be an opportunity to learn without permanent consequences.

Sometimes, this tertiary space doesn't have to be fully fleshed out, meaning it doesn't have to
be a standalone activity, rather, teachers can take the role of someone who is more coach or
cheerleader. Case in point, Kelsey and Larry from Lake City State, found ways to maximize learning
in the pass/fail portfolio process by repositioning themselves as coaches, instead of the sometimes
common perception that students see teachers as adversarial.

*I want [students] to all pass. It's not just like "I am the ultimate grader" but I think with the first obstacle
obviously is passing for [portfolio] review, I feel like I can have a different relationship with my students
because of that. So how can [we] get on the same journey with our students? Not pretending like we're not
graders, but I think that's a unique opportunity to help them as sort of an "outsider" to the process.*
-Kelsey

*What I like about this set up and having third party reviewers who have the final analysis, and not me, is
that it allows me to step out into the role of arbiter, and really throughout the semester work as an
advocate…[I see] my only job to help [students] do these things. That was nice [because] the port review is
the roll of the dice, in the sense that if it is no longer up to me—like I'm not the Dungeon Master who can
who can just do whatever I want—there is an element where someone else or something else is going to*

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influence students' ultimate success or failure. I love the fact that it actually creates a different audience for

students. [At other schools] I've always played that game: "your writing for this this person." I've had

students do assignments where they write a letter to the editor of a newspaper. I had students do assignments

where they write an email to their boss. Or like a proposal to their employer for something they would like to

see changed…so there's an audience there, but it's usually make-believe. But [the portfolio] is real with real

stakes.

-Larry

Note, Larry used two gaming related concepts in his identification as an advocate: Dungeon Master and make-believe. In fantasy, table-top Role Playing Games (aka RPGs like Dungeons & Dragons) the Dungeon Master (DM) maintains three simultaneous roles for Player Characters (PCs). First, they're a storyteller, creating a universe for PCs to play in and contribute to the narrative with their actions. Second, the DM is an ombuds of sorts. They need to monitor and maintain the game aspect of an RPG: following guidebooks, interpreting rules, and rolling dice to determine outcomes of PC actions. The third role, is often understood yet unstated: maintain the fun of the game. DMs don't wish to make an RPG too easy or difficult. In Game Theory terms, we refer to this as a flow channel, a perfect balance of challenge and support.

For Larry to see himself as not the main decision-maker, because the Portfolio committee is, he's allowed to help students hack the expectations of the committee, and thus pass. Additionally, what he's describing in creating assignments that have made-up, make-believe scenarios, is also a Mediational Transition experience. More often than not, teachers who create those scenarios aren't doing anything more than establishing a case study: a standalone activity that may have multiple solutions, but the actions/decisions made from the students don't have any other consequences or impact. They could get the case study "wrong" but there's no further emotional extraction regarding

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why that failure mattered. To some degree, Kelsey and Larry characterize themselves more as an NPC: a character who's a guide, but has no final power on students' success. I'd still argue that at least puts teachers in a position of ally or coach. While I don't have data to back up how students see them, I can postulate these roles increase trust students have with their instructors.

Moreover, this ally role could only work in an FYC program similar to Lake City State, where there's a high stakes grading event at the end of the semester. Given that uniqueness—and how Kelsey and Larry weren't the only ones from Lake City State to mention their roles as guides, advocates, or coaches—my final analysis for this chapter is a deep dive on how Lake City State's program had strong potential as a robust Mediational Transition program for students, yet accidentally created its own unintentional problems that may have stifled transformative learning.

Part 2: Lake City State as Mediational Transition or Simulation

I end this project analyzing Lake City State's FYC curriculum: the blind portfolio process for its two mandatory classes. I've argued instructors should know more about transfer's mechanics and terminology. Likewise, focusing on Beach's more complex transfer scenarios, specifically Collateral and Mediational Transitions, can help us design robust activities and assignments. Reviewing Lake City's materials and interviews, they seem to attempt a Mediational Transition, even if (un)intentionally. I propose studying a potential Mediational Transition systems can help us better understand how to use them effectively within our classrooms, which addresses one of my smaller research questions: how can learning about these complex systems help us as teacher-scholars tweak our materials and design pedagogy to better meet the needs of our students while also addressing intuitional expectations? Diving a little deeper into Lake City's blind portfolio process, seeing it through the lens of a mediational transition, and understanding how/why teachers navigated this process will illuminate the complexity of Mediational Transitions.

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Two thoughts informed my approach here. First, the basis of transfer scholarship is to understand writing transfer as a phenomena. "As individuals move from context to context, they receive cues, both explicit and implicit, that suggest knowledge associated with a prior context may prove useful in the new context" (Nowacek 12). As I've shown this chapter and chapter 4, we're constantly thinking of transfer, even if not explicitly talking about it. I want us to better understand Mediational Transitions because I see them akin to simulation, both of which are robust learning concepts because they challenge students to practice how to look for cues in contexts we can invent and provide in our classroom space.

Second, even though I'm highlighting this transfer concept, I'm doing so with the caution Kinochle provides in *Teachers as Researchers* (2002) when folks use research to prove a singular best practice.

"Consider that a naïve view of validation teacher research would hold if they, like positivist researchers, attempted to externally validate research in our classrooms. Teachers operating in this way would attempt to teach a student to read using only validated general principles of reading pedagogy. Teacher spontaneity and creativity based on understandings of the unique experience of the student would be suppressed because it might not jibe with the generalized pedagogical principles (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Orteza Y Miranda, 1988; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000)." (171)

Do I valorize Mediational Transitions and simulations? I do because I feel they can incorporate Kinnochle's warning here: Mediational Transitions are not one specific way to teach, rather, a pedagogical structure that can easily include creative, spontaneous, and individualistic teaching strengths that makes higher education unique. Students don't take just one class, but all our classes.

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The wide variety students experience means they're constantly moving from context to context, learning from different teachers' systems, even if under one university umbrella. Using that contextual diversity, I believe Mediational Transition activities and assignments can teach students how to look for those cues that Nowacek discusses.

The FYC curriculum at Lake City State has many identifiable characteristics of a Mediational Transition. I unpack those characteristics as a way to show the possibilities and pitfalls associated with simulations and Mediational Transitions. I wholly recognize Lake City WPA leaders didn't intend or characterize the blind portfolio review process as such. Given how participants characterized the structure though, there's a framework that's pretty close. And with the right tweaks could be a very robust experience for students. First I provide a refresher of Lake City's process. Second, I point out where the program meets Mediational Transition characteristics. And finally, I point where the program falls short, yet make recommendations on potential adjustments.

Section A. Lake City State FYC Structure, Refresher

Lake City State's FYC classes, Composition I and II, require students to produce a final portfolio of writing respective to the class, to be evaluated as passing or failing. For Composition I, students submit two 3-5 page essays that analyze semi-common readings, and a reflection of how they brainstormed, composed, and revised their work. For Composition II, students complete a long form research paper, with length varying among teachers, but on average was about 6-7 pages. Composition II students also write a reflective paper with similar guidelines to Composition I. The student portfolios are anonymized and submitted to a reading group made up of FYC teachers from all levels, who currently teach either Composition I or II. Instructors are broken into teams of about 12, and use their department's FYC objectives (see page 106) as a rubric to evaluate whether the portfolio passes or fails. If passed, students are eligible to take the next class, and/or fill prerequisites

for their majors. If failed, students must retake the course. Throughout the semester, and on the day

of portfolio review, reviewers participate in a series of professional development meetings and

workshops aimed at "norming" their interpretations of the objectives within their particular groups.

Norming is typically conducted by looking at "borderline" portfolios (they could pass or fail), and

having instructors adjust their viewpoints via discussion.

Section B. Effective Mediational Transition Characteristics

From interviews and artifacts, four important Mediational Transition qualities emerged that

make Lake City's process a dynamic learning experience.

- Analyzable, Real Audience
- High Stakes Challenge
- Teacher Serves as Coach
- Mandatory Reflective Component

Analyzing a real audience is a key characteristic to Mediational Transitions and simulations.

Lake City State provides that audience.

I support the portfolio review process. I really like that it gives students of a very real audience. A very sort of

large and diverse audience that gives a meaning of a rhetorical situation to think about. I like that and I feel

like I can kind of work with my students as a team. It creates a unique learning context.

-Kelsey

The rhetorical situation, and analyzing audiences, is a corner stone of FYC programs. Exploring the

expectations of real people who'll make a final decision on student portfolios, is not something

often found in FYC programs. Likewise, needing to analyze this audience ties entirely into the

second characteristic that makes Lake City's FYC program a potential Mediational Transition: the

reason why students need to rhetorically address the real audience is to pass the class. Transparently, there are concerns with *how* high the stakes are for students given that it's a definitive pass/fail result that occurs right at semester's end leading students, according to teachers, to express high anxiety.

However, the role of coach, the third important mediational transition characteristic, is what many teachers embraced because they found creative ways to help students develop tools to negotiate this process. For example, our two ELL/ESL instructors—who did express concerns about how the program impacts ELL/ESL students inequitably—embraced the opportunity to steer audience conversations away from themselves as sole audience to the committee.

I hear a lot of instructors in meetings with students say "well I really want you to do more lalalala" and I don't say that because it's not about me, you know? I like that it's not about my preferences [with passing/failing their work]. I want students to know it's their project and how [they] present to readers.
-Grace

We have a day in October where we talk about [audience and] we just kind of break it down. It was very interesting as when we do this, a majority of the students don't get past: who are you writing for? And they go "uhhh???" And I say "don't say me because it not me..."
-Carol

The role of coach or advocate is key. They can act with the knowledge of being an evaluator yet also a guide who helps students understand the rules and structure. As I noted earlier, one teacher saw themselves as a sort of Game or Dungeon Master role, traditionally linked to table-top Role Playing Games (e.g. *Dungeons & Dragons*). A GM or coach role wears many different hats, and is challenged to interpret content from multiple audience perspectives. One role is acting as purveyors of the

system, which may exacerbate the high stakes, yet also helps participants reach goals because students feel like there's an insider. This requires a good balance of challenge and support from teacher to student yet when done well adds dynamic layers to a Mediational Transition experience.

The fourth and final Mediational Transition characteristic that's important is an opportunity for reflection. As I've already shown, instructors indicated how much that helped students when meeting with them to discuss drafts; the consensus was that the more narrative, accessible format allowed students to directly communicate their writing choices. This is also the only characteristic of the four that needs some tweaking, mostly due to the timing of the final portfolio's results, which is right at semester's end. In short, students miss out on an additional opportunity to reflect on why they passed or failed. For passing students, this would affirm learning (positive transfer); for failing students, while frustrating, this would also provide a negative transfer moment wherein the teacher could talk about next steps in preparation to retake the course. Or, if we're truly dreaming, to more ideally add a secondary review process to give students the opportunity to apply learned lessons.

Section C. Mediational Transition Missteps & Solutions

The three biggest missteps are no reflexive opportunity on final portfolio decisions, complicated FYC objectives used as the sole rubric, and the extra emotional labor required of teachers to assuage student anxiety. While labeled missteps, it doesn't mean these were intentional, planned, and/or considered since, as I pointed out earlier, this is my observation that Lake City State's FYC program is Mediational Transition scenario. However, with a better understanding of writing transfer, and its noticeable alignment to a mediational experience, it's important to analyze what we can learn from these missed opportunities, not to condemn any stakeholders, but make sure we don't make similar mistakes when creating our simulated activities. Moreover, I offer suggestions, some influenced by those I interviewed, to avoid potential missteps.

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First, and probably the easiest element to modify, would be to move the blind portfolio

process a couple weeks to a month earlier in the semester. As I stated earlier, students don't receive

their portfolio results until right at the end of semester (but before grades are submitted). From what

I learned, students receive minimal to no feedback about why their portfolio didn't meet objectives.

> *[We should be] identifying a key component of what would help [students] here, which is feedback, so*
>
> *students can interpret what they did wrong, and not just mechanically discuss what they did wrong.*
>
> *-Carol*

If they fail, they receive 2-3 bulleted lines of feedback in a decision letter, but nothing on the

documents in their portfolio submission. Having served as a reader for *Research in the Teaching of*

English, we don't even do this with blind peer review for journals. Moreover, it's not required for

teachers to review writing with their students. Finally, while students and teachers can appeal a

finding, that's also an optional process; however, there's no class session to prepare students.[15] Even

culminating the process in the second-to-last week would allow students time to meet with their

teacher, and prepare for next steps. Likewise, those students who pass, also have an opportunity to

know why they passed.

Second, per teacher and administrator interviews, the objectives used for the rubric are

overly complex, and highly interpretive. We've already shown how Lake City's FYC objectives are

lengthy, verbose, and contain interpretable language. Even though there are professional

development sessions to get instructors on the same page, teachers recognize there's a significant

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[15] The appeal process could also be a good Mediational Transition exercise, yet, and ironically, it's a different set of
writing rules, and none of them are taught in the curriculum both formally, nor informally by teachers.

range of "tough-to-easy" reviewers. The following teachers discussed this range in the context of professional development meetings.

[The student sample we used] was unreadable in some sections. It was so bad. And yet most everybody still wanted to pass it, and I had a real hard time with that. And partially I think I was I was not being a terribly generous reader [as a teacher]. So that balance between which goals get the most attention [from reviewers] was a contention for me.

-Larry

There were some moments where my [teacher] mentee's expressed surprise at a norming session. I think generally people are a lot harsher about things sometimes, and realize that there's ways of recognizing these FYC goals being met in different ways than just one specific way.

-Tim

I'm sometimes shocked when students of mine passed because teachers didn't [pass] some in [our] practice portfolio, but when applied [in final portfolio] there is much more flexibility than one might anticipate. I think that that compromises learning…I feel like the program has a real life stubbornness or irrational commitment to these goals.

-Carol

Per their descriptions, teachers indicate that portfolio practice sessions were often "tougher" than the final portfolio evaluation. While that may ultimately be good—meaning, more students pass than fail—I agree with Carol's line about how this compromises learning, especially if there's not a true reflective exercise to help students process that learning.

The concern over objective language interpretation also came up frequently. Teachers of all backgrounds had mixed feelings of how challenging the language might be for students.

There are some objectives that are a little more transparent and less up for a million interpretations; [it's] impossible to make them "objective" objectives, but some of the language still confuses me. I think we need to give students just very straightforward objectives. They have a hard enough time defining these objectives. I just feel like there some words are confusing. It could be more straightforward for both teachers and students.
-Kelsey

What came first [in group discussion] was critical interpretation. And that was problematic. And as we started looking at the goals, controlling purpose became the next bugaboo [for students]. I think they're muddy terms already. I think they can mean many different things. They are context dependent.
-Larry

The difficulties that I've had explaining to students what these goals mean. The difficulty I see students having in trying to meet these goals. I do all these things with language in different activities: I have them interpret the goals; put them in their own words; questions about them in those discussions. I can see the difficulty [students] have processing them. They can't even summarize them sometimes. They can't define certain words like interpretation and explain them a little bit.
-Carol

These perspectives are the most emblematic of what many teachers shared. Concerns include: objective language isn't easy to define for/by students; extra labor is needed for students to

understand said language; and language, even if defined, is dependent on the context of the writer (or reader).

The confusing FYC objective language and rubric especially impacted ELL/ESL students. Carol expanded a lot on challenges she saw students face, which in turn, caused her to "hack" the system in order to make sure her students pass the high stakes process.

> *I don't want to teach these outcomes to my students…I think most of the goals on here are really are covered by what I call the "American Convention in American academic essays" which [non-international students are] already familiar with. And the other goals on here are describing the process of the inquiry research, and they're asking if the student could have proved that process in their essay. So I really don't teach the course from the goals; I teach the course from the lens of professional writers.*

Because Carol stated she didn't really teach the goals, I clarified, since I knew she also mentioned how much she wanted students to do well. That's when she shared her own technique. First, to reference other contexts students are working toward. Secondly, to hack the system she focuses on things she thinks the portfolio committee puts more weight on, even if it's unstated and unfair.

> *[I focus on] topic sentences with transitions, and introducing the quote, because you give the reader a heads up on what's in the quote…I think the final portfolio puts so much pressure [on those mechanical things] because then there's some readers, you know, people outside of your class, and I know they value those things, and so I want my students to pass, so I will encourage them to do those things. But I do feel it's a lot…[and] I'll say something like "[these mechanics aren't] a universal rule but you can't go wrong helping your reader know what to think about when they're reading that quote."*

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Carol's last line is also an example of Mediational Transitions, and argues for what I want FYC

stakeholders to consider: there's a wide variety of writing strategies and options, some fit some

situations, and others other, best for us to be transparent about that.

Additionally, within her quotes, I'm reminded of scholarship regarding the inequity of

enforcing "standard English" and expecting student writing to follow that path (Young et al 2014;

Shapiro et al 2016; Cavazos 2019). This is not something we want in composition. Again, I cannot

confirm, beyond Carol and Grace's perspectives, if other teachers observed similar challenges for

ELL/ESL students. However, my suggestion is to simplify the language and trim down the amount

of objectives.

The third and final misstep observed is the most complex, and one I don't have a clear

resolution for: the high amount of emotional labor WPA teacher-administrators use working with

students and other teachers. Even though teachers enjoy the "coach" role, and despite Steven's

efforts to support labor among graduate students, when talking with teachers and administrators I

noticed a lot of emotional labor interactions. While regular teachers act as coaches for the students,

administrator-teachers seem to play therapist for fellow teachers. As I've already discussed the

former, here, I present the latter.

WPA leaders, many of whom directly mentored teams of 5-6 graduate teachers, referenced

how they saw a main objective of their job as emotional support.

> *I was very interested in training and working with instructors, but helping out other [teachers] and wanting to*
>
> *make sure they felt supported in emotional ways as well; not just "here, let me tell you what the curriculum*
>
> *was." I wanted to be there more than that.*
>
> *-Theodosia*

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To help new TAs to understand, you know, what the program is going for…why we have these goals; how

students can meet those goals; how goals can be taught so students can understand them.

-Kelsey

In a way [my role is] to advocate for [Composition II] in the discussions about what's happening with the

curriculum; but also oddly, and this is not in my official position, but I find myself representing lecturers in a

way, since it's mostly lecturers that teach [Composition II], and most of the grad students, so I guess being the

voice in some ways for some kind of labor issues or concern.

-Fred

Three kinds of support here. The first identifies a relationship that is more than administrator, almost like a friend. The second wants mentees to understand a more wholistic picture of the program, and not just the basics. And finally the third, who oversees all of Composition II, is also looking for employment issues. These are all positive, yet are beyond their positions' scope.

From those who were just teachers in the program, feelings of support were mixed. There was a consistent acknowledgement leaders were trying, yet challenges and concerns remain.

[Lake City State] has a very, very well designed program to make sure we're discussing the goals; from the

five days of training, and the readings, in addition to everything that happens during [the mandatory graduate

seminar] during the first semester of our first year here…I also think it's the rhetoric of the TA per training

to say "how can you do this exactly the way we told you to do it" rather than [laughter] "here are the goals

and outcomes and how can you use your own strengths to do all this." It's just like "shut up and deal with

it" rather than, you know, how can we help you discover—as a training program—how we can actually help

you discover those things you're always doing well, and that you have the potential do very well.

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-Rick

[Training here] is very sort of, like, rigorous. It's a sort of like standard indoctrination of the ideology of the

program. But there is no sort of involvement beyond that to ensure you understand what these things are,

you're just supposed to largely figure out. And by the way in which the lecturers and other graduate students

talk about these [objectives] which is probably where 80% of everyone's confusion about the course comes

from, is from the fact that there is no sort of like clear distillation of these things. [Objective] definitions are

defined via conflict.

-Khris

A consistent observation from interviews: no participants said anything negative about the individual folks they worked with, rather, these critiques are about structure. The structure's issues, and the unstated emotional labor responsibilities of WPA leaders give me pause. I can't imagine how these leaders balance maintaining support for the program while also supporting teachers.

Emotional labor in Mediational Transitions, if not teaching in general, is essential. As part of the mediational or simulated experience is to experience successes and failures based upon decision making, students are going to feel emotions related to those outcomes. For Lake City in particular, there's an acknowledgement of the high stress students feel, and the high stress instructors feel, and WPA leaders are meant to triage both. That's too much emotional labor. And as it is, there are many other areas we practice emotional labor (Brooks 2021). Having a system that fosters too much tension, like Carol said, takes away from the rich learning that can occur.

Part 3: Mediational Transitions & Simulations

What Lake City State's blind portfolio review teaches us is that there's room for macro-level Mediational Transitions. However, as we've seen, teachers must still negotiate a program's system and objectives with their own pedagogy. Thus, on a micro-scale, employing Mediational Transitions or simulations can likewise offer robust experiences; one the best examples is Jane from Clover University who worked within her department's objectives by using a Mediational Transition to prepare student writing. Here, I clarify and address the similarities between Mediational Transitions and simulations, making an argument for their use in FYC curriculum.

As a quick background in game studies, when we play a game, a broader term for simulations, we place ourselves within a "magic-circle" where all participants agree on a set of rules, utilizing common tools, and enacting certain roles all to achieve specific objectives (Huizinga, 1955, 10). Note the Activity Theory language within my paraphrase. Revisiting the Mediational Transition diagram, any simulation done within a class would be Context C.

Figure 9: Mediational Transition Diagram
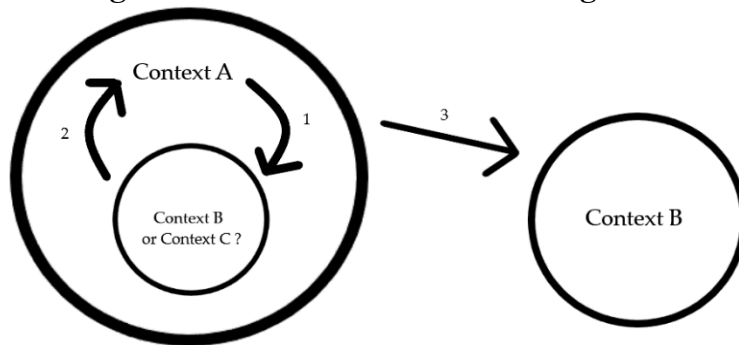
Like setting up a game, there's preparation for entering Context C (the magic circle) in order to actively participate. Once the simulation is over, students return to Context A, the original learning context, to use as a safe space to unpack failures and successes. If we design Context C in a way that resembles aspects of a Context B (a future professional context for example), then we're not simply

pretending to be business writers, or technical writers, or health writers, or creative writers, we're *acting* as professionals, preparing our minds for experiences within those contexts.

Simulations, or really, writing simulations, contain pedagogically robust writing transfer characteristics.

- Mediational Transitions require a feedback loop, and not just a grade, but a detailed explanation of what happened when certain writing decisions were made, and what could have happened had other writing decisions been made.

- Mediational Transitions utilize High Road Transfer, specifically, bridging. There isn't one "right answer" in simulations, there are multiple outcomes for participants who, as individuals or groups, make decisions based upon information at hand. Maybe the information is incomplete. Maybe a solution is not immediately apparently. Having students traverse that learning gap is more common outside the academy than hugging, which directly connects participants to a solution.

- Related, there is no goal, or valorization for positive transfer as an outcome. Both positive and negative transfer are at play. And, because there's an active feedback loop, students better understand why some knowledge/skills were validated, and why some weren't. Moreover, if students make rushed decisions, there's opportunities to share tools like rhetoric to help them a second time around.16

- Far Transfer scenarios can be utilized as much as Near transfer ones. As we know, the current generation of students view higher education differently than Millennial, Gen X and Baby Boomer teachers: often, a means to an end. Constructing simulated contexts that can

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16 If this comes up during the defense, I have a great story about this in regards to students selecting celebrities as spokespeople for a marketing campaign.

moderately resemble future professional settings leans into current, young adult motivations. We're not just preparing them for the next class, but for contexts beyond college. This is especially helpful for First-Generation professionals.

- Finally, and highly important to DEI initiatives and anti-racist pedagogy, simulations don't presuppose certain experiences. Everyone can participate. And, because students are often tasked with relying on whatever knowledge they have, from whichever contexts they've experienced, Collateral Transitions are embedded within the larger learning framework, so long as teachers running the simulation include strong literacy components.

In educational circles, there's precedent for Mediational Transitions and simulations. Educational scholar L. Dee Fink characterizes these experiences as Significant Learning. I briefly introduced Fink in Chapter 2, discussing curricular creation. His book *Creating Significant Learning Experience*s (2015) discusses the link student motivation has with learning. His student-centric view is refreshing and reinforces educational interest in learning transfer, placing a premium on Far transfer in Mediational Transfer activities, without using those specific terms.

> "Significant learning requires that we help students connect what they learn in our courses with their 'life file' rather than with their 'course file'…the course file is where [students] put everything they learn in school or in the university; they draw on this file only when they take tests, do homework, and so on. The other is their life file; this is where they put the lessons from their everyday life, and they draw on this file for all their life decisions, questions, actions, and so on." (7)

Fink doesn't diminish or demolish the role classroom space plays with student learning, rather, he reminds us that we're not trying to keep students in school (at least not permanently). Our aim is to provide a range of skills, knowledge, and experiences students can use in multiple areas of life, or what he means by the term "life file." He argues that if we keep reinforcing and preparing students for school contexts, that's all they'll be prepared for. We need to engage them with more contexts.

I've included simulations within my teaching for 12 years now. Even before this study, I used my experience with role-playing games to create activities within writing classes where students apply writing to simulated contexts. I want them to see how their invention, composing, and revision choices have possible outcomes beyond earning a grade. I've conducted Mediational Transition exercises at all levels of undergraduate education, across different subjects: Business, Tech Writing, Engineering, Job Preparation, Journalism, and Video Games. Not all were initially successful, yet they brought something fresh and hands on, noted in course evals and emails. Likewise, after formally learning about Activity Theory, Writing Transfer, and Game Theory, I've made tweaks to those activities to help students get more meta-; this is another reason I feel learning about Writing transfer terminology can aid pedagogical practice.

One example I'm fond of sharing, and have used at conference presentations, job applications, and casual conversations with colleagues is when I taught a 200-level Technical Writing course. I created a semester long simulation where students worked for a technical writing consultation group. Students were split into Project Managers and Designers; the Project Managers worked with "clients"—fictional entities I created based upon experiences I had with professionals outside of the university—to draft a spec sheet for the Designers, who then designed the document. Simplistically, this is like the telephone game we play as kids. Both groups met with me separately, putting all the stakes on the spec sheet as the shared communicative tool. In addition to practicing technical design, this simulation helped student think about clear communication and audience

analysis. For four weeks, we had four different projects. After each project's completion, students received a collective grade, and we spent class time going over final document design, using skills we learned in class, revisiting what the client wanted. We discussed processes as much as we did the document; moreover, as students became familiar with the process, they demonstrated a learning curve, show by improved communication between the two groups.

In one session, students were tasked with designing a scholarship application for a fictional organization linked to a fictional private high school. Acting as the client, I provided Project Managers with an overview sheet, and gave them opportunities to ask follow up questions. The Project Managers sent the completed spec sheet to the Designers, who then spent in-class time drafting the final application. While the design itself was well done, almost all the students didn't notice they included subtle racist and misogynist language the clients used. As a whole class, we went over their final document carefully; once they had another moment to pause, many caught the inappropriate language. In writing transfer, we'd considered this Negative Transfer, since we did cover unprofessional, and inequitable language earlier in the semester, but students couldn't pick up on the clues to apply it on the scholarship. Because this was a Mediational Transition exercise, students were allowed to make mistakes, since the consequences experienced were still within the class, and not in a professional context. One student in particular expressed gratefulness for the higher awareness.

Since then I've cultivating a compendium of these exercises, I'd like to complete for publication, along with providing teachers tips and strategies for simulation. This dissertation has indirectly helped that project since it reinforced a question I've been asked at conferences like Computers & Writing and CCCC when talking about simulations. Conference participants have asked me: if we're to conduct writing simulations, using other professional contexts, how much should we know about different contexts? I've argued that it's near impossible to fully replicate a

professional context for many reasons and limitations. However, since writing teachers are often both generalists and specialists, I think we in FYC are already attempting to enact and recreate other contexts. Thus, we don't need to know that much, yet some exploration would help. And of course, the history of table-top RPGs is predicated on the notion of imagination: not one Dungeon Master has ever ruled over a fantasy dungeon filled with monsters, magic, and other make-believe items.

Finally, ever since James Paul Gee published *What Video Games Have to Teach Us About Learning and Literacy* (2003) colleagues at Computers & Writing and CCCC continue to present on gamification. Learning more about Mediational Transitions and other transfer terms would complement and even refine many of those presentations and studies. I say refine because, from my perspective, much of that work still focuses on the less robust aspects of gamification. For example, earning badges or trophies for accomplishing tasks in the classroom or on an assignment, while potentially motivating, isn't a good example of true simulation. What's relevant in solid gamification is an understanding of the relationship between contexts—learning (Context A) and application (Context B)—and Writing transfer terminology helps us better understand that relationship. Regardless of or within objectives, the flexibility of employing simulation doesn't prioritize one kind of composition theory or practice. Simulation prioritizes students injecting their own ethics and perspectives into decision making. Those choices, and the consequences that follow (good or bad), create a robust game-like opportunity more than earning a completion badge does.

Students in my Tech Writing class expressed frustration at not seeing the offending language. That's neither a skill or knowledge. Rather, it's an emotional response. And we can use our writing classes to help students learn for themselves how they could've approached a situation differently, as well as how to mentally/emotionally prepare in case they're faced with future, accidental oversights. All the more reason I feel experience should be studied more in Writing

transfer scholarship; our triumphs stick with us as much as our trials do. Look at the stories that start this dissertation: good or bad, those emotional connections lingered.

A Conclusion of Contexts

What started as a journey to learn more about FYC administrators and teachers, and how they form objectives, curriculum, and pedagogy, resulted in a somewhat winding journey through the role writing transfer plays in our work. Even if we're not actively talking about it, writing transfer underpins what we do on a macro-level within FYC programs, and a micro-level in individual pedagogical decisions. Transfer terminology helps uncover and scaffold what we're doing and how to see the big picture possibilities of our curricular and pedagogical choices. Going forward, if we apply our awareness when using transfer concepts, we must also consider the emotional experiences students carry with them from previous contexts, alongside their knowledge and skills. In addition to this summative thought, here I revisit my central research question, its subordinates, and my assumptions for final takeaways, including what areas to research further.

The Influences of FYC Administrators and Teachers

On both an administrative level, when creating FYC programmatic objectives, and teaching level, when forming pedagogical choices, influences can be grouped into academic and non-academic categories, wherein, non-academic influences seemed to be more prominent. South Harmon's laundry list of objectives were handed down to them (with no scholarly explanation) and even with the opportunity to inject some scholarship into them, the three teacher-administrators focused more on the student aggregate of those enrolled. Clover University utilized objectives and best practices from two FYC professional organizations (CCC and WPA), yet needed to negotiate old and new systems within their university; first, they needed to extrapolate discipline specific

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writing expectations from other departments, who used to design their own writing classes and expectations; second, they needed to address the university's, at the time, new expectations for programmatic assessment. Given Lake City State's long history, it's possible the scholarship is so embedded within the program, it's not easily identifiable or pronounced. However, the current WPA leadership readily explained their rationale to support teaching labor but struggled to provide direct influences and explanations of said foundational scholarship.

On a teaching level, the two biggest influences of pedagogical choice were how and why teachers negotiated programmatic objectives and other non-academic influences that were more student oriented, yet as individuals seeking personal growth and development than learning about academic discourse. Speaking on the former, at all three schools teachers shared thoughts on how they worked within, and sometimes against, objectives. At Clover University and South Harmon, the rigorous programmatic assessments influenced the way teachers taught assignments, wanting to ensure that student work met criteria. However, not eschewing student learning to meet academic standards, we also saw those same teachers develop strategies to meet students where they were at, often more related to students' personal lives, professional interests, and identity. As my Lake City State analysis above showed, their teachers negotiated complex objectives and student anxiety more often than employing a specific composition or writing theory.

One of my assumptions was that scholarship held a required yet undefined role within FYC. Per my limited qualitative data set, I learned scholarship doesn't necessarily need to have an overtly defined role. Even reflecting on my own teaching, where I use Activity Theory in the classroom, I overtly talk about AT and hairballs because I see the value in students analyzing inequitable systems. And yet, my influence in doing so is related more to my Arizona State experiences in administration, dealing with complicated, bureaucratic processes. However, AT gave me terms and language to describe organizational hairballs' structural components. In a future project, interviewing teachers

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solely on academic influences would likely open more narratives to better clarify scholarship's role in FYC instructions. And it's possible that our academic influences are so intrinsic, we don't actively think about them. For example, Kelsey from Lake City State would like say she was a feminist, before she formally learned about feminist rhetoric.

FYC Objectives Formation, Training, and Assessment Processes

I learned the most about these areas; however, I only scratched the surface. Objectives can be formulated by state agencies, and refined by administrators (South Harmon); they can be cultivated and synthesized from professional organizations, other academic departments, and the educational experiences of teachers within a program (Clover University); and they can have such a deep history where current leaders may not know where/how objectives were created, yet revise objectives enough to change with the student population (Lake City State).

The most important lesson learned, from my humble perspective, is that FYC objectives shouldn't be overly complex and too long (South Harmon and Lake City State). We've seen how that impacts teaching choices due to frustrations regarding complicated and highly interpretive language, from those who worked at Lake City State. We've seen how overly long objectives can impact programmatic assessment, from the teacher-administrators at South Harmon. And while I would personally valorize Clover University's approach to keep objectives simple, I acknowledge having access to only one teacher perspective may incorrectly idealize that simplicity. For example, Jane didn't state she had issues with the objectives, nor did she state they were overly helpful.

Likewise, I feel more observations to better understand how training on and assessing objectives would be helpful. I was able to observe some training sessions from one school but not the others. Following the perspective of a new teacher throughout one academic year, at each training session and in their teaching, would provide much better insight on how and why objectives

are disseminated, and how those approaches impact pedagogical choices. Moreover, just as we need more detailed narratives on FYC objective creation from WPAs, reading potential training narratives will clarify our understanding of an equally important and related activity.

Observing programmatic assessment, reviewing assessment data, and seeing how said data is applied to FYC objectives were areas I minimally was able to answer. I know, at the very least, that my assumption about assessment was misinformed: WPAs *are* using data to make decisions. However, I'd like to see those structures' innerworkings more and hear stakeholder discussions on how they felt about and acted upon such results. Assessment is a key component to teaching; currently working in an FYC program where we haven't yet conducted a formal assessment process, leaves us a bit in the dark with understanding programmatic effectiveness.

Related, my third assumption about whether or not WPAs were concerned about instructor consistency, or how much consistency they did expect, was never really answered. The program with the most consistency was Lake City State. However, that outcome was largely due to the rigid blind portfolio process where teachers still found little cracks to fill with their own pedagogical practices, albeit to help coach students to pass the final portfolio. From administrators I interviewed, a common theme, motif, or stance about consistency never emerged. Characterizing how much freedom instructors were allowed seemed largely dependent on different administrators' values. However, within this minimal findings is where I found the value in understanding the relationship between teachers' and their departments' objectives.

How Teachers Adapt to or Diverge from FYC Objectives

While I acknowledge this question departs most from writing transfer in general, I feel it's critical in understanding how and why we construct our pedagogy, which in turn impacts how we set up transfer scenarios for students. Consider: when we apply for teaching jobs, on the onset, we

don't fully understand and have yet to experience what it is to teach within that writing program's curriculum. Nor do we know how students respond to the FYC curriculum, even with assessment (which tends to be more quantitative than qualitative from what I did learn; for example, South Harmon knew assessment scores were lowest regarding MLA/APA citations but didn't know why). In short, while not about objective formation or writing transfer, an understanding of how teachers orbit their FYC hairball can present narratives that help with our professional development. What happens if we don't entirely fit inside said curriculum?

On average, the full-time teachers I interviewed had been working at their respective institutions for almost ten years. Those are folks dedicated to a program or school for whatever reasons (and in fact, *that* qualitative study would be dynamite). Regardless of motives, teachers must negotiate departmental objectives, and the related activity systems' rules, roles, etc. Even graduate students from Lake City, who for the most part will only teach there for a few years, have to deal with those FYC hairballs as they prepare themselves for another institution to, hopefully, work at forever.

Exploring how and why teachers choose to adapt, negotiate, or even disregard objectives, helps us better understand what MacKenzie argued for in *Orbiting the Giant Hairball*. He liked his job as an artist/writer, yet struggled within a corporate system; many of us like our jobs as teachers, but may struggle where we work. Just two months ago at a conference, I met with faculty who teach in Florida; system negotiation is pretty much all they do in order to survive. Understanding more about those emotional/pedagogical journeys is just as important as understanding how FYC systems are established, since, as I discovered, it's possible we may never learn that particular rationale from administrators.

The ways we orbit FYC hairballs connects to writing transfer on the surface. Looking at the various contexts administrators and teachers drew from to create their own pedagogical approaches,

shows that transfer is always happening. Bad experiences with formatting spelling tests (in)correctly and positive experiences with (mechanically rough) creative writing valorizes certain experiences for us. Those experiences are likely going to permeate into the learning contexts (Context A) we teach and construct our perspectives on possible professional contexts (Context B).

Coda

I started this dissertation by sharing two student experiences, related to writing, that have impacted me my entire life. Despite learning more about Composition pedagogy, because of its sheer vastness, it was difficult to fully understand or see, even reflectively, what my two teachers were aiming for in those educational scenarios. And, even after this research project, I'm not any closer to divine what those teachers were trying. However, I am much more aware of the various contexts we teach in (Context A) and for (Context B) as well as how educational hairballs may impact, sometimes impede, what we want to accomplish. As we venture deeper into the 21st century, we must find creative ways to teach our students how writing can help students unpack their contexts, making transfer an ongoing, positive experience.

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Appendix A: CCCC's Position on Writing Assessment 2006

Introduction

Writing assessment can be used for a variety of purposes, both inside the classroom and outside: supporting student learning, assigning a grade, placing students in appropriate courses, allowing them to exit a course or sequence of courses, certifying proficiency, and evaluating programs. Given the high-stakes nature of many of these assessment purposes, it is crucial that assessment practices be guided by sound principles that are fair and just and specific to the people for whom and the context and purposes for which they are designed. This position statement aims to provide that guidance for writing teachers and administrators across institutional types and missions.

We encourage faculty, administrators, students, community members, and other stakeholders to reflect on the ways the principles, considerations, and practices articulated in this document are present in their current assessment methods and to consider revising and rethinking their practices to ensure that inclusion and language diversity, teaching and learning, and ethical labor practices inform every level of writing assessment.

Foundational Principles of Writing Assessment

This position statement identifies six principles that form the ethical foundation of writing assessment.

1. Writing assessments are important means for guiding teaching and learning. Writing assessments—and assignments to which they correlate—should be designed and implemented in pursuit of clearly articulated learning goals.
2. The methods and criteria used to assess writing shape student perceptions of writing and of themselves as writers.
3. Assessment practices should be solidly grounded in the latest research on learning, literacies, language, writing, equitable pedagogy, and ethical assessment.
4. Writing is by definition social. In turn, assessing writing is social. Teaching writing and learning to write entail exploring a range of purposes, audiences, social and cultural contexts and positions, and mediums.
5. Writers approach their writing with different attitudes, experiences, and language practices. Writers deserve the opportunity to think through and respond to numerous rhetorical situations that allow them to incorporate their knowledges, to explore the perspectives of others, and to set goals for their writing and their ongoing development as writers.
6. Writing and writing assessment are labor-intensive practices. Labor conditions and outcomes must be designed and implemented in pursuit of both the short-term and long-term health and welfare of all participants.

Considerations for Designing Writing Assessments

Based on the six foundational principles detailed in the previous section, this section enumerates key considerations that follow from these principles for the design, interpretation, and implementation of writing assessments, whether formative or summative or at the classroom or programmatic level.

Considerations for Inclusion and Language Diversity

- *Best assessment practice is contextual.* It is designed and implemented to address the learning needs of a full range of students in the local context, and involves methods and criteria that are locally developed, deriving from the particular context and purposes for the writing being assessed. (1, 2)

- *Best assessment practice requires that learning goals, assessment methods, and criteria for success be equitable, accessible, and appropriate for each student in the local context.* To meet this requirement, assessments are informed by research focused on the ways assignments and varied forms of assessment affect diverse student groups. (3)

- *Best assessment practice recognizes that mastery is not necessarily an indicator of excellence.* It provides opportunities for students to demonstrate their strengths in writing, displaying the strategies or skills taught in the relevant environment. Successful summative and formative assessment empowers students to make informed decisions about how to meet their goals as writers. (4, 5)

- *Best assessment practice respects language as complicated and diverse and acknowledges that as purposes vary, criteria will as well.* Best assessment practices provide multiple paths to success, accounting for a range of diverse language users, and do not arbitrarily or systematically punish linguistic differences. (3, 4, 5)

Considerations for Learning and Teaching

- *Best assessment practice engages students in contextualized, meaningful writing.* Strong assessments strive to set up writing tasks and situations that identify purposes that are appropriate to, and that appeal to, the particular students being assessed. (4, 5)

- *Best assessment practice clearly communicates what is valued and expected of writing practices.* It focuses on measuring specific outcomes defined within the program or course. Values, purposes, and learning goals should drive assessment, not the reverse. (1, 6)

- *Best assessment practice relies on new developments to shape assessment methods that prioritize student learning.* Best assessment practice evolves. Revisiting and revising assessment practices should be considered periodically, as research in the field develops and evolves, and/or as the assessment needs or circumstances change. (3)

- *Best assessment practice engages students in the assessment process, contextualizing the method and purpose of the assessment for students and all other stakeholders.* Where possible, these practices invite students to help develop assessment strategies, both formative and summative. Best assessment practice understands that students need multiple opportunities to provide feedback to and receive feedback from other learners. (2, 4, 5)

- *Best assessment practice helps students learn to examine and evaluate their own writing and how it functions and moves outside of specifically defined writing courses.* These practices help students set individualized goals and encourage critical reflection by student writers on their own writing processes and performances. (4, 5)

- *Best assessment practice generates data which is shared with faculty and administrators in the program so that assessment results may be used to make changes in practice.* These practices make use of assessment data to provide opportunities for reflection, professional development, and for the exchange of information about student performance and institutional or programmatic expectations. (1, 6)

Considerations for Labor

- *Best assessment practice is undertaken in response to local goals and the local community of educators who guide the design and implementation of the assessment process.* These practices actively seek feedback on assessment design and from the full range of faculty who will be impacted by or involved with the assessment process. Best assessment practice values individual writing programs, institutions, or consortiums as communities of interpreters whose knowledge of context and purpose is integral to assessment. (1, 6)

- *Best assessment practice acknowledges how labor practices determine assessment implementation.* It acknowledges the ways teachers' institutional labor practices vary widely and responds to local labor demands that set realistic and humane expectations for equitable summative and formative feedback. (4, 6)

- *Best assessment practice acknowledges the labor of research and the ways local conditions affect opportunities for staying abreast of the field.* In these practices, opportunities for professional development based on assessment data are made accessible and meaningful to the full range of faculty teaching in the local context. (3)

- *Best assessment practice uses multiple measures to ensure successful formative and summative assessment appropriate to program expectation and considers competing tensions such as teaching load, class size, and programmatic learning outcomes when determining those measures.* (2, 6)

- *Best assessment practice provides faculty with financial, technical, and practical support in implementing comprehensive assessment measures and acknowledges the ways local contexts influence assessment decisions.* (5, 6)

Contexts for Writing Assessment

Ethical assessment at all levels and in all settings is context specific and labor intensive. Participants working toward an ethical culture of assessment must critically consider the conditions of labor, as well as expectations for class size, participation in programmatic assessment (especially for contingent faculty members), and professional development related to assessment. In addition, these activities and expectations should inform all discussions of workload for assessment participants to ensure that the labor of assessment is appropriately recognized and, where appropriate, compensated.

Ethical assessment does not only consider the immediate practice of faculty engaging in classroom, programmatic, or institutional assessment, but it also builds on the assessment practices students have experienced in the past. Ethical assessment considers how it will coincide with other assessment practices students encounter at our institutions and keeps in sight the assessment experiences students are likely to experience in the future. A deliberately designed culture of assessment aligns classroom learning goals with larger programmatic and institutional learning goals and aligns assessment practices accordingly. It involves teachers, administrators, students, and community stakeholders designing assessments grounded in classroom and program contexts, and it includes feeding assessment data back to those involved so that assessment results may be used to make changes in practice. Ethical assessment also protects the data and identities of participants. Finally, ethical assessment practices involve asking difficult questions about the values and missions of an assignment, a course, or a program and whether or not assessments promote or possibly inhibit equity among participants.

Admissions, Placement, and Proficiency

Admissions, placement, and proficiency-based assessment practices are high-stakes processes with a history of exclusion and academic gatekeeping. Educational institutions and programs should recognize the history of these types of measures in privileging some students and penalizing others as it relates to their distinctive institutional and programmatic missions. They should then use that historical knowledge to inform the development of assessment measures that serve local needs and contexts. Assessments should be designed and implemented to support

student progress and success. With placement in particular, institutions should be mindful of the financial burden and persistence issues that increase in proportion to the number of developmental credit hours students are asked to complete based on assessments.

Whether for admissions, placement, or proficiency, recommended practices for any assessment that seeks to directly measure students' writing abilities involve, but are not limited to, the following concerns:

- Writing tasks and assessment criteria should be informed and motivated by the goals of the institution, the program, the curriculum, and the student communities that the program serves. (1, 2)
- Writing products should be measured against a clearly defined set of criteria developed in conversation with instructors of record to ensure the criteria align with the goals of the program and/or the differences between the courses into which students might be placed. (1, 2)
- Instructors of record should serve as scorers or should be regularly invited to provide feedback on whether existing assessment models are accurate, appropriate, and ethical. (4, 6)
- Assessments should consist of multiple writing tasks that allow students to engage in various stages of their writing processes. (4, 5)
- Assessment processes should include student input, whether in the form of a reflective component of the assessment or through guided self-placement measures. (5)
- Students should have the opportunity to question and appeal assessment decisions. (5, 6)
- Writing tasks and assessment criteria should be revisited regularly and updated to reflect the evolving goals of the program or curriculum. (1, 3)

Classroom Assessment

Classroom assessment processes typically involve summative and formative assessment of individually and collaboratively authored projects in both text-based and multimedia formats. Assessments in the classroom usually involve evaluations and judgments of student work. Those judgments have too often been tied to how well students perform standard edited American English (SEAE) to the exclusion of other concerns. Instead, classroom assessments should focus on acknowledging that students enter the classroom with varied language practices, abilities, and knowledges, and these enrich the classroom and create more democratic classroom spaces. Classroom assessments should reinforce and reflect the goals of individual and collaborative projects. Additionally, classroom assessment might work toward centering labor-based efforts students put forth when composing for multiple scenarios and purposes. Each of the six foundational principles of assessment is key to ensuring ethical assessment of student writing in a classroom context.

Recommended practices in classroom assessment involve, but are not limited to, the following:

- Clear communications related to the purposes of assessment for each project (1, 2)
- Assessment/feedback that promote and do not inhibit opportunities for revision, risk-taking, and play (4, 5)
- Assessment methodologies grounded in the latest research (3)
- Practices designed to benefit the health and welfare of all participants by respecting the labor of instructors and students (6)
- Occasions to illustrate a range of rhetorical skills and literacies (3, 4)
- Attention to the value of language diversity and rejection of evaluations of language based on a single standard (5)
- Efforts to demystify writing, composing, and languaging processes (3, 4)
- Opportunities for self-assessment, informed goal setting, and growth (5, 6)
- Input from the classroom community on classroom assessment processes (5, 6)

Program Assessment

Assessment of writing programs, from first-year composition programs to Writing Across the Curriculum programs, is a critical component of an institution's culture of assessment. Assessment can focus on the operation of the program, its effectiveness to improve student writing, and how it best supports university goals.

While programmatic assessment might be driven by state or institutional policies, members of writing programs are in the best position to guide decisions about what assessments will best serve that community. Programs and departments should see themselves as communities of professionals whose assessment activities communicate measures of effectiveness to those inside and outside the program.

Writing program assessments and designs are encouraged to adhere to the following recommended practices:

- Reflect the goals and mission of the institution and its writing programs. (1)
- Draw on multiple methods, quantitative and qualitative, to assess programmatic effectiveness and incorporate blind assessment processes of anonymized writing when possible. (1, 3, 6)
- Establish shared assessment criteria for evaluating student performance that are directly linked to course outcomes and student performance indicators. (1, 2)
- Occur regularly with attention to institutional context and programmatic need. (3, 6)
- Share assessment protocols with faculty teaching in the program and invite faculty to contribute to design and implementation. (4, 5, 6)
- Share assessment results with faculty to ensure assessment informs curriculum design and revisions. (1, 2)
- Recognize that assessment results influence and reflect accreditation of and financial resources available to programs. (6)
- Provide opportunities for assessors to discuss and come to an understanding of outcomes and scoring options. (4, 5)
- Consider faculty labor:
    - Faculty assessors should be compensated in ways that advantage them in their local contexts whether this involves financial compensation, reassigned time, or recognized service considered for annual review, promotion, and/or merit raises. (6)
    - Contingent instructors are vital to programs and, ideally, their expertise should be considered in assessment processes. If, however, participation exceeds what is written into their contracts/labor expectations, appropriate compensation should be awarded. (6)

Conclusion

There is no perfect assessment measure, and best practices in all assessment contexts involve reflections by stakeholders on the effectiveness and ethics of all assessment practices. Assessments that involve timed tests, rely solely on machine scoring, or primarily judge writing based on prescriptive grammar and mechanics offer a very limited view of student writing ability and have a history of disproportionately penalizing students from marginalized populations. Ethical assessment practices provide opportunities to identify equity gaps in writing programs and classrooms and to use disaggregated data to make informed decisions about increasing educational opportunities for students.

Individual faculty and larger programs should carefully review their use of these assessment methods and critically weigh the benefits and ethics of these approaches. Additionally, when designing these assessment processes, programs should carefully consider the labor that will be required at all stages of the process to ensure an adequate base of faculty labor to maintain the program and to ensure that all faculty involved are appropriately compensated for that labor. Ethical assessment is always an ongoing process of negotiating the historical impacts of writing assessment, the need for a clear portrait of what is happening in classrooms and programs, and the concern for the best interests of all assessment participants.

WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition (3.0), Approved July 17, 2014

The most recent version (3.0) of the WPA Outcomes Statement can now be downloaded as a PDF (at the bottom of this page). Further information about the process used to revise the statement and the reasons for those revisions appears in WPA: Writing Program Administration 38.1 (Fall 2014): 129-143.

Introduction

This Statement identifies outcomes for first-year composition programs in U.S. postsecondary education. It describes the writing knowledge, practices, and attitudes that undergraduate students develop in first-year composition, which at most schools is a required general education course or sequence of courses. This Statement therefore attempts to both represent and regularize writing programs' priorities for first-year composition, which often takes the form of one or more required general education courses. To this end it is not merely a compilation or summary of what currently takes place. Rather, this Statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory. It intentionally defines only "outcomes," or types of results, and not "standards," or precise levels of achievement. The setting of standards to measure students' achievement of these Outcomes has deliberately been left to local writing programs and their institutions.

In this Statement "composing" refers broadly to complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies. Writers also attend to elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens as well as printed pages. Writers' composing activities have always been shaped by the technologies available to them, and digital technologies are changing writers' relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways.

These outcomes are supported by a large body of research demonstrating that the process of learning to write in any medium is complex: it is both individual and social and demands continued practice and informed guidance. Programmatic decisions about helping students demonstrate these outcomes should be informed by an understanding of this research.

As students move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, their abilities will diversify along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines as these writers move into new settings where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge. Therefore, this document advises faculty in all disciplines about how to help students build on what they learn in introductory writing courses.

Rhetorical Knowledge

Rhetorical knowledge is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts. Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of composing. Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating purpose, audience, context, and conventions as they compose a variety of texts for different situations.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Learn and use key rhetorical concepts through analyzing and composing a variety of texts
- Gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes
- Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure
- Understand and use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences
- Match the capacities of different environments (e.g., print and electronic) to varying rhetorical situations

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The expectations of readers in their fields
- The main features of genres in their fields
- The main purposes of composing in their fields

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing

Critical thinking is the ability to analyze, synthesize, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, situations, and texts. When writers think critically about the materials they use—whether print texts, photographs, data sets, videos, or other materials—they separate assertion from evidence, evaluate sources and evidence, recognize and evaluate underlying assumptions, read across texts for connections and patterns,

identify and evaluate chains of reasoning, and compose appropriately qualified and developed claims and generalizations. These practices are foundational for advanced academic writing.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Use composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts
- Read a diverse range of texts, attending especially to relationships between assertion and evidence, to patterns of organization, to the interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements, and to how these features function for different audiences and situations
- Locate and evaluate (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, bias and so on) primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources
- Use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The kinds of critical thinking important in their disciplines
- The kinds of questions, problems, and evidence that define their disciplines
- Strategies for reading a range of texts in their fields

Processes

Writers use multiple strategies, or composing processes,to conceptualize, develop, and finalize projects. Composing processes are seldom linear: a writer may research a topic before drafting, then conduct additional research while revising or after consulting a colleague. Composing processes are also flexible: successful writers can adapt their composing processes to different contexts and occasions.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts
- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing
- Use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas
- Experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes

- Learn to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities
- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- To employ the methods and technologies commonly used for research and communication within their fields
- To develop projects using the characteristic processes of their fields
- To review work-in-progress for the purpose of developing ideas before surface-level editing
- To participate effectively in collaborative processes typical of their field

Knowledge of Conventions

Conventions are the formal rules and informal guidelines that define genres, and in so doing, shape readers' and writers' perceptions of correctness or appropriateness. Most obviously, conventions govern such things as mechanics, usage, spelling, and citation practices. But they also influence content, style, organization, graphics, and document design.

Conventions arise from a history of use and facilitate reading by invoking common expectations between writers and readers. These expectations are not universal; they vary by genre (conventions for lab notebooks and discussion-board exchanges differ), by discipline (conventional moves in literature reviews in Psychology differ from those in English), and by occasion (meeting minutes and executive summaries use different registers). A writer's grasp of conventions in one context does not mean a firm grasp in another. Successful writers understand, analyze, and negotiate conventions for purpose, audience, and genre, understanding that genres evolve in response to changes in material conditions and composing technologies and attending carefully to emergent conventions.

By the end of first-year composition, students should

- Develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising
- Understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary
- Gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions
- Learn common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts

- Explore the concepts of intellectual property (such as fair use and copyright) that motivate documentation conventions
- Practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The reasons behind conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and citation systems in their fields or disciplines
- Strategies for controlling conventions in their fields or disciplines
- Factors that influence the ways work is designed, documented, and disseminated in their fields
- Ways to make informed decisions about intellectual property issues connected to common genres and modalities in their fields.

Appendix C: South Harmon, Writing I: Course Outcome Summary

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Writing I: Course Outcome Summary

Core Abilities
1. Collaborate with Others
2. Communicate Effectively
3. Embrace Change
4. Respect Diversity
5. Think Critically and Creatively
6. Utilize Technology

Course Competencies

1. Apply the conventions of academic essay writing

Linked Core Abilities
Communicate Effectively
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
by meeting all requirements specified by the instructor for length, content, and format of documents
by revising and submitting documents that incorporate the drafting process and/or comments from instructors and/or peers
by preparing word-processed drafts
by meeting deadlines established for assignments

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
learner writes essays that contain an introduction, a body and a conclusion
learner writes a thesis statement
learner develops thesis statements through the use of supporting details, evidence and analysis
learner chooses an appropriate organizational plan for the essay
learner writes paragraphs with topic sentences and supporting details, evidence, and analysis (paragraph coherence)
learner constructs the essay through a series of well-crafted paragraphs, with each paragraph contributing to a dominant idea (essay coherence)
learner uses transitional phrases to show logical connections between paragraphs
learner writes sentences that are grammatically correct
learner observes standard rules for punctuation and mechanics
learner writes essays that are free of spelling and typographical errors
learner writes essays that observe the conventions for academic

Learning Objectives

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Write paragraphs with topic sentences and supporting details, evidence, and analysis (paragraph coherence)
Observe the conventions for academic diction
Observe standard rules for punctuation and mechanics
Write grammatically correct sentences
Use transitions to show logical connections
Write sentences with variety, conciseness, and clarity
Edit for spelling and typographical errors

2. Write essays

Linked Core Abilities
Communicate Effectively
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
by writing a total of 2500 words of polished writing
by writing a minimum of 3 critical essays (a program project may be substituted for one of the essays) that meet all expectations stated by the instructor for content and length
by completing all prewriting exercises assigned by the instructor
by revising essays through a prescribed peer review
by preparing word-processed essays

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
learner applies the conventions of academic essay writing
learner uses a process of prewriting, drafting, revision, and editing to complete each essay
learner writes essays that demonstrate knowledge of a variety of rhetorical patterns (involving some, but not all: compare/contrast, classification, analogy, definition, analysis, etc)
learner writes essays for a variety of purposes (involving some, but not all: informative, explanatory, evaluative, persuasive, narrative, descriptive)
learner writes essays that are unified
learner writes essays that are coherent
learner writes essays that explore a topic in-depth

Learning Objectives
Write essays that reflect the primacy of audience, purpose, and occasion
Demonstrate the conventions of academic writing
Construct the essay through a series of well-crafted paragraphs, with each paragraph contributing to a dominant idea (essay coherence)
Demonstrate the specified rhetorical pattern for essay development
Create critical thesis statements
Demonstrate the parameters for college level paragraph development
Demonstrate the specified pattern of organization
Incorporate transitions within paragraphs and between paragraphs
Write appropriate introductions and conclusions for each essay

3. Revise essays

Linked Core Abilities
Collaborate with Others
Communicate Effectively
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
by participating in revision exercises
by revising essays and submitting them for additional review
by using word-processed essays

Criteria
Your performance will be successful when:
learner revises essays using evaluation from self, peers and/or instructor
learner participates in all peer review exercises as assigned
learner prepares essays that are free of typographical and spelling errors
learner recognizes essential parts of an essay (thesis statement, logical organization, topic
sentences, sufficient evidence, coherence, unity)
learner judges appropriateness of suggestions for revision
learner adds, deletes, rearranges or rewrites information based on suggestions
learner prepares essays that follow standard guidelines for format (margins, spacing, indention,
page numbering, etc)
learner copy-edits essays for mechanical and grammatical correctness

Learning Objectives
Recognize MLA format for documents
Identify mechanical errors

4. Develop and sharpen listening skills

Linked Core Abilities
Collaborate with Others
Embrace Change

Assessment Strategies
in written and oral form
through quizzes and/or listening exercises

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
learner identifies common distractions
learner identifies active listening techniques
learner uses active listening techniques
learner identifies note-taking techniques

leaner uses note-taking techniques
learner determines a speaker's purpose and organizational pattern
learner recognizes a speaker's non-verbal cues
learner paraphrases information accurately

Learning Objectives
Recognize a speaker's non-verbal and vocal cues
Paraphrase information accurately
Summarize information correctly
Identify note-taking techniques
Identify active listening techniques
Identify common distractions

5. Develop and demonstrate skills in speaking

Linked Core Abilities
Communicate Effectively
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
in a minimum of three extemporaneous speeches

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
learner identifies the elements of a speech presentation
speeches are coherent and unified, and contain an introduction, body and a conclusion
speeches incorporate appropriate visual aid where applicable
learner uses appropriate verbal and non-verbal language
learner cites sources of information
learner evaluates speeches by using oral and written critiques

Learning Objectives
Identify the occasion for the speech
Articulate the purpose for the speech
Recognize the appropriate audience
Interact with the audience
Prepare to answer audience questions
Gather material for presentation
Prepare material for presentation
Incorporate appropriate visual and audio aids
Incorporate technology when appropriate
Evaluate speeches by using oral and written critiques

6. Use the research process

Linked Core Abilities

Think Critically and Creatively
Utilize Technology

Assessment Strategies
by meeting all requirements the instructor has specified for content and length of assigned research paper
by meeting all requirements the instructor has specified for number and types of sources to be compiled for the research paper
by preparing word-processed documented essays
by successfully completing a library-orientation project

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
learner identifies types of information required for a topic
learner identifies sources that are credible and current
learner gathers information from appropriate sources (eg, the library, the Internet, personal interviews)
learner prepares accurate summaries of information gathered from sources
learner supports a thesis with supporting evidence taken from sources
learner identifies sources
learner documents sources
learner recognizes what constitutes plagiarism

Learning Objectives
Gather information from appropriate sources
Distinguish credible sources from non-credible sources
Identify types of information appropriate for the research paper
Distinguish between primary, secondary, and tertiary sources
Distinguish between and appropriately use summary, paraphrase, and quotation

7. Analyze poetry and/or drama and/or creative non-fiction and/or short story as communication

Linked Core Abilities
Respect Diversity
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
in oral or written form

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
learner applies literature's exploration of shared life-experiences
learner analyzes literature's exploration of shared life-experiences
learner analyzes the purpose, audience, and delivery of the text/work

Learning Objectives
Identify the relationship between the audience and the text/work
Discuss themes

Appendix D: South Harmon, Composition I: Course Outcome Summary

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Composition I: Course Outcome Summary

Core Abilities
1. Collaborate with Others
2. Communicate Effectively
3. Demonstrate Responsibility
4. Think Critically and Creatively
5. Utilize Technology

Course Competencies

1. Establish critical reading skills

Linked Core Abilities
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
in oral or written form.

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
Learner recognizes main idea or theme in a passage.
Learner determines the meanings of words on the basis of context cues.
Learner recognizes the author's tone.
Learner identifies figurative language.
Learner recognizes rhetorical devices.
Learner recognizes cultural and ideological background of a text and its author.
Learner draws inferences.
Learner arrives at conclusions based on evidence.
Learner evaluates based on evidence.

Learning Objectives
Learner applies knowledge of vocabulary commonly used in college reading, writing, and speaking.
Learner identifies critical reading strategies, such as previewing, contextualizing, questioning, reflecting, outlining and summarizing, comparing and contrasting, analyzing, interpreting, and evaluating.

2. Establish critical thinking skills

Linked Core Abilities
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
in oral and/or written form

Criteria
Your performance will be successful when:
Learner recognizes that thinking has a purpose, objective, goal, or function.
Learner recognizes that thinking is an attempt to figure something out, settle some question, or solve some problem.
Learner recognizes that thinking is based on experience, data, information, evidence, or research.
Learner recognizes that thinking is a process of reasoning.
Learner recognizes that thinking is a process of abstraction (putting concrete information into abstract categories).
Learner avoids logical fallacies in reasoning.
Learner recognizes that thinking is a process used to rank order ideas.

Learning Objectives
Learner formulates purposes, goals, and objectives for learning that are clear and reasonable.
Learner divides complex questions into subquestions (accurately identifying the complexities of an issue).
Learner accurately categorizes an issue/question before reasoning through it.
Learner distinguishes the following concepts: facts, information, experience, research, data, and evidence.
Learner creates abstract categories for concrete data.
Learner identifies the parts of an issue.
Learner interprets the relationship among the parts of an issue.

3. Employ Writing Process

Linked Core Abilities
Communicate Effectively
Demonstrate Responsibility
Think Critically and Creatively
Utilize Technology

Assessment Strategies
in written form.

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
Learner uses prewriting techniques.
Learner's written work demonstrates purpose and organization.
Learner effectively uses revision techniques.
Learner integrates techniques from assigned readings/models into their own written work.

Learning Objectives

Learner can identify common prewriting techniques.

Learner can apply knowledge of language to make effective choices for organization, meaning or style.

Learner can identify the purpose of revision and its major focus areas (purpose/audience, focus, organization/paragraphing, and content).

4. Edit written work

Linked Core Abilities
Collaborate with Others
Communicate Effectively
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
in oral and/or written form.

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
Learner's written work adheres to standards appropriate to audience and purpose.
Learner evaluates effectiveness of his/her work.
Learner evaluates effectiveness of peers' work.
Learner implements strategies for improvement.
Learner's written work demonstrates use of effective sentences.
Learner's written work demonstrates effective paragraph development.

Learning Objectives
Learner distinquishes different levels of English (non-standard informal, standard informal, standard professional, formal).
Learner can demonstrate a command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage in writing.
Learner can demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation and spelling in writing.

5. Conduct research from written sources, both primary and secondary, to support analysis

Linked Core Abilities
Utilize Technology

Assessment Strategies
in written and oral form

Criteria
Your performance will be successful when:
Learner demonstrates an understanding of how to locate library resources, both print and electronic.
Learner uses library resources to locate primary and secondary sources.

Learner evaluates secondary sources for reliability, credibility, objectivity, and effectiveness.
Learner integrates information from several sources into written assignments and essays.

Learning Objectives
Learner uses a keyword search to identify and use subject headings.
Learner uses Boolean operators to narrow or expand search results.
Learner recognizes the characteristics of general and specialized information resources.
Learner differentiates between general and specialized information resources.
Learner uses Who, What, Where, and When questions to evaluate source material.

6. Use source material effectively

Linked Core Abilities
Communicate Effectively
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
in oral and/or written form.

Criteria
Your performance will be successful when:
Learner uses summaries of source information as support for points.
Learner appropriately documents summaries of source information as support for points.
Learner uses paraphrasing to translate short passages from source material.
Learner appropriately documents paraphrasing to translate short passages from source material.
Learner use attributive tags to incorporate quotations into the text.
Learner inserts quotations correctly into text when the quotation is a complete sentence.
Learner inserts quotations correctly into text when the quotation is not a complete sentence.
Learner modifies quotations to fit into the text grammatically.
Learner uses paraphrases and quotations sparingly.

Learning Objectives
Learner defines summary, paraphrasing, and quotation.
Learner identifies the characteristics of effective summary, paraphrase, and quotation use.
Learner locates a variety of source material.
Learner evaluates a variety of source material
Learner demonstrates the fair use of intellectual property.
Learner identifies MLA formatting and documentation rules.
Learner uses MLA format and documentation

7. Write a research driven essay

Linked Core Abilities
Communicate Effectively
Demonstrate Responsibility
Think Critically and Creatively

Utilize Technology

Assessment Strategies
documented analytical essay of at least at least 1,000 words using a minimum of three primary and secondary sources

Criteria
Performance will be successful when:
Document effectively analyzes or argues about a topic.
Document correctly and effectively incorporates primary and secondary sources.
Document adheres to the standards of American English.
Document presents a clear main idea (thesis) and purpose.
Document demonstrates logical thinking.
Document shows adequate development of thesis and sub-points.
Document employs the conventions of academic writing within the essay: topic sentences, coherence, unity, introduction, body, and conclusion.
Document employs an organizational pattern that will present analyses and arguments in the most logical and clear way.
Document correctly uses MLA format and documentation.

Learning Objectives
Learner describes how the conventions of academic writing (topic sentences, coherence, unity, introduction, body, and conclusion) are effectively used when writing an essay.
Learner locates a variety of research materials.
Learner evaluates a variety of research materials
Learner uses MLA format and documentation.

Appendix E: South Harmon, Composition II: Course Outcome Summary

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Composition II: Course Outcome Summary

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Core Abilities
1. Communicate Effectively
2. Respect Diversity
3. Think Critically and Creatively
4. Utilize Technology

1. Establish critical reading skills

Linked Core Abilities
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
1.1. in oral or written form.

Criteria
Criteria - Performance will be satisfactory when:
1.1. Learner recognizes main idea or theme in a passage.
1.2. Learner determines the meanings of words on the basis of context cues.
1.3. Learner recognizes the author's tone.
1.4. Learner identifies figurative language.
1.5. Learner recognizes rhetorical devices
1.6. Learner recognizes cultural and ideological background of a literary work and its author.
1.7. Learner recognizes elements of a literary work, such as imagery, symbolism, setting, point of view, and stylistic features.
1.8. Learner arrives at conclusions based on evidence.
1.9. Learner considers his or her understanding of a literary work relative to others' thinking and interpretations.

Learning Objectives
1.a. Apply knowledge of vocabulary commonly used in college reading, writing, and speaking.
1.b. Identify critical reading strategies, such as previewing, contextualizing, questioning, reflecting, outlining and summarizing, evaluating, comparing and contrasting

2. Develop the ability to analyze prose fiction (short story and novel), poetry, and drama.

Linked Core Abilities
Communicate Effectively
Think Critically and Creatively

Assessment Strategies
2.1. in oral or written form.

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Criteria

Criteria - Performance will be satisfactory when:
2.1. analysis or argument discusses literary elements, such as plot, theme, character, setting, and point of view.
2.2. analysis or argument uses accepted academic and literary conventions.
2.3. analysis or argument discusses stylistic techniques.
2.4. analysis or argument employs literary terminology (e.g., symbolism, metaphor, paradox, allusion).

Learning Objectives
2.a. Identify the literary elements and terminology specific to prose fiction, poetry, and drama.
2.b. Write clear, coherent, and persuasive essays.
2.c. Present analysis according to assignment specifications.

3. Write expository and rhetorical essays which critically analyze and/or persuade using literary elements.

Linked Core Abilities
Communicate Effectively
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Utilize Technology

Assessment Strategies
3.1. in oral or written form.

Criteria

Criteria - Performance will be satisfactory when:
3.1. analysis or argument presents a clear main idea and purpose.
3.2. analysis or argument adheres to the standards of American English.
3.3. analysis or argument shows logical thinking.
3.4. analysis or argument shows adequate development of thesis and sub-points.
3.5. analysis or argument employs the conventions of academic writing within the essay: topic sentences, coherence, unity, introduction, body, and conclusion.
3.6. analysis or argument employs an organizational pattern that will present analyses and arguments in the most logical and clear way.
3.7. analysis or argument identifies historical context as it relates to the literary works.
3.8. analysis or argument explains literary significance.
3.9. analysis or argument considers technical merit of a literary work
3.10. analysis or argument follows established academic and literary standards.
3.11. analysis or argument considers ideas about literary works from secondary sources.
3.12. analysis or argument effectively and correctly incorporates ideas about literary works from primary and secondary sources to support the main idea.
3.13. analysis or argument correctly uses MLA format and documentation.

Learning Objectives

3.a. Identify the literary elements specific to prose fiction, poetry, and drama.
3.b. Describe how the conventions of academic writing (topic sentences, coherence, unity, introduction, body, and conclusion) are effectively used when writing an essay.
3.c. Identify how established literary standards are used to measure literary significance and technical merit.

4. Conduct research from written sources, both primary and secondary, to support literary analysis

Linked Core Abilities
Think Critically and Creatively
Utilize Technology

Assessment Strategies
4.1. in oral or written form.

Criteria
Criteria - Performance will be satisfactory when:
4.1. Learner demonstrates an understanding of how to locate library resources, both print and electronic.
4.2. Learner uses library resources to locate primary and secondary sources.
4.3. Learner evaluates secondary sources for reliability, credibility, objectivity, and effectiveness.
4.4. Learner integrates information from several sources into written assignments and essays.

Learning Objectives
4.a. Use a keyword search to identify and use subject headings.
4.b. Use Boolean operators to narrow or expand search results.
4.c. Recognize the characteristics of general and specialized information resources
4.d. Differentiate between general and specialized information

5. Use source material effectively

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Assessment Strategies
5.1. in oral or written form.

Criteria
Criteria - Performance will be satisfactory when:
5.1. Learner uses summaries of source information as support for points.
5.2. Learner uses paraphrasing to translate short passages from source material.
5.3. Learner uses attributive tags to incorporate quotations into the text.

5.4. Learner inserts quotations correctly into text when the quotation is a complete sentence.
5.5. Learner inserts quotations correctly into text when the quotation is not a complete sentence.
5.6. Learner modifies quotations to fit into the text grammatically.
5.7. Learner uses paraphrases and quotations sparingly.

Learning Objectives
5.a. Define summary, paraphrasing, and quotation.
5.b. Identify the characteristics of effective summary, paraphrase, and quotation use.
5.c. Demonstrate an understanding of the fair use intellectual property.
5.d. Locate a variety of source material.
5.e. Evaluate a variety of source material
5.f. Identify MLA formatting and documentation
5.g. Use MLA formatting and documentation

6. Write a research-driven essay on a literary subject, author, or text(s), using persuasion and/or literary analysis.

Linked Core Abilities
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Assessment Strategies
6.1. A research paper on a thematic subject, author, or literary text(s) (at least 1,000 words) using a minimum of four primary and secondary sources, at least two of which should be secondary.

Criteria
Criteria - Performance will be satisfactory when:
6.1. document effectively analyzes or argues about a literary topic, work, or author.
6.2. document correctly and effectively incorporates primary and secondary sources.
6.3. document adheres to the standards of American English.
6.4. document presents a clear main idea (thesis) and purpose, supported by appropriate and relevant sources.
6.5. document demonstrates logical thinking.
6.6. document shows adequate development of thesis and sub-points.
6.7. document employs the conventions of academic writing within the essay: topic sentences, coherence, unity, introduction, body, and conclusion.
6.8. document employs an organizational pattern that will present analyses and arguments in the most logical and clear way.
6.9. document correctly uses MLA formatting and documentation.

Learning Objectives
6.a. Describe how the conventions of academic writing (topic sentences, coherence, unity, introduction, body, and conclusion) are effectively used when writing an essay.
6.b. Identify the literary elements and terminology specific to prose fiction, poetry, and drama.
6.c. Locate a variety of research materials.

6.d. Evaluate a variety of research materials
6.e. Use MLA format and documentation