RESEARCH SHOWS: RECASTING RESEARCH INSTRUCTION IN WRITING-ABOUT-WRITING APPROACHES TO FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

by

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that Writing-about-Writing (WAW) scholarship could strengthen its commitment to teaching writing and rhetoric through lenses of composition scholarship by paying more attention to its treatment of secondary research. WAW scholarship has enriched composition’s understanding of genre and transfer, and has allowed its practitioners to use disciplinary writing to teach genre awareness. But while such pedagogies depict primary research in nuanced and recursive ways, they at times portray secondary research as a mechanical process of retrieval. Such a depiction threatens to perpetuate the very generic view of writing WAW advocates wish to subvert.

A similar tension was observed in 34 open-ended qualitative interviews and classroom observations of first-year writing students, their composition instructors, and instructional librarians at a large public university in the Midwest. Although instructors readily identified the varied and nuanced contexts of different writing situations, and often shared this view of academic writing with their students, they also portrayed research as a generalizable process, easily transferred to future writing situations. This tension arose in each of the research process “steps” identified by participants: developing a research focus, locating sources, evaluating sources, and citing sources. WAW pedagogy, with its emphasis on teaching about writing, offers tools that could help participants to resolve those tensions. At the same time, the participants’ experiences with research offer challenges to WAW pedagogy.

To be successful, WAW approaches to research instruction need to approach secondary research with as much care and detail as they do primary research. First-year composition approaches to research instruction would be more effective if they foregrounded awareness about research over the discrete tools of research instruction. This dissertation concludes with three propositions for integrating more fully theorized research instruction into WAW pedagogies. Successful research instruction requires 1) an emphasis on teaching about research
over how to research, 2) instructors who cultivate their own research awareness, and 3) extended collaborations between the fields of composition and library and information science.
DEDICATION

To Betty Loomis, 1929-2010

for your example
for your support
for the green cookies
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INTRODUCTION: CREATING A RESEARCH SPACE

As different writing situations offer different answers, the transferable knowledge is not the answers but the questions: not “how to write,” but how to ask about how to write. – Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle, “Reimagining the Nature of FYC”

For by teaching the generic “research paper” as a separate activity, instructors in writing signal to their students that there is a kind of writing that incorporates the results of research, and there are (by implication) many kinds of writing that do not and need not do so. “Research,” students are allowed to infer, is a specialized activity that one engages in during a special course, or late in a regular semester or year, but that one does not ordinarily need to be concerned about and can indeed, for the most part, forget about. – Richard Larson, “The ‘Research Paper’ in the Writing Course: A Non-Form of Writing”

In “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning ‘First-Year Composition’ as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies,’” Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle argue that while composition theory and research have long challenged the existence of a universal form of “academic” writing, first-year composition programs (FYC) perpetuate the myth of universal academic language when they are designed to teach “how to write in college” (553), to impart a set of skills that is unproblematically assumed to transfer from one writing situation to the next. Downs and Wardle propose restructuring FYC as “Intro to Writing Studies,” in which students read composition scholarship and conduct their own primary research to answer their questions about writing. Based on their experiences teaching such a course, Downs and Wardle conclude that teaching FYC as an introduction to composition can help students develop awareness about writing, which preliminary studies suggest transfers across writing situations.

1 The title of this chapter serves three functions for my arguments about the role of research in first-year composition. First, the text it references – John Swales’s Genre Analysis – highlights the genre-focused argument I make about writing instruction. Second, as the first excerpted material included in Wardle and Downs’s textbook Writing about Writing, it draws attention to the promise of WAW pedagogy while also suggesting room for new research spaces within this pedagogy. Finally, Swales’s Create a Research Space (CARS) model, which maps the key moves of research introductions, is especially appropriate because it identifies the tasks I must accomplish in this introduction: “establishing a territory,” “establishing a niche,” and “occupying a niche.”
This pedagogy, now broadly referred to as Writing-about-Writing (WAW), \(^2\) “explicitly recognizes the impossibility of teaching universal academic discourse” and “seeks to improve students’ understanding of writing, rhetoric, language, and literacy in a course that is topically oriented to reading and writing as scholarly inquiry and encouraging more realistic understandings of writing” (Downs and Wardle “Teaching about Writing” 553). Primary among these “realistic understandings” is the view of “academic discourse” as a fragmented, multiplicitous practice rather than a monolithic form of writing. A WAW-focused course, Wardle clarifies in “Mutt Genres,” would not “teach students to write in the university,” but “teach students about writing in the university” (767):

In such a course, the subject (as Wendy Bishop put it) is always writing: how people use writing, how people learn to write, how genres mediate our work in society, how “discourse communities” affect language use, how writing changes across the disciplines, and so on. The research is about language, the discussions are about language, and the goal of the course is to teach students about the content of our discipline. (784)

Over the past five years, Downs and Wardle’s vision for a FYC course about writing has generated a burgeoning pedagogical movement. From these early articles, WAW has gained momentum (and acronym status), appearing in panels, workshops, and a special interest group at CCCC. The Writing-about-Writing Network (WAWN) and listserv connect teachers from distant locales to trade information about WAW pedagogies. April 2012 saw the launch of the Writing-about-Writing Newsletter, in which contributors follow WAW trends, present scholarship, and share student reactions to WAW assignments.

WAW pedagogies have been criticized for conflating “writing” and “academic writing” (Miles et al.), a point that Downs (“Response”), Wardle (“Continuing the Dialogue”),

\(^2\) Wardle traces this term back to David Russell’s argument that composition should “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). This revised term helps avoid one considerable conflict originating from Downs and Wardle’s 2007 article positioning FYC as “Intro to Writing Studies,” which was interpreted by at least one set of vocal critics as an argument for making FYC an introduction to the writing studies major (Miles et al.). Wardle comments on this change in her response to Miles and colleagues. “Writing Studies” conjures images of disciplinary writing designed for entrants into a field; “Writing-about-Writing” is an introduction designed for a wider swath of non-specialist, non-majoring students and teachers (“Continuing the Dialogue” 180).
and Barbara Bird ("Writing about Writing") reject. Although WAW pedagogies introduce students to the disciplinary writing of composition, the goal of such approaches is not to shape students into proto-disciplinary writers. WAW pedagogies focus on scholarly inquiry, not because it is the only or end-all function of writing, but because it is both immediate and relevant to instructors and students in a first-year writing course. Downs argues that WAW’s focus on “academic” writing is appropriate because the scholarly inquiry that produces such writing is “the central activity of college” (174). By dispelling students’ notions of universal academic prose and teaching students tools that will allow them to study disciplinary writing, instructors can enable students’ success in future courses (174).

In “Reimagining the Nature of FYC: Trends in Writing-about-Writing Pedagogies,” Downs and Wardle assert that all WAW pedagogies share “a desire to create a transferable and empowering focus on understanding writing as a subject of study” (131). Downs and Wardle identify four features common to all WAW pedagogies. First, WAW pedagogies resist a “deficit” model of FYC; WAW practitioners are “working in the spirit of” Bartholomae and Petrosky’s *Ways of Reading*, assigning difficult readings to students. Second, those readings come from composition studies, and act as both the content of the course and texts for genre study. Third, WAW pedagogies emphasize “metacognition and reflection” (138), through which students may more readily transfer knowledge about writing to new writing situations. Lastly, WAW pedagogies emphasize analysis and research: “After reflective writing, the most common assignments are ethnographies and auto-ethnographies, interview reports, and other research reports in which students have observed some site of writing or literacy and have analyzed or theorized it” (138-9).

The primary objective of a WAW curriculum, Wardle claims in “Continuing the Dialogue,” is “to empower students to understand better how writing works in the world and in their lives” (176). This focus on “how writing works” stems from the already robust literature of genre theory. Wardle opens “‘Mutt Genres’ and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?” with David Russell’s oft-invoked “ball-handling” metaphor to
challenge the notion that we can teach a general but still useful model of “how to write” through FYC (765). A course in how to write for the university is problematic, Russell argues, because it is “something like trying to teach people to improve their ping-pong, jacks, volleyball, basketball, field hockey, and so on by attending a course in general ball using” (58). Russell argues that, just as there cannot be a course in general “ball-handling,” there cannot be a course in general “writing” (59).

But Russell suggests there could be a place for “learning how to learn” genres (58). The debates sparked by Downs and Wardle’s initial article, and the conversations that have followed since, have opened new ways of thinking about genre and transfer, leading to a new conception of how FYC might prepare students for academic writing and for writing outside the academy. A WAW course is not a service course designed to equip students with basic skills, nor is it an introduction to academic discourse; instead, it is an introduction to the theory and practice of writing studies, with specific emphasis on genre awareness. If, as Amy Devitt, Mary Jo Reiff, and Anis Bawarshi have suggested, FYC acts as a “port of entry to other scenes” (337), a WAW pedagogy can help students cultivate the meta-awareness necessary to navigate these scenes.

In this dissertation, I argue that WAW could strengthen its commitment to teaching writing and rhetoric through lenses of composition scholarship by paying more attention to scenes of research, and of secondary research in particular. Downs and Wardle argue that what we call “writing” is really just the end stage of a much larger project (“Teaching about Writing” 563), and that a WAW course, which encourages students to conduct “messy” primary research, can help students to “raised awareness of research writing as a conversation” (573). And yet, despite WAW’s use of assignments reliant on and engaged with primary research methods, “research” remains an under-theorized concept in WAW approaches. Although WAW scholarship has routinely contested the concept of teaching students “how to write,” it has not focused as much attention on the equally flawed premise of teaching “how to research.” Even as we include ever more diverse models of primary research (among them ethnography, surveys, interviews, and case studies) into FYC, our descriptions of secondary research perpetuate a view
of “the research process” as a mechanical and routinized method applicable to all writing situations. If WAW pedagogies are to be successful in teaching about writing, they need to pay increased attention to the ways in which research instruction influences students’ writing awareness.

**The research paper in FYC**

In order to understand the ways in which the depiction of research in WAW pedagogies affects WAW’s objective of teaching writing awareness, we must first understand how “research paper” instruction has functioned within FYC more broadly. From this foundation, it will be possible to observe how descriptions of research in WAW pedagogy attempt to reverse, but also unintentionally re-inscribe, a view of research as a mechanical and generalizable process.

*The research paper as preparation for academic writing*

Earlier approaches to teaching the research paper were thought to provide students with broadly applicable knowledge of “academic writing.” This model of the research paper as preparation for future writing situations is visible in Ambrose Manning’s 1961 study, “The Present Status of the Research Paper in Freshman English.” Eighty-three percent of the schools that responded to Manning’s survey[^3] required research papers in first-year writing (74). Manning attributes the rise of the research paper to dissertation and thesis directors, who argued that their students were unprepared for research. Manning’s respondents saw first-year composition as “the only opportunity the student has to receive instruction in the use of library resources and in the technologies of research and documentation” (77). This training was viewed as necessary for an increasingly underprepared student body; one respondent to Manning’s survey argued that removing research from first-year writing would tacitly condone the “visigoth invasion” of the university. The value of the research paper, this commenter argued, was that it

[^3]: Manning does not include a copy of the survey, nor a description of the respondents, who are referred to as “schools,” leaving some question as to who actually replied to the surveys and what motivations influenced their replies. The written responses Manning includes in the report, which make frequent use of personal pronouns to describe activities in first-year composition – such as “We discarded the research paper some years ago, only to be asked by other departments to restore it” (78) – suggest that the replies came from either department/program chairs or instructors.
“separate[s] the sheep from the goats. And even though the registrar’s office no longer distinguishes between the sheep and the goats, someone must” (78).

Manning concludes that, because of these two roles – preparing students for academic writing and separating strong students from weak ones – “the freshman research paper is in no danger of being relegated to a lower place or taken out of the curriculum; indeed, it has more prestige than ever” (78). In 1982, just over twenty years after Manning’s study, James Ford and Dennis Perry, responding to “the general impression that research paper instruction was on the wane” (825), as well as to the scarcity of attention given to the research paper in *College English* and *CCC*, conducted a study similar to Manning’s (a significant difference was the sample size: 397 schools to Manning’s 171). Ford and Perry found that the prevalence of research paper assignments had not changed much since Manning’s study; 84% of the English departments they surveyed offered a research paper in first-year composition, and 78% of those offering the research paper required it (827). Like Manning, Ford and Perry concluded that there was “high investment in and satisfaction with research paper instruction in a large majority of English departments” (829). Both studies demonstrate a common assumption among departments and programs: research papers could create students ready for the rigors of the college experience. Manning summarizes his respondents’ attitudes toward the research assignment: “the discipline required in producing a ‘baby thesis’ makes the whole thing worthwhile” (77). Ford and Perry also picked up on this theme, and quote one respondent who claimed “that the formal research paper is a valuable tool in teaching students to develop discipline and a scholarly attitude” (830). This emphasis on “discipline” suggests that the research paper was meant to prepare students for the kind of scholarly work they would complete later on; they would transfer the research habits learned in their “baby theses” to the larger projects expected in other courses.

Ford and Perry’s study appeared alongside two other articles on research instruction, all of which were published in the December 1982 issue of *College English*. In the first of these articles, then *CCC* editor Richard Larson describes the research paper as “a non-form of
writing,” and argues that research, which can be used in virtually any form of writing, is not a
genre of its own (813). According to Larson, the research paper, which lacks a substantive
identity, also lacks a procedural identity, as there is no single research method appropriate to
completing a research paper (813). The consequence of teaching “the research paper,” Larson
argues, is that teachers

signal to their students that there is a kind of writing that incorporates the results
of research, and there are (by implication) many kinds of writing that do not and
need not do so. “Research,” students are allowed to infer, is a specialized activity
that one engages in during a specialized course, or late in a regular semester or
year, but that one does not ordinarily need to be concerned about and can indeed,
for the most part, forget about. (814-5)

Larson claims that this view of research as a specialized skill used solely in “research papers”
does not encourage students to support, challenge, or extend the ideas they present in other
forms of writing with strong evidence. Furthermore, Larson argues, this view suggests that
“research” is the same as “book research,” even though research takes many forms. Larson uses
interview research as an example, and argues that by teaching research as a book-based skill
only, “we show our provincialism and degrade the research of many disciplines” (815). When the
research paper is treated as a form of generic academic writing, it is not actually valuable to the
kinds of discipline-specific writing students will do later on. Instead of this genre-less paper,
Larson argues, composition instructors should be encouraging the more general skill of
supporting all of their writing with various kinds of evidence (816). For Larson, good research
instruction should encourage students to think critically about how various forms of research,
including but not limited to library research, can inform all of their writing, not just those
assignments called “research papers.”

Larson touched a nerve, as indicated by James Doubleday’s response article in the
September 1984 issue of College English:

Richard L. Larson’s philosophical dissertation on the notion “research
paper” (CE, December 1982) is an extremely annoying piece of work. It is
appropriate that the paper was first given at the MLA and that its author is a
part-time administrator, since the lofty tone, woolly thinking, and total lack of
practical sense apparent in this article are all characteristic of the MLA approach
to teaching and the administrator’s approach to anything. (512)
That the suggestion of tossing out the research paper could provoke such an attack suggests that at least some in composition viewed the research paper as fulfilling some vital function.

Doubleday argued that Larson, the detached and impractical administrator, was acting in absolute ignorance of what it was really like in the classroom, and that the research paper assignment was “of great value” (512), regardless of whether or not it produced good writing, because it taught students about sources:

Most students come into college not knowing, and not caring about, the difference between a first-hand, a second-hand, and a third-hand source. All things written are equally authoritative to them. If they have the vaguest glimmering of what plagiarism is, their way of guarding against it is to refer, vaguely and incompletely, to one source at the end of the paper, usually not at an appropriate point. Other students insist on footnoting everything in their paper except their own names. They do not know the difference between a summary and a paraphrase, and can write neither. Students usually have no idea of the different reference sources available. (512)

Doubleday’s argument about students’ source use suggests that a major goal of first-year writing instruction should be to teach students how to use print sources appropriately: how to identify types of sources, how to assess the credibility of a source, how to appropriately attribute a source, and how to incorporate a source into their writing. His argument perhaps reflects his experience teaching at a community college; his response, while quite rude to Larson, demonstrates his concern for students’ academic preparation. Doubleday’s argument also suggests a significant change to research instruction that goes uncommented upon in Ford and Perry’s study. In 1961, Manning reported that 33.5% of the schools in his sample used a “controlled research technique” (76). Controlled research was a popular method of instruction that used source books, from which all students composed their research papers (see Bramer; Houghton; Kerner; Kogan; Weeks). For at least 33.5% of the schools in Manning’s sample, Doubleday’s argument about identifying and evaluating sources would have been irrelevant, because students’ sources were chosen for them. Ford and Perry found that only 14% of programs used “casebooks” (828), a synonym for source books. This decline marks a significant change in research instruction: students were increasingly expected to find their own source material.
In his counter-response to Doubleday, Larson agreed that source selection was important, but claimed that it need not – and should not – be taught in the space of a single unit bracketed off from the rest of a writing course. Sources should be the focus not of a single assignment, but of all the work students do; students should think of sources as a way of inspiring or building on their own ideas. Larson was not arguing that teachers should abolish research along with the research paper. Instead, research should be incorporated in all areas of the course.

Doubleday’s response helps confirm Ford and Perry’s claim that teachers of first-year composition were heavily invested in the research paper. Robert Schwegler and Linda Shamoon’s “The Aims and Processes of the Research Paper,” sandwiched between Larson’s and Ford and Perry’s contributions to the December 1982 CCC, helps to explain this investment. Schwegler and Shamoon conducted interviews “to recognize the considerable difference between the way students view the research paper (and have been taught to view it) and the way most college instructors and other researchers view it” (818). Schwegler and Shamoon found that for students, the research paper is a test of their research skills, a fact-based, information-gathering process for an audience of one: the teacher. For teachers, the research paper is not just informative, but analytical, a question-answering process that emerges from and speaks to an audience of scholars.

Schwegler and Shamoon argue that “because the conventions for the most part transcend disciplinary boundaries (except in superficial matters like use of personal pronouns and documentation style), they can be made part of research-paper instruction in composition courses and in lower-level, content-area courses” (821). This argument about conventions is much different from those which have preceded it. For Schwegler and Shamoon, the most important transcendent convention of the academic research paper is its move from “the known, as defined by current scholarship,” to “the unknown, attempting to pursue an admittedly elusive ‘truth’” (821). What can be “known” is restricted by the standards of evidence and information-gathering in the particular discipline. In other words, the research method limits what the
researcher can say. What the researcher can say is further limited by scope; academic researchers make small claims about small aspects of their disciplines. They are, however, expected to draw larger connections between their small claims and the discipline at large. This disciplinary view of writing challenges the style of research writing Doubleday advocates in his response to Larson. Rather than teach the “superficial matters” of MLA format, for example, Schwegler and Shamoon aim to teach a larger understanding about how researchers write from within specific communities, and how a writer’s choices enable or limit interaction in a community.

In her 2009 follow-up survey of the research paper in American colleges and universities, Carra Leah Hood found that the “traditional” research paper, which she labels as an informative essay relying on sources, has experienced a 92% decline since Ford and Perry’s study (7). Although this finding appears to demonstrate an extraordinary decline in research paper requirements over the past 30 years, this apparent decline can be partially explained by respondents’ description of their researched assignments as being “traditional” or “alternative.” Hood’s survey indicates that of those teaching research-based assignments in first-year composition, only 6% identify the typical research assignment at their institutions as a

\[
\frac{78 - 6}{78} = 92\%
\]

Whether stated as a 72% decline or a 92% decline, Hood’s finding suggests a significant shift in how instructors describe researched assignments.

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4 Hood, mimicking Manning and Ford and Perry before her, did not define “traditional” on her survey. In fact, she did not use the word “traditional” at all, instead opting for “typical,” without a definition, to encourage respondents to define what was typical in their own terms. It is important to note that Manning used the term “traditional” in contrast with the terms “controlled materials,” “critical reviews,” and “series of short papers” (76). In this context, “traditional” may refer to a range of activities, from how students gathered and used sources to how they drafted their papers. Manning’s survey does not allow readers to determine the mode or style of typical papers assigned. Ford and Perry did collect data on the mode of research papers, and found that 41% of the assigned research papers were “thesis-oriented” (828), suggesting that argument was an important component of at least some researched assignments at that time.

5 Hood refers to this as a 72% decline, which she arrived at by subtracting the 6% of her respondents who reported using a “traditional” research paper from the 78% of respondents in Ford and Perry’s study who reported such assignments. The decline from 78% to 6% does not represent a 72% decline, but a 92% decline:
“traditional research paper,” while the other 94% identify the assignment as an “alternative” to that traditional research paper. These alternative papers take many forms (such as annotated bibliographies, ethnographies, and proposals). The most common “alternative” assignment was the researched argument (8). Hood suggests that the reason for the rapid growth of the researched argument assignment is its relevance to the writing tasks students will do in other contexts (8). Of the 22 different learning outcomes respondents identified with their researched assignments (regardless of assignment type), the most frequently identified were “ability to integrate/synthesize resources” (12%), “ability to use format/document/citation style” (12%), “ability to evaluate resources” (9%), “evidence of critical thinking/reading/writing” (8%), “ability to locate a variety of resources” (7%), and “ability to argue a point/solve a problem” (7%) (9). Hood explains that the argument assignment reflects the work students will need to do in other disciplines; they will have to find, evaluate, and synthesize resources to support arguments, and present these arguments in the format preferred in their disciplines.

Hood suggests that the shift from traditional to alternative could remedy some problems of the research paper while creating new ones. The alternative formats could resolve issues of “plagiarism and genrelessness,” but do not dissolve the service role of first-year composition. However “alternative” the assignment, the researched paper in composition continues to be framed as a preparation for future coursework. Neither does the assignment silence debate on the relationship between first-year composition and discipline-specific writing (16).

Manning’s, Ford and Perry’s, and Hood’s surveys suggest a few significant changes in research paper instruction within first-year composition. First, students are increasingly expected to select their own sources. Second, students are expected to choose these sources in service of discipline-specific arguments. Third, students are encouraged to adapt disciplinary research methods to their topics. Fourth, students, who are increasingly expected to evaluate and synthesize sources, are perceived to be entering an ongoing conversation through their research. In the time that has lapsed between Manning’s and Hood’s studies, one aspect of research instruction remains: we continue to rely on the fraught term “the research paper.”
“The research paper” is a problematic term, Devitt argues (Writing Genres; “Transferability”), because while the genre label stays the same, the features of it change, both over time and through disciplines. The work of scholars studying genre and transfer challenges the concept of a genre such as “the research paper,” at least without specific and narrow contextual markers. And yet, composition continues to rely upon this term to describe the work students do when they research. The description of the academic writing cluster in the CCCC 2013 call for papers includes “teaching the research paper and research writing.” But “the research paper” is a “baggy” genre (Medway 141), an umbrella term for an impossibly large constellation of social actions, which both govern and are governed by epistemologies, research paradigms, and writing styles.

Researched assignments in WAW: challenging and upholding the myth of “academic” writing

The research paper is a response to a classroom-based exigency; like many other classroom genres, it is designed to test students’ knowledge. But what knowledge is the research paper imagined to test? FYC students are often told to write about whatever topic motivates them, which suggests that the emphasis is not so much on mastering any kind of content knowledge, but on mastering the skills of rigorous research, be that incorporating proper citations, including quotation marks, or showing that an argument is built on the ideas of others. All of these skills are thought to be of value to the work students will undertake in future courses. The research paper is a tool used to measure students’ progress toward this procedural writing knowledge.

There is a strange divide between the content of these research papers and the technical practice of writing them. As genre theorists have convincingly argued, a genre is not equal to the sum of its formal features. Mastery of a genre does require procedural knowledge, but also content knowledge, not just of the immediate subject of the document, but of the norms, practices, and worldviews of community who uses that document. WAW pedagogy offers one partial solution to this separation of form and content. In a WAW classroom, the goal of the
research paper – expressed through both the content and the procedure – is to showcase knowledge gained about writing. The research paper, then, could be both a means of learning procedural knowledge and a means of writing about writing.

WAW pedagogies are powerful because they advocate teaching genre awareness over teaching static features of a particular genre. They encourage students to view research as both a verb and a noun, as both something we do and as an object of study. To promote this understanding, WAW pedagogies often employ tools of ethnographic research. One issue with the current WAW-focused pedagogies is that, while they frame popular research methods such as ethnography as complicated, nuanced, and rhetorical processes, they often frame other modes of research, especially “library research,” as simple, non-rhetorical processes. Anne Beaufort’s *College Writing and Beyond*, even as it is focused specifically on how students transfer genre knowledge from one writing situation to the next, is one such example. Beaufort develops a rich model of the knowledge domains experts employ when completing a writing task (writing process knowledge, subject matter knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, genre knowledge, and discourse community knowledge) (18-19), and follows a single student for six years, observing how he navigated, negotiated, or ignored these contexts.

In one of the appendices, which includes assignments designed to “teach for transfer” (177), Beaufort and collaborator Dana Driscoll provide assignments meant to teach students to “learn to become lifelong learners” by developing “multiple writing expertises” (177). Following the tradition of genre analysis, these assignments include a literacy autobiography, a genre analysis, and a discourse community analysis, all of which are designed to cultivate the kind of meta-awareness that Devitt and others have argued students need to successfully write within genres. While these assignments portray writing as a complex social activity, they portray library research as a relatively simple process of retrieval. Such a portrayal, I argue, undermines all of our messages to students about the complicated genre-specific nature of academic writing. Beaufort and Driscoll’s discourse community analysis assignment, for example, includes “feeder” assignments designed to prepare students to observe discourse communities. The
fourth feeder assignment, which students complete after choosing a population, developing a research question, and conducting initial observations, is to

use the library’s online databases and/or stacks to locate two articles that provide background on the discourse community you are researching [. . .]. After you locate your two articles, write an annotated bibliography of these two articles. In the annotation, summarize the articles and state what you have gleaned from them to further refine your research questions. (201)

The essay assignment makes one additional mention of library resources: “Your research should include appropriate primary or secondary sources to support or amplify your field research. You may use sources from popular magazines, newspapers, non-scholarly Internet sites, or other sources, but you need to include at least three scholarly sources, as this is an academic essay” (205). In these two descriptions, the aptly-named “secondary” research of collecting scholarly sources is subordinated to the main task of observing a discourse community. It is puzzling that there is no hint that the articles and books students find through library research are also products of specific discourse communities, that the databases and stacks themselves are shaped by discourse communities. Students are not encouraged to account for these influences in the texts they find, which they need only use to “support” or “amplify” their own conclusions. Beaufort and Driscoll’s later use of “scholarly” and “academic” erases the differences among various databases and different sections of the stacks, and ignores the complex hierarchies used to catalog library information. Such descriptions of library resources and “scholarly” or “academic” work undermine all of the careful distinctions Beaufort wants students to be able to make about discourse communities.

In 2011, Wardle and Downs published the 747-page Writing about Writing: A College Reader, a “strong zip line” for instructors “ready to take the leap” (McMillan) into WAW pedagogy.⁶ The introductory chapter, which Wardle and Downs frame as an “Introduction to

⁶ Wardle and Downs’s textbook is the first entirely devoted to WAW, but earlier textbooks might be considered close relatives. Devitt, Reiff, and Bawarshi’s Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genre (2003), as its title suggests, teaches writing through genre analysis. The text does not incorporate readings from composition scholarship. Sargent’s Conversations about Writing: Eavesdropping, Inkshedding, and Joining In (2005) contains readings from composition scholarship, but is more process-focused in its approach.
the Conversation,” explains that students may be surprised by the kind of research expected of them, which will be “imperfect, incomplete, inconclusive, and provisional” (4). The introduction features three scholarly works specifically focused on this new approach to research: John Swales’s “Create a Research Space,” Stuart Greene’s “Argument as Conversation,” and Michael Kleine’s “What Is It We Do When We Write Articles Like This One – and How Can We Get Students to Join Us?” But in the assignments that appear in each chapter, “research” is not always described in this way, particularly when it comes to library-based research. Most of Wardle and Downs’s assignments include a section specifically devoted to research, many of which are impressively detailed. The research section of their discourse community analysis assignment, for example, includes information on data collection and analysis that, while certainly not as detailed as we would expect of our own scholarship, would allow students to generate a great deal of data about their chosen discourse communities and to develop rich theories about that data. The research sections paint a broad picture of possible research methods, among them auto-ethnography, literary analysis, observation, interviewing, and surveying.

But when students are asked to do what we might call more “traditional” research – that is, collecting and analyzing what others have written – Wardle and Downs offer surprisingly little direction. In the “Navigating Sources that Disagree” assignment, students are asked to select a current debate and “carefully choose three different sources within your debate that do not agree” (165). There is, however, no discussion of how to find these sources, or even where students should begin looking. In another assignment asking students to respond to “Students’ Right to Their Own Language,” Wardle and Downs direct students to first find the original text “by searching on ‘NCTE right to their own language’” (712). There is no discussion of where students should search or what they will be likely to find.

In these assignments, students are expected to engage deeply with their source texts and to understand them rhetorically. In one more assignment, for which students are asked to compare and contrast a news article about a scientific finding with the original journal article
WAW pedagogy is exciting for its presentation of writing as a nuanced, context-specific practice that is an ongoing subject of scholarly inquiry. But its treatment of research, which is presented as non-rhetorical and mechanical, creates a divide between primary and secondary research methods. Primary research gets to be a “messy,” inconclusive process that, bit by bit, adds to a discipline’s knowledge. When secondary research is a simple process of “finding” and “choosing” sources, students are led to a much different view of research that undermines the very “messy” view that WAW pedagogies have worked so hard to build, not just of research, but of writing as a whole. Secondary research, the kind of research students will most often be called upon to do in college, is often portrayed as a singular process broadly applicable to all projects. Writing is portrayed as a context specific practice. At the very least, the stark differences in these portrayals of research and writing will create confusion for students. Worse, if “research,” which is viewed as a common denominator of academic writing, is understood as a singular process, then students may not take us seriously when they hear us say that all writing situations are different. Still worse, these two portrayals of research and writing suggest to students that they are entirely separate processes; research is a simple matter of gathering information, and writing is an equally simple matter of writing that information down. If our goal is to teach knowledge about writing that will transfer to future writing situations, we need to pay more deliberate attention to the ways in which we describe research.

Project description

This dissertation intervenes in the WAW conversation by arguing that we should be as attentive to cultivating students’ research awareness as we are to cultivating their writing awareness; or rather, that our teaching about writing not neglect the role of research within writing. WAW pedagogies, with their emphasis on primary research in composition, provide a
nuanced, contextual, and genre-focused model of writing. But there is a gap between these
depictions and the often a-contextual, mechanical, generalized way that these same pedagogies
depict secondary research. I argue that WAW can be more successful in its mission to cultivate
students’ meta-awareness if it also helps cultivate a research mindset, which can help writers understand the contours of the conversations they wish to enter. A research mindset can help students think through their writing, becoming more engaged with the worlds they inhabit, as well as those they wish to enter.

Throughout this dissertation, I draw from 34 qualitative and open-ended interviews with, as well as observations of, first-year writing students, composition instructors, and instructional librarians7 at “The University,”8 a large Midwestern public university. All of these interviews and observations, with the exception of a scattering of follow-up meetings and e-mails, were conducted in the fall of 2009. An expanded explanation of my methods can be found in Appendix B. My initial question for these groups was “What is research?” In asking this question, I hoped to uncover differences between each group’s understanding of research that could lead to more thoughtful approaches to research instruction. I focused on first-year composition in particular for two reasons. First, “the research paper” continues to be assigned in FYC, even as composition scholarship challenges this “non-form” (Larson) of writing. Second, FYC, perhaps more than any other course, includes library-based research instruction. My early

7 I struggled with how to name each of the groups in the study. “Students” was an easy choice, as all of the 18-, 19-, and 20-year old participants in this study identified themselves as such. I initially called the second and third groups “teachers” and “librarians.” But these terms are only partially accurate. Not all composition instructors view themselves as teachers, or at least do not see “teacher” as their primary job description. Some of the TAs, for example, teach only as a requirement of their program, and expect to enter non-teaching professions later in their careers. The term “librarian,” used alongside students and instructors, suggests that librarians are not teachers, but the librarians in this study identify their primary role as teaching. With these caveats in mind, I refer to the groups as “students,” “instructors,” and “librarians” throughout.

8 I have chosen the name “The University” in order to protect participants’ anonymity, but also because for the students attending the school and the people who work at it (as well as the whole town whose economy is based on it), that’s exactly what it is: THE university.
sense was that these library sessions would offer a useful opportunity to observe the different ways in which students, instructors, and librarians understood research.

Unsurprisingly, the study evolved in ways I did not anticipate. In sifting through interview transcripts and observational notes, it became clear that instructors at The University, none of whom identified themselves as “in” the discipline of composition and who did not report keeping up with the literature of the field, often employed methods very similar to those described in WAW pedagogy; they were committed to teaching students to view “writing” as a context-specific process shaped by particular discourse communities, and to helping students make sense of unfamiliar academic genres. As these instructors incorporated researched assignments into their courses, however, it became clear that there was a significant disconnect between this description of writing and their teaching of a more unified, linear, and de-contextualized “research process.” I argue that consciously and deliberately bringing WAW pedagogy into the classroom could make this disconnect more visible and offer opportunities for resolving it. WAW strategies could certainly improve research instruction for those instructors at The University, specifically, helping them to resolve the tension between their wish to prepare students for academic writing situations and their struggle against a monolithic “academic” writing. But this application of WAW to instructors in this one location can also expand and complicate the ways in which secondary research is theorized within WAW pedagogies.

Readers of the following chapter descriptions will notice that the layout – developing a research focus, locating sources, evaluating sources, and citing sources – appears to follow precisely the sort of generic and linear process that I resist throughout this dissertation. I choose to invoke these steps of “the research process” because that is most often what my participants described themselves as doing, even as their actions demonstrated a much more complicated sense of “process.” Each chapter allows me to explore moments of tension between teaching “how to write” and teaching “about” writing. WAW pedagogy can turn our attention away from “how to choose a topic” or “how to find sources” to how each of these steps works. Furthermore,
WAW strategies can help us show students that these “steps” are not steps at all, but rather intertwined and recursive processes.

In Chapter 1, I demonstrate a tension between a university-based agenda for first-year composition as preparation for “academic” writing and individual practitioners who, while also concerned with students’ preparation for college work, argue that “academic” does not convey the varied nature of the writing situations students will face in college. I claim that WAW pedagogy, rooted in theories of genre and transfer, could help to resolve this tension by helping students cultivate awareness about writing. But this tension, I argue, cannot be resolved without increased attention to the role of research in WAW pedagogies. I then turn to two instructors from The University, both of whom use discourse analysis assignments in order to help students cultivate writing awareness but whose descriptions of research topic selection lead to two different outcomes, one undermining and one encouraging meta-awareness.

In Chapter 2, I move to a second “step” of research, finding sources. I begin with portrayals of libraries and librarians across composition’s scholarship and textbooks, demonstrating how these depictions frame secondary research as a mechanical process. This depiction is reinforced by the “one-shot” library instruction sessions commonly requested by individual composition instructors and entire composition programs across the country. Our reliance on these sessions, which demonstrate how to find “scholarly” books and articles, leaves students with the impression that a single search strategy is appropriate to all writing situations. Drawing from interactions between composition instructors and librarians at The University, I demonstrate how even those instructors who want to teach academic writing as genre-governed and contextual can be limited to teaching secondary research as a mechanical process. I then suggest that by more consciously entering into discussions about research, WAW-centered strategies can make even the problematic one-shot session a fertile ground for teaching students about library research instead of how to find sources.

In Chapter 3, I turn to a third “step” of the research process, source evaluation. Interviews with students and instructors at The University show that while instructors tend to
evaluate sources based on the more abstract criteria of credibility and function, students evaluate sources based on textual features that indicate expertise and accuracy. The differences between these criteria suggest that the two groups employ significantly different antecedent genres and genre strategies to researched assignments. Instructors appear to employ antecedent genre strategies rooted in genre awareness; students, by contrast, appear to rely on the antecedent genre of “the research paper,” which they understand to be a test of knowledge. This antecedent genre, I argue, encourages students to evaluate sources in terms of expertise and accuracy. I argue that in order to move past this antecedent, students need to create “concept maps” (Ambrose et al.) of the conversations they wish to enter and evaluate sources using those maps. I then suggest that WAW pedagogy, with its focus on teaching about writing, is uniquely well-suited to incorporate these maps into research instruction in FYC.

I turn to a fourth “step” of the research process in Chapter 4, in which I argue that citation is especially prone to the “how to” problem voiced in WAW scholarship. Drawing from Chris Anson’s “Citation as Speech Act,” I suggest that current research instruction often limits students to two positioning functions: showcasing their knowledge and proving they did not plagiarize. Such positioning restricts students from making full use of what Anson calls “ideational” citation. Drawing from Amy Robillard’s relational model of citation, I argue that if students are to see the contours of the academic conversations they are entering and to make full use of ideational functions, they need to view citations in terms of relationships.

Before exploring the first “step” of the research process in Chapter 1, I want to turn to my title – Research Shows – and its implications for my work. Research Shows takes its title from an often-employed appeal to credibility. Research shows that pomegranates will make us live longer. Research shows that lengthening the school year will aid student retention. Research shows that four out of five dentists recommend Trident. In each of these statements, invoking “research shows” allows the writer to make truth claims. Once “research shows,” it is difficult to un-see, which can have devastating and lasting consequences. The long uphill battle of medical researchers refuting links between vaccines and autism is one such example. Andrew
Wakefield’s completely fabricated “research” linking autism to childhood vaccines has been repeatedly disproved, but even after he was disbarred, the effects of the claim that research shows a connection between vaccines and autism are still powerfully evident in anti-vaccination campaigns.  

*Research Shows* also describes the ethnographic data on which this dissertation is based, episodes that give insight into how students, composition instructors, and librarians understand research. Students display shows of research writing (finding “scholarly” sources, adopting an “academic” voice) as a means of asserting their knowledge. Librarians also present “research shows,” neatly-packaged 50-minute versions of the research process. But in interviews, they widely discredit this practice. Librarians present carefully-constructed sample searches that will work perfectly in class, when they know that the actual process of research is far more complicated and time consuming, full of false starts and dead ends. Composition instructors put on research shows of their own. “The research process,” as presented in first-year writing courses, bears little or no resemblance to the ways these instructors do research in their own fields. Their research shows often present *how to* research, even as they recognize that this imprecise procedural knowledge is not sufficient for strong research.  

*Research Shows* also demonstrates research’s possible roles as both noun and verb. This move is more than a play on language; in positioning research as both noun and verb, I align this work with WAW scholarship, which insists that first-year composition not teach *how to write* (writing as verb) but *about* writing (writing as noun) (Robillard “Situating”; Wardle “Mutt Genres”). In asking questions *about* research, we can encourage our students to investigate how research functions within different writing situations. As access to information is expanding at an incredible rate, it is ever more important to think critically about the information we interact with, to understand how it is constructed and what motives shape this construction. The transparent claim of research (that it *shows*) masks other possible actions. By locating research within a WAW pedagogy, we can turn students’ attention to the other functions obscured by “research shows.”
1 ASKING RELEVANT QUESTIONS

What we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have. – Carolyn Miller, Genre as Social Action

Most of us, when we go to find something out, we don’t just start from scratch. We think, “Okay, why do I care about this and what do I already know? And what do I need to fill in?” – Amber, composition instructor

In my introduction, I described how WAW pedagogies often represent secondary research in the limited language of “choosing” or “finding.” I argued that such a depiction encourages students to view “academic writing” in precisely the sort of generic terms that WAW pedagogy works to expose and subvert. In this chapter, I introduce the writing program at my research site and its objective to prepare students for “academic” writing, a term which is used to refer to all of the writing situations students will encounter during their college years. I then turn to instructors in The University writing program, and describe a tension between their wish to teach generalizable skills that will serve students in future academic writing situations and their understanding that “academic” is a misleading term that obscures the differences within and among these future writing situations. I argue that WAW pedagogies, with their emphasis on genre and transfer, can help to resolve this tension by promoting writing awareness. This transferable knowledge about writing, as opposed to knowledge of “how to write,” preserves the contextual view of writing these instructors wish to promote. I then analyze instructional approaches to topic selection from two composition instructors at The University. Both instructors make WAW-esque moves in their courses. The two representations of the first stages of a research project, however, lead to much different outcomes. In one case, the description of topic selection subverts WAW pedagogy; in the other, that description enables WAW pedagogy. The instruction to “choose a topic,” I argue, contradicts instructors’ message that there is no generalizable form of academic writing. The instruction to “ask a relevant question,” by contrast, helps engender transferable meta-awareness.
Writing at The University: preparing students for “academic” writing

All students at The University are required to take a first-year writing course. Most students elect to take either Writing about Literature or College Writing, both of which fulfill this requirement. The course catalog explains that in both of these courses, students are expected to craft “arguments that matter in academic contexts.” To do this, students are expected to make progress toward learning goals meant to build their skills in crafting successful arguments. Students are expected to pay careful attention to audience, using different rhetorical strategies to effectively persuade their readers. As they compose their own texts, students are also expected to learn how to incorporate other texts, and to know the differences among summary, analysis, and synthesis. The learning goals also emphasize peer review and revision, which provide students with an opportunity to test and subsequently re-shape their arguments.

Persuasive Writing, a sophomore-level elective, continues, even through its course title, to uphold argument as the goal of academic writing. As in the first-year courses, students in Persuasive Writing read texts to learn about rhetorical strategies. A key difference between the first- and second-year courses is how students are expected to craft “well-supported arguments.” First-year students are expected to support their claims, but no mention is made of outside research. Second-year students are expected to use “appropriate evidence.” Although no definition of an “appropriate” source is offered, students are expected to use and make careful distinctions between “primary” and “secondary” sources. These students should emerge with “a working set of skills and resources for academic research projects” and “an understanding of how to begin, carry out, and complete a (short) writing assignment incorporating research.”

In their emphasis on argument, these course descriptions reflect Hood’s finding that the researched argument is the most common researched assignment in first-year composition (8). This emphasis on argument as a form, Wardle argues in “Mutt Genres,” is problematic because “the argument’ is assigned as a genre whose purpose is to write the genre” (775). This purpose

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1 Students in some of The University’s colleges, such as the College of Engineering, meet this requirement by taking department-specific writing courses.
does not reflect the much larger, varied, and complicated set of academic arguments. The descriptions of the research meant to support these arguments perpetuate this notion of generalized academic writing. The Persuasive Writing course description explains that, in addition to building on the skills learned in a first-year course, students will get “a basic introduction to finding and effectively incorporating research” into their writing. Coupled with undefined and general service descriptors such as “appropriate,” “primary,” and “secondary,” Persuasive Writing, like Writing about Literature and College Writing before it, constructs a generalized form of “academic” writing that is intended to serve students throughout their careers at The University.

Given the course descriptions of the two first-year writing courses and Persuasive Writing, no writing instructors should be teaching “research” until the 200-level. And yet, Melissa, the instruction coordinator at University Library, reports that dozens of first-year writing instructors request research instruction for their students each term. Because I recruited interview participants through attending their library instruction sessions, (see Appendix B: Methods), all of my participants included some form of research – whether through library instruction, a research-based writing assignment, or both – in their courses. Participants in my study reflected on their choice to include research and suggested that this instruction was critical to students’ success in college. Amber, who has been teaching composition at The University for six years, wants students to leave College Writing with an enlarged sense of the types of writing they will need to do throughout college and tries to pass on a broad range of skills students may need to use in other courses:

I think if we in freshman composition are going to serve well, then we need to think about what are the other things that they’re going to need to be equipped to do. They may not need to make a movie, but they might. They need to be able to do an analytical argument to get by here. So have them write that. It’s good to be able to think about your own life and figure out what matters to you, so have them write a personal essay. It’s good to be able to write to other people and persuade them, if there’s something you care about, so the persuasive essay that

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2 All participants’ names, as well as job titles and other identifying details, have been changed to preserve anonymity. For biographies of participants, see Appendix A.
comes at the end of class. And then I think you’ll probably have to do a PowerPoint. So just do five slides here.

Amber identifies students’ needs for writing skills that they can use throughout college, and builds her course around those needs, reinforcing the preparatory role enacted by the course descriptions of first-year writing. Research, like moviemaking, analytical arguments, personal essays, persuasive essays, and PowerPoint presentations, is one of the many skills Amber thinks students will need to write successfully in college. Her goal of exposing students to these forms of documents, along with her use of the word “serve,” connects her rationale with the long debate about whether FYC should be a “service” course meant to prepare students for writing in her courses.

This service function is also visible in Sabrina’s rationale for including research in her FYC course. Sabrina, a first-year PhD student and TA at The University, introduces her first-year students to research because she fears that without this instruction, they will graduate without learning how to research:

> I think the official policy of the English Department here is that we don’t teach research [in College Writing]. But it seemed to me that we’re gonna teach them how to write. We’re basically the baseline writing course of college for most students, maybe the only fully directed writing course they will ever have. And we’re not going to teach them a skill that they will clearly need in whatever discipline they’re in? And I mean, even if they’re in business or whatever, most likely they’ll have to do some research at some point.

Like Amber, Sabrina attributes a preparatory function to FYC, the “baseline” course that teaches students “how to write” before continuing on to other work at The University. Sabrina sees research as her responsibility to teach because it is not being taught elsewhere at The University: “Upper-level classes are definitely not going to truck them to the library and teach them how to use databases.” But Sabrina also sees FYC as preparing students for the writing situations they will face outside of college, many of which she thinks will require strong research. Put in terms of WAW pedagogy, Amber’s and Sabrina’s goals seem more aligned with teaching “how to” write and “how to” research. WAW proponents are one of the most recent, but certainly not the first, groups to argue against this service function of composition (see Crowley, S. Miller). But their
focus is less on the institutional position of FYC (a course they would like to see changed, not eliminated) or its practitioners and more on the impossibility of teaching transferable knowledge of “how to write.”

Amber and Sabrina identify research as one of the many writing “skills” students need to acquire for success in future writing situations. Other instructors treat research as a separate entity, not necessarily embedded in writing. Ben, who graduated from The University with a PhD in literature and returned to teach composition, also sees College Writing as an introduction to skills students will need in future classes, and includes research among these skills: “I want them to just be familiar with the concept of research. They’re gonna use it more in later classes.” Ben does not include a formal researched assignment in his course, but instead has students complete a library scavenger hunt, which he created because he sensed that his students were inexperienced researchers, for whom a “long” paper was three pages and for whom “outside sources” could be any quote from any possible source. Ben developed the hunt “to fill a gap, to get them familiar with the library in general.”

The scavenger hunt has been widely critiqued in library and information science scholarship because it is a poor approximation of the task of scholarly inquiry. Librarian Larry Hardesty argues that these hunts lead to successful fact-finding, but “teach students little about conducting independent research or evaluating and synthesizing information” (“Strategies” 112). These hunts are often designed as a means of teaching students how to research, or, more specifically, how to use library tools. This emphasis on discrete library tools led to a massive theory change in library and information science from *bibliographic instruction* to *information literacy*, a change I describe in more detail in Chapter 2. Here, it is sufficient to note the scavenger hunt’s intended function of teaching students “how to research.” The goal of these hunts is to prepare students for academic research, but these hunts do not situate academic research within any specific context; in fact, they often decouple writing and research. As a result, the hunts portray “research” as a decontextualized and tool-focused skill.
Amber’s, Ben’s, and Sabrina’s explanations of their decisions to incorporate research instruction into their courses suggests that they view College Writing as a place to acquire essential academic writing skills, and that they count library research among these skills. All three instructors also demonstrate their sense of personal responsibility in preparing their students for the rigors of writing at The University; if they do not do it, who will?

But these instructors, while feeling pressure to prepare students for academic writing, also acknowledge that “academic” is an impossibly broad term. Instructors teach students “how to research” because they view this instruction as preparation for the kinds of work students will be expected to do in other courses. And yet, as the following assignment descriptions show, instructors indicate that they cannot teach some generic form of “research,” as it holds different meanings in different contexts.

Although Sabrina sees her students as rather shrewd assessors of audience, with a “fairly sophisticated understanding of the fact that there are different ways of speaking with different people,” she also sees that students have trouble “transposing it into the academic world.” She sees a tendency to generalize academic writing: “you’re my teacher, and there’s another teacher, there’s another teacher.” To address this problem, Sabrina creates a discourse analysis assignment, for which students must interview a professor and analyze journal articles from their chosen fields. Sabrina hopes to use her disciplinary conventions assignment to dispel this notion that there is a form of “academic” writing applicable in all courses. To help students acquire this understanding, Sabrina wants to create an assignment that will let them “leave with something in hand that’s going to be useful to them for the rest of their academic careers.”

Although they do not use the word “transfer,” instructors do seem quite concerned with their students’ ability to transfer knowledge and skills gained in FYC to other writing situations. The second assignment for Amber’s class is a rhetorical analysis of academic writing. Amber created the assignment for a few reasons. First, the assignment was “the only traditional academic assignment that they’re doing in the whole class, and I feel like there’s some necessity to teach people about thesis, organization, evidence, analysis, you know, all that kind of stuff,
because they’re not going to do it in any of the other projects.” The rhetorical analysis unit, then,
is a preparation for the kind of work students will do throughout their careers at The University.

Rather than teach students how to make an argument, though, Amber wanted them to
study how academic arguments are made. Amber asks her students to analyze the features of
texts from various academic disciplines and to describe how these features contribute to each
writer’s argument. During the unit, they focused on the “structure, evidence, and language” of
academic arguments, and “also spent a lot of time talking about purpose, audience, and kairos.”
Finally, they focused on sources, “and how different writers use sources in different ways.” One
student, for example, “is writing a paper about a writer’s use of headings, and different levels of
headings in their paper to help make something scientific and complicated more transparent to
a general reader.”

Sabrina’s discourse analysis assignment and Amber’s academic writing unit suggest that
both instructors want to teach transferable writing knowledge. But both instructors
acknowledge that there is no definitive model of “how to write” that holds true for all situations.
WAW approaches to teaching FYC offer one means of resolving this tension between teaching
transferable writing knowledge and teaching writing as a context-based practice. WAW
pedagogies overcome this obstacle by turning the focus away from how to write entirely, instead
teaching FYC as a content-based course on composition studies. Teaching “about” writing, I
argue, allows instructors to introduce key concepts of writing while also addressing what
composition has learned about these concepts. Wardle and Downs’s textbook, for example,
devotes a chapter of readings to the concept of discourse communities. Through ethnography-
based assignments included after these readings, students are encouraged to investigate
discourse communities.

Before we can explore how a WAW pedagogy may help resolve this tension in more
detail, we need to look to two other bodies of scholarship that provide a foundation for WAW
scholarship. In “Mutt Genres,” Wardle poses two questions about teaching WAW: “What general
knowledge can we teach students about academic genres that will help them write in later
courses? And how can we ensure that students will transfer that general knowledge – at all and in helpful ways?” (769). The two key concepts embodied by these questions – genre and transfer – are central both to an understanding of WAW and to an exploration of the role of research within a WAW pedagogy.

**Genre: three key principles**

Scholarship in Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) offers some answers to Wardle’s first question. Since the publication of “Genre as Social Action,” in which Carolyn Miller emphasized genres’ social actions over their forms and communicative purposes, RGS has primarily studied what genre does, how it can be taught, whether it should be taught, and, most recently, whether genre knowledge transfers across writing situations. Here I briefly outline three principles of rhetorical genre theory relevant to my study in particular and the teaching of research writing in FYC more broadly.

*Genres are not equal to the sums of their formal features*

As social constructions, genres are “stabilized-for-now” (Schryer) forms that allow for participation within a discourse. But a genre is not the sum of its formal features. Although such features no doubt make it possible to identify a genre, the picture created by these features, according to Charles Bazerman, “gives us an incomplete and misleading” understanding (317), encouraging us to focus on those aspects of the genre most obvious to us. Focusing on the features can make them seem “ends” in themselves (323), causing us to erroneously conclude that a successful research paper hinges on properly formatted quotations, paraphrases, and citations. Imagine, for example, an assignment that asks a student to write a researched argument on a topic of her choosing. The student who writes a paper arguing against the legalization of same-sex marriage diligently incorporates all of the formal features that her handbook tells her belong in a researched essay set in MLA Style. There is a properly-formatted title page. There are perfect parenthetical citations and flawless references with consistent hanging indents. There is a thesis statement. There is a topic sentence for every paragraph. There is third person narration. There are no typographical errors. But the formal features
suggested by the term “research paper” obscure the expectations of the instructor and of the various communities to which that instructor belongs. If the citations and references construct a biblical argument against same-sex marriage, the student has likely violated the instructor’s standards of evidence, and certainly those of the legal system, a significant problem for a paper addressing a legal issue. The clash of activity systems represented in this writing situation (a particular religious denomination and its attitudes and beliefs about human behavior and classroom in which religiously-grounded arguments are often deemed less credible than other types of arguments) may not be visible to the student asked to write on “any topic.”

This problem of equating a genre with its formal features alone is compounded by the names given to genres commonly found in FYC. Wardle analyzed assignment genres in an FYC program at a Midwestern university and found that purposes and genres are often conflated; the function of “the argument paper,” for example, is to write an argument (“Mutt Genres,” 775). Because a genre is more than the sum of its formal features, genre names rooted in formal features – such as “the argument” or “the research paper” – are insufficient descriptors of a genre.

“Conflating purpose and genre becomes problematic,” Wardle argues, “when the goal of the course is to help students write effectively beyond FYC – and neither ‘The Informative Paper’ nor ‘The Position Paper’ exists in that way outside of the FYC classroom” (777). The for-or-against same-sex marriage paper is divorced from any particular exigency; it is not a review of case law, a sermon, a speech delivered to a senate subcommittee, a newspaper editorial, an election campaign flyer, or any other real-world document that might take up the issue of same-sex marriage.

The best solution to the problems inherent in this term “the research paper” would be to bury the term, but is highly unlikely that it would stay buried for long. All of my participants used the phrase “the research paper” to describe their research-based writing assignments. Throughout this project, I will continue to rely upon the term “the research paper” as a macro-genre that describes researched assignments in first-year composition. My interest here,
however, is not in whether or not “the research paper” is a “real” genre, but in the problems that emerge when we teach “the research paper” in terms of formal processes of “scholarly” research or “correct” citation. In writing the for-or-against “research paper,” the student is not forced to grapple with any of the expectations of a particular genre. Instead, the student is encouraged to focus on the formal features generally presumed to identify a “research paper”: the school-based expectation of “scholarly” research and citation. These processes emphasize “how to” write and research, while neglecting the “about” approach that would allow students to see how these formal features of their writing are embedded in larger contexts.

**Genres are social**

In “Genre as Social Action,” a landmark essay for genre theory, Miller argues for an expanded understanding of genre that includes categories ignored by literature and composition’s theories of genre. Responding to these “closed systems” of genre, which organize genres based on form or general intention, Miller argues that genre theory should be an “open system” focused on “situated action” (155). This “ethnomethodological” approach would look to everyday genres like recommendation letters, eulogies, and ransom notes, in the specific contexts in which they appear. Expanding the view to “such homely discourse,” Miller argues, allows us to see all of these writing situations as rhetorical, and all genres as responses to recurrent situations (155). One of Miller’s most valuable and lasting conclusions is that genres are “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (159). Genres are not just containers for our thoughts or mere tools to accomplish particular tasks; genres allow us to respond to exigencies, but also, through repeated use, shape those exigencies: “What we learn when we learn a genre is not just a pattern of forms or even a method of achieving our own ends. We learn, more importantly, what ends we may have” (165).

In their introduction to genre theory, Bawarshi and Reiff identify Miller’s work as shaping both the study of genre and writing instruction, specifically, “how genres might be best used to help students understand and participate in social actions” (73). Devitt expands upon this view of genre as social action in *Writing Genres*. All communication, Devitt argues, requires
at least two people: a writer/speaker and a reader/listener. But genres, she argues, “require multiplicity”:

    [G]enre is predicated on more than two people, on multiple people acting repeatedly, thus creating the perception of recurrence. The social nature of genres involves more than simple multiplicity, though, for that perception of recurrence comes from socially developed understandings of situations...the multiple actions that comprise genres are constituted and interpreted within particular social structures and particular groups. (33-4)

Devitt’s description of “multiplicity” is useful because it prohibits a collapsing of “social” to mean an entirely observable and recognizable context shaping the formation of genres. To say that genres are social is not to say that there is a single unified group regulating their formation. Rather, genres are worked upon at multiple social and cultural levels.

There is significant debate, both within and outside RGS, about what name we should give to the social groups that shape and are shaped by genres. The term most often used is “discourse community,” but RGS\(^3\) and composition at large often express discomfort with this term. Joseph Harris argues that the word community places too much emphasis on coherence and consensus (106, 109). Tom Deans argues that our reliance on the term discourse community too cleanly separates one group from another (290). RGS-based approaches are wary of the potential flattening of the complexity of social interactions by the term discourse community, as well as by the emphasis on formal features that divorces genre from context. Devitt takes issue with the term because it “privileges discourse above other group activities, motives, and purposes; and disguises the social collectivity that shapes the very nature of the group and of its discourse (and its genres). As a result, it emphasizes too heavily the role of discourse in constructing groups and not enough the role of groups in constructing discourse” (39).

\(^3\) The use of “discourse community” is often used to separate RGS from a related school of genre theory, English for Specific Purposes (ESP). This school, with Swales as its main representative, emerged from linguistics, and is primarily focused on a genre’s communicative aim. Bawarshi and Reiff describe ESP in *Genre: An Introduction*: “it is communicative purpose (defined in relation to a discourse community’s shared goals) that both gives rise to and provides the rationale for a genre, and shapes its internal structure” (58). ESP approaches to genre focus on studying the formal features of genres produced by a discourse community in order to successfully communicate through those genres.
RGS has produced many alternatives to discourse community, among them Devitt’s communities, collectives, and networks and Russell’s activity systems. Although I will often draw from these alternatives throughout the dissertation, I continue to rely on discourse community for three main reasons. First, “discourse community” is the term most frequently used by my respondents to describe different groups of writers, and for good reason. Graduate students in literature and composition, who comprise the bulk of composition instructors at The University, are likely to have encountered discursive theories of knowledge, and “discourse community” resonates well with these current attitudes toward knowledge production. Instructors with little training in composition theory can latch onto the concept of discourse community.

Second, like process, “discourse community” is something that instructors of composition can use; in fact, discourse community-based pedagogies permit a revised version of process, allowing different processes for different disciplines. These constructs are useful, and work against an unproductive notion of writing universals such as “Never use ‘I’ in an academic essay.” The concept of discourse communities has helped the field of composition move away from a fixed notion of academic discourse, and the metaphor of entrance supplied by “community” is a powerful way to envision what writers do as they compose.

Third, “discourse community” also helps us explore the epistemological dimensions of scholarship, which is especially helpful in advancing WAW pedagogies. The move from one discourse community to another is a “highly charged affair,” Suresh Canagarajah asserts, because “we are asking new members to not only adopt these conventions but also conform to the related ways of understanding life” (84). In other words, members of different discourse communities may differ not only in their ways of speaking and writing, but also in their beliefs about the world. These belief structures are not always immediately apparent to someone unfamiliar with the discourse community. While the term “discourse community” has understandably come under criticism for painting groups with too broad a brush, the emphasis
on belief offers outsiders to a group a framework that, however provisionally, can help them to begin to understand the motivations of writers within the community.

Genres are ideological

This emphasis on epistemology allows us to explore a third key principle of rhetorical genre theory useful to the study and teaching of research writing in FYC: the ideological nature of genres. This is itself an ideological claim, one rooted in a view of language as active and generative, in which knowledge is constructed through language rather than discovered and recorded in language. Genres are not static forms into which we can, as with a Mad Lib, input the called-for information to create a piece of writing. Instead, a genre “reflects, constructs, and reinforces the values, epistemology, and power relationships of the group from which it developed and for which it functions” (Devitt *Writing Genres* 63).

In *Genre and the Invention of the Writer*, Bawarshi describes genre as more than sets of features or rules for writing different types of documents. For Bawarshi, “genres are both functional and epistemological – they help us function within particular situations at the same time as they help shape the ways we come to know and organize these situations” (24). Genre features, then, constrain not just our ways of reading or producing a piece of writing, but also our ways of seeing the world. Canagarajah asserts that writing is not “knowledge” unless it uses the conventions of a particular group and is published. These conventions shape membership in discourse communities and regulate what can be considered knowledge (80). These conventions are not neutral or universal, nor are they merely a reflection of preference; a community’s conventions reflect the epistemological views shared by that group. Conventions, then, are “ways of thinking” (83). They do not only reflect the worldview of their users; through repeated use they reproduce that worldview, ensuring its continued existence. Conventions “enable thought, but also suppress thought” (83-4); because conventions maintain the worldviews of their users, they also restrict other possible views. Canagarajah provides the Introduction-Methods-Results-Discussion format of much scientific writing as an example. The conventions sustain a positivist view of research and knowledge, in which data are neutral and careful interpretation of data can
lead to truth (83). Devitt uses the example of the five-paragraph essay, which she argues “reinforces apparent objectivity and distance from the subject and Western logic” and “minimizes personal engagement with the subject, emotional appeals, and an understanding of subjects having complexity that’s irreducible to parts” (“Teaching” 339).

This ideological view of genres helps describe the problem faced by the hypothetical writer of the anti-same-sex marriage paper. What the student may not realize is that “the research paper” in this composition course is situated within larger contexts. Embedded in “the research paper” assignment may be the expectation that knowledge is not “out there,” waiting to be incorporated into the paper as evidence for the writer’s claims, but is instead a social construction. Thus, the anti-same-sex marriage research paper becomes not only a violation of the instructor’s standards of evidence, but of that instructor’s understanding of knowledge. The student’s use of biblical evidence in support of her positions has met a formal requirement of citing sources, but this text, when used as an argument for same-sex marriage’s “fit” within a system of absolute truth, would violate the instructor’s (and perhaps the academy of which that instructor is a representative’s) understandings of knowledge and truth.

The ideological nature of genre presents a particularly difficult problem for students when the single genre name called for – such as “the research paper” – stands in for a range of different kinds of assignments with competing goals and shaped by differing ideologies. Reiff and Bawarshi found that students transitioning from high school to college were unsuccessful in writing FYC genres when they could not identify the different expectations that separated these genres from similar-looking high school assignments.

With these key principles of RGS in mind, I return to my instructor-participants’ descriptions of academic writing. Amber, whose focus is on what students “are going to need to be equipped to do” in future courses, teaches research because students will need to conduct research later in college. Ben knows that students are “gonna use it [research] more in later classes,” so incorporates his scavenger hunt so that his students will “just be familiar with the concept of research.” Sabrina claims that research is a skill that her students “will clearly need in
whatever discipline they’re in.” But these instructors also recognize that “academic” is not a catch-all term, but a convenient label for a wide range of writing practices. WAW pedagogies, which have at the center a focus on teaching about writing, draw from rhetorical genre studies to explore the nuances of academic writing and to help students learn to view various academic writing tasks as social actions rather than static forms. Teaching “academic” writing means demonstrating the ways in which the genres students write in college are socially-negotiated, ideologically-embedded forms. Such a pedagogy cannot teach features alone, but instead needs to describe where those features come from, what functions they serve, and how they are shaped by a group’s ideology.

**Cultivating genre knowledge in FYC: a question of transfer**

In her overview of transfer studies inside and outside of composition, Christiane Donahue suggests that FYC has adhered to a “Bo Peep” (Perkins and Salomon) view of transfer, that transfer is a largely automated process and that our goal is to teach the most useful information (148). Donahue goes so far as to say that FYC is “anti-transfer” for its history of teaching overly reductive models of “academic” or “discourse community” writing (157). WAW pedagogy has made transfer one of its key goals (Downs and Wardle, “Teaching” and “Reimagining”; Wardle, “Understanding” and “Mutt Genres”; Driscoll, “Connected”). Instructors at The University appear similarly concerned with transfer; they want to teach students skills that will last them throughout their college careers, and particularly to navigate different writing situations. This focus on life long writing skills requires students’ successful transfer of writing knowledge across writing situations, which begs the question: how do we know what knowledge transfers from FYC to these other situations?

In his response to Downs and Wardle’s “Teaching about Writing,” Joshua Kutney, drawing from studies of service courses that have increased awareness of social problems but have not induced behavioral changes in response to those problems, suggests that a WAW pedagogy may make students more aware of writing situations without encouraging them to transfer writing knowledge to those situations. “Awareness,” he writes, “may beget only self-
awareness,” and this self-awareness, “even when critically questioned, may produce only the sort of awareness (critical consciousness) anticipated to facilitate transfer” (277). Further research into WAW pedagogies is necessary to determine what and how much students transfer from WAW courses to other writing situations. Although much remains unknown about how students transfer genre knowledge from one context to the next, longitudinal studies offer some provisional answers, as well as new questions for future studies. For Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers, Lee Ann Carroll conducted a longitudinal study of four students, observing how their writing changed throughout their college careers. Carroll found that as students moved from early college writing situations to later ones, they did not write “better” (based on metrics such as use of “proper” grammar or mastery of a citation style), but “differently.” Carroll concluded that “students’ literacy develops because students must take on new and different roles that challenge their abilities as writers” (9). Carroll’s work challenges the notion that students can be evaluated based on a smooth and simple model of progress throughout their college writing tasks, and argues that students’ writing should be expected to worsen as they approach more rhetorically complicated tasks (9).

Carroll’s study was not focused on transfer, but it offers useful lessons to those studying transfer. First, Carroll’s interviews and observations remind us that we cannot equate students’ writing with students’ knowledge, because students often know more than they can or do put into writing. Furthermore, it is possible that “worse” writing is evidence of students’ growing awareness of and control over increasingly complex rhetorical forms. Together, these findings present an obstacle for studies of transfer and WAW pedagogy in particular. Student writing, the most readily available resource we have for studying transfer, may not be the best evidence of students’ ability to transfer writing knowledge. We cannot expect students’ research papers to reflect all that they have learned about research. We may even find that students’ papers contradict what they have learned about research.

David Smit addresses transfer’s evidence problem in The End of Composition Studies: “it is difficult to say just what kind of evidence would demonstrate sufficiently whether a person is
capable of transferring certain kinds of knowledge and ability from one situation to another” (133). If, as Carroll and others have suggested, writing may offer an incomplete view of the knowledge that students transfer, what other types of sources could we look to for evidence of transfer? How might multiple types of evidence allow for a richer picture of how students transfer writing knowledge? More recent studies have questioned students directly about what they learned in FYC and how they have applied this knowledge to other writing contexts.

Beaufort conducted a six-year study of one student, Tim, to determine when and how he transferred genre knowledge from one course to the next. Beaufort found that Tim tended to identify only the immediate discourse community of the classroom he was in, and not the broader discourse communities and contexts affecting his instructors’ evaluation of his work (72). Although his first-year composition course emphasized audience, a concept that his instructor expected Tim to transfer to other writing situations, Tim tended to interpret audience somewhat narrowly and literally as “the instructor”; for example, he made decisions about a history paper based on his knowledge of his professor’s personal life (149-50).

Beaufort argues that Tim’s first-year composition course would have better prepared him to view writing as a product of discourse communities if it had taught him “those broad concepts (discourse community, genre, rhetorical tools, etc.) which will give writers the tools to analyze similarities and differences among writing situations they encounter” (149). Beaufort’s study, limited as it was to a single student, does not allow us to conclude that no students transfer lessons learned in first-year composition to other writing situations. But her study does suggest that students in first-year composition may not be able to transfer writing knowledge without explicit instruction in genre and discourse community theories.

Other studies have confirmed that students may transfer incorrect or incomplete writing knowledge, often understood as universal rules for good writing. Linda Bergmann and Janet Zepernick found that students in their focus groups left FYC with “a series of behavioral ‘shoulds’ that they remember and accept, but don’t necessarily follow: you should give yourself plenty of time to revise; you should ask two or three people to read it before you turn it in; you
should approach writing with a detailed plan for what you’re going to say” (137). All of these “shoulds” focus on “the writing process,” and deal with the mechanics of writing without adapting that knowledge to a particular context. Students also categorized the work of FYC as “subjective” or “creative,” and thus saw these lessons as unimportant to future writing situations. Bergmann and Zepernick found that while students were able to identify situations in which these skills would be valuable, they “do not look for such situations because they believe that skills learned in FYC have no value in any other setting” (139). Most surprising, and perhaps most discouraging, was that students in Bergmann and Zepernick’s focus groups did not see FYC, or the instructors of the course, as rooted in any discipline. Students made no distinction between the types of writing in FYC and literature courses (130), a finding perhaps attributable to the fact that the people teaching these courses were usually literature faculty. Alone, this finding would suggest that FYC students (and perhaps their instructors as well) grouped all FYC assignments under “English” writing, by which they meant writing about literature. But Bergmann and Zepernick also found that students “perceive[d] no discipline behind English teachers’ directions and comments,” instead viewing writing assignments in FYC as wholly “personal” writing designed to “entertain” or “please” readers (132).

Bergmann and Zepernick’s findings suggest that students emerge from FYC with what they perceive to be general rules about writing, and that the faculty teaching these broad rules do not rely upon any disciplinary expertise, but on their own subjective assessment of students’ work. It is possible that students may come to view their instructors’ expertise differently if they presented themselves not as writing experts, but composition experts. This distinction might separate the behavioral “shoulds” from the content of the field of composition. WAW pedagogies, which are built on composition scholarship, may allow instructors to speak from a different position of expertise that could enable them to teach not what students should or should not do in their writing, but how writing works.

In “Transferability and Genres,” Devitt echoes the work of previous rhetorical genre scholars when she argues that what we as a field have learned about the rhetorical nature of
writing invalidates the notion of generalized writing skills, transferable to any context (216). But it is not sufficient to simply say “all writing situations are different” and send students on their way. Successful writing hinges on understanding how those situations are different, and specifically, understanding how the genre called for in one location differs from how the same genre is called for in another. A “research paper” in FYC may look very similar to a “research paper” in high school. The college version may be longer and have stricter source and citation requirements. But the similarities between these papers may obscure important differences.

Devitt argues that the writer does not transfer discrete writing skills from the old situation to the new one, but a whole genre, or antecedent, that approximates the new genre (220). Devitt stresses that antecedent genres are not entirely applicable to new situations, but instead “help writers move into a new genre; they help writers adjust their old situations to new locations” (222). Take the above example of high school and college research papers. An entering college student’s knowledge of “the research paper” allows him a starting place for researched assignments in college. He knows he will need to quote and paraphrase from other sources. He knows he needs to use the information culled from those sources to support an argument. But, as Devitt argues, “drawing from known genres in new locations results in mismatches as well” (220). The student may not recognize how the shift from his high school English classroom to the college writing classroom, or from the college writing classroom to a course in his major, affects the genre.

Successful transfer, Devitt argues, requires a writer’s control over antecedent genres. Devitt observed first-year law firm associates and how they approached the analytical memorandum, a genre that closely resembled genres common in law school, among them the blue book exam and the law review article. She found that the most successful associates were able to rely on their antecedent genre knowledge while also adapting to the differences in the writing situation (for example, understanding the shift in purpose from presenting relevant knowledge to adapting that knowledge to a specific client). Those associates who were the least successful in adapting to the workplace genre were those who “never mastered the genres of law
school” (221). Devitt concludes that “rather than failing because the genres they know serve
them poorly in a new location, these writers fail because they do not adequately know their old
genres; they do not control the genres upon which they might draw” (221). Devitt’s findings are
important because they demonstrate the need for transfer studies to focus not just on what
students may be able to write during or after FYC, but how the genres they have learned prior to
FYC shape their work. A student who has “control” over the high school research report can
better see the differences between that report and the new genre being required in FYC.

“Control” over an antecedent genre is not the same as mastering a set of genre features.
Following Anne Freadman, Devitt argues in Writing Genres that explicit instruction of a genre’s
formal features is not sufficient for control (197). In order to have control over that genre, the
student also needs to be able to analyze that genre, to understand how it functions in a
particular setting. Such a student would know how “to understand the intricate connections
between contexts and forms, to perceive potential ideological effects of genres, and to discern
both constraints and choices that genres make possible” (198). What is absolutely critical to
genre awareness, Devitt argues, is the linkage of form and context, without which students lack
understanding of the rhetorical situations which give rise to and are sustained by genres. The
student who has “control” over the formal features alone lacks control of the genre; that student
cannot see how the form of the research paper is shaped by context, and cannot thus make
adjustments to reflect a new context.

In How Learning Works, Susan Ambrose, Michael Bridges, Michele DiPietro, Marsha
Lovett and Marie Norman complicate the notion of the antecedent even further. The authors
reviewed studies of learning from a wide variety of disciplines and developed seven core
principles for improving student learning. The first of these principles – “students’ prior
knowledge can help or hinder learning” (13) – is especially helpful for observing the
complexities of selecting useful antecedent genres. Ambrose et al. argue that if a student’s prior
knowledge is “activated, sufficient, appropriate, and accurate,” it will help the student’s learning;
however, if that prior knowledge is “inactive, insufficient, inappropriate, or inaccurate,” it will
hinder that student’s learning (14). The uses of and and or are important here. For prior knowledge to help a student’s learning, it needs to meet all of four of the helpful conditions; for prior knowledge to hinder a student’s learning, it need only meet one of the unhelpful conditions.

Imagine a student in first-year composition who is asked to write a researched essay using scholarly sources. The assignment prompt, which draws on the common genre name “research paper,” certainly activates the student’s prior knowledge. The student likely has sufficient knowledge of the basic components necessary for such a paper: she can draw from her previous experience with the processes of topic selection, researching, note-taking, and writing to produce the called-for genre. Then again, instructors may incorrectly assume that incoming students have sufficient knowledge and that they will see an automatic connection between this knowledge and the new context. But this connection can cause problems for the student. The term “research paper,” which helped activate the student’s prior knowledge, may have activated inappropriate knowledge. The term “research” may have very different implications in different contexts. Ambrose et al. assert that students’ knowledge will be inappropriate if they “analogize from one situation to another without recognizing the limitations of the analogy” (20). A student’s prior knowledge of what counts as a “scholarly” source, for example, may not translate to other classrooms.

Inaccurate prior knowledge also influences transfer. Ambrose et al. distinguish between different types of inaccurate prior knowledge. They claim that “relatively isolated ideas or beliefs that are not embedded in larger conceptual models” do not present much of a problem for students, because they can incorporate corrections about these ideas and beliefs into their knowledge (24). But misconceptions, which Ambrose et al. define as “models or theories that are deeply embedded in students’ thinking” (24), present a serious challenge. Ambrose et al. offer stereotypes as an example. These kinds of misconceptions are particularly difficult to correct because they are built and reinforced over long periods, combine both true and false
components such that the inaccurate data is difficult to parse out, and have some utility in everyday life.

Students’ prior knowledge of “academic” writing, I would argue, is just such a misconception. The sense that there is a generic form of “academic” writing is both true and untrue; there are certainly writing techniques and strategies germane to many academic writing situations, but when students speak of “academic” writing they are often referring to surface features, such as tone or the use of personal pronouns, or to research. In this view, “research” is not understood as a process intertwined with writing, but as an “add on” to writing. Sabrina put it well when describing one of her student’s use of research in a subsequent draft of an assignment: he just “put a hat on it,” adding research to what he had already written. But research cannot really be “added” to writing in this way, at least not with much success. Students’ view of academic writing as writing with research added is a misconception that can interfere with successful transfer.

While some scholars have complicated our understanding of transfer by describing the conditions required for successful transfer, others have complicated this understanding by investigating why even students who can meet these conditions might not engage in transfer. In “Understanding Transfer,” Wardle demonstrates that an absence of transfer does not mean students are unable to transfer. At the midpoint of her longitudinal study on genres and transfer, Wardle found that, at least in the first two years of college, students reported that they did not need to apply lessons learned from FYC to other courses (73). This lack of transfer, Wardle argues, did not result from a lack of ability or awareness, but of motivation or permission. One student understood that an assignment would require research and writing knowledge gained from FYC, but, recognizing that other courses did not require that level of commitment, chose to drop the course. When students viewed an opportunity for transferring skills from first-year composition and wanted to do so, other forces often prevented this transfer. One student reported that he wanted to write multiple drafts of an assignment, a technique learned in FYC, but that the instructor did not provide enough time between the
assignment and due date to write these drafts (76). When asked about those rare occasions when they did transfer skills from FYC, students explained that these situations required them to engage with what they perceived as real rhetorical problems. They reported actively transferring when they felt inspired or challenged by the assignment. Students reported that they did not receive many of these assignments in the first two years of college (78).

Based on these students’ responses, Wardle concluded that students frequently transferred one ability, “meta-awareness about writing.” Students who chose to apply skills from FYC to other courses did so because they had gained “the ability to analyze assignments, see similarities and differences across assignments, discern what was being required of them, and determine exactly what they needed to do in response to earn the grade they wanted” (77).

Wardle extends this claim past students who consciously transferred skills of FYC to those who consciously elected not to transfer these skills. Even those students who chose not to apply skills learned in FYC did so because they could determine whether these skills would be valuable to these new writing situations. Wardle concludes that “meta-awareness about writing, language,

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4 In “Understanding Transfer,” Wardle uses the term “meta-awareness about writing” to refer to “the ability to analyze assignments, see similarities and differences across assignments, discern what was being required of them, and determine exactly what they needed to do in response to earn the grade they wanted” (76-7). Because she later concludes that “meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies in FYC may be the most important ability our courses can cultivate” (82), it is worth pausing to parse out this term. It is clear from Wardle’s definition that “meta-awareness about writing” is meant to capture the main goal of WAW pedagogy: teaching students about writing rather than teaching them how to write. One explanation for this “meta-awareness about writing” (awareness about awareness about writing) is that terms such as “writing knowledge” or “writing awareness,” while more syntactically appropriate than “meta-awareness of writing,” may be unsuitable, because neither term necessarily reflects the multi-faceted, always contextual nature of writing that Wardle wishes to emphasize (one could conceive of “writing knowledge” as a static collection of rules for writing).

Another possible explanation for the term “meta-awareness about writing” is the disciplinary currency of “meta” work, be it meta-awareness, metacognition, or metawriting. It is reasonable to conclude that, in attempting to create a new approach to teaching FYC, Downs and Wardle wanted to coin a vocabulary to draw attention to their work. Now that WAW has achieved acronym status, these initial terms are less useful. In their more recent writing, WAW proponents appear to have abandoned “meta-awareness about writing.” In “Reimagining the Nature of FYC,” Downs and Wardle use “meta-awareness” without appending “about writing,” as well as “metacognition,” “reflection,” and Shannon Carter’s “rhetorical dexterity” (134).

When directly quoting early WAW scholarship, I will use the original “meta-awareness about writing.” Elsewhere, I will use the slimmed down “awareness about writing” or “meta-awareness” to refer to this key goal of WAW pedagogy.
and rhetorical strategies in FYC may be the most important ability our course can cultivate” (82).

Like Wardle, Driscoll focused on students’ perceptions of transfer, conducting surveys of students from eight FYC classes to determine what they perceived about transfer before and after the course. Students were asked to respond to statements such as “What I will learn in my FYC course will help me with other courses” and “I expect my FYC course to prepare me for college writing” in a start-of-term survey and “What I have learned in my FYC course will help me with other courses” and “My FYC course has prepared me for college writing” in an end-of-term survey. Driscoll also interviewed a sub-sample of these students after they completed FYC. She found that students began first-year composition with the expectation that the skills they learned in the course would transfer to other disciplines. But in the end-of-term survey, students reported that they were not as convinced that FYC would help them write in other courses, their majors, or after college, and almost half of students (45.9%) answered either that they saw FYC as having no application outside of the course or that they were uncertain that the lessons learned in FYC would apply elsewhere.

Driscoll categorized student responders into four groups. *Explicitly connected* students could see how what they learned in FYC would transfer to other writing situations. These students, who made up 13.3% of Driscoll’s survey respondents, “reported internalizing specific information about writing, genres, and contexts they expect to need to write in the future.” *Implicitly connected* students, representing 40% of the sample, wrote much more generally about the importance of “good writing” in future writing situations, but did not exhibit the rhetorical awareness of the explicitly connected students. *Uncertain students* (29.1%) reported that they did not know if writing would be important, and *disconnected students* (16.3%) claimed that writing skills from FYC were unimportant or that they would not need to write in the future.

Driscoll observed the instructors of all eight of the FYC courses, and found that all of them taught rhetorical, audience- or genre-centered views of writing that they believed
transferred to other writing situations. Because these instructors were teaching writing as a complicated situational practice, we should find the high number of implicitly connected students troubling. Students, often tired and frustrated at the end of the semester, can reasonably be expected to complain that their course was “useless,” as the disconnected students did. Students who have not yet been introduced to their majors may be poor evaluators of what writing will be expected of them, which can account for some of the disconnected as well as uncertain students. But the finding that 40% of students exiting a course based on a context-specific model of writing wrote about a generalized “good writing” suggests that teaching genre awareness will require dismantling a powerful “misconception” (Ambrose et al.) about the nature of writing. If WAW pedagogies are to be successful, they must work to correct this misconception, but we cannot expect such a course to provide students with all of the rhetorical knowledge required to succeed in any writing situation. In explaining his findings about the rhetorical knowledge transferred by six co-op students as they moved from classroom to workplace, Doug Brent reminds us that even though all of these students had received a one-term introduction to rhetoric, “it is unthinkable that the degree of diffuse but apparently deep rhetorical knowledge that these students displayed could have been conferred on them by this course” (589). Even if we are able to identify what sort of rhetorical knowledge transfers most easily and how to help students cultivate this knowledge, we cannot presume that our single course can teach everything about writing (just as it cannot teach them “how to write” in 14 weeks). In the following sections, I discuss how WAW pedagogy may help cultivate students’ rhetorical awareness, but I do not claim that such a course can equip students with everything they need to know about writing.

One reaction to this misconception about writing is to develop pedagogies meant to correct students’ understanding of writing; WAW pedagogies are one such way of addressing the problem. But another reaction, Rebecca Nowacek argues in *Agents of Integration*, is to consider the institutional structures that enable particular definitions of transfer. Nowacek argues that current studies of transfer in composition depend on categories of positive transfer (the student
successfully adapts knowledge to a new writing situation), negative transfer (the student incorrectly applies knowledge to the new situation), or zero transfer (the student makes no connection between the old and new situations). But these categories are wholly determined by the instructor, who cannot always evaluate whether or not transfer has taken place (37-8); transfer, Nowacek argues, “is both more common and more complex than research currently recognizes” (53). In place of the positive, negative, and zero categories, Nowacek offers a matrix of “seeing” and “selling” axes; the student can move from “unconscious seeing” to “meta-aware seeing” on the “seeing” axis and from “successful selling” to “unsuccessful selling” on the “selling” axis. Nowacek uses case studies to demonstrate the four quadrants created by this matrix, which can in turn alter how we define or evaluate transfer. The student whose paper might normally be used to describe “negative transfer” is, under Nowacek’s terms, an example of “frustrated integration”; that student may be completely self-aware but unable to “sell” that self-awareness through writing. The student who lacks any meta-awareness but still sells his writing choices has engaged in “successful transfer,” but not “successful integration.”

Central to Nowacek’s argument is her premise that “[s]tudents’ acts of transfer are sometimes not recognized or valued” (114). For example, Henry, a student who asks his teacher Thomas whether he may include questions in his paper, might appear to be asking a “random, convention-obsessed question.” Henry, however, wanted to know if the conventions of a different teacher and the field she represented applied for the field that Thomas represented. Thomas, Nowacek argues, “has no idea what connections motivate Henry’s question” (114), and thus fails to see the question as a moment of imperfect or incomplete transfer. In making this claim, Nowacek challenges nearly all transfer studies to date; looking to instructors’ evaluations of whether transfer has occurred is likely to miss many moments of transfer that, like Henry’s question about questions, are perceived as nagging questions about format rather than insightful questions about writing.
Considered together, these studies of transfer challenge the assumption that lessons learned from FYC transfer to future writing situations, and offer preliminary suggestions about how to teach for and study transfer:

1) Students may not be able to transfer writing knowledge without explicit instruction in genre awareness.

2) When students encounter a new writing situation, they begin with genres they already know; used consciously, deliberately, and correctly, these antecedent genres can help students to adapt to new situations.

3) To develop critical genre awareness, students require understanding of the rhetorical contexts surrounding and constituted by genres.

4) Many students do not see value in transferring knowledge from FYC to other writing situations. Students who receive genre-based training may still speak about generalized “good writing.”

5) “Meta-awareness about writing” appears to transfer across writing situations more readily than decontextualized writing skills.

6) Students’ writing may not be the best evidence of their ability to transfer writing knowledge.

7) Absence of transfer does not mean that a student is unable to transfer knowledge; a student may use meta-awareness to make a conscious decision not to transfer knowledge.

8) Instructors without deep cross-curricular knowledge may not be in the best position to observe transfer; successful identification of transfer requires detailed understanding of ways of knowing across the curriculum.

These preliminary suggestions about transfer are useful to my work in three key ways. First, the studies of transfer discussed above suggest a number of implications for the instructors at The University wishing to teach research as a discipline or context-specific practice. Such a pedagogy would need to begin with explicit genre awareness and context-specific definitions of “good writing.” A researched assignment could not merely ask students to “using at least 10 sources, write a research paper on a topic of your choosing,” because such an approach would ignore our understandings of genre and transfer. Instead, instructors would need to help students cultivate the writing and research awareness that enables them to analyze new writing situations, to choose antecedent genres wisely, and to explore context.
Second, these studies suggest that subsequent courses play as much of a role in activating transfer as FYC courses. In “Reimagining,” Downs and Wardle assert their optimism that WAW courses are more likely to prepare students for transfer than other FYC courses, but acknowledge that transfer also requires “appropriate subsequent learning environments” in a vertical curriculum (135). Furthermore, recent studies of transfer, among them Angela Rounsaville, Bawarshi, and Reiff’s “From Incomes to Outcomes” and Donahue’s “Transfer, Portability, Generalization,” have encouraged us to consider the directional nature of transfer. Donahue asks, “Is the future situation (the new context) more responsible for affording transfer, or is the initial context more responsible for seeding transfer via the way in which the knowledge is learned?” (161). “Teaching for transfer” may not be useful, Donahue argues, “because so much depends on the new context and its affordances” (163). Because we cannot control the future writing situations in which students may find themselves, we cannot guarantee that instructors will activate students’ prior knowledge. But we can encourage students to inventory and select from their prior knowledge. Downs and Wardle assert that in WAW pedagogies, the focus “is not the answers but the questions – not ‘how to write’ but how to ask about how to write” (“Reimagining” 134). If students know “how to ask about how to write,” it stands to reason that they can prime themselves for acts of transfer in future courses.

Third, these studies caution us against placing too much weight on “transfer.” In his survey of the “deeply conflicted” transfer scholarship, Brent offers two broad critiques of transfer studies in composition. First, like Nowacek, he takes issue with the very term “transfer.” Brent argues that, in composition’s use of the term, “transfer” does not mean simply using a learned skill in a new situation, but in adapting that knowledge; thus, Brent encourages us to reject the word “transfer” and the simple mechanical process it implies in favor of “transformation,” which highlights the adaptation required for using rhetorical knowledge in a new situation (565). With Brent’s critique of the term in mind, I proceed with “transfer” because, like “discourse community” before it, transfer is a term well-recognized by specialists and nonspecialists alike. Transfer is also useful because it is not limited to one use at one time;
we can identify students who engage in transfer across class periods, assignments, courses, terms, and academic years, as well as from college life to life after college.

Two models of academic research

The instructors I interviewed for this project experienced a tension between their perceived responsibility to provide students with an introduction to “academic” writing and their sense that “academic” writing is a context-specific product of discourse communities. This tension, I suggest, might be partially resolved by turning to WAW pedagogies, and specifically, those focused on the concepts of genre and transfer. But these tensions are never completely resolved, and manifest themselves in various ways throughout instructors’ attempts to teach research, and secondary research in particular.

Throughout this dissertation, I explore instructors’ attempts to teach “academic” writing as a context-specific, research-driven process and prepare students to analyze the various writing situations they may encounter. I then look to the ways in which these instructors are prevented from depicting writing and research in as nuanced a way as they might like, in order to suggest new pedagogies that may be more likely to promote writing awareness. In this section, I explore how even the act of asking students to select a topic invokes these tensions between fixed and genre-situated models of academic writing. I introduce two instructors at The University, each of whom incorporated a unit designed to acquaint students with “academic” writing. Both WAW-esque units encouraged students to see writing as a product of involvement in discourse communities. In the research units that followed, however, each of the instructors presented a different model of “academic research”: one model subverted the WAW-esque approach from the previous unit while the other model enabled a WAW-esque approach.

“Choose a topic”

Sabrina, as we saw earlier, included a “disciplinary conventions” assignment, through which students developed a sort of “user’s manual” for their majors. For this assignment, students interviewed professors from their disciplines and reviewed scholarly journals to learn about such standards as “how to select an argument” and “how to give evidence.” This
assignment, I suggested earlier, is consistent with many of the goals of WAW pedagogies because it is meant to help students see differences within and among academic disciplines and understand that “academic writing” is merely a convenient label for a wide variety of writing practices.

Sabrina views research as an essential skill for all of her students’ future success, regardless of discipline, so she followed her disciplinary conventions assignment with a research paper. But she also recognized that the word “research” would not excite many of her students, and so offered a “pretty wide-open” assignment to let them pursue topics of interest. There was not “a huge amount of design” in the assignment; essentially, students were instructed to select a topic and write a “traditional research paper” that used 10 sources, all of which needed to be “academic,” “secondary” sources. Although Sabrina’s disciplinary conventions assignment highlights the ways writing differs across academic contexts, in the following unit she returns to a static definition of “academic writing” that applies to all topics, and dissociates the topics chosen from any particular disciplinary constraints. The purpose of the discourse analysis assignment was to observe how writing functions in a particular discipline. The purpose of the research paper – to write a research paper – illustrates Wardle’s description of FYC assignments that “conflat[e] purpose and genre” (“Mutt Genres” 777). Sabrina’s reason for including the assignment is that she wants to help students conduct successful research in other courses. But the assignment, which does not respond to a specific exigency, is a “mutt genre,” one that does not exist outside of FYC.

Sabrina’s students struggled with the open choice of topic for the assignment. One student, Keith, was uncomfortable with the openness of the assignment: “It was open-ended, so it gave us a lot of leeway to do whatever we want[ed], which is nice, but at the same time, it made me pick from anything. Sometimes I kind of like that structure to make me pick what I need.” Keith is referring specifically to choosing a topic, and this difficulty was reflected in the topics he considered – the importance of the Miami Heat to the city of Miami and the influence of jazz on New Orleans – both of which were impossibly large and unfocused for the 8-10 page
paper. Other students, unbothered by the lack of constraints on topic selection, demonstrated concern over how they should approach their topics. Christopher explains that the methods they could use to explore their topics were as open as the topics themselves: “She said like anything from the history of something to analyzing or comparing or contrasting two things that you care about.” Still other students were less overwhelmed by the free choice of topic and approach than the lack of structure for completing their projects. The assignment was difficult for Adrian because “it pretty much just said research a topic and write about it. I really didn’t know what that meant, because in the past, I’d been assigned one research paper in high school, and it was more guided.”

Wardle argues that when the function of a genre is to write the genre (e.g. to write a research paper), students are less able to identify the value of those assignments. Wardle noted that students “could explain what they were writing” but not “why they were doing so or why they were doing so in the form of a particular genre” (“Mutt Genres” 777). When questioned about their topic selection, Sabrina’s students displayed a similar knowledge of what they were writing about (jazz in New Orleans, the history of something) but not why they were writing about it. This lack of understanding resulted in more problems as students chose an overall subject, a methodology, and a process for completing their papers.

Jennifer, a librarian who provided two research instruction sessions to Sabrina’s class, observed the difficulty students had with the assignment: “[Sabrina] wanted them to write a paper that would be interesting to them, which is a really valuable thing to get them interested in research. But they just didn’t know where to begin.” The students “were just like ‘I don’t know how to write a 10 page paper. I don’t know how to do this.’ They seemed a little overwhelmed with their assignment.” Jennifer finds students’ difficulty with the assignment understandable, given their ability level and exposure. “They’re freshmen. They’re having a hard time figuring out what they’re interested in and what their studies are.” I would suggest that the issue is not that students were unsure of “what they’re interested in” – many of them had no trouble listing topics that excited them – but that they genuinely didn’t know why they were writing about
these topics, aside, of course, that they were writing in order to receive a grade, a purpose that Wardle describes as “related solely to the FYC class and not beyond it” (Wardle “Mutt Genres” 777).

During the last three weeks of the term, as students began gathering sources for their research papers, Sabrina decided they “need[ed] a little bit more support around the assignment,” and developed class workshops to help students analyze and integrate sources. She also held one-on-one conferences with students to review their annotated bibliographies and help them find new directions for their research. But students’ difficulties with developing an overall approach to their topics suggest that the most useful scaffolding should have come long before they constructed annotated bibliographies or integrated sources into their papers. Instead, students required explicit instruction about how to transfer what they had learned about academic discourse in the previous unit to their research papers. For such transfer to be successful, students required explicit instruction in genre awareness, strong antecedent genres, and a sense of the disciplinary contexts that shape these genres. If we want students to write more successfully in academic settings, we need to first help them develop writing awareness but then continually activate this knowledge (Ambrose et al.). The instruction to “choose a topic,” which obscures disciplinary contexts and exigencies for writing, is not likely to activate prior knowledge of genres and discourse communities.

“The goal has to drive the research”

Like Sabrina, Amber follows her unit on academic writing with a research-based project. A crucial difference between their assignments is how they describe the act of formulating a research project. This act shapes the entire project, and, in Amber’s case, helps students develop their own exigencies for writing while also developing awareness about research questions that can serve them in future writing situations. Amber’s section of College Writing, part of the interdisciplinary, learning community-based Scholarship in Service program at The University, focused on issues of food policy. For their community-based research project, her students had to identify a local food-related problem and develop solutions to that problem through library
and “real world” research. The format of the project was not specified. Instead, after choosing a local issue to study, students were responsible for choosing a format that would best convey their message. One student concerned with nutrition and hydration practices of exercise neophytes made posters of his research findings and hung them in the campus gym. A group of students concerned about meat production in the U.S. screened the film *Meet Your Meat* to a focus group and summarized their findings in a website. Another group wished to raise awareness about food scarcity in a nearby city, and decided a documentary film would be the best vehicle for their message.

For Amber, the key to a successful research project was a clear and manageable goal. To facilitate students’ goal formation, Amber used a structured brainstorming exercise to help students figure out what they wanted to write about: “I had them start with sort of a brainstorm of as many topics as they could think of and then to narrow that down to two and explore those equally so that they had thought about two possibilities. So they were making a real choice and not just jumping on the first thing that they came up with.” The worksheet contained six questions, all designed to help students construct this “real choice” for writing. After brainstorming a string of topics and narrowing to two, students had to describe at least two different projects related to each topic, consider what they would need to learn in order to complete each project, and determine the value of each possible project. In focusing on the value of possible projects, Amber’s brainstorming worksheet helps students identify not just what to write about, but why to write about it (Wardle “Mutt Genres” 777). Furthermore, the focus on value emphasizes audience. In being forced to think about not just a topic but a value for pursuing that particular topic, students develop research goals directed toward specific audiences. To whom will this work be valuable? What contribution(s) does it make?

One of the major aims of the worksheet was to model the kinds of thinking Amber does in her own work. By forcing students to weigh multiple solutions before selecting one, Amber hopes to prevent students from rushing to a decision, a problem that she experiences in her own work: “I think I fall into this trap, that I get myself going down the path and can’t say ‘Stop. This
isn’t going to work’ or ‘This is going to be too frustrating or too hard.’ I’ll just keep banging my
head against that wall. I don’t want them to do that. I want it to be something that they’re really
engaged in.” Students were given a week to answer the questions on the sheet, and the questions
couraged students to create space between each of these steps. Question 3, for example,
reminded students “Yesterday, you narrowed the field to two topics,” before explaining what
students should do today.

Amber also wants students to see that academic writers never start from scratch, but
instead take stock of their existing knowledge and experience. Amber asks students “to think
about what they know and what they don’t know. So if you want to do a certain thing, what do
you already know and where do you have gaps?” Amber uses the same question in her own
work:

Most of us, when we go to find something out, we don’t just start from scratch. We think, “Okay, why do I care about this and what do I already know? And what do I need to fill in?” I know when I’ve done research projects recently that’s kind of where I’m at. What are the fields that I need to brush up on or learn something about like discourse analysis, which I really don’t know anything about. What will I learn about that in order to help me fulfill my goal? So one of the things that matters to me is the emphasis on the goal and the research for support of the goal.

This inventory of what she knows and does not know suggests that Amber has developed, in
Downs and Wardle’s terms, knowledge of “how to ask about how to write” (134). This
knowledge requires that Amber position herself somewhere between an expert and a novice; she
does not know everything she needs to complete a project that reaches her goal (content
knowledge), but she has developed strategies that help her “fill in the gaps” (procedural
knowledge). In encouraging her students to identify their plans for acquiring sufficient content
knowledge, Amber models a procedural strategy that helps them ask about how to write in
different situations.

After students have completed the worksheet, Amber requires them to write a proposal
in which they describe their goals for their projects and how their research and experience will
help them to meet those goals. Her role in reading those proposals is to help students focus their
goals and map those goals to appropriate disciplinary methods. Amber explains that the group screening *Meet Your Meat* initially planned to conduct a focus group and then interview each participant separately. She told them, “Let’s not do that. Let’s think about designing a survey and then doing the film and doing a focus group right then, because you don’t have that much time, and getting all these people’s schedules to fit [in] an interview with you is going to be hard.” That students in that group planned to make a video for their final project, and Amber wanted them to consider changing that format:

> I think I’m going to say to them what you’re doing is actually much more conducive to a document than to a movie, because you’re doing these data collection methods, focus group, surveys, and you’re trying to get a broader sense of how people respond to this. And to present it in a film means you have to do all the work of getting individual interviews as well as this other sociological or social science methodology.

Although she does not want to “squash” the students’ enthusiasm for their project, Amber recognizes that a different, more print-friendly format might be more conducive to their methodological approach. In recommending alternative formats, Amber shows that choosing a topic is much more complicated than arguing a position, demonstrating how the research method chosen for a project directs not just what questions the researcher can ask or what kinds of conclusions he can draw, but the format of the resulting project. Through this assignment, Amber models “rhetorical dexterity” (Carter, qtd. in Downs and Wardle “Reimagining”), teaching students not what method to use but how to determine what method to use.

Following the unit on academic writing, in which she asked her students to determine how different types of academic arguments are made, Amber encourages her students to see their own work in similar terms. Her considerable emphasis on goals and the tools necessary to achieve them helps students to slow down and locate their work within specific contexts. By selecting two topics, developing two possible projects for each topic, and taking inventory of what they know and need to know about each project, her students are forced to define clear goals and develop a research plan in service of those goals. Although Amber does not describe her course in WAW terms, it certainly seems that she shares the main goal of WAW, to “change
students’ awareness of the nature of writing and literacy in order to shape the way they think about writing, with the expectation that what they write may change in turn” (Downs and Wardle “Reimagining” 139). By encouraging students to inventory their existing knowledge, Amber asserts that they are not blank slates. But she also argues, along with Downs and Wardle and other WAW proponents, that students also require the metacognition necessary to reflect on what they do not know about their subjects (138).

The effects of Amber’s WAW-esque focus are clear in her student Allison’s description of topic selection. Initially, Allison interpreted the research assignment as “just pick any topic that we could possibly think of about food and research it and go forward,” signaling the same kind of decontextualized approach to research as many of the students in Sabrina’s class. When she first learned of the assignment, Allison thought she would write about organic food, because the class had covered the topic in discussion and she “thought that would be something the teacher would like a lot.” Allison’s initial reaction to the assignment suggested that the goal was to write a research paper about a topic that would please her instructor, a classroom-based exigency. But as she worked with the brainstorming worksheet, Allison began to develop her own interests and questions, as well as her own goals, and started thinking about coffee: “Organic food is not really my passion. I’ll buy organically occasionally, but it’s not like something I’m really into. But coffee I love.” During the middle of our interview she retrieves a folder from her backpack and pulls out her brainstorming worksheet. She presents the page, filled to the edge of the margins, and says, “Yeah, I just wrote all over it.” Allison walks me through the worksheet:

Okay, the first question was, “what issues or problems or topics related to food in your life or community, [University City], [State], etc., do you find strange, unusual, interesting, or significant?” And “brainstorm as many as you can.” And as you can see I brainstormed a whole lot. There’s organic food right there. And then there’s the coffee right there, [and] a bunch of others in-between.

This is where many brainstorming exercises are likely to end; the student has a list of possible topics to explore and then follows one of these topics. In Amber’s worksheet, this list was only the beginning. Allison could not simply choose a topic and move on, but instead had to consider different approaches, both in what they would require and what they would allow her to do.
For the second question, which asked her to narrow her topic list to two possible topics, Allison selected organic food and coffee. Allison reads on:

“For each of the two issues, problems, or topics you described yesterday, describe two different ways in which you could execute a project based on these topics. For example, you might make a short film or write a research paper.” So I told my teacher that I really didn’t want to do a research paper because I hate them. I did them in high school, and I’m tired of them. So I asked if there was another way that I could do something more creative but just as informative, and she said I could do like a magazine, which is an idea that I had. I’m going to be writing a bunch of different articles that kind of relate to my research findings. So it will be very informative, lots of research, just not the research paper format.

In her response to this question about format, Allison exhibits a fairly typical definition of “the research paper” as a regurgitation of facts about a topic. Given the chance to match her project format with her goals, Allison considered other formats that might more effectively present her research to her desired audience. The magazine offered her a way to appeal to other coffee enthusiasts who share her interests in learning about their beloved beverage. With this initial direction in mind, Allison began to take stock of her existing knowledge about coffee and what she still needed to learn:

The next one was what kind of things do I need to learn, need to research. So for coffee I want to find out some of the history of coffee, like when did they start drinking it, when did they figure out that this plant could be this drink. And then how the beverages have changed over time, because 50 years ago it was all about a plain cup of joe and now it’s all about the fancy drinks.

The format that Allison has chosen for this project, a magazine for coffee lovers, has shaped the questions she plans to pursue in her research. These questions, she surmises, will generate small articles for inclusion in her magazine. She wants to inform readers about where their beverages come from. She also wants to write a more analytical article mapping today’s coffee tastes to aspects of our culture. Allison reads through the last section of the worksheet:

And then the last thing is “what’s the value in this project, and why is it worth doing?” And yeah, talking to some of my peers, everyone’s like “Coffee would be interesting. I love coffee. I drink it all the time. How do they come up with this idea to make this plant into a beverage?”

Allison may not have a strong sense for the value of her work or a sense of urgency, a “so what” about her project as some other students in her course do, but in her discussion of value she
identifies, however generally and unspecifically, an audience for her work and a reason why that audience could benefit from her work. Her magazine format will help her generate what she calls “mini-research papers,” 2-3 page articles well suited to a periodical for coffee lovers.

There are a number of similarities between Sabrina’s and Amber’s classes. Both instructors taught a unit designed to cultivate awareness about academic writing. Both wanted their students to develop facility with research tools. Nearly all of their students were intimidated by the open-endedness of the researched assignments. The key difference between Sabrina’s and Amber’s open-ended research assignments is that Amber’s assignment included the metacognitive scaffolding necessary to help students to develop arguments that mattered to them and their communities. In Amber’s class, students are forced to create their own tasks and identify the communities by whom those tasks should be judged; Sabrina’s students, while made aware of different models of academic writing in one unit, are held to a generic standard of “academic” writing in the next. Put another way, Amber’s course may be said to be about writing; students observe writing conventions and then make careful choices about which conventions to use. Sabrina’s course, by contrast, is about how to write; students are meant to learn how to write in their disciplines and then how to write “the research paper.”

**Conclusion**

This comparison allows us to draw a few tentative conclusions about the value of developing WAW pedagogies with a stronger emphasis on research. We need to re-evaluate the language we use to describe the opening stages of a research project. To “pick” or “choose” a research topic implies that research is a readily generalizable process, broadly applicable to any topic: you pick a topic, find some sources on that topic, and write your paper. The instruction to “choose a topic” divorces writing from any real context, supporting the illusion that all academic writing projects should be approached in the same fashion. “Choosing a topic” suggests the same approach we might use when reading a menu: consider the available choices, perhaps weigh which items we are most in the mood for, and make a selection, all in the span of about 10 minutes. To “ask a relevant question,” on the other hand, requires knowledge of a discipline, its
key concepts, and debates. A relevant question requires a good fit between a research method and an object of study. A writer is not only choosing the subject of research, but also the contexts of that research, the methods of data collection, and the presentation format, all of which are shaped by the participants of particular communities.

Students in FYC may not yet be prepared to ask relevant questions because they may lack a sense for how to situate their work within an ongoing conversation. Amber identifies a “danger” of her brainstorming assignment: students “could possibly not know what they don’t know,” and thus not do sufficiently broad research. Ambrose et al. assert that “novice students are in a state of unconscious incompetence, in that they have not yet developed skill in a particular domain, nor do they have sufficient knowledge to recognize what they need to learn” (96). With increased exposure to a discipline, students reach conscious incompetence; that is, they know what they don’t know. This concept of conscious incompetence helps explain positive outliers in Sabrina’s class, students who used their research papers to address their own questions about “hot” topics in their chosen academic disciplines. Adrian, a political science major, was curious about the relationship between a president’s personality and his approval rating, and he sought out prominent voices in political science literature to address this question. Ethan, who hopes to be admitted to an interdisciplinary political science, psychology, sociology, and economics program next year, was interested in the “extralegal” factors influencing jury decisions, and situated these questions within psychology literature. But both of these students had prior exposure to these academic disciplines through extra-curricular activities in high school. Students without any prior exposure to a particular discipline’s ways of writing and knowing likely require a more directed approach. Most students conducting research in FYC likely have unconscious incompetence about the ways different discourse communities might approach their topics, and therefore require explicit instruction on how to shift from not knowing what they don’t know to knowing what they don’t know. To negotiate this shift, students need tools to help them learn how information is organized. When these
tools are not explicitly addressed, the gap between generic and contextual models of academic writing widens. I explore this widening gap in Chapter 2.

One critique of WAW is that in focusing on academic writing as an object of analysis, it positions students as proto-disciplinary writers (see Miles et al.). I argue that the goal of WAW is not to turn students into disciplinary writers, but to become better analysts of writing. Because instructors like Amber are well-versed in academic writing – and usually the academic writing of the discipline of composition in particular – they can be better guides to students as they explore these forms to learn about writing. Amber’s classroom example suggests that while we might use composition scholarship to teach FYC students about writing, students can apply these about strategies outside of academic disciplines. In developing the ability of “how to ask about how to write,” FYC students are certainly better equipped to tackle research subjects located in academic settings, but as Allison’s coffee magazine shows, the focus on teaching about writing can equip them to explore a broader range of contexts for research.
Even though as teachers we insisted that students see writing as a process, we tended not to say the same things about research. We both knew that scholarly research was never linear and never replicable from project to project, yet our course schedules and assignments revealed an assumption that a single “dose” of library instruction would teach students all they needed to know about research. – Heidi Jacobs and Dale Jacobs, “Transforming the One-Shot”

I know this might be a pie-in-the-sky kind of thing, but I want them to think about what information they want, not just whatever information they find. – Maureen, instructional librarian

In the previous chapter, I described how composition instructors at The University committed themselves to preparing students for “academic writing” while acknowledging that the term “academic writing” was an oversimplified label for a wide array of different and often contradictory forms of writing. I then proceeded to the first phase of the research paper identified by instructors and students, topic selection, which was presented as a process generalizable to future courses. This generalization, I argued, did not help students develop the meta-awareness necessary to ask relevant research questions. I argued that in adopting a WAW-centered approach to research instruction, instructors can shift the focus from “choosing a topic” to “asking a relevant question,” a change that focuses not on how to write, but on how to ask about how to write.

In this chapter, I turn to the next phase of the research unit: library instruction. I draw from genre scholarship in composition and information literacy scholarship in library and information science¹ in order to draw connections between these disciplines’ common pedagogical approaches to research instruction. Then, drawing from Wardle’s concept of “mutt

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¹ Composition might be referred to as composition and rhetoric, rhetoric and composition, composition studies, or writing studies. Library science shows similar variation, and might be referred to as library studies, information and library studies, or library and information science. In both fields, the various terms used to describe the discipline are mostly treated interchangeably. There is, however, an important shift taking place from “library science” to “library and information science” or “information science.” This shift indicates that librarians associate themselves not just with the repositories of materials in brick-and-mortar libraries, but with the study of information in all formats. Throughout, I have mostly referred to the full name “library and information science” to emphasize librarians’ broad focus on information.
genres,” I contrast these nuanced and contextual approaches to research instruction with the access-focused portrayal of libraries and librarians in composition’s scholarship and textbooks. These depictions are reinforced by the model of library instruction most commonly sought by composition instructors: the “one-shot” session. Using an interaction between a librarian and a composition instructor at The University, I demonstrate how compositionists perpetuate “mutt research” and undermine our messages about the importance of discourse communities and genres when we treat the library as a simple repository of information. If, as genre theorists have argued, part of composition’s job is to supply students with antecedent genres that will allow them the most success later on, and if meta-awareness of genre is crucial to selecting appropriate antecedent genres, our continued reliance on instructions such as “get a book” or “find an article,” even when we request that these items be “scholarly” or “academic,” suggests to students that a standardized search strategy is equally appropriate to all writing situations. I then turn to another librarian at The University, whose focus on developing a research context allowed her new opportunities to teach research as a discipline-specific process rather than a set of basic skills. Given the ubiquitousness of these one-shot sessions and the financial and institutional difficulties inherent in replacing them with more integrated forms of research instruction, I suggest one method of successfully incorporating library research sessions into our courses while maintaining emphasis on transfer: teaching students about library research.

**Information literacy: teaching for transfer**

Before turning to composition’s involvement in perpetuating “mutt research,” we need to better understand a shift within the field of library and information science. A primer on bibliographic instruction and information literacy will demonstrate that librarians’ approaches

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2 Although I have limited my focus to helping students interrogate the concept of academic writing (specifically, to view such writing not as a generic style but as a variety of writing situations shaping and shaped by discourse communities), I do not suggest that the function of WAW pedagogies, or FYC in general, should be to produce disciplinary writers. Instead, I argue that FYC act as an introduction to learning about writing. The goal of such a course is not learning how to write genres, but learning how to learn genres. Disciplinary discourses offer one useful means of entrance into this type of study, but mastering these discourses is not the object of the course; the object is instead to cultivate awareness about writing that can help students approach many types of writing situations.
to teaching research have in many ways paralleled composition’s approaches to teaching writing.

During the 1960s and 1970s, library collections expanded at an extremely fast pace. Coupled with this growth was an expansion of the student body that needed to learn to use new library technologies. As a result of these changes to library collections and student populations, library instruction was designed to teach students to use specific resources, such as the *Readers’ Guide to Periodical Literature* (Tiefel “Library User Education” 322). Such *bibliographic instruction* was viewed as a means of empowering students; by teaching students to use the physical tools of the library, librarians made it possible for students to access information on their own (Koyama 12). The key criticism of bibliographic instruction was that it focused on the discrete tools available in the library, but not on the critical thinking skills necessary to make good use of those tools. James Ford likened this form of library instruction to teaching Driver’s Ed. by pointing to features of cars: “‘Here is the clutch and this is how it works. Here is the carburetor and here’s how it works. Here is the transmission and this is how it works,’ etc. Then the instructor says, ‘Now, drive!’” (136). Library instruction, Ford argued, worked in much the same way: “The instructor says: ‘Here is the card catalog (the key to the library!); ‘here is the *Reader’s Guide,*’ etc. ‘Now, research!’” (136). Loanne Snavely and Natasha Cooper argued that the term *bibliographic instruction* undermined the work that librarians hoped to do: “The word *instruction* describes the activity of the teacher, not the learning. The word *bibliographic* clearly limits the concept to a narrow definition of what is being taught” (11). Despite librarians’ best intentions, then, “bibliographic instruction” was often synonymous with discrete skills, not the processes of accessing, evaluating, or using information.
Critiques such as these gave way to pedagogies of information literacy\textsuperscript{3}, which seek to highlight students’ roles as researchers and critical thinkers. In January 2000, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL)\textsuperscript{4} approved five Competency Standards for Higher Education:

1) The information literate student determines the nature and extent of information needed.

2) The information literate student accesses needed information effectively and efficiently.

3) The information literate student evaluates information and its sources critically and incorporates selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system.

4) The information literate student, individually or as a member of a group, uses information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose.

5) The information literate student understands the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information and accesses and uses information ethically and legally.

The information literate student knows what kinds of information she needs, as well as how to find that information. Moreover, that student can critically evaluate the information she finds, using it to re-evaluate her previous knowledge. The student can, alone or with others, use information for a variety of purposes. Finally, the student understands the various implications of her source use.

The Information Literacy Competency Standards suggest that librarians and compositionists have important goals in common. The standards’ emphasis on determining information needs for specific tasks reflects many of the same goals as genre-based pedagogies.

\textsuperscript{3} Information literacy, like bibliographic instruction before it, has some definitional issues. The major problem with information literacy is its tie to autonomous models, in which literacy is framed as a “skill or set of skills” (Barton 11). In this conception, literacy is a noun, something that people can learn or know. Those who have this knowledge are considered more able, productive members of society. Snavely and Cooper offer a list of alternatives for information literacy that frame it not as set of skills to master, but as a knowledge-making process, which includes “Curiosity Satisfied-across-the-Curriculum,” “Information Discovery,” “Information Empowerment,” and “Information Mapping” (11). Despite these alternatives, “information literacy” continues to be the dominant term.

\textsuperscript{4} The ACRL is the division of the American Library Association focused specifically on academic libraries.
In order to “determine the nature and extent of information needed,” for example, a student needs to complete the complicated task of analyzing the genre required, applying antecedent genre knowledge, and recognizing differences between the known and new genres. This genre analysis will allow the student to determine how much and what kinds of information she would need to write in the new genre. The student would need to follow a similar process for each of the other information literacy standards. To “access needed information effectively and efficiently,” the student requires knowledge of common search tools, such as library catalogs and electronic databases, and also needs to learn how to use these tools to access the information most relevant to or respected in the discipline(s) surrounding her topic. To “evaluate information and its sources critically,” the student needs to understand disciplinary expectations governing selection, among them standards of evidence. To “incorporate selected information into his or her knowledge base and value system,” the student needs a conceptual map of a discipline into which she can organize the new information. To “use information effectively to accomplish a specific purpose,” the student needs to select a genre that will allow her to meet this purpose and learn the constraints on information use within this genre. By learning the permissible citation functions of the genre, the student can begin to “understand the economic, legal, and social issues surrounding the use of information.” From the perspective of genre theory, then, a successful library instruction session would need to emphasize how to evaluate and adapt to a particular research context. Such a session could not rest on a generic view of “good research,” as this definition would not satisfy the instructional objectives of compositionists or librarians.

**Library research in composition: access**

In Chapter 1, I drew on Wardle’s concept of mutt genres to focus on how assignments such as “the argument paper,” meant as primers for future writing situations, are not conducive to cultivating awareness about writing. Wardle uses the term “mutt genres” to refer to FYC-based genres such as “the argument paper” because these genres “mimic genres that mediate
activities in other activity systems, but within the FYC system their purposes and audiences are vague or even contradictory. They are quite different from and serve very different purposes in FYC than they do in other disciplinary activity systems” (“Mutt Genres” 774). The purpose of the argument paper in FYC, for example, is often “to write an argument.” This conflation of purpose and genre is problematic, Wardle argues, because it does not reflect the ways in which genres respond to specific rhetorical exigencies (777). Although “argument” is certainly a component of many of the genres students will write in other courses, it is not actually a genre (775). Wardle surmises that mutt genres like “the argument” are intended to prepare students with skills they can apply in their writing for future courses (777). But, as she and other WAW proponents have argued, students are unlikely to successfully transfer these kinds of skills from one writing situation to the next (Smit; Beaufort; Driscoll; Nowacek). In this section, I return to one mutt genre in particular – “the research paper” – and demonstrate how composition’s treatment of library research continues to breed this particular mutt. I use composition’s scholarship and textbooks to demonstrate how we often frame source gathering in terms of access, which links the research paper with simple procedural knowledge about how to find sources and thus perpetuates the mutt genre of the research paper.

The purpose of the research paper in FYC is not to present new findings, to contribute to a discipline’s growing knowledge, to challenge previous work, or any other of the myriad functions of research-based genres. Instead, the purpose of the research paper in FYC is often to show that the student can conduct research, a skill deemed important to success in future courses. But if discrete writing “skills,” such as “writing an argument,” are unlikely to transfer to future writing situations, why would we presume that discrete research skills are likely to transfer? Although composition has as a field become more suspicious of the claim that writing skills can be easily taught and transferred, its teaching of research continues to rely upon a mutt genre meant to prime students for the genres they will encounter later on.

In “Understanding Problems in Critical Classrooms,” William Thelin provides an impressively detailed account of the problems that plagued him and his students in a negotiated
FYC course. After receiving complaints from students about the workload in the course, Thelin slowed the pace, condensing two assignments into a single large research paper. Students were permitted to choose any topic as long as the paper incorporated an article from *Rereading America*, the course text, “as an important part of its argument or thesis” (123). Because students appeared apprehensive about the work, Thelin agreed to devote one week of class to library research. Thelin assumed that his students could learn the tools of the library without assistance from either him or a librarian: “The week in the library coincided with one of my job interviews, so I assigned teams whereby leaders working under A contracts would make sure all members learned how to navigate through the computer system of the library. From what I could tell, the students learned how to find books and articles as well as if I had been there” (123). When reading students’ drafts, however, Thelin was frustrated with the poor quality of their research:

> A woman wrote a paper on teenage pregnancy, one that I assumed would use Kristen Luker’s excellent excerpt in *Rereading America* to deflate the myths surrounding the issue. To my surprise, the student used a quotation from an unrelated article to try to meet the requirement of the assignment and relied on research that used no statistics and no critiques of the status quo to reach its traditional conclusion about birth control. (124)

When students were instructed to “find books and articles,” they had little difficulty piling up texts to use in their papers. By leaving the A contract students in charge of research instruction, Thelin implies that library research is a simple matter of finding texts. His response to his students’ papers, however, suggests he held a more complex and “unconscious competence” (Ambrose et al.) of research, one that was perhaps so obvious to him that it did not occur to him to explain to his students. Thelin’s expectation that the student would use statistical evidence demonstrated that “find books and articles” does not adequately describe the activity of gathering sources; students need different kinds of sources to make different kinds of arguments. None of these differences are articulated by the simple direction to find sources.

Thelin’s assumption that his student would use a particular essay from the textbook further demonstrates the mutt nature of the research paper; the requirement to include a
particular source from the course reader, which is likely Thelin’s attempt to connect the writing assignment to the course content, replaces source selection with classroom-based exigencies for writing. Furthermore, his frustration that the student did not include what he as the instructor found relevant demonstrates that the student’s research paper is a mutt genre whose function is primarily to show mastery over course content.

One of the shortcomings of Thelin’s approach is the assumption that students, who often exhibit the technological literacy necessary for conducting library searches, do not require instruction in source selection. Thelin literally leaves his students to do this work for themselves, with dissatisfying results. Other instructors, perhaps noting the difficulties presented by library searching, have identified the need for research instruction. Wendy Bishop and Pavel Zemliansky’s *Research Writing Revisited* collects research approaches that “treat research as a rhetorical and active process, and not merely as a matter of information-gathering” (vii). In her contribution to the volume, Jeanette Martin outlines Patrick Slattery’s “dogmatic,” “noncommittal,” and “analytical” orientations to research (4-5). Unlike dogmatic approaches, for which students gather sources only to support their claims, or noncommittal approaches, in which students offer many different views without synthesis or analysis, analytical approaches, Martin claims, require “a real conversation with sources” (6). Martin does not describe any particular assignment in detail, but does explain the approach she uses to expose students to research. She begins by asking students “to explore their topics by surveying general reference tools.” She does not explain exactly what such tools are, but claims that they “introduce key terms and figures and open up myriad avenues of exploration for narrower topics while giving students quick and easy reading of the topic at the onset of their project” (10). We might thus assume that Martin is referring to dictionaries and encyclopedias.

Approaches such as Martin’s are common in composition’s scholarship and textbooks, but the practice of starting with “general reference tools” is a thorny subject for librarians. In “The Research Processes of Undergraduate Students,” published twelve years before Bishop and Zemliansky’s collection, Barbara Fister, an academic librarian, asserts that “the ‘overview’
needed to get started is rarely found in a reference book.” Reference works, Fister argues, are useful for “locating accepted knowledge” or “quick facts,” but “less successful at illuminating those interesting gray areas that are the best place to develop a research project” (168).

Following Fister, I would argue that encyclopedias are not the best place for beginning the kind of “real conversations with sources” Martin describes. In focusing on “general reference tools” such as encyclopedias, Martin contributes to a mutt genre of “the research paper” that emphasizes the topic over the conversation.

One further problem of Martin’s approach stems from her treatment of the librarian as a conduit to sources:

> When possible, I arrange for an orientation to relevant reference tools by a reference librarian who is far more knowledgeable and up to date on library resources for particular disciplines than I am. For instance, while teaching classes in American literature, I take my students to the reference section, where a librarian walks students through an exercise in which they locate appropriate sources useful to their upcoming research projects. (Martin 10)

In enlisting the aid of subject-specialist librarians, Martin indicates that knowing “how to research” may require specialized disciplinary knowledge and expertise, but her subsequent treatment of the library session undercuts this view. This type of orientation is problematic because of the emphasis on “appropriate” sources, which go undefined here. This orientation includes “general reference” only, and the instructor takes it upon herself to show students the computer-based resources, leading a “one-class tour of the library to demonstrate locating sources” (10). The single class session also suggests that source gathering is a simple matter of learning where the books are or how to use a database.

Paul Heilker, Sarah Allen, and Emily L. Sewall’s contribution to *Research Writing Revisited* avoids many of the pitfalls of the previous approaches. In their courses, library instruction is a deliberate and well-timed activity. Wanting the library session to be relevant to students, they reserve it until after students have identified topics they are passionate about, in fact, after they have written a first draft:

> When their completely personal drafts are finished, students are now at that “teachable moment” when instruction on how and why to use different search
strategies and different information resources becomes personally meaningful. Since most now care about their topics and their approach to their topics (as embodied in their first drafts), we have found students at this point attend effectively to sessions offering information literacy training. This is the moment when students should take the “library tour” and meet the reference librarians, learn to use Boolean searches, learn to navigate the local library’s electronic catalog and available databases, learn to use Internet search engines effectively, and learn to critically evaluate the quality of websites, because this is the moment they care about such things: they know exactly what kind of information they are looking for and why it is important for them to find it. They become purposeful and strategic in their efforts, researching more like authors than students. (53)

There is much to praise in Heilker, Allen, and Sewall’s model; in it, library research is framed as an opportunity not to find sources, but to explore issues of importance. They do not want research to be presented as a decontextualized skill or, in instructor-participant Sabrina’s terms, a “hat” to add to a paper in its final stages. They stress the importance of beginning with a sense of what students want to learn (an argument I made in Chapter 1). Although Heilker, Allen, and Sewall encourage students to develop what we might call a “real world” approach to research – developing a relevant question – the approach they describe for studying that question again generates mutt research. The list of activities included in this list is an impossibly tall order for a single library instruction session, and the activities, which emphasize access, only mimic the actions “authors” use when navigating library resources. Knowing where the resources are (accomplished by way of a library tour) is not the same as using resources wisely. Knowing how to use a database is not the same as knowing how to determine the kind of evidence one needs to enter a particular conversation. Evaluating websites, a classroom exercise that often focuses on generic markers of popular and scholarly work, is not the same as determining the effect of a particular website on one’s audience.

Even researched assignments specifically designed to help students cultivate writing awareness can result in mutt research. In my introductory chapter, I explained how the WAW-based pedagogies laid out in Beaufort’s College Writing and Beyond portrayed secondary research as a simple process of retrieval. Beaufort and collaborator Driscoll include assignments (literacy autobiography, genre analysis, discourse community analysis) designed to cultivate students’ writing knowledge. I argued that while these assignments encouraged students to view
writing as a complex and genre-situated process, the description of secondary research accompanying these assignments made such research appear a simple process separate from writing. Here, I want to address how this portrayal of secondary research – and libraries and librarians in particular – reifies the mutt genre of “the research paper” by limiting secondary research to a “how to” process of access. Beaufort and Driscoll, like many proponents of WAW pedagogies, include a discourse community analysis assignment in their course. The following assignment, intended to be completed after selecting a population, developing research questions, and conducting initial observations, is designed to help students locate library sources:

Use the library’s online databases and/or stacks to locate two articles that provide background on the discourse community you are researching. Be as specific as possible, but understand there are limitations to the articles available. For example, if you are going to conduct a discourse community analysis of the local poetry club, it is very unlikely that you will find articles on that specific club. But you certainly will find articles on the larger poetry reading movement. Note: if you cannot find any references that talk about the discourse community (and you have consulted a reference librarian for help), then find two published documents from the discourse community and, based on what you observe about these texts, further refine your research questions. (201)

These instructions are meant to help novice researchers avoid the conclusion that nothing has been written about their topics by demonstrating that a “topic” does not consist of a research site alone, but also the larger movements that the research site might represent. The instructions, however, continue to emphasize secondary research as a simple matter of access. The search should be specific, but not too specific. The student should consult a librarian for help accessing sources. If the student cannot access the “right” sources, he can substitute sources generated by the discourse community he is studying. This emphasis on access obscures the knowledge of research that may be so practiced as to be invisible to Beaufort and Driscoll, their “unconscious competence” (Ambrose et al.). Take the suggestion to research “the larger poetry reading movement” if searches for a particular poetry club are unsuccessful. Knowing to make this kind of move from a specific group to a larger movement is not a simple matter of entering the right search terms; this search strategy draws from knowledge of the genre
expectations embedded in ethnography, that the reader may expect to see connections between the research site and the larger structures in which people at that site are embedded. But such a move may be completely unintuitive to the student, who might reasonably assume that his job is to describe one specific group. Library searches are influenced by the researcher’s understanding of genre conventions, but assignment instructions like these emphasize access as a process of achieving the right level of specificity.

In addition to framing library research in terms of how to access materials, these works also create a divide between “scholarly” and “popular” sources that suggest a universal form of “academic” writing that can lead to mutt genres. Beaufort and Driscoll’s discourse community analysis assignment reminds students that “your research should include appropriate primary or secondary sources to support or amplify your field research. You may use sources from popular magazines, newspapers, non-scholarly Internet sites, or other sources, but you need to include at least three scholarly sources, as this is an academic essay” (205). This requirement, which groups sources in terms of “scholarly” and “popular,” is likely meant to encourage students to learn to read academic journal articles and monographs. But in relying on “scholarly” and “popular,” Beaufort and Driscoll contribute to the formation of the mutt genre of “the research paper” by implying that all “scholarly” sources, regardless of disciplinary focus, can be used interchangeably within the same paper, a view inconsistent with most research-based genres.

**Library research in composition: generic “good research”**

When we frame secondary research as a simple matter of how to find sources, we obscure all of the additional constraints limiting source selection. Treating secondary research as access, then, contributes to the mutt genre of “the research paper.” But as we saw in Beaufort’s work, this emphasis on access is not the only factor contributing to mutt genres. In this section, I demonstrate how composition’s use of one-shot instruction portrays “research” as a generic skill. I then turn to a research instruction session at The University to illustrate how
the “one-shot,” a common practice in FYC classes and programs across the country, encourages mutt genres and discourages the research awareness necessary for successful transfer.

Criticisms of one-shot instruction are often voiced in library and information science scholarship. Many of these criticisms begin by addressing the coupling of one-shot instruction with FYC classrooms and programs. Donald Barclay and Darcie Reimann Barclay, reporting on their study of 149 institutions, found that 39% of students receiving library instruction in the 1991-1992 school year received that instruction through a first-year composition course. Sixty-one percent of librarians surveyed reported that freshman writing was “very important” to their instruction program (215). Barclay and Barclay were troubled by this link between first-year writing classes and the library. They noted that as composition turned to process writing in the 1960s and 1970s, librarians were in the midst of their own process movement, transitioning from bibliographic instruction and its accompanying library tour to “active learning, instruction across the curriculum, and alternatives to both the traditional term paper and the traditional one-shot lecture” (216). The one-hour generalized instruction session given to first year writing classes served neither librarians’ nor instructors’ goals (216).

Barclay and Barclay’s survey data suggests that composition-based library instruction in the early 1990s followed an outdated format for a no longer existent form of writing course. Recent scholarly collaborations between librarians and compositionists suggest that composition continues to rely on the one-shot library instruction session. This instruction encourages a view of research that prevents students from developing either genre awareness or information literacy, a problem that composition has recently begun to acknowledge in a scattering of articles. In “Transforming the One-Shot Library Session into Pedagogical Collaboration,” Heidi Jacobs, a librarian, and Dale Jacobs, a composition professor, point to a common oversight made by composition instructors when they schedule library visits for their students:

Even though as teachers we insisted that students see writing as a process, we tended not to say the same things about research. We both knew that scholarly research was never linear and never replicable from project to project, yet our
course schedules and assignments revealed an assumption that a single “dose” of library instruction would teach students all they needed to know about research. Even though we constantly challenged the recurrent view that a first-year composition course is a one-stop site at which to “fix” student writing or that composition could be an inoculation for “bad” student writing, we did not apply the same ideas to the teaching of research within composition courses. (74)

Jacobs and Jacobs write that in requesting one-shot instruction, Dale was asking the librarians to “inoculate his students against bad research habits, much as others on campus were asking him to inoculate their students against bad writing habits” (75). One of composition’s perennial concerns is with university and public perceptions of the first-year writing course as a fix-it shop for poor writers, as an inoculation against bad spelling, grammar, and style, and as a deterrent against plagiarism. As a field, we are frustrated by the expectation that we can “fix” these issues in a single semester. And yet, when requesting library instruction, we suggest that a single class session is sufficient to teach “research.”

In addition to sending the message that library research is a simple process of access that can be learned in a single hour, compositionists who take students to the library for one-shot sessions undermine their treatment of research and writing as integrated and recursive processes. Margaret Artman, Erica Frisicaro-Pawlowski, and Robert Monge argue that “research skills cannot be taught in ‘one shot,’ just as writing cannot be taught in one term” (105), and that composition’s continued reliance on one-shot instruction “serve[s] to reinforce the perception that the research process is separate from (and more facile than) the writing process, that teaching students effective research practices can be reduced to a single, skills-based class session, and that, ultimately, literacy in information is only useful or valuable if tied to that well-worn (and ill-formed) genre, the academic research paper” (96).

Anecdotal evidence from more recent composition scholarship suggests that one-shot library instruction is still a commonly-employed practice within composition. Carolyn Willis and William Joseph Thomas interviewed students at their library and found that 69% were first year students, and the most frequently represented class was the first-year composition course (434). More recent studies of composition’s use of library instruction would need to be conducted in
order to determine what place library instruction continues to have in composition. But the presence of criticisms such as those offered by Jacobs and Jacobs and Artman, Frisicaro-Pawlowski, and Monge suggest that the one-shot instruction session is a regular feature of many composition programs.

Library instruction at The University suggests that library instruction for FYC continues to be a common practice; even though no researched assignments are required in the course, dozens of FYC classes visit the library for instruction each term. Many of the library instruction sessions at The University, like many across the country, followed the same basic format, including an introduction to the libraries and their holdings, a discussion of scholarly and popular sources, a virtual tour of the catalog and databases, and a physical tour of one or more of the libraries. Here I describe one of these sessions to demonstrate how use of the “one-shot” perpetuates mutt research.

I met with Katie, a graduate student in library science completing a practicum at University Library, shortly after she received her first instruction request. Katie had difficulty preparing for the session because she had only sparse information about the class. Katie knew that she had been assigned to Amber’s College Writing class, as well as what modules Amber had selected from the instruction request website (an introduction to the library catalog and databases, as well as a discussion of scholarly and popular resources), but initially knew nothing about the course theme or the assignment for which the class was visiting the library. To find more information, Katie searched for the course in The University’s online catalog. The course description, as we saw in Chapter 1, emphasizes “arguments that matter in academic contexts,” and suggests that College Writing is meant as a primer in academic writing. Amber, we learned in Chapter 1, is not entirely comfortable with this aim. Based on her description of credible sources and on her previous unit exploring “academic writing,” it is clear that Amber favors a model of writing influenced by genre studies. She wants students to eschew the generic research paper in favor of a variety of formats based on the research question and chosen audience. She recognizes that what will count as “credible” research depends on a host of factors, and wants
students to make conscious and deliberate choices based on these factors. Katie knew nothing about these aspects of Amber’s class, and was left to build the session based on the course description and the request for a discussion of scholarly and popular resources. She was left to fall back on equally general principles about research. Without a copy of the assignment or a meeting with Amber, Katie had no sense for Amber’s goals.

Midway through her planning phase, Katie received an e-mail response from Amber that included a copy of the community-based research assignment. Armed with this new information, Katie selected databases that would be of use to students’ food-related projects. Her selection of JSTOR, a personal favorite, was an easy decision, because it contains only full-text journal articles. Katie also decided to cover ProQuest Research Library, because although “it searches academic stuff and trade publications, and newspapers, and magazines,” the database “will also separate those for you,” making it easy for students to identify scholarly material. Katie thought the Alternative Press Index might be a valuable resource because of its coverage of alternative food movements, but decided not to include the database on her handout because she was not sure whether or not students were allowed to use newspaper articles as sources.

This selection of databases suggests that, even though she had a copy of Amber’s assignment, Katie did not have a sense for Amber’s attitudes toward particular types of sources. Her choice not to include the Alternative Press Index indicates that she was relying on a generalized distinction between “scholarly” and “popular” sources suggested by the language in the course description.

One week later, Katie had finished preparing and was ready to teach Amber’s class. In her introductory remarks, Katie said, “You are writing a food paper for this class, partially on your experience and partially on research.” When modeling searches in ProQuest Research Library, Katie explained that it is a good general database, but that because it “contains scholarly and non-scholarly sources,” students need to filter out the popular sources. Following this discussion of the catalog and databases, Katie handed out some sample publications for
students to identify as scholarly or popular. Katie concluded the session by having the class collaboratively develop a list of criteria distinguishing between the two types of publications.

I spoke with Amber about one week after the session. Amber was pleased with the databases Katie selected for her students, which were “tailored” to them, as well as with the practice searches Katie had developed (corn subsidies, bovine growth hormone, agribusiness, organic food, slow food, and cornfed beef). Additionally, Amber thought Katie “was very practical about evaluating what ProQuest [Research Library] is good for, what its strengths and weaknesses are.” “And yet,” Amber says of Katie’s session and library instruction sessions at The University more generally, “it always feels like there’s some little tiny misunderstanding, like [the librarians] haven’t understood some aspect of [the assignment].”

One such misunderstanding was detectable in Katie’s opening remarks about the paper being “partially on your experience and partially on research,” which implied that research refers only to the activity of searching for sources in the library, and that students’ interviews, surveys, and observations fall under the realm of personal experience. Amber categorized all of these methods as part of the research process, and included the experiential component in the project precisely because “real” researchers rely on observation and experience: “I think it’s just so fake to say that what we do in the world doesn’t count. Or that your own observations and impressions don’t mean anything. I think those are powerful, and it can matter to the individual and make the project worthwhile.”

The misunderstanding that “really bothers” Amber centers on Katie’s descriptions of scholarly and popular: “The University librarians say ‘well there’s popular and then there’s
There was a Venn diagram at some point, I think, that was about popular and scholarly. But that distinction is not always clear, and sometimes it’s not even relevant.” Amber wants to help her students “see that there’s a lot of gray area around that, and that using a popular source doesn’t necessarily mean that you’ve lost credibility or it can’t hold up in academic writing.” Amber prefers the word credible over the word scholarly, and sees “a big middle ground where you have stuff that is credible, even though it’s popular.”

Criticisms like Amber’s are often leveled at the librarians we ask to teach our students. The librarian just didn’t “get” our course or the librarian’s view of research disagrees with our own. I would argue that the two problems Amber describes – limiting “research” to refer only to library research and treating scholarly and popular as binaries – are not so much a result of a misunderstanding between composition instructors and librarians as they are a consequence of library instruction requests. Katie tailored her lecture based on the sparse information she has about Amber’s assignment. Katie’s tailoring of the instruction to Amber’s particular research project is consistent with arguments from both composition and library and information science that focus on the context-specific nature of research. The carefully-chosen databases resist a characterization of “the research process” in which all researchers follow the same steps. Katie’s careful selection of research tools and development of food-related searches for Amber’s class demonstrate her awareness that research tools must be adapted to particular projects.

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Amber’s statement about the Venn diagram representing scholarly and popular sources is a good example of a problem I have encountered with some of my data. I attended this instruction session, and know that Katie used multiple Venn diagrams to illustrate the AND, OR, and NOT commands in Boolean searching, but did not rely on such diagrams to discuss the terms “scholarly” and “popular.”

When I encounter one of these sorts of contradictions, I feel compelled to “fix” the statement, to pin down an accurate account of events, especially when the inaccurate account may lead a reader to think negatively of one of the participants. In this case, Amber’s statement about the Venn diagram attributes a definition of scholarly and popular to Katie that is not borne out by Katie’s interview, or by any of the librarians’ interviews. At the same time, I need to extend the same courtesy to Amber’s memory as I do to the other participants’ memories. There are surely gaps and inconsistencies in all of the interviews, and I just happened to be in a position to observe the contradiction between Amber’s interview and her class’s library instruction session. Furthermore, my interviews were designed to get at participants’ feelings and beliefs about research, and Amber’s mis-remembrance of the scholarly/popular Venn diagram shows us her beliefs about how library instruction portrays differences between scholarly and popular.
But this limited information also forces Katie to rely on generic descriptions of research that undermine this project-specific view. Even though she prefers to avoid the language of “scholarly” and “popular” sources, instead opting for the context-specific terms “credible” and “non-credible,” Amber selected “scholarly and popular” from the menu of modules available on the library instruction request form. Coupled with the lack of information about Amber’s course goals, this choice left Katie to assume that Amber viewed “scholarly” and “popular” in stark terms. While her selection of databases was built on a disciplinary and context-specific model of research, Amber’s use of the generic terms “scholarly” and “popular” suggest context-free categories of sources.

Although she requested that Katie address scholarly and popular sources, Amber does not appear particularly concerned about whether a source fits into either of these categories. Part of the reason that Amber prefers to discuss sources in terms of credibility is that scholarly and popular are difficult to define. In her earlier unit on academic writing, Amber talked to her students about scholars who eschew footnotes and provide a bibliography at the end of their texts so as to avoid “burdening the text itself with the notes,” a practice which leaves readers to decide whether or not to hunt down sources in the bibliography. “Does that count as popular or scholarly? And can you use it?” Furthermore, sometimes students need to look to resources that are outside a narrow definition of scholarly writing in order to convince their readers. Amber’s students, who were doing community-based projects, would not be successful if they restricted themselves to journal articles. Instead, they needed sources that demonstrated that a particular problem was happening in a particular community. Borrowing from Chris Thaiss and Terry Myers Zawacki, whose work she discussed with her students the academic writing unit, Amber says that students should seek credible sources. Amber says that when deciding whether to use a source, students should look for evidence that the writer has been “disciplined, open-minded, and persistent in study,” and students should also check that the source “is also directed to a reader who may be sort of skeptical and needs evidence in support of the argument.”
Amber thinks her class unit on academic writing, in which students analyze the structure, evidence, and language of a piece of writing, was particularly helpful to students because it encouraged them to exchange a view of sources as scholarly or popular for a view of sources as credible or non-credible, because “not everything in there was obviously academic writing. It wasn’t all pulled from a journal.” A lot of the pieces students analyzed “may not fit what the librarians say,” by which Amber means the pieces do not include footnotes, do not appear in journals, and are not published by a scholarly press. These essays do, however, depict a writer “who has clearly done their homework.” Amber wants her students to “do their homework” as well, choosing sources that are not necessarily academic, but carefully researched and well-reasoned.

Without knowing anything about the preceding unit on academic writing and with sparse information about the current assignment, Katie was forced to make a number of assumptions about Amber’s expectations. Katie chose one database based on its ability to separate the “academic” articles from the “journalism.” She rejected a database that she thought could be valuable to students’ projects because she suspected Amber did not want students using non-scholarly sources. Katie sees great value in discussing the wealth of resources available through open web searches, but hesitated to do so because it might have left students confused about what was scholarly and what was popular. In doing all of these things, Katie taught a view of research that neither she nor Amber appears to endorse.

From a genre studies perspective, there are many good reasons to discontinue one-shot instruction. Such instruction forces generic language about research and encourages a sort of mutt research that, while imagined to transfer to other writing contexts, only perpetuates a view of “good research” incompatible with the varied research situations students face. While I agree that alternatives to the one-shot, such as course-integrated instruction (in which a librarian is a co-instructor or at the very least a frequent classroom participant) or for-credit information literacy courses (in which the librarian is the sole instructor for an entire course), offer much stronger models of research, I recognize that at many institutions, time, labor, and cost
limitations prevent these kinds of approaches, and that library instruction in first-year composition is likely to continue at many institutions. I argue that by bringing WAW pedagogy into more deliberate relationship with our requests for library instruction, we can help students to develop the organizational knowledge of libraries necessary to help them choose antecedents wisely and develop research awareness.

**Library instruction as researching-about-research**

Criticisms of the one-shot session are most often framed in terms of time. The constraints of these sessions – 50 minutes in which librarians must discuss databases, the library catalog, scholarly and popular sources, and evaluating websites – limits opportunities for nuanced discussions about research. But I would argue, based on the findings from the previous section, that the problem is not so much the time allotted for library instruction as the way in which we as requesters frame these sessions. While sensitive to arguments like Artman, Friscar-Pawlowski, and Monge’s, which suggest that our use of one-shot instruction in FYC can make it appear as though “research” is a simple skill easily mastered, I would counter that there is nothing inherently wrong with providing an introduction to research. Instead of abolishing library instruction, we should pay more careful attention to our own roles in shaping how research is portrayed in these sessions and imagine new ways of working with our librarian colleagues to re-envision the library session as “Researching About Research.” In teaching *about* research, librarians are freed from teaching discrete tools in favor of teaching processes of research and adapting those processes to different contexts. Here I turn to Maureen, one of the librarians at The University, whose departure from the typical instruction model permitted her to avoid teaching *how to* research and instead teach *about* research.

Shortly after being assigned to teach Lindsay’s College Writing students, Maureen contacted Lindsay to learn more about her class. From the start, Maureen was most concerned with the range of topics Lindsay’s students had selected: “It’s huge. It’s all over the map. How do I pick one database to teach to the students? And I’m remembering the feedback that I’ve gotten in the past, especially one [evaluation] I had the week before, which said ‘yeah, it’s a great
session, but I’m a music student. Why didn’t you demonstrate a music database?” Maureen
views that student’s feedback as evidence of a recurring problem in her library instruction
sessions: “How do I balance this need to teach search strategies, search commonalities [. . .] with
the fact that if I use PsycInfo, the music students aren’t gonna get as much out of that?” Even
though Maureen asserts that the search strategies are the same for multiple databases, students
“sort of tune out, because they’re like, well this is PsycInfo. I’m not a psychology student.”
Maureen’s second concern about library instruction as she had previously approached it is that
the activities included on the instruction request form were not the only or even the main goals
she had for students: “It’s more than just what the sheet has, which is the catalog, databases,
[the library website], whatever. It’s more than that. It’s what those tools do to help you create a
research paper.” For Maureen, the instruction request form depicts research instruction as a
collection of “how to”s: how to use a catalog, how to use a database, how to use the library
website. Instead, Maureen wants to help students understand how the tools function within the
organization of the library.

Faced with these concerns, Maureen redesigned her instruction session to address
Lindsay’s stated goal (helping students find resources for their projects) as well as her own goal
(teaching students about library organization). She finds the library’s current search tools
unfriendly to new users, and furthermore thinks that to use the tools requires subject-specific
knowledge that students may not have: “That assumes you know what a social science is, even a
word like sociology or psychology. [Students] don’t always understand you’re talking about
behavior, you’re talking about how people think [. . .]. I guess I just really feel like it’s hidden.”
Maureen decided that she needed to introduce students to a concept that librarians call “upper-
level browse,” the categories under which library information is organized. With the help of
subject-specialists, Maureen created branching smart charts for each of these categories,
including art; business; engineering; government, politics, and law; health sciences; humanities;
international studies; science; social sciences; and news and current events. Each of these main
fields branched into subfields; health sciences, for example, had 47 branching bubbles, and
some of these bubbles had bubbles of their own. She gathered the charts into a packet, making enough copies so that all students could have at least two packets: one to use during the session and one to help them with a paper for another class.  

Maureen had written on the whiteboard before class:

Library information is **organized**

If you can place your topic into this structure...

- finding information will be **easier**
- you will find more **relevant** information

AND
- you will have a **stronger paper** and **better grade**

Maureen carried this theme of context and organization throughout the session. She told the class that “to do good research, you need to know how information in the library is organized, the structure of information in the library. We are going to place your paper topics into this structure.” Before Maureen demonstrated the catalog or databases, she had students use the packet to learn about the fields in which they might place their topics. The top sheet of the packet asked students “Where do you fit in academia?” and instructed them to use the packet to place their topics within one or more contexts. In emphasizing the “upper-level browse” categories used by the library, Maureen offered students a means of developing the first of the ACRL’s core competencies for information literacy. By identifying a disciplinary context for their work, students might have more successfully considered the different ways they could approach a topic, and for each of those options, “determine[d] the nature and extent of information needed.”

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6 Although including the organizers would be a useful visual representation of Maureen’s emphasis on teaching about research rather than teaching students how to use research tools, doing so would raise serious representational issues in my work. Maureen may choose to publish these charts in her own scholarship; therefore, to protect Maureen’s anonymity (as well as the anonymity of all of my participants) I have decided not to include the organizers in this chapter.
Maureen did not pre-select databases well-suited to students’ topics. Instead, she took on the mantle of novice researcher and showed students how she could use the charts to find useful information about her topic. She chose the death penalty, and began her search not by typing “death penalty” into a database, but by brainstorming different aspects of the topic she might write about and connecting each aspect to one or more of the academic charts. If she were interested in why people commit crimes, she might look to the social sciences chart and its subdivision of psychology. When she encountered a “new” term within the social sciences chart – sociology – Maureen pulled up a dictionary to find a definition. Once students had learned some of the vocabulary of the fields they had chosen, Maureen had them use that vocabulary to locate a field-specific encyclopedia. At first glance, this activity seems quite similar to the encyclopedia usage that Fister criticizes. But Maureen did not ask students to use encyclopedias to get a general overview of their topics; instead, she encouraged students to use field-specific encyclopedias to cultivate awareness of the disciplines whose conversations they were entering through their researched essays. In following these steps, Maureen demonstrated that different research questions on the same topic may lead students to different disciplines, and that students will need to learn at least a little bit about each discipline before they can do research within it.

Maureen’s use of the charts in conjunction with library instruction might have helped students develop the ACRL’s second competency, to “access needed information effectively and efficiently.” Instead of demonstrating how to search for information on their topics, Maureen taught students to build their investigations from their initial grounding in particular disciplinary contexts. When students had selected possible academic contexts for their work, Maureen directed them to the library-created research guides for each discipline, which contain top-ranked discipline-specific databases and other research tools. Maureen’s session resisted a generic “research process” for an equally generic “research paper.” In focusing on the various academic contexts within which students might situate their research and in teaching students to locate overviews of a topic to learn its specialized vocabulary, Maureen helped students learn
not just how library information is organized, but how to place their topics within disciplines and to conduct their secondary research within disciplinary frameworks. She encourages students to develop a view of researched work that relies not just on a generic “academic” context, but on disciplinary and sub-disciplinary contexts. Although she relied on the term “research paper” (which was perhaps inevitable, given that those requesting library instruction usually relied upon this term), Maureen, in shifting the emphasis away from how to use library tools to how those tools work, suggests that strong research requires conscious and deliberate manipulation of those tools.

Reflecting on the session, Maureen was pleased with the charts, but concerned that students might not have gotten the resources they needed: “I feel really bad that I couldn’t talk with them as much about search strategy,” that is, about how to enter search terms into a database. At the same time, she was not sure that teaching how to search was as valuable as teaching how library information is organized: “I could stand up there and demonstrate five different databases and put different percentages of people to sleep at different times, or I could do this one concept. It’s more than just the databases. It’s like, what do you want to do with the databases?” She describes her goals for library instruction: “I know this might be a pie-in-the-sky kind of thing, but I want them to think about what information they want, not just whatever information they find.” She views the charts as “a step in that direction.”

Maureen’s session offers a promising alternative method of teaching source gathering in FYC. In placing less emphasis on the mechanics of how to use the library and more emphasis on how the library is organized, Maureen encourages students to situate their research questions within particular disciplinary contexts, much in the same way we saw Amber do in Chapter 1. From this foundation, Maureen frames source gathering not as a product of routing through the catalog or databases, but using resources well-respected within a discipline to find relevant materials. In so doing, she turns the instruction session commonly understood as “how to research” into researching-about-research.
Conclusion

Based on the criticisms of one-shot instruction emerging from both library and information science and composition, the easiest solution to the problem of decontextualized library sessions and their treatment of research as a discrete skill would be to abandon these sessions. But, as I suggested earlier, funding and other institutional issues may make alternatives to one-shot instruction, such as course-integrated library instruction or librarian-led for-credit research courses, impossible. What follows, then, are solutions that do not throw out library instruction, but that call for instructors and librarians to re-evaluate the aims of library instruction in first-year composition.

Compositionists need to pay greater attention to the ways in which we portray library research in our scholarship, textbooks, and classrooms, and more seriously consider the effects of these portrayals on our messages about writing. The picture of research we present to our students through our scholarship, and especially in one-shot instruction, obscures all of the background work that precedes our use of a catalog or database search box. In “Desperately Seeking Citations,” librarian Gloria Leckie writes that faculty members, already often expert researchers in their fields, can fall into a number of assumptions that create difficulty for students. Faculty assume that students will do the kind of background reading typical of their own work, something students can lack the inclination, and more often the time, to do (203). They assume that students see gradations of scholarly sources, and can use different types of scholarly sources for different applications (204). They assume that students already have scholarly search strategies, and require only technical instructions for how to access the right material (205). Within Ambrose et al.’s framework, these assumptions are representative of faculty’s “unconscious competence.” Faculty need to interrogate these assumptions and make disciplinary ways of research more clear to students.

When we conduct secondary research, we rely on an information-gathering process built on our knowledge of composition. By checking our RSS readers or flipping through hard copies of journals sent to our home and campus mailboxes, we continually build mental maps of our
discipline. We are well-acquainted with the PE1400s of the library stacks, and we know which electronic databases will grant access to leading periodicals. We already know many of the key concepts of the field, which allow us to identify which information is most relevant to our research questions. All of this background helps us to cultivate exigencies for writing; to borrow Wardle’s terms, we know not just what we are writing, but also why we are writing about it (“Mutt Genres” 777). Of course, our students are not likely to subscribe to discipline-specific journals. They may not have the controlled vocabulary necessary to alight on the best search terms for their topics. They do not know the leading participants, watershed moments, or touchstone texts of their fields of study. We should not expect them to have this kind of disciplinary knowledge, but we can improve their abilities as researchers by replacing lessons in “how to research” with lessons about library organization, which may help students shift from a view of library searches as a hunting and pecking method of finding scholarly sources to a process of situating themselves in an ongoing conversation.

To help negotiate this shift from learning how to research to teaching about research, we need to upgrade our metaphors for source gathering. In “Making Peace with the Research Essay,” Gay Lynn Crossley describes the implications of “finding” sources: “We can ‘find’ four-leaf clovers, but I hope we don’t associate (only) luck with conducting research. I can ‘find’ my dog’s stuffed elephant once I stumble over it, but I don’t trust that I’ll stumble on the right journal article when I go to the library” (166). Crossley prefers “collecting,” which implies control. Collectors make careful decisions about which objects to select, and understand that some objects are better suited to our needs than others: “When we ‘collect’ Nolan Ryan baseball cards, we aren’t just satisfied with what we ‘find.’ We’re more discriminating. We’re not as interested in the common cards as we are with his rookie card. We’re not looking for cards we already own. We’re looking for the card that will add something to, or complete, our collection” (167).

As collectors, students could gather sources with regard to their values or functions, becoming curators of the materials they collect and making careful decisions about which
materials to take. This metaphor of collection implies a more valuable method for evaluating sources. Rather than categorizing sources as “scholarly” or “popular,” for example, the collector considers the fit of a source within a particular disciplinary framework. I follow the implications of this shift in perspective in Chapter 3.

If students view themselves as collectors rather than finders of sources, they can also pay more careful attention to how different sources function in their work. Crossley suggests that students frequently resort to writing “he says” when incorporating a source because they have not been taught to look for how their sources function. When seeing themselves as collectors, students can also develop language for how different sources might function in their papers. I explore these functions in greater detail in Chapter 4.
If we see FYC as a potential site for disrupting the maintenance of strict domain boundaries, if we want to encourage students to draw from their full range of discursive knowledge, and if we want students to draw on antecedent genres they are familiar with in order to negotiate what they perceive as new and future rhetorical situations, we must intervene at the very beginning of the course in order to make possibilities and processes of domain crossing explicit and clear – Mary Jo Reiff and Anis Bawarshi, “Tracing Discursive Resources”

It’s weird. I didn’t really come up with exactly what I wanted to present in my research until I got to look at some of the sources and see what they had to say. And I sort of let that dictate how my research was going to develop. – Adrian, composition student

In the previous two chapters, I followed instructors at The University through the first two phases of their research units, and observed the tensions between their desire to prepare students for academic writing situations and their sense that there is no generalizable process applicable to all academic writing situations. In each chapter, I suggested that WAW pedagogies, with their emphasis on teaching genre awareness, can begin to resolve these tensions by helping students to cultivate awareness of writing. WAW strategies, I argued, can turn our attention from how to write a research paper to how research writing works. Instead of teaching students to “choose a topic,” we might teach them to “ask a relevant question.” Instead of asking students to “find” sources, we might encourage them to “collect” sources. In these ways, WAW pedagogies can lead to more nuanced strategies for research instruction. This association with research instruction can benefit WAW as well, enhancing the ways in which secondary research is theorized within WAW pedagogies.

In this chapter, I turn to the third phase of the research paper unit: evaluating sources. I explore how students’ antecedent genres influence not just the formats of the researched writing they produce, but their entire approaches to a research project, from how they choose topics to how they cite sources. My interviews and observations at The University indicate that while instructors describe sources in terms of credibility and function, students describe their sources in terms of expertise and accuracy, which suggests that the two groups employ different
antecedents and genre strategies when approaching researched assignments. While instructors employ the antecedent strategy of genre awareness, which allows them to investigate the expectations posed by new writing situations and choose sources based on the criteria of credibility and function, students appear to employ the antecedent genre of “the research paper,” which they view as a test of knowledge. This view of researched writing, I suggest, encourages students to evaluate sources as “scholarly” or “popular” using textual markers of expertise and accuracy. Drawing from studies of students’ ability to transfer knowledge from high school to college writing, I argue that to evaluate sources according to credibility or function, students must learn to create conceptual maps of the conversations they wish to enter and use these maps to determine which sources to use. I describe how three students in one course learned to make such maps, and how these maps allowed them to evaluate sources based on function rather than on generic markers of expertise. I close the chapter by explaining how WAW, with its emphasis on teaching about writing, can help us incorporate these mapping skills into our research instruction. At the same time, such mapping will complicate the often generalized depiction of secondary research within WAW pedagogies.

**Antecedent research genres**

The concept of the antecedent genre, originally formulated by Kathleen Jamieson and popularized by Devitt in *Writing Genres*, was initially used to describe genres taught in FYC that could assist or hinder students’ success in future writing situations. Antecedents, Devitt claims, should not be the focus of writing instruction, but are nonetheless a byproduct of that instruction; when students learn genre awareness, they will also learn genres (203). The genres that instructors use as a means of promoting genre awareness will be added to students’ genre repertoires, a fact that has led Devitt and others to ask which antecedents would best serve students in college (203-4). Later, in “Transferability and Genres,” Devitt clarifies this position. Genres cannot be unproblematically transferred from one context to the next; rather, “writers use the genres they know when faced with a genre they do not know” (222). Antecedents, when well chosen and combined with genre awareness, can help students begin to analyze and write
into new genres. Instructors who wish to teach genre as a means of promoting awareness about writing might ask if “the research paper” or any of its variants would serve students well as they adapt to other writing situations, and consider alternative genres that might serve better in other contexts.

More recently, antecedent genres have been used as a tool for analysis. Increasingly, that tool is being used to study what antecedents students transfer from high school into FYC (Rounsaville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi; Reiff and Bawarshi, “Tracing”). These studies have explored the conditions under which students transfer either whole genres or genre strategies. Both Devitt and Rounsaville, Goldberg, and Bawarshi found that when faced with a new writing situation, students tend not to apply skills or techniques learned from previous genres, but instead whole genres. These antecedents can certainly prove useful in writing the new genre; the student who has written researched papers in one setting will likely be better able to integrate quotations and paraphrases in a subsequent research assignment. But the subsequent paper, Devitt argues, represents a unique writing event (“Transferability” 219). The differences between the old and new situations are often obscured, which leads students to import whole genres to the new situations.

Genres, as I described in Chapter 1, are not equal to the sum of their formal features, but are instead “socially situated and culturally embedded” (Bawarshi and Reiff 197). Devitt argues in “Teaching Critical Genre Awareness” that “when writers take up a genre, they take up that genre’s ideology” (339). When the new writing task has the same label as the antecedent, students may reasonably assume that their old model is sufficient for the new situation. What students may not realize is that while the genre label remains the same, the genre has changed. That labeling can obscure different values and beliefs represented by the different situations, even when those situations appear so similar, such as a research paper in a high school literature course and a research paper in a first-year writing classroom.

In the “Genres in Transition” featured session at CCCC 2012, Devitt likened antecedent genres to “baggage.” Just as we all carry luggage throughout our travels, we carry genre baggage
into new writing situations. The key to successful use of antecedent genres, Devitt argues, is much like the key to good packing. As we travel more often, we “learn what we can leave behind, what must come with us, and how to make good use of what we packed.” Likewise, to use antecedent genres successfully, we need to be able to identify those genres and apply them to new writing situations. To extend Devitt’s analogy, just as a snowsuit would be a good choice for an Alaskan cruise but a poor choice for a Caribbean cruise, a book report would be a poor antecedent for a successful book review.

Devitt’s choice of the word “baggage” suggests that our earlier genre knowledge may weigh us down, that we might apply inappropriate antecedent genres to new situations, or, even when we choose strong antecedents, use them incorrectly. But, like luggage, genre baggage is necessary for a successful writing journey. Just as we need luggage to take a trip, we need genres to approach new writing situations. A strong command of our antecedent genres can help us pack more wisely for the next writing task.¹

Understanding the genre baggage students bring into FYC may help us develop stronger approaches to teaching transferrable research knowledge. Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz found that for many entering college students, high school was a process of asserting their expertise, a view supported by all the mechanisms devised to test their knowledge (quizzes, exams, reports). When Sommers and Saltz asked entering college students why faculty give writing assignments, they “focused on evaluation – ‘so that professors can evaluate what we know’” (139). By the end of the first year, a major change had occurred: many students reported seeing “writing as a transaction, an exchange in which they can ‘get and give,’” and viewing “a larger purpose for their writing” than a grade (139).

Sommers and Saltz argue that the most successful student writers are those who make a paradigm shift from seeing academic writing situations as tests of knowledge to seeing these

¹ Devitt’s baggage metaphor is especially useful because it reminds us that genre theory describes all kinds of writing journeys. Although many of the examples we might use to describe antecedent genres, including the research papers I discuss in this chapter, are situated within academic disciplines, the genre awareness advocated by Devitt and others can be used to evaluate any new writing situation.
situations as opportunities for exchange (139-40). To negotiate this shift, students must make a
counter-intuitive move: they must position themselves, at least initially, as novices. When
students take what is in their minds an initially painful step backwards from their personas of
expertise and stop viewing their writing as uncomplicated assertions of knowledge, they can
come to see writing as an exchange. Students who “refuse to be novices,” by contrast, experience
their courses much differently, viewing writing assignments as “games” for which they must
master their teachers’ “secret codes” (134). Sommers and Saltz conclude that when students are
willing to position themselves as novices, they are more inclined to learn disciplinary research
conventions; that is, students who position themselves as novices – not experts – are better able
to learn the scholarly moves that enable their entrance into academic discourses.

Sommers and Saltz are primarily concerned with how students learn to negotiate college
assignments meant to mimic academic research articles (“philosophical writing,” for example).
But their title, “The Novice as Expert,” might be usefully applied to genre-based pedagogies that
encourage students to position themselves as outsiders to any discourse in order to study how
that discourse operates. Reiff and Bawarshi recently made such a claim in “Tracing Discursive
Resources.” They use two terms from educational theory, “low-road transfer” and “high-road
transfer,” to describe students’ use of antecedent genres in first-year composition. When
students use a “low-road” strategy, they import a whole genre to respond to an assignment in
first-year composition. A “high-road” strategy, by contrast, permits students to transfer
knowledge gained from antecedent genres to what they perceive as a new writing situation
(325). Reiff and Bawarshi assign the term “boundary crossers” to those students “who engaged
in high-road transfer as they repurposed and reimagined their prior genre knowledge for use in
new contexts.” “Boundary guarders” are those who held to low-road transfer, “even in the face of
new and disparate tasks” (325). Virtually all students, Reiff and Bawarshi argue, enter first-year
composition as boundary guarders, confidently and uncritically importing antecedent genres.
We might say that students’ emphasis on expertise and accuracy in sources represents, in Reiff
and Bawarshi’s terms, “unwarranted confidence in task recognition and use of prior
knowledge” (324). These students perceive “the research paper” in college writing to indicate a rhetorical situation nearly identical to the rhetorical situations they were faced with in high school, different only in terms of rigor. As a result, they import the whole antecedent genre, along with methods of source evaluation.

Reiff and Bawarshi claim that three key moves help students become crossers instead of guarders. First, students experience a crisis of confidence “prompting them to engage in high-road transfer” (326). Second, students shift from using a whole genre to “smaller constellations of strategies”; rather than importing their antecedent genre of “the research paper,” for example, students might apply various strategies they learned from the research paper to new writing tasks. Finally, students who successfully became “crossers” engaged in what Reiff and Bawarshi label “‘not’ talk”; for example, a new genre like a researched argument is like a high school book report because it requires summary, but also not like a book report because it requires that students use summaries to drive specific arguments. Reiff and Bawarshi postulate that students who never “cross” are those who never identify differences between their antecedent genres and the writing tasks in first-year composition (329).

Reiff and Bawarshi suggest that these three moments – a crisis of confidence, the use of strategies over whole genres, and the use of “‘not’ talk” – enable crossing, and that crossing “may be a key element of transforming knowledge and learning” (330). Their goal, then, is to encourage such crossing in first-year composition, a task they, like Sommers and Saltz, claim requires students to position themselves as novices:

Our “boundary crossers” are students that Sommers and Saltz (2004) would term productive “novices.” Though they were not as certain of the task facing them in their first major papers and what previous writing experiences would serve them best in the new task, they appeared willing to assume a learner’s role. So one part of encouraging boundary crossing might mean talking to students about how to embrace strategically and productively the role of novice, as Sommers and Saltz suggest, in order to draw on and adapt a wider range of prior genre knowledge and attendant resources. (330)

The students in my study were interviewed between two and three months into their first college year, and many were in the process of completing their first college research assignments. It is
likely, then, that they continued to operate based on high school strategies of asserting their expertise such as the ones that Sommers and Saltz and Reiff and Bawarshi observed. I argue that when students view writing as a test of knowledge, they treat the “expert” sources they find as unproblematic statements of fact, more bricks to contribute to pyramids of knowledge. My interviews demonstrate that students do a remarkable job evaluating sources for markers of expertise, and compile impressive lists of experts on their topics. But these experts are representations of an academic imaginary; that is, they are not identified as participants in a wider academic discipline or community, but as universally “scholarly” sources.

In the following sections, I explore how instructors at The University want their students to evaluate the sources they collect for their research papers, and how this view of source evaluation is tied to their understanding of “the research paper” as a macro-genre that can help students to understand how to investigate and participate in communities of writers. I contrast this view of source selection with that of students at The University, who, influenced by the antecedent genres they import into FYC and their instructors’ use of the term “research paper,” view research writing as tests of their knowledge, a view that stands in opposition to instructors’ goals for research writing in FYC.

**Genre awareness as antecedent**

In Chapter 1, I described a tension between instructors’ perceived need to prepare students for academic writing situations and their sense that “academic” is a convenient but inaccurate label for an impossibly broad set of practices. I argued that although these instructors did not identify themselves as practitioners of WAW, they were certainly engaging in WAW-esque pedagogies. With their emphasis on adapting to various rhetorical situations, such WAW-like moves are also evident in the ways instructors spoke about source selection. Instructors’ emphasis on two features of students’ sources – credibility and function – suggests that they want students to cultivate “raised awareness of research writing as a conversation” (Downs and Wardle “Teaching about Writing” 573).
Credibility

Instructors at The University, I suggested in Chapter 2, were uncomfortable using labels such as “scholarly” and “popular.” In her critique of Katie’s library instruction session, Amber says that she wants students to see a “gray area” between scholarly and popular sources, and prefers that they use the labels “credible” and “non-credible” when evaluating sources. Unlike “scholarly” and “popular,” which are usually identified by formal features, credibility is not a formal property embedded in a source; instead, credibility is a product of deliberation, a judgment made after identifying an object of study, who is discussing that object, and how they discuss it. All three of these tasks take place before evaluating an individual source.

For instructors, source evaluation begins by locating the object of study within various contexts. Ben wants students to develop sufficient background to understand the larger contexts of the issues they are writing about: “If you’re talking about a political epoch or particular period in music, you need to understand what’s going on in that epoch, what some of the major developments are.” This background research may not even go into the papers themselves, but is necessary for students to have in order to evaluate the information they find through their research.

Instructors expect that their students will identify groups of people discussing their objects of study. During her class’s library instruction session, one of Amber’s students complained that all of the articles in a Google Scholar results page were saying the same thing, and was disappointed that there was not more variation in the results. Amber replied that the redundancy is “a good sign because that means that you’re in the right place. If you’re not finding more dissenters, if everybody’s kind of on the same thing, then you have a sense of what the consensus is about.” This consensus can give the student insight into not only who is discussing a particular topic, but also who are considered the more authoritative writers on a subject. Amber also encourages students to look at the number of times an article has been cited, which will help clue them in to how “peripheral or central” an article is, and tells students
to “focus on the central stuff. If you’re a beginner, you go there, because this is what other people are sort of agreeing with or finding useful.”

Strong source evaluation also requires knowledge of a particular community’s standards of evidence. Ben talks about audience so often that he expects his students “want to throw something” at him, but he does so because he wants his students to think about what their audiences are likely to know: “You don’t want to talk down to an audience that isn’t well-versed in the topic,” but you also want to avoid providing too much information, because “you can insult them by giving them too much information, too much explanation, because of course they already know this stuff.” The type and number of sources will also change based on the audience. Some audiences, Ben says, require “in-depth support that proves that this thing is actually happening.” Other audiences “have been doing the same research, reading the same source you have. They already know it. So [when] you say it as being true, everybody accepts it. It’s the new law.” This sense of conversational context, far more than generic markers of “scholarly” sources, lets the student understand the standard of evidence he or she needs to use to evaluate sources: “How much you know about your audience to a great extent dictates what sorts of outside sources you’re going to use, what sorts of research you’re actually going to access and cite.”

Function

In addition to wanting their students to consider the credibility of sources relevant to particular conversations, instructors want their students to consider how different sources could function in their papers. As with credibility, function is not a formal property of the source. Brandon asked a librarian to show his students “scholarly databases” and “newspaper databases” to use in their analyses of debates about current events. He wanted his students to “analyze the way the debate was being carried on,” not “to focus on the merits of the arguments themselves, but on how the arguments were being presented, posed, the ways in which the arguments were being ignored in favor of other things and talked around.” Newspaper articles chronicling the debate would allow students an object of analysis. Scholarly articles would
provide tools for analysis, but would also analyze the merits of the arguments, so students would need to be careful not to get pulled into value judgments when using these sources. Brandon’s descriptions demonstrate that different types of sources can allow a writer to make different types of arguments; the genres of a student’s source documents, then, can shape the purpose of that student’s paper.

If the sources students decide to use limit the possible arguments they can make, students should evaluate sources based on what those sources will allow them to do in their papers. When she evaluates students’ sources for their community-based research projects later in the term, Amber plans to focus on the fit between those sources and students’ goals, telling students where they have sufficient sources to meet their goals and where their sources conflict with their goals. Amber does not want students to be too vigilant about finding the “best” possible sources, where “best” is a measure of scholarly quality. Instead, she is more concerned with how students use the sources they get: “What are you doing with what you’ve gathered? How much does that help you to accomplish your goals as a writer?” Amber’s emphasis on writers’ goals, I suggested in Chapter 1, resonates with WAW pedagogy because it helps students to understand not just what they are writing about, but why they are writing about it (Wardle “Mutt Genres” 777). Her description of source selection encourages her students to consider the functions that various sources can fill, and how these functions might help them meet these goals.

This focus on goals allows instructors to encourage students to draw from a wide range of available sources, not only from those sources they might label as academic. To help show students how they might mix a variety of sources in their papers, Kristen provides a scholarly article about how the eponymous heroine of Buffy the Vampire Slayer influenced teenage speech. Kristen describes the article as “an interesting funky way of dealing with research, because it was showing ‘okay, depending upon your topic you’re not just referring to the heavyweight authorities,’” but a mix of theoretical works and pop culture examples, as well as creative vocabulary such as “slayer speak.” Ben is surprised that his students do not appear to
consider podcasts, MP3s, YouTube videos, or government documents as valid sources: “Most of them think book, newspaper, or periodical. That’s it.” Ben’s goal is to get students “to think beyond that, and understand there are many different types of sources you can use.”

Instructors seem less concerned with whether or not students find the “best” sources than they are with the work that sources allow their students to do. According to instructors’ descriptions of research, source evaluation requires that students construct detailed conceptual maps of their research contexts. Students must have background knowledge of the broad topics of their papers, the communities invested in those topics, and what sorts of evidence would best appeal to those communities. Students then must develop goals and choose sources that will help them meet those goals, all the while considering the expectations of their readers. The model of research these instructors advocate does not explicitly invoke genre, but instructors’ emphasis on credibility and function demonstrates that source evaluation cannot take place in a vacuum; instead, source evaluation must always be tied to the expectations supplied by the research context. In instructing students to map the contexts surrounding their research projects and to evaluate sources based on their fit and function within these contexts, instructors are encouraging students to cultivate the kind of awareness Downs and Wardle and other WAW proponents have described, specifically, knowing not only what they are writing, but why they are writing about it and choosing sources that help them achieve their goals. This genre awareness can then act as a powerful antecedent for source selection.

And yet, even as they encourage students to view sources in terms of credibility and function and to select sources appropriate to their chosen audiences, instructors at times fall back on generic descriptions of “academic” sources that mirror their own disciplinary or personal source expectations. For a “position paper” assignment he has been using for many semesters, Ben’s students are required to choose a controversial policy (government, school, community, etc.) and argue for or against that policy. He says that the topics students choose for that assignment are strong predictors of source quality:
If they tend to choose subjects from within popular culture, there tends to be a much greater likelihood that they’re gonna choose sources that aren’t very credible. If they write, for instance, about government policy, they’re gonna cite from government documents, they’re gonna cite from newspaper articles, or even scholarly articles critiquing the controversy in some way. So their sources tend to be much stronger out of the gate. If they write about topics drawn from pop culture, whether it’s entertainment or sports or whatever, they tend to go with entertainment or sports related periodicals.

These periodicals are problematic, Ben asserts, because they are not “weight-bearing” sources: “the writer is speaking from memory or even perhaps proceeding based on urban legend, not feeling any real pressure to pay attention to any kind of standard in terms of the credibility of the information.” Ben describes students from a past term who were arguing about the unfairness of college football’s Bowl Championship Series and built their argument on quotations from athletes and commentators “who are just presenting their opinions. They haven’t done any research on it. In many cases they haven’t even thought through their own opinions very carefully and their arguments fall apart pretty easily when you give them a little nudge.” The sources need to be credible, because they set the foundation for the paper: “If the very foundation of the problem that you’re presenting is tenuous, then you can’t really proceed with the rest of it. So those sources need to be pretty rock solid.”

In Chapter 1, I described a tension between instructors’ perceived need to prepare students for academic writing and their sense that there is no singular form of “academic writing” for which they can prepare students. Ben’s position paper reflects this tension in two ways. The purpose of “the position paper,” as an FYC-specific genre, is “to write an argument” (Wardle “Mutt Genres” 775), not to engage in any of the more complex range of genres that rely on argument. The aim of the assignment – to teach students to build strong arguments – is problematic because those arguments are not taking place in any meaningful context. Such an assignment can lead to a depiction of sources as “scholarly” or “popular.”

When Kristen uses the term “heavyweight authorities,” she encourages students to develop a sense for key participants in a dialogue and to establish credibility by building their arguments on the work of those authorities. Ben speaks of weight much differently. “Weight-
“bearing” sources, at least in the context of this position paper, are identified by their truth value; government publications, newspapers, and scholarly journals are weight-bearing while entertainment and sports based magazines are not. In Ben’s description, the source genres themselves seem evidence enough of this truth.

But even as Ben encourages students to identify audiences and select sources appropriate to those audiences, he remains the primary audience for his students’ writing. His messages about source selection may thus reflect his own disciplinary or personal expectations for sources. Ben’s description of the football coach as a “tenuous” source suggests that he expects students to adhere to his standards of evidence (those of literary criticism), which may compete with the standards of evidence of students’ chosen audiences. Viewed from this perspective, the “truth value” represented by Ben’s “weight-bearing” sources does not refer to any objective reality, but to the types of sources generally considered authoritative in his own discipline. Carroll argued that faculty who were English majors in college may fall into the habit of claiming that what is true for writing about literature is true for all disciplines (10). Ben appears to make such an assumption in his description of sources. Sabrina, too, appears to rely on this generalization when describing the source requirements for her researched assignment: “I’m asking them to have 10 sources, and they all have to be from academic sources. Unless [pause]. No one’s writing on literature. But 10 secondary sources, basically.” Sabrina’s “unless,” followed by a seeming exception to the source rule that would exist if students were writing literary criticism, helps illuminate her understanding of “primary” and “secondary” sources. “Primary” sources refer to written works such as novels, poems, or correspondence; “secondary” sources refer to “academic” sources, which in this case appear to be journal articles. These definitions of primary and secondary sources are specific to Sabrina’s own discipline of literature and the humanities more broadly, but are not generalizable to all disciplines. The murky genre of “the position paper,” however, does not provide either Sabrina or Ben with an opportunity to discuss source evaluation in relation to their own disciplines.
“Research paper” as antecedent

Interviews conducted as they were completing researched assignments suggest that students at The University view source evaluation much differently than their instructors do. Additionally, students are employing an antecedent genre of “the research paper” in some ways at odds with the writing situations they face in FYC. Despite the well-worn argument that students carelessly resort to open web sources for their research, the students I interviewed for this study demonstrated a keen sense for markers of scholarly material, whether they found it through the library or on the open web. The key difference between instructors and students was not one of being “careful” or “careless” when choosing sources, but what criteria members of each group used to evaluate the sources they found. Whereas instructors relied on abstract principles such as credibility and function, students relied on formal properties. When students were asked how they went about selecting sources for their research papers, many emphasized the need for “scholarly” sources, which they identified using two main criteria: the writer’s credentials and the institutions with which the writer was affiliated.

Experts

Students’ source evaluation begins with the writer’s name and credentials, which help determine whether a source is scholarly. Nick googled authors’ names to find out more about them, and ranked sources’ value to his paper hierarchically based on the authors’ affiliations: “If they’re a part of a university they have to be someone credible. And if they’re part of some institution, I think they have some credibility. If they’re like a newspaper reporter, I guess they have some credibility over someone I can’t find on Google.” Adrian used JSTOR almost exclusively to find “scholarly” sources. He favored this database because the articles he found in it included information about authors: “All of the ones that I picked were usually professors at major public universities in the United States. So I knew that what they wrote was going to be ___

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² For students in this study, Google is synonymous with internet. None of the students participating in this study discussed Bing, Yahoo, or any other open web search engine, even though I observed hundreds of students using Bing (the default home page on all library computers) during the library instruction sessions. This suggests that for students, the noun Google stands for all open web search engines and the verb to google means “to search the open web.”
credible, because for one they’re highly educated, and two, it is going to be relevant to the topic.” When Eric looks at a possible source, he wants assurance that a writer is not “just some average Joe,” and looks for a PhD or university affiliation as evidence of the writer’s knowledge.

For students, the presence of a university degree is a strong indicator of a scholarly article. Students also identify scholarly sources by another formal feature: the presence of multiple voices, be those multiple authors or multiple references. When the writer lacked clear credentials, the presence of references could assure students that a source was credible. Before choosing to use an article for their project on barefoot running shoes, Eric and his group mates would “scroll all the way down and see all these sources. So then we would say ‘okay, this is not just off the top of his head.’” Keith sees scholarly articles as those that contain “a lot of input. It could be a bunch of writers writing for one article.” For Keith, a scholarly source combines the work of multiple scholars. Christopher, who sees few differences between scholarly and popular writing in computer engineering, makes his judgment based on how often a piece of writing references others. The more references a source includes, the more scholarly it is. This emphasis on the volume of sources (and not just any sources, but those marked with academic credentials), suggests that students see more PhDs as better than one; multiple references from multiple authors signify the accuracy of the information.

Institutions

In the absence of clear markers like an author’s academic credentials, students look to the reputation of the sponsoring organization to determine whether or not a source is scholarly. Aaron chooses sources based on the institution with which the authors are affiliated: “Anything with the American Association of Psychology Research or something” is a good source to use for his psychological analysis of beatniks. Eric decides that an article on the National Rifle Association website is “automatically pretty legitimate” for his paper on gun control, “because it’s coming from the NRA.” Eric’s assertion that the NRA website is a legitimate source is especially surprising, given that the “stance” of his paper is that “guns are a threat to the existence of humans.” Eric is aware that the NRA represents an opposing view: “[they’re] for
guns, like wanting to hunt and feed the family and stuff.” Tyler, who chooses an article from the
Centers for Disease Control for his paper on the side effects of the H1N1 vaccine, recognizes that
the organization’s bias might influence the information provided by that organization. Tyler
hesitated before using the article because of the CDC’s role in promoting the vaccine: “if the CDC
wants to do it they’re not going to tell you more about the negative effects than the positive
effects. They want people to be happy, not scared.” Although he believes the CDC is “required” to
share the negative effects, “it’s harder to find them.” Ultimately, Tyler elects to use the CDC
source because “they regulated the vaccine, its production, and its usage, which is a big part of
my paper. It’s all about the usage of the vaccine and its side effects.”

Eric’s and Tyler’s reliance on articles from the NRA and the CDC despite their
reservations suggests that both are relying on another marker of credibility: the top-level
domain of the website (.org, .gov) through which they accessed these articles. Adrian also relies
on the top-level domain of a website to determine whether he should proceed: “Anything that
was like .edu or .gov was fine. But anything that was .com, I had to be a little bit more careful.
Or .org was fine most of the time too. But if it said .com I immediately had to be more skeptical.”
Once he decided to click on a web address, the look of the website held many clues to
establishing that website’s credibility. Just the look of the website allowed Adrian to reject
sources: “If the website didn’t have a name that looked like it was official, a formal name or
some type of agency, I would not use it.”

For many students, the library, validated by their instructors’ definitions of scholarly and
popular sources, is another institutional guarantor of credibility. After listing the questions
students might use to evaluate a website, which focus on the author’s credentials, the publisher,
and the institution, Erin says that it is better to eschew these questions. Instead, she should
ignore sites on the open web altogether in favor of library resources, which saves time and
ensures credibility: “It’s almost easier to just use the library website. You know it’s a credible
source.” Eric visited ProQuest Research Library “because I knew that it was a good database
where scholarly articles and good articles would be posted. So I just knew I would be able to go
there and be able to legitimately find a good article or whatever I needed." Tyler finds another source he likes through the reference page of an article from PubMed, but is unsure that it is acceptable because he did not locate it through the library website: “One of them was from the *New York Times*. I don’t know if that’s scholarly enough for the professor. It didn’t come from The University [library] website. It’s a big newspaper though, so maybe. I’ll run it by her.” The *New York Times* is available through University Library. In fact, during many library instruction sessions, including one that Tyler attended, librarians explained that students can read .pdf copies of articles from its foundation in 1851 onward. Because the *New York Times* did not appear in Tyler’s initial search for databases, though, he questions whether he can use the source, demonstrating the institutional influence of the library on his source selection. Students’ description of the library suggests that they see some degree of oversight in the library resources; a source’s presence in the physical building or webpage indicates that it has been vetted by an unseen hand. This appraisal of the sources contained in the library’s physical and electronic spaces is perhaps associated with the top-level domains discussed earlier; university library webpages bear the “.edu” domain suffix that students use to make determinations about accuracy.

**The research paper as test of knowledge**

Although many students have referred to the importance of “credible” sources, their use of this term is somewhat different from that of their instructors. For students, credibility can be determined by looking at the text; their assessment of credibility is built almost entirely on formal markers of expertise and accuracy. A PhD, multiple references, a respected organization – even a source’s mere location in the library – all signal expert knowledge. Based on their descriptions of scholarly sources, we may conclude that students imagine their research papers as tests of knowledge; to produce a successful paper, they showcase their accumulated knowledge by presenting the words and ideas of experts. Even if names like “So-and-so, PhD” or “What’s-her-name, MD” do not have significance to the students who cite them, the markers of credibility alongside these names demonstrate their belonging to this “scholarly” club. Students
recognize the power of institutions as well; to choose the APA as a source is not just presenting a fact, but a reputation for thoroughness and fairness that demands to be taken seriously; to choose the CDC is to align oneself with the weight of privileged scientific discourse supported by the government.

Barbara Walvoord and Lucille McCarthy found that the models of writing that students bring with them to the classroom may “override” the messages they receive from the instructor (85). They use the example of an instructor who asked students to go beyond a “compare and contrast” of two restaurants, but whose use of this very phrase in the assignment instructions activated students’ prior genre of the “compare and contrast” essay (84). In the following section, I suggest that the term “research paper” is a similarly strong label that activates students’ prior genre knowledge. The rhetorical situation of “the research paper,” at first glance, appears to be the same as it was in high school: students gather a prescribed number of sources, follow MLA or a similar format, and submit their assignments for grading. But the instructors’ description of source evaluation indicates that while both high school and college “research papers” represent classroom-based exigencies for writing, these two genres differ in the types of knowledge students are expected to exhibit.

By turning to students’ description of their source use in high school, we can better understand their emphasis on expertise and accuracy in the sources they select for their FYC papers. Students report that in high school, they were not savvy evaluators of print sources. For high school papers, Theresa would find the library shelves covering her topic “and just look through books,” a method she describes as “not very scientific.” Then, a reliable source “was always a book or a published thing.” This definition, she claims, did not adequately prepare her for college level writing; her FYC instructor expected “something from a reliable institution that was objective and could prove everything it said.” Theresa now knows that a printed work is not in itself sufficiently authoritative, and that she needs to look to markers of scholarly material. Theresa’s browsing behavior sets her apart from many of her peers, who relied mostly on specific call numbers when seeking out printed texts. In fact, her browsing, which she sees as an
amateur habit, puts her in company with many of the faculty at The University, who could identify the basic sections of the stacks they frequented most often. Theresa’s description of her high school shelf browsing as “non-scientific” shows that she is now more concerned with the accuracy of the information she finds. Her conflation of vetting for accuracy (a method of source evaluation) with her shelf browsing (a method of source gathering) suggests that for Theresa, source evaluation, which focuses primarily on accuracy, should take place at the same time as source gathering.

Students are especially quick to denounce their high school web-searching skills and the inaccurate or unauthoritative results their searches produced. Nick associates Wikipedia with the papers he wrote as a tenth grader: “When you’re younger, when your research skills are less developed, maybe, you tend to gravitate towards online resources, because they’re a lot easier.” Adrian explains that for a research paper in high school he used Wikipedia, “which now I know is definitely a no-no during research.” At the beginning of his first-year writing course, Tyler searched for sources on Google, which he describes as “the high school way to do it.” He explains that many of his peers did the same, using the “high school easy get-through-your-paper method.” Tyler’s high school instructors “didn’t tell us to go for scholarly sources. They just wanted supporting evidence.” Christopher did not need to be a careful evaluator of sources in high school: “Wikipedia was a pretty good source back then, and searching on Google was pretty effective.” Upon their arrival on campus, students view these web-based sources as markers of their childhood, easier and less sophisticated than the scholarly sources they now know how to find. Students’ emphasis on the relative “ease” of sources like Wikipedia – easier to locate, easier to read, easier to cite – suggest that they see difficulty level as the main difference between their previous and current source use. They imagine themselves to be completing the same basic task, but are doing so with more reliable information.

Although students’ source selection criteria have changed since high school, their description of source evaluation suggests that their antecedent genre of “the research paper,” combined with instructors’ use of an old term to refer to a new writing task, limits their
understanding of research writing to a test of knowledge. Students have learned that search strategies they used in high school allowed them to access “good enough” sources, but that the strategies they are learning in their first year writing classes are granting them access to much more accurate information. When students emphasize expertise, they suggest that while the source expectations have become more rigorous, the antecedent genre of “the research paper” remains mostly the same. Because they view their papers as tests of knowledge, their criteria for sources are directed toward obtaining accurate information from experts.

While students see the difference between high school research papers and college research papers in terms of difficulty and rigor, instructors often see a significant shift in rhetorical situations, or at the very least a new kind of test. Although there is still an undercurrent of “academic” sources that would suggest clear and unambiguous criteria for scholarly and popular sources, there is also a strong emphasis on interpretive qualities of credibility and function. When the instructors emphasize these two criteria, they indicate that source evaluation is more complicated than determining whether or not a source displays expertise and accuracy. Instructors, recognizing the social and ideological nature of genres, understand that sources are credible only when they are credible to a particular audience. Students appear to view the research paper like building a wall; better sources make stronger bricks and more bricks make a better wall. Instructors, however, view the research paper as a much different activity. They want students to imagine themselves not as wall builders but mapmakers, locating their work with an academic discipline, developing a sense for that discipline’s key concepts, and evaluating sources based on the discipline’s standards of evidence and their intended function. In doing so, these instructors are working against the notion that all academic writing situations require the same kinds of sources, all of which can be evaluated using formal markers of expertise. And yet, reliance on the term “the research paper,” which activates students’ previous genre knowledge, obscures this multifaceted view of writing.
Instructors’ and students’ descriptions of source evaluation demonstrate a wide gap between their understanding not just of research, but of genres more broadly. Students’ emphasis on the formal features of the sources they select – such as the academic affiliations and credentials included on the first page of a journal article or the references page at the end of that article – suggest that they view source evaluation in terms of generic “academic” markers. Instructors view source evaluation much differently, claiming that it is dependent on the research context. Students describe source evaluation in terms of general “ball handling” (Russell 58); that is, they assume that the same basic rules and strategies will apply to their source evaluation in other contexts. The instructors’ focus on credibility and function suggests that they are primarily concerned with “learning how to learn” (58); they want students to evaluate sources based on their fit within a particular context.

Another important difference between the groups is how they situate source collection and evaluation within the research process. We might be inclined to assume that for instructors at The University and other academic writers, collection and evaluation are concurrent stages, and to some extent they are. We make determinations about the possible functions or credibility of a source when we decide to print or save it. As we gather sources, we are also developing larger pictures of the conversations we are planning to enter. These pictures help us evaluate how a particular source might function or how credible our readers may find it. This evaluation leads to more gathering, which leads to more evaluation, and so on within a larger recursive process of writing and refining our research questions. Students’ descriptions of sources, which are based nearly entirely on formal features, suggest that collection and evaluation happen in a single step; students look for scholarly or popular markers as they collect sources. Of course, students are also likely to return to source collection many times throughout the writing process, but this return is often framed in terms of formal requirements: “I need more sources.”

If, as Bawarshi has argued, genres constrain our ways of seeing, then the antecedent genre of “the research paper,” when imagined as a test of knowledge, may prevent students from
developing useful context-based evaluative criteria for source selection. To “learn how to learn” what sources are credible, students need to, at least partially, shed their antecedent genres. Based on their description of their source selection processes, students see scholarly as synonymous with expertise. Individual experts are interchangeable, with one expert as good as the next: a scholar is a scholar is a scholar. This view of the scholarly source is at odds with rhetorical genre theory, which holds that a source can only be “scholarly” in its relationship with other sources. Scholarly connotes a web of signification within a discoursal frame, but that web is invisible to students who are citing undifferentiated experts. My point here is not to criticize students for attributing too much authority to texts. The features they associate with scholarly texts – an advanced degree, an institutional affiliation – are often prerequisites for joining academic discussions. But when students use these markers alone, they are prevented from observing how genres function in these conversations.

To help attune students to these features of genre, and to help them become boundary crossers, we might begin by supplying one strategy of genre analysis. Ambrose et al. claim that as novices, students tend to develop “sparse, superficial knowledge structures” for organizing their knowledge, such as grouping information chronologically. Experts, by contrast, develop “rich, meaningful knowledge structures,” which create a stronger platform upon which to add new knowledge (45). We can reasonably expect student-novices to have less knowledge about a topic than teacher-experts, but Ambrose et al. demonstrate that the greater problem might not be what information each group has, but how each group organizes this information. They suggest that teacher-experts with unconscious disciplinary competence are not aware of their organizers, and “erroneously assume that their students have the same structures” (52) as they do. Ambrose et al. found that students and teachers used much different organizational structures. For example, students asked to sort a set of physics problems into groups based their groupings on “surface features,” such as the presence of a pulley in a diagram. Experts asked to group the same problems sorted them based on the physics laws required to solve them (54-5).
Ambrose et al. argue that teachers should provide “concept maps” to students to make their organizational structures more clear. Equipped with these organizers, they argue, students are more likely to learn and retain knowledge. A concept map of art history, for example, would not rely on chronology, but might instead group paintings in terms of techniques, artistic schools, or periods. Ambrose et al. are referring to the kinds of information students need to recall on tests. But viewed as a genre strategy, these concept maps might also help students come to view researched assignments closer to the way their teachers describe them. Based on their criteria for strong sources, many students at The University appear to have a “sparse, superficial knowledge structure”: a source is either “scholarly” or “popular.” This knowledge structure does not enable students to make rich connections across any of the sources they find. Extending Ambrose et al.’s work from tests to writing, we might tentatively conclude that students who develop stronger concept maps – who identify a discipline’s key movements, theories, or concepts – should be better equipped to evaluate sources in terms of credibility and function.

**Students as mapmakers**

In this section, I present three student boundary-crossers who positioned themselves as novice explorers to develop conceptual maps that aided their source evaluation. All three of these students were writing 8-10 page “traditional” research papers for Sabrina’s section of College Writing. This research unit was immediately preceded by a discourse analysis assignment, for which students had to interview faculty members in their majors to learn about the expectations for writing for students and professionals in those majors. I describe each student’s experience navigating the discourse analysis and research assignments to demonstrate how they learned to build conceptual maps upon which to base their source selection. I then examine all three students collectively to draw conclusions about how we might help students develop sharper genre strategies.
Adrian wrote one research paper in high school, which was “more guided” than the paper he is writing for Sabrina’s class. He was excited to have the challenge of coming up with this own topic for Sabrina’s paper, instead of having the topic assigned to him as it was in high school. Adrian enjoys public speaking and is enrolled in a political science class this term, so decided that he would combine these interests to study the links between a president’s approval rating and his personality, an argument he sees himself addressing to political scientists. Adrian’s research for this project demonstrates that he had begun to build a concept map of the discipline of political science through the discourse analysis assignment he completed earlier in the term. His choice to search for articles in JSTOR, for example, emerged from that unit: “I know that for this particular project, I needed scholarly writing in the field of political science. So I just went back to it from literally the last paper. Not more than a week passed.” Adrian’s discourse analysis assignment prepared him to base his search not on a generic definition of “scholarly” sources, but on sources that would be most relevant to his argument about polling and presidential personality. He selected JSTOR because he knew that it contained articles written by political science professors focusing on political psychology. His previous assignment acquainted him with the journal *Political Psychology*, from which he drew three articles for his research paper.

Adrian does not let his evaluation rest on these scholarly markers, but emphasizes the fit of these sources within his growing knowledge of political science and the subdiscipline of political psychology. Reiff and Bawarshi argue that one key move distinguishing boundary guarders and boundary crossers is the use of “‘not’ talk,” which refers to how one genre is similar to, but different from, a previously understood genre (325). Adrian exhibits “not” talk when he makes distinctions among the types of sources he could have used in his paper. Some sources would put his work more in line with political psychologists, while others would allow him to write an article addressed to political scientists who are interested in but not experts about psychology. One of the articles he retrieved from *Political Psychology* “got very scientific in the
abstract and was talking about like the physical process [of psychology] and I said this is not what I’m looking for. I need something that touches on the psychology, but more importantly evaluates a president based on it.” Adrian describes an article that did meet these criteria: “I found one that was like ‘presidential personality revisited from 1980 to 2000,’ and it was evaluating all the presidents from 1980 to 2000 in terms of their personality and how that impacted the way they led. And I said this is the type of thing I want.”

Adrian did not limit himself to the journal he learned about in the discourse analysis unit, because the articles he studied were built on raw polling data. Adrian recognized that to make his own argument about presidential approval rating and personality, he would need to conduct his own analysis of raw polling data. For that information, he sought out polling organizations and eventually settled on The American Presidency Project, a web database with near-daily approval ratings dating back to 1941. Adrian was thrilled to find this data, but initially hesitant to “blindly trust it,” so examined the website’s citations to determine where the polling information came from. Once he learned that the information came primarily from Gallup, he decided to use the information: “Every news outlet will cite Gallup polls. That’s probably one of the largest polling agencies in the country.” He also compared the polls with results from other polling organizations, such as Rasmussen, to ensure that his data was accurate. Throughout his discussion of sources, Adrian suggests that credibility is not necessarily linked with the origins of a source (a printed book or a website), but with the usefulness of that particular source for a particular paper, for the fit of that source within the larger argument.

Through his discourse analysis and research paper assignments, Adrian first develops and then builds upon a mental map of political science, which I visualize in Figures 3.1 and 3.2.
Through the discourse analysis assignment, Adrian learns of a subdiscipline of political science (political psychology), as well as a research tool valuable to studying political science. When he moves to the research paper, Adrian appears to engage in “near transfer”; that is, he appears to have transferred knowledge between similar contexts (Ambrose et al. 108). First, he uses the same map he made for the previous unit and complicates his knowledge of both the subdiscipline of political psychology and the research tools one might use to study political
science. Then, he relies on this new knowledge when deciding which sources to use, understanding, for example, that providing similar findings from competing polling organizations could strengthen his argument. Through studying the “discourse community” of political science (a group perhaps too wide to be represented under a single term but which is nonetheless a foothold for him as he begins his work), Adrian is able to develop procedural knowledge about political science writing, specifically research tools, that allow him to make choices about sources.

**Ethan: from discourse community to procedural knowledge (less-near transfer)**

During his discourse analysis assignment, Adrian developed a concept map of political science, primarily focused on research tools employed within the discipline, that allowed him to make judgments about sources for his researched argument about presidential approval ratings and personality. Ethan builds a similarly strong concept map of political science, but elects to enter a different disciplinary conversation through his research paper. Ethan, who hopes to enter an interdisciplinary political science, psychology, sociology, and economics program in his sophomore year, views Sabrina’s course as an opportunity to learn more about writing in these disciplines. For his disciplinary conventions assignment, Ethan chose to examine one of the fields represented in his interdisciplinary program, political science. His analysis of the field suggests that the disciplinary conventions assignment allowed him to make the high-road transfer necessary for success in first-year composition (Reiff and Bawarshi 315). Ethan exhibits “not” talk when he draws contrasts between political theory and political science, which he originally thought were synonyms. Writing for political science, he now understands, is “essentially like a scientific paper, where you have to say introduction, procedure, etc. And it’s a very stringent format. Whereas political theory is really open-ended. It’s like a combination of history and philosophy, sort of.” Ethan draws on his antecedent genre knowledge to make connections across political science writing and scientific writing, as well as across political theory, history, and philosophy, but his use of “like” and “sort of” demonstrates that the forms of writing used in these fields are not identical.
Once he had drawn these comparisons to known genres, Ethan engages in “not” talk about each of the disciplines: “My very first question was ‘What differentiates political science writing from other writing,’ because I figured if I went and just said how to write a political science paper and it looked the same as a chemistry paper, then I wouldn’t do very well. So I decided the main thing I needed to know was what was different.” Ethan’s focus on these differences suggests that he is engaging in the kind of “not” talk that can help him apply genre awareness to other contexts. I visualize Ethan’s mental schema of political science in Figure 3.3.

![Figure 3.3: Ethan, concept map for discourse analysis assignment](image)

Like Adrian, Ethan begins with a broad concept of a discipline (political science). Then, based on the information he receives from an interview with a political science professor, Ethan creates a new mental schema for the field, splitting it into political science and political theory. Unlike Adrian, who examines the research tools of the discipline, Ethan begins with formal genre conventions, a strategy likely driven by Sabrina’s discourse analysis assignment.

For the research paper following the discourse analysis assignment, Ethan chooses another of the fields in his interdisciplinary program, psychology, and uses his knowledge of that discipline to select sources that would be acceptable within that field. His early searches for
“jury influences” in librarian-recommended databases led to search results in which nine out of ten hits used the term “extralegal factors.” Confident that he had alighted upon a key term for the field, Ethan then returned to journals he had encountered through his prior experience in psychology. As in his disciplinary conventions assignment, he selected journals from a specific discipline and built his work on them. This time, that knowledge came from his work writing for and editing his high school’s psychology journal as well as the discourse analysis tools he learned while completing his previous assignment. These experiences taught him the accepted format for articles, which in turn allowed him to evaluate the content of these articles:

I kind of know where in the article to look at this point, because it’s usually sectioned. There’s usually an introduction which I can skim through, just to ensure that this is the article I want. And then there’s the kind of procedure for whatever experiment they were doing. It’s just not particularly important. So I can usually flip through a few pages and get to the analysis, which is the really important part where they’ll say the results, they’ll say “this is what I found,” and analysis, which says “this is why this happened.” And it’s the why that I’m really interested in.

Ethan’s description of psychology articles bears striking similarity to the reading practices Carol Berkenkotter and Thomas Huckin observed when they asked scientists to select journals and narrate their reading experiences. The seven scientists interviewed all searched for something “new” in the journals. They started with the table of contents, where a topic plus a noted scholar warranted a reading. After deciding to read an article, they would begin with the title and abstract, then move on to tables and figures before reading the results. Some of them read the whole article, while others skipped straight to the discussion. All participants ignored the methodology section. Ethan’s method of reading psychology articles suggests that he, like the scientists in Berkenkotter and Huckin’s study, is searching for the “new.”

Ethan also builds a conceptual map of psychologists’ expectations for good scholarship, and uses this map to make choices about what types of sources to include in his paper. First he set out to find sources that proved that extralegal factors influence jury decisions, because “in order for my paper to hold any water, first I have to establish that this is true. Because if I can’t convince my audience that extralegal factors have a big influence, then the rest of my paper
doesn’t even matter.” Ethan recognizes that he cannot make assumptions about what his audience, whom he has defined as psychologists, know about extralegal factors, and so must begin by using sources that prove the problem exists.

I visualize Ethan’s psychology map in Figure 3.4. As with his discourse analysis assignment, Ethan begins by seeking out genre conventions. In doing so, Ethan appears to be engaging in what we might call “less near” or “further” transfer (“far” transfer usually being reserved for college-outside college transfer); he uses the same basic mental schema he used to learn about a different discourse community in the previous assignment, but adds to that schema using disciplinary knowledge of psychology learned through high school.

This mental map also demonstrates Ethan’s transition from writing about political science to writing to psychologists. The genre conventions he identifies in the first map (“sort of” like history, “essentially like a science paper”) rely on formal features identified from a reader’s perspective. Although he identifies fewer features for his second map, those features are split into how to read for the field and how to write for it; furthermore, the features identified are less
clearly formal textual features as they are functions, actions Ethan imagines are accomplished by the text. Ethan uses his understanding of how psychologists read articles (locating analysis and searching for the “new”) to develop strategies for writing, and specifically, source selection. To convince his reader that he has come to a new and noteworthy conclusion, Ethan needs to begin with literature that establishes his truth claim that “extralegal factors have a big influence.”

*Christopher: content knowledge to discourse community*

Both Adrian and Ethan appear to transfer genre strategies from the discourse analysis assignment to their researched assignments. Adrian engages in near transfer when he searches the journals he learned about in the first assignment to find sources for the second assignment. Ethan appears to make somewhat more distant transfer when he applies the strategies he learned through the discourse analysis of political science to source evaluation for psychology, for which he relies not only on the method of discourse analysis from the previous assignment, but also knowledge about the discipline of psychology gained from high school. Christopher, a third student from Sabrina’s class, does not appear to have made such transfer between assignments. He was not able to secure a useful interview for his discourse analysis of engineering; the first professor he approached does not write for academic audiences, and the second professor writes about computer science pedagogy, a part of the field that Christopher was not interested in. Christopher instead turned to technical writing textbooks for information about writing in engineering. Christopher’s description of these three sources – a professor of engineering (no specialty indicated), a professor of computer science, and books on technical writing – suggest that he was not able to build the kind of conceptual map of his intended field that Ethan and Adrian were able to construct.

Left without a map of the field or strategies to draw from in investigating a new field, Christopher had to find a different entry point into his research paper. When Christopher was given free reign to write about whatever topic he wished for Sabrina’s research paper assignment, the obvious choice was video games. A frequent participant in *Super Smash Bros.*
tournaments (he recently took home first prize – a Nintendo Wii) and a champion of the health benefits of video games (he persuaded his parents that the Wii could aid his physical fitness), Christopher was excited to learn more about the role of video games in another arena: education. Unlike Adrian and Ethan, who relied on previous knowledge of academic disciplines to conduct and evaluate searches in a single step, Christopher did not have this disciplinary knowledge, and so began by brainstorming a list of debates about video games (health, aggression, community building, memory, education, etc.), narrowing this list to a particular issue, and then determining what scholars were studying that issue. After narrowing his focus to educational benefits of video games, Christopher used Google Scholar to search for “video games in education,” “video games and learning,” and “video games and literacy.” As he searched, he began to see a pattern in the results: “There were a few articles that came up on almost every search. There was one called ‘How do Video Games Help You Learn,’ or something like that. And there’s one called like ‘Digital Games and Learning.’” Because these articles appeared in multiple searches, Christopher determined that they were important to the study of video games and learning.

Christopher then typed these titles into BibMe.org, which he calls “the best automatic bibliography generator.” Although he finds the automatically generated references useful, “the coolest thing” about BibMe is the recommendations feature, which suggests other readings based on his entries. BibMe’s recommendations allowed him to draw conclusions about key authors on video games and literacy:

There were two authors that kept popping up. One was named, I think it was like James P. Gee. His name kept popping up. There was another guy named Kurt Squire whose name kept popping up. So I looked into their stuff, and I think it was either Gee or Squire, they wrote a book about video games and learning. So I’m probably going to check that out as soon as we’re done here.

Christopher found that James Gee “was either the sole author or co-author” of numerous articles, which suggested to him that Gee’s work would be a good source for his topic. Although Christopher describes his search strategy as “random,” the steps that lead him to Gee’s What Video Games Have to Teach Us about Learning and Literacy demonstrate that he has a good
system for finding not just any scholarly work, but well-respected experts on a particular topic. The “random” Google search helped him begin to see patterns in the literature on video games, and his use of BibMe allowed him to generate a bibliography of key texts related to video games and literacy. Earlier, I described Amber’s advice to students about seeking out consensus. One possible problem with this advice is that students may view consensus where there is actually heated disagreement. In Gerald Graff’s terms, “in the dark, all intellectual disagreements are gray” (7). Christopher’s strategy offers one useful metric for gauging consensus. The repeated appearance of Squire’s and Gee’s works suggest that they are primary contributors to conversations about video games and literacy. By following Google Scholar’s “cited by” results, Christopher can chart the various responses to these writers’ texts, observing moments of both consensus and disagreement.

Unlike Adrian and Ethan, who began with an interest in particular disciplines and then located their topics within those disciplines, Christopher began with a broad concept – video games – and mapped out the debates or questions related to this topic. I visualize this map in Figure 3.5.
From this initial focus on the topic and debates, Christopher used Google Scholar to find out what academic groups were contributing to these debates. In focusing on the most frequently-cited authors, Christopher demonstrated a preliminary understanding of credibility. He did not begin with a library database and evaluate articles based on markers of accuracy and expertise described earlier in the chapter.

Christopher’s map differs from Adrian’s and Ethan’s maps in a few significant ways. Unlike Adrian and Ethan, Christopher did not describe his source evaluation in terms of function. At the time of our interviews, he had established that the sources he had selected were “credible,” but he had not quite determined the “to whom” that would allow him to consider how these sources might function in his paper. Unlike Adrian and Ethan, who imagine themselves to
be writing to audiences of political scientists and psychologists, respectively, Christopher does not describe his work as relevant to any particular group outside of himself (who wants to learn more about video games) and Sabrina (who will evaluate his work for a grade). In this sense, Christopher’s source selection veers toward the more commonly understood function of the research paper as a test of content knowledge.

Looking at these students’ concept maps and listening to their descriptions of source evaluation, it would be easy to conclude that Adrian and Ethan have the stronger maps. But Christopher’s concept map allows him insight into a discipline’s discourse that Adrian’s and Ethan’s maps do not grant them. By beginning with key debates and using Google Scholar to map out the frequency with which different voices participate or are invoked in that debate, Christopher has identified a center of the conversation in a way that Adrian and Ethan have not.

**Conclusion**

When students approach researched assignments in FYC as tests of their knowledge, they may be “bound by the manacles of the antecedent genre” (Jamieson 413) of their high school research papers. Our use of the familiar term “research paper,” even as we recognize its ties to these high school writing situations, does little to disabuse students of this notion. But, as Jamieson and the host of genre theorists who followed her have argued, antecedents can also help writers as they encounter new situations. If our goal is to teach students about writing, we should help students cultivate the antecedent strategy of genre awareness.

The discourse/genre analysis advocated by practitioners of WAW seems to be an especially useful antecedent, especially when taught in sequence with a researched assignment. As I argued in Chapter 2, many of our current models of research instruction, with their reliance on terms such as “academic” or “scholarly,” encourage students to view all sources as equally expert bricks to add to monuments of knowledge. Institutional documents such as the course descriptions of the first-year writing program at The University position writing courses as preparation for the work of academic writing, further cementing the notions of a unified “academic” writing that can be taught in a single term and of “scholarly” sources represented by
textual features stripped of context. As Sommers and Saltz explain, students can adapt to college writing more successfully by taking on the role of novice, which requires them to shift their perspectives about the goals of research and writing. The main goal should not be to demonstrate knowledge (although such demonstrations are certainly expected). Instead, the main goal should be to contribute to an exchange, to imagine oneself as within a dialogue with other interested participants.

I argue that Adrian’s, Ethan’s, and Christopher’s maps offer useful starting points because they allow each student to evaluate sources in terms of disciplinary or topical constraints rather than in terms of formal markers of expertise and accuracy. The sequence of a discourse analysis and a researched assignment may help students develop concept maps that, in turn, allow them to select sources based less on formal markers of expertise and accuracy and more on abstract determinations of credibility and function. Ethan’s case suggests that students may not even need to follow the same discipline through the two assignments.

The participants I have described here relied on metaphorical maps; to my knowledge, none of the three physically outlined these maps or consciously acknowledged their mental mapping. As a result, each student develops knowledge about one element of a discipline while ignoring other possible elements. Adrian focuses on research tools, Ethan focuses on textual conventions, and Christopher focuses on content. I argue that to be more effective, these mapping strategies need to be combined and made overt.

A concept map is not the same as a story web – it is not an outline that lets the writer decide what to include in the paper, but a tool for developing an organizational structure of the discipline into which they imagine themselves to be writing. Because the map takes a wider view than the immediate plan for writing, it can pose a problem for instructors. When students are asked to choose any topic for their researched assignments, they cannot reasonably be expected to do enough background reading to build a strong concept map. Lacking the necessary knowledge of other disciplines can make it difficult for instructors to comment on their students’ maps. In a WAW-based course, the course itself could provide the map. As members of (or
perhaps current entrants into) the discipline of composition, instructors would not be relegated to the “intellectual sidelines” (Beaufort 12), unfamiliar with the disciplines their students elect to study. Instead, they could be central to students’ map making. Composition has historically used mapping strategies to describe itself, whether by camps (current traditional, expressivist, social constructivist, etc.), key concepts (discourse, literacy, genre), or courses (FYC, WAC, writing-intensives, basic writing). These maps allow us as a field to determine what people have talked/are talking about, but also how they have done/are doing so. By sharing these maps with students, or perhaps even building these maps with them throughout a term, we can help them gain knowledge of not only composition, but also, because of the concepts studied within the course, knowledge of how to learn about other disciplines.

Ambrose et al. suggest that concept maps offer students useful grouping strategies that make it easier to memorize the content of a particular course or discipline. Grouping physics problems by concept being tested makes it easier to solve problems than grouping problems by the presence or absence of pulleys (as pulley problems might be testing students’ knowledge of force, tension, angular momentum, or other core concepts). I am using concept maps somewhat differently. Rather than giving students a map of a topic so that they can better answer questions about its key figures or core concepts, I advocate that we give them the tools needed to develop their own concept maps by teaching students to consciously seek out subdisciplines, key concepts, research tools, and textual conventions. When they encounter new readings, students can ask themselves where the authors might fit within those maps. As they conduct their own research, students might begin by positioning themselves, however tentatively, within their maps. Adrian says of his research paper: “It’s weird. I didn’t really come up with exactly what I wanted to present in my research until I got to look at some of the sources and see what they had to say. And I sort of let that dictate how my research was going to develop.” Christopher described his method as “working backwards,” “because usually you write a skeleton framework of your paper, like an outline or something. And then you look for a source to fill in the gaps. But now, I had the sources, but I didn’t have the framework yet.” Adrian’s and Christopher’s
approaches will allow them to evaluate sources in new ways, but will also help them to develop relevant questions to ask throughout their research.

While these maps could be enhanced through a more overt association with WAW pedagogy, these maps could also strengthen the ways in which WAW pedagogies present secondary research to students. In Chapter 1, I argued that the lessons learned from a stand-alone discourse analysis assignment, even assignments as rich and nuanced as those frequently appearing in descriptions of WAW courses, will not automatically transfer to the next writing assignment, let alone another course. Such transfer was especially fraught, I suggested, when these discourse analysis assignments were followed by researched assignments that spoke in generalizations such as “find some sources.” If students are transferring an antecedent genre of “the research paper” that encourages them to view researched writing as a test of their knowledge, they may not be able to successfully transfer the conceptual mapping strategies learned through discourse analysis to subsequent researched assignments. By emphasizing these strategies in its depiction of research, WAW could strengthen its commitment to teaching for transfer; specifically, in teaching the navigational strategies necessary to explore unfamiliar writing situations. This mapmaking exercise asks a lot of first-year college students; mapping a field is more often associated with graduate exams. But again, my interest in teaching the map is not to make first-year writers experts in composition studies; rather, my goal is to help students learn about writing through exposure to the discipline of composition.

Of course, this mapping is not perfect. All three students focused on a specific object of analysis (presidential polling, extralegal factors, video games), but not on the larger discipline-specific concepts that insiders might use to explore these topics. But I would argue that the “correctness” of a student’s conceptual map matters far less than the genre awareness that the student develops through the process of making that map. The same is true for the problem of audience. Adrian and Ethan imagine themselves to be addressing their work to particular groups, and evaluate their sources based on perceived expectations of these groups. But is either student really writing to his imagined audience? While we cannot deny the institutional and
classroom constraints on their writing, I argue that when we focus too much on the impossibility of this audience we miss the larger opportunity of these maps to give students a means for learning about writing and framing source selection in terms of credibility and function.

If one of our goals is to help students view sources in terms of function, turning the focus of FYC to WAW could also allow us to draw more attention to the different kinds of sources our field uses and how we use them. I explore this concept of function in the following chapter.
When we talk about citation with students, it’s the economic metaphor that predominates because it’s the economic metaphor that is most susceptible to logic rather than affect. With students, teachers don’t often talk about “feelings” of debt; rather, our discussions of citation are likely dominated by the notion of giving credit where credit is due. And credit is due whenever we use the words or ideas of another writer. Simple as that. – Amy Robillard, “Young Scholars Affecting Composition”

The main points of the paper were how the traditional scientific method is involved, the importance of validating sources, working together with other chemists. So I wrote down basic questions about those just so I could throw in quotes from that professor into my paper to help back up my points. And luckily they agreed with what I already had. – Tyler, composition student

A common goal of WAW pedagogy is to promote students’ awareness of writing by shifting the focus of FYC from teaching how to write to teaching about writing. This focus is based on studies that suggest that students can transfer meta-awareness from one writing situation to another. As these studies of transfer have suggested, teaching students “how to write” is unlikely to prompt them to transfer what they learn in FYC to other writing situations. Throughout Chapters 1, 2, and 3, I have suggested that WAW pedagogies could benefit from increased attention to research, and secondary research in particular, because the language used to describe such research, both in WAW scholarship and in composition scholarship more generally, focuses on “how to” research more than “about” research.

In this chapter, I argue that the language used to describe citation is especially prone to this “how to” problem. Drawing from Chris Anson’s description of citations as speech acts, I suggest that when they are taught how to cite, students at The University are limited to two “positioning” functions of citation: showcasing their knowledge and proving they did not plagiarize. These positioning functions limit students from the full range of “ideational” functions available to them. Then, drawing from Amy Robillard’s relational model of citation, I argue that students, who are primed to view citation as an economic exchange, could develop a stronger understanding about writing and research if they came to view citation as, in
Robillard’s terms, a means of establishing relationships, a view that would help illuminate both the positioning and ideational functions Anson describes.

**Rhetorical dimensions of citation in WAW pedagogy**

In Chapter 1, I argued that research instruction in FYC – even the nuanced and context-specific models depicted in WAW pedagogies – often presents secondary research as a mechanical process. Citation is perhaps the most mechanized aspect of these pedagogies, as it is most closely associated with parentheses, authors’ names, page numbers, and other formal features. This conflation of citation with these features may stem in part from language; because the act bears the same name as the genre, “citation” comes to stand for the process of correctly incorporating well-formatted citations. This association may also be reinforced by the function students imagine their research to have. In Chapter 3, I suggested that students evaluate sources based on markers of expertise and accuracy, a strategy that grew from their understanding of researched assignments as tests of their knowledge. If students view their researched assignments in this way, we can expect them to view their citations as “proof” that they have accumulated knowledge. We can also expect them to be concerned about the formal correctness of their citations, which would allow them to demonstrate yet another form of mastery.

Citations, like the genres I have discussed throughout the dissertation, are not reducible to the sum of their formal features. But citations are also different from other genres discussed thus far, because while they might appear to represent a macro-genre (like “research paper,” which represents a wide range of research-based writing tasks), citations are always embedded in other genres; mastering citations, then, requires understanding not just how to format them according to the required style of a genre (MLA, APA, etc.), but understanding how citations may be allowed to function within that genre.

Wardle and Downs have included just such a description of citation in *Writing about Writing: A College Reader*. The first and last excerpted selections, taken from Swales’s *Genre Analysis* and Hyland’s *Disciplinary Discourses*, both suggest that successful citation requires more than rigid adherence to formal features. Although these readings indicate that citations are
careful rhetorical choices, both stop short of discussing what these functions might be, and thus leave students with a strong sense of how citations might differ across disciplines, but without much understanding about how citations might function within a particular discipline. Swales’s description of his “Create a Research Space” model is the first of the “‘foundational’ selections” that Wardle and Downs use to describe academic writing. In this three-page excerpt, Swales distinguishes between “integral” and “non-integral” citations, which designate whether the author’s name is included within a sentence or in a citation following the sentence (qtd. in Wardle and Downs Writing about Writing 7). Although these definitions focus on formal elements of citation, and thus appear to describe a “how to” approach, these definitions are situated within Swales’s first “move” of a successful research introduction, “Establishing a territory” (qtd. in Wardle and Downs 6). The formal process of integrating citations, then, is one element of mapping the disciplinary terrain. By choosing to include these three pages of Swales’s work as the first selection of their textbook, Wardle and Downs encourage students to view citation as part of the key “moves” of research-based writing (in Swales’s terms, “Establishing a Territory,” “Establishing a Niche,” and “Occupying a Niche”). Even though this section is quite brief, it helps set the tone for the entire work. In their introduction to the excerpt, Wardle and Downs tell students that the introductions of research articles are often the most difficult parts to understand, and that learning Swales’s three moves will help them in reading and writing “researched articles” (6). By placing these three moves at the start of their textbook and by encouraging students to come back to Swales’s steps as they work through the other readings, Wardle and Downs imply that citation is not merely a formal feature of a text, but crucial to the three key “moves” of research-based writing.

It is surprising, then, that although “research” is invoked many times throughout the textbook, citation does not appear again until Wardle and Downs’s summary of Hyland’s Disciplinary Discourses, which closes the book. In their summary of Hyland’s work, Wardle and Downs assert that “research is a social activity; it requires researchers to engage with their colleagues and it happens within social institutions” (700). From this opening assertion, Wardle
and Downs go on to summarize the features Hyland found common to all academic research writing. Among those similarities, Wardle and Downs include “rhetorical choices” a writer faces when attempting to persuade readers; writers might “galvanize support,” “express collegiality,” “resolve difficulties,” and “avoid disagreements” (701). Coupled with Hyland’s data on the frequency and types of citations in different academic disciplines, this description of commonalities suggests that Wardle and Downs want to emphasize the various ways a writer might use sources to interact with an audience.

In the “Analyzing and Exploring Ideas” section that follows their summary, Wardle and Downs ask students to analyze the data sets in Hyland’s article: “[W]hy do you think that sociologists use so many more citations than physicists? Why do you think that philosophers are the only academics who routinely use more integral citation than nonintegral citation? Why do different disciplines use different verbs when introducing quotations and paraphrases?” (704). These questions encourage students to view citation as a disciplinary practice. Taken alone, these questions might be thought to replace a universal set of rules for citation with separate disciplinary rule sets; sociologists all use citations this way, while physicists use citation that way. But through the remaining questions, Wardle and Downs encourage students to use Hyland’s data as a launching point for their own explorations of citation. First, they ask students to interview professors in their majors, and ask them how many citations they use, whether those citations are integral or nonintegral, and whether they incorporate information through quotation, paraphrase, or summary. Second, they ask students to compare and contrast the citation use in papers from separate academic disciplines. Wardle and Downs’s closing set of questions offers an excellent entry point into conversations about citation because they replace discussion of parentheses and other formal features with a discussion of how citations differ across disciplines. This description, however, should not be the ending of a discussion of citation, but rather the beginning of it. I argue that we need to complicate this description by encouraging students to reflect on how citations function.
Citation as speech act

Students at The University, we saw in Chapter 3, evaluated sources in terms of expertise and accuracy, which I suggested was a consequence of their interpretation of the research paper task. Students who viewed the research paper as a test of knowledge used sources as evidence of their knowledge. In “Citation as Speech Act,” Anson shows that even this most seemingly simple type of evidential citation, through which the writer cites to support a claim, involves “finer judgments about the nature of an assertion and how likely readers are to take issue with it” (205). Anson uses his own introduction about writing handbooks’ focus on the hows of citation (paraphrase, quotation, and so on) as one example. In this introduction, he asserts that such instructions are insufficient to learning to write strong researched writing, but he does not supply a citation to bolster this claim. In a reflective note a few pages later, Anson describes this “missing” reference as a carefully-made decision, based on his assumption that his audience would agree with him and that including examples from handbooks might distract his readers from his argument (208). At another “decision point” in the essay, Anson chooses not to include a citation based on his “predicted knowledge of the audience (based on the assumed or planned context of the writing) and the distance between the original source’s focus and the focus of the text at hand” (205).

Anson encounters a similar decision point when he discusses the preparatory function, for which writers “provide a context for an argument or lay the groundwork for a research study or analysis” (206). Anson displays his understanding of this function when he wonders whether or not to provide a reference to Chomsky after invoking the term “deep structure.” Again, Anson decides against a citation for fear of alienating an audience of people “in the know.” Furthermore, if he included such a citation, he might send those readers not in the know to Chomsky’s text, which would not be useful to them in understanding his argument. To make this decision, Anson had to judge what knowledge his readers were likely to have, what “persona” he wanted to develop, and how closely tied Chomsky’s text was to the argument he wanted to make (207).
Anson demonstrates that other functions lead to similarly complicated decisions about citation. Citations can serve a *terministic* function, “invoking or incorporating another author’s use of a specific term (or concept) into a text, often for purposes marginally related to those of the term’s author” (208). The decision of whether or not to attribute “thick description” to Geertz (or Clifford Geertz, or Clifford Geertz, author of *The Interpretation of Cultures*, or Clifford Geertz, influential father of postmodern anthropology), Anson claims, depends on the imagined audience. Before using the term, the writer would need to consider how knowledgeable his audience was about Geertz’s work more generally. If that audience was likely to be familiar with “thick description,” and if the writer was intending to use the term in a substantially different way, the writer would need to make the definitional differences clear. If the audience had little awareness of the term, the writer could cite Geertz without explanation or perhaps not cite Geertz at all.

Anson classifies these three functions – *evidential*, *preparatory*, and *terministic* – as well as a list of others briefly mentioned (*speculative*, *concessional*, *facilitative* and *contestatory*) as “ideational” or “pragmatic” functions of reference; that is, authors use them “to add to or support their ideas and contribute to the information flow of their paper” (204). But there are also “indirect” citation functions that are less immediate to readers because they are based on the writer’s motivations. One such indirect function is *positioning*. Again, Anson uses his own work to explain how the positioning function operated in his process. After quick nods to Austin and Searle, whom he uses to set up his argument about speech acts, Anson references Bach and Harnish, whose work classifies speech acts. This marked another decision point for Anson; should he list more articles to demonstrate that Bach and Harnish were not the only ones to develop such a classificatory scheme? Would readers benefit from more knowledge of speech acts? This decision point is similar to the preparatory function described earlier – in choosing to include Bach and Harnish, along with Austin and Searle, Anson means to prepare his reader to better understand a complicated concept. But in choosing not to include other possible references, Anson acknowledges an “indirect” function as well. Anson decides against
additional references because of the message a string of references might send to his readers: “Look at this wealth of information I’m aware of and can cite; I’m showing you my expertise and extensive knowledge, so you can certainly trust my words and opinions” (211). Anson also associates this type of positioning move with novice writers, because these strings of citations may communicate “insecurity instead of authority” (211). But experienced writers also need to be attentive to positioning. Anson elects not to include the additional references because he did not want to position himself as an expert in speech act theory.

Anson’s work is valuable because it demonstrates that citation is a complex rhetorical choice, not a simple process of attribution. This nuanced view of citation helps explain the difficulties less experienced writers face when making decisions about citation. One of the most remarkable features of the essay is Anson’s attention to “the differences between what we do in professional practice and what students do to display their learning” (203). Throughout the essay, Anson’s drafting notes demonstrate the complicated rhetorical decisions he faced every time he incorporated others’ words and ideas into his work. Students, who may not yet have the requisite knowledge of their audiences to make such decisions, are at a distinct disadvantage. They may stumble with the evidential function because they are not able to intuit readers’ “tolerance for [an] assertion and their willingness to suspend judgment at the start of the essay” (205). They might over- or under-prepare readers because they have trouble determining what those readers are likely to know, or make “egocentric” decisions about documentation, “based not on what they believe an audience knows or can bring to a text, but on their own recently acquired knowledge of the researched subject” (207). They may be tripped up by the terministic function because they assume a term is central to the discipline or completely alien to the discipline (210). All of these errors should be expected in students’ work, because they are understandably unlikely to have the requisite disciplinary knowledge to make savvy decisions.

But in focusing on the citation functions that students enact less successfully than experts, we ignore the far greater issue of the positioning function. When drafting his opening discussion of speech act theory, Anson writes that he elected not to include a long string of
citations because he did not want to position himself as a master of speech act theory. Instead, he opted to mention only Bach and Harnish’s article, which he deemed a useful enough source for readers interested in learning more about speech act theory. Students, however, are encouraged to provide just the kind of citation strings Anson resists. When the research paper is viewed as a test of knowledge, citations act as proof of that knowledge. When making these “positional” citations for teachers, students are essentially saying \textit{Look, teacher, I have learned all of this material (and I didn’t plagiarize)}. Although all writers use citations to position themselves within a text, Anson asserts that limiting students to citation-as-positioning is problematic because positioning strategies prevent students from observing and using all of the varied ideational functions available to them (211). In the following section, I argue that the commonly employed economic model of citation helps restrict students to the positioning functions Anson describes. I then argue for a more inclusive relational model of citation that permits both positioning and ideational functions. Teaching about research could be usefully expanded to emphasize not just how the physical format and placement of citations differs across disciplines but how citations are used to fulfill both ideational and positioning functions, to enable particular relationships between writers, cited authors, and readers.

\section*{Citation as positioning}

Anson suggests that student writers are often limited to a form of citation-as-positioning; students cite to assert their knowledge and prove they have met their teachers’ requirements. These positioning functions, he argues, prevent students from consciously considering other ideational functions of citation, among them evidential, preparatory, and terministic functions, all of which could allow students to “move beyond what they believe are arbitrary and school-based requirements and into more purposeful scholarly writing” (212). Anson does not explain why students might be limited in this way, but exploring the differences between the ideational and positioning functions of citation may illuminate the problem. Anson describes ideational functions as “surface” functions visible to experienced readers (211); that is, a reader can infer that a particular citation is terministic, preparatory, evidential, and so on. Positioning citations,
Anson claims, are less immediately visible in scholarly texts. Thus, a “surface” ideational citation (such as listing an additional speech act theory reference to prepare readers) can have “deeper” positioning functions (such as marking oneself as an expert or non-expert in a particular theory). I argue the reverse is true for student writing, wherein the positioning functions, not the ideational functions, are described as the surface functions; that is, they are the most readily identified reasons for citation. When positioning functions become the explanation for students’ rhetorical choices, the other ideational functions get neglected.

Although I encouraged student participants to share their written work with me, my primary objective was to learn their motivations for and attitudes about research, which I determined could be better understood through interview data than through students’ writing (I describe this choice in more detail in Appendix B). Therefore, I do not have access to most students’ actual uses of citation, only their descriptions of that citation. Some of the earliest interviews, conducted at the very start of students’ research processes, yielded little or no information about citation. For example, Allison, whose project brainstorming I described in Chapter 1, did not describe any of her plans for citation, likely because she had not yet encountered this phase of her assignment.

Interviews with students who were further along with their projects suggest that “citation” is the key formal feature by which “the research paper” can be identified. Although he had used MLA format throughout the term, Keith recognizes that for his research paper on jazz in New Orleans, citation would be more important: “Usually [Sabrina] doesn’t care how we cite. And she hasn’t really been a stickler on that. But now that it’s a research paper, the works cited is more important.” Citation, as a marker of research, is used by many students to position themselves as honest and knowledgeable writers.

After Eric described the mechanical differences between MLA Style and APA Style, the formats he was required to use in high school English papers and college sports management papers, respectively, I ask him why, aside from his teachers’ requirements, he cited sources in his papers. He answers: “To give the author credit for his work, because if I didn’t do that, then I
would just be taking what this guy said. And then I would be passing it off as mine. So as a result
I have to take it and then I have to give him credit for that work.” For Eric, citation means
“giving credit” to another author, a way of marking off that author’s ideas from the rest of his
text.

Students’ struggles with when and how to cite suggest their concern for positioning
themselves as non-plagiarists, while also framing citation as a mechanical process that, once
mastered, can be easily and universally applied. For a paper explaining Art Deco, Derek first
conducted background research to learn more about the style. He says: “And I didn’t have to cite
it, because we were talking about it in class. I just wanted some ideas to stimulate my head. At
least I don’t think I had to cite it. I didn’t direct quote anything.” Derek’s description of his
choice not to cite is not motivated by the same kinds of choices Anson describes. Derek is not
making deliberate choices about preparatory or terministic functions, either of which might be
useful in supplying background about Art Deco. Instead, his choice is based on his sense of
rules: a direct quote requires a citation, but not summarized background information culled
from class does not. Derek appears entirely focused on the “rules” of citation (which appear to
be rooted in his sense of what his teacher will allow). Perhaps because of this focus on how he
positions himself in this text, he is unable to make choices about the ideational functions his
citations might serve.

When completing her art analysis assignment for Tara’s class, Susan also struggled with
what and where to cite, and was critiqued on an earlier draft for not supplying enough citations:

Well, I guess you are supposed to cite everything that’s not public knowledge. But
it was kind of hard to figure out, because some things [pause] I didn’t take the
sentence right from the website or something, but I had a lot of information and I
think I was supposed to cite more of it than I did. I don’t know. I think that was
just a citing problem, of knowing when and where. ‘Cause I’d like have a whole
paragraph of all this information. I didn’t know you were supposed to cite every
sentence, or just the paragraph, or what.

Like Derek, Susan appears to be operating with a generalized set of rules for citation, such as to
cite all information that is “not public knowledge.” Her hesitation after declaring this rule (“it
was kind of hard to figure out, because some things” [pause]) suggests that Susan understands
that to make choices about public knowledge, she requires some sense of who that public is. Is the public her teacher? Is the public her imagined readers? Susan’s emphasis on “when and where” to cite suggests that her primary motivation for citation is to position herself as an honest student. Susan’s use of “supposed to” suggests her awareness of a particular type of positioning function: the requirement to give credit where credit is due. She is entirely focused on supplying citations in the “right” place (which she identifies as at the end of each sentence, not at the end of each paragraph).

One surprisingly rich source of data about students’ understanding of citation came from their description of one source they were not allowed to cite: Wikipedia. My interest in invoking this controversial resource is neither to critique nor defend it, but to use students’ explanation of their instructors’ prohibitions of the website to unpack their understanding of citation-as-positioning. Nearly all of the students interviewed for this project chose not to cite Wikipedia, even when they believed the information they accessed on the website would be valuable to their papers. Although he went to Wikipedia for background information when researching the history of a park bordering the campus, Aaron excluded this background from his paper, because “obviously, you don’t cite Wikipedia.” This statement was almost a mantra for the students I interviewed, most of whom made at least a passing reference to Wikipedia. Derek explains that, because Wikipedia can be edited by anyone, information on the website may be incorrect, and that “you shouldn’t be able to cite it because of the off chance that it is inaccurate.” Derek’s description suggests that he is being attentive to what Anson calls the evidential function; in citing a potentially inaccurate source, Derek could be introducing a flaw
into his paper.\(^1\) Other students offer similar explanations about Wikipedia. Christopher argues that Wikipedia “was a pretty good source” in high school, but that it is no longer appropriate. Although the source itself has not changed for the worse (in fact, Christopher argues that it is improving), “it’s just how much I can depend on it for my project that’s changed quite a bit,” because the standards for evidence have changed. While all of these examples focus on the accuracy of the information on Wikipedia (thus suggesting students’ concern for the quality of evidence in their papers), students’ descriptions of Wikipedia also demonstrate their sense of citation-as-positioning relevant to their teacher-audiences.

Although he frequently uses Wikipedia as a starting point for his research, Ethan would never cite the website “because it’s not considered to be credible. If I cite Wikipedia in a paper, then the teacher would automatically assume that I was desperate at 6:00 am the day before it was due and I said ‘Oh my God, Wikipedia.’ It’s considered to be a kind of a last resort.” Ethan’s choice not to include a citation from Wikipedia is based primarily on the message the citation would send about him as a student, specifically, that he was a lazy researcher. Keith explains that while he too uses Wikipedia for background research, “I’ll never cite it in my paper.” For his

\(^1\) When asked to describe what kinds of Wikipedia articles they found most accurate, students at The University offered a number of reasonable suggestions: checking the footnotes at the bottom of an article, reviewing the article history, and verifying the information with other sources. One peculiar and surprisingly consistent response was that certain types of articles were more likely to be accurate than other types. Aaron noted that Wikipedia had put a “lock” on the article for George W. Bush because he is a controversial figure (and presumably, people would add their biased opinions about him to the article). Other topics, Aaron claims, are accurate because they do not invite such controversy: “No one’s gonna go on there and fool around with something about like some obscure part of history. No one’s going to screw up an article about Ivan the Terrible or something. It’ll mostly be about some political thing.” Erin shares this perception that historical articles on Wikipedia are more reliable than other sorts of articles: “If it’s history based, I really think it’s a credible source because it’s history based. Even if it’s not by a credible person. I don’t know like all the different degrees and everything, but I think that if something’s going to give you historical information, most of the time it’s right.” Theresa goes to Wikipedia for a “well-rounded view” of an unfamiliar topic, but is wary of different types of topics: “You definitely have to be careful with articles about politics, and things that always have opinion in them...for science and math, I think it’s really reliable.” Although my main interest in students’ description of Wikipedia is their use of the positioning function, I include this evaluation of the types of articles on Wikipedia to further complicate students’ means of source evaluation. This emphasis on the truth value of particular types of articles (history, science, math) and the suspicion of other types (politics) is perhaps further evidence of the powerful construct of “research” as something that merely “shows,” of research as an unbiased portrayal of truth and knowledge. Future studies of students’ evaluation of Wikipedia might begin with this framing of research-based subjects as being bias- or ideology-free.
research paper on the NBA salary cap, Keith “didn’t use Wikipedia. I probably could because it’s all the same information.” Keith’s choice to avoid Wikipedia demonstrates his focus on positioning functions of citation. Even though the information he found on other websites matched the information he had originally found on Wikipedia, he recognizes that citing Wikipedia would reflect poorly on him.

Other students describe citations as support for arguments they have already written, allowing them to position themselves as experts. Tyler chose to write about organic chemistry for Sabrina’s discourse analysis paper, an assignment that required him to conduct an interview with a professor in his major to learn more about writing in that major. He wrote the paper prior to his interview with an organic chemistry professor, and determined his main points would be “how the traditional scientific method is involved, the importance of validating sources, [and] working together with other chemists.” To prepare for his interview, which he conducted two days before the paper was due, Tyler modeled questions based on these three areas “so I could throw in quotes from that professor into my paper to help back up my points.” For Tyler, a source that did not confirm what he had already written would have been damaging to his paper, so it was “lucky” that the professor he chose to interview “agreed with what I already had, ‘cause I already had my paper pretty much done before I met with him.”

Tyler’s description of the interview appears to suggest an evidential function: the interview acts as support for his claims. But that evidential function is also part of a positioning function: proving that he has met Sabrina’s requirements and drawn the “right” conclusions about writing in the field of organic chemistry. When his organic chemistry professor was explaining validation, Tyler asked him to repeat the same answer multiple times so that he could copy the response word for word, because the validation section “was a big part of my paper, a big part of the middle of it, and I needed some quotes from him to back those up.” What is most striking about Tyler’s use of citation is that even in a paper about writing in a particular discipline (organic chemistry), in which he argues that citation functions in many ways, he views his own citation as having a singular role, acting as evidence of his knowledge. Tyler’s
description of his citations suggests that if students view research as only tests of their subject knowledge, they may be limited to using citations to assert their knowledge, even if they are aware of other possible citation functions.

The above students’ descriptions of their sources offer two different explanations of positioning. In one scenario, students use citations to demonstrate intellectual honesty. In another, students provide citations as proof of their knowledge. Both of these positioning functions, I will argue in the next section, are indicative of a larger economic model of citation circulating through writing classrooms, departments, and universities, which limits students to a very particular role. To examine this function, I turn briefly to scholarship on plagiarism, from which we can draw conclusions about the nature of citation in student writing.

Citation as economic exchange

Instruction in citation, often delivered in the same breath as instruction about plagiarism, suggests that the predominant model of citation provided to students relies on two limited economic relationships. Students can “give credit” to authors for their work through proper citation or “steal” from authors when they use their words or ideas without attribution. And these are very peculiar types of credit giving and stealing. Stefan Senders distinguishes between plagiarism and “normal theft”; thieves steal items they want, while students steal things “that they frequently don’t want or care about, or even hold onto for long” (196-7). The “credit” given through students’ citation is not quite “normal” credit. When the authors are appropriately cited, they do not actually receive the kinds of rewards associated with scholarly citation; what students write about them does not lead to more prestige, book sales, research grants, or other consequences of academic credit. The un-cited authors are not economically hurt by stealing; the consequence of theft is not damage to the author, but to the student, who either goes uncaught but misses an opportunity to create his own work or is caught and penalized.

The issue here is not that students plagiarize (none of the students in my sample admitted to this practice, and most made passing – if any – reference to plagiarism), nor is it
that there is anything necessarily wrong with developing an economic model of citation. The issue is that, when citing sources, students are permitted a limited number of options based on the economic metaphors of giving credit and stealing. In “Pass it On: Revising the Plagiarism Is Theft Metaphor,” Robillard surveyed the language composition textbook authors used to describe plagiarism and found that these texts overwhelmingly focused on theft. Her survey of composition scholarship, however, revealed a much broader range of metaphors, among them disease, lying, fraud, conquest, collaboration, and false alchemy (412). The contrast between descriptions of plagiarism in composition textbooks and scholarship suggests that the plagiarism-as-theft metaphor positions students in a very limited way. If we wanted to develop a more nuanced economic model of citation, we could certainly do much better than “steal” and “give credit” and conceive of economic metaphors that do more. We might, for example, think of citations as loans, wherein emergent writers borrow cultural currency from the authors they cite in their work. They can “pay back” these loans later in the form of their own contributions to the field. We could expand an economic model to consider saving (developing stores of procedural and content-based knowledge of a field), scraping by (having just enough sources), cutting back (not “buying” as much from sources but relying instead on one’s own ideas), and earning (gaining insight through adapting to the expectations of a discourse community). We could envision citations as mortgages, taxes, cash payments, or even donations. Earlier, I argued that while in scholarly texts, positioning functions are less immediately visible than surface-level ideational functions (Anson 211), in student texts, positioning functions are the surface functions. When presented with an expanded economic model such as this one, the ideational functions (represented by these activities such as saving and cutting back) could be brought to the surface, helping students to make deliberate contextual choices about citation. In the current economic model, however, positioning is the central activity. Students either “give credit,” the due deference to scholars who keep the accepted knowledge of a field, or “steal.” This metaphor captures few of the many different ways we might conceive of writing-as-economic-relationship.
This impoverished economic metaphor is further problematic because it focuses on two small economic relationships (buyer-seller/thief-victim) to the exclusion of countless other types of relationships that might more aptly describe citation. In Part I of his two-part study on “The Rhetoric of Citation Systems,” Robert Connors addresses the ways in which an author’s use of citation demonstrates “feelings of debt and ownership” (7). The “debt” component of citation has been well-drilled into students by the time they reach our classrooms, and our existing discussions of the functions of citation do little to diminish this point. I argue that in the impoverished economic model, students do not feel debt so much as they pay sources for services rendered. To feel debt requires inclusion in a community, to realize that one’s work could not exist but for the work of others. I argue that by relocating these economic metaphors within a relational model of citation, students can more fully grasp the positioning functions of citations and more consciously address these functions in their work. In so doing, they can more successfully employ Anson’s ideational functions of citation.

**Citation as relationship**

Looking toward composition’s scholarship, we see that our own motivations for citation are more complicated than those we offer students. Anson demonstrates that students are limited by a positioning function that includes two specific requirements: I did the assignment and I didn’t plagiarize. In “Young Scholars Affecting Composition,” Robillard argues that we present citation to students in stark economic terms. Our own scholarship, by contrast, demonstrates that citation is also based on affect; we use citations to create and sustain relationships between readers, cited authors, and ourselves. I have organized Robillard’s citation functions in Figure 4.1. The boundaries between these categories are not fixed, and one function may fit under multiple categories (258). This way of visualizing these categories, Robillard asserts, “demonstrate[s] the differing degrees to which reader, writer, and cited author benefit from scholarly citation practices” (258).
Citation-functions that serve the reader | Citation-functions that serve the author | Citation-functions that serve the cited authors
---|---|---
Provide access to source material | Establish the citing author’s expertise | Give credit where credit is due
Establish relationships among texts | Provide evidence for the citing author’s claims | “Identify and legitimate contributions to a discipline’s economy” (Rose 244)
Align a citing author with a particular school of thought | Suggest a great deal about an author’s “feelings of debt and ownership” (Connors) | Indicate the citing author’s respect for the cited author’s work
“Act as a ‘protective garment’” (Howard) “battering any potential critics into silence” (Connors) | “Affirm individual property, relinquishing the citing writer’s claim to it” (Howard) | “Show how [others] have shared their work with us” (Robbins)

**Figure 4.1**: Relational functions of citation. Adapted from Robillard, Amy. “Young Scholars Affecting Composition: A Challenge to Disciplinary Citation Practices.” *College English* 68.3 (2006): 253-270. All italicized functions are direct quotations from Robillard. Functions that appear in quotation marks were quoted by Robillard within the article.

Anson suggests that when positioning functions of citation “dominate” student writing, students are prevented from using ideational citations in their work; without these ideational citations, he argues, students are excluded from academic conversations. Robillard’s model allows for a similar interpretation. The most frequent demands made of students – “give credit where credit is due” and “provide access to source material” – function differently for scholars.
and students. For scholars, these are affective moves that enact relationships that benefit the cited author and the reader, respectively (258). For students, both of these moves are made for a teacher-audience and are not so much deliberate choices intended to enact relationships with cited authors and readers as they are requirements completed for a grade.

In this view, what we tell students about citation suggests that they have nothing to gain from citation except not alienating cited authors and readers (or the teachers who adopt both of these roles while grading). Robillard points to an even greater difference separating the citation functions available to students and those available to academics, who cite to show, in Connors’s terms, “feelings of debt and ownership.” In this view, citation has an affective element. Robillard argues that in our conversations with students, we leave off “feelings,” focusing only on “debt and ownership”:

> When we talk about citation with students, it’s the economic metaphor that predominates because it’s the economic metaphor that is most susceptible to logic rather than affect. With students, teachers don’t often talk about ‘feelings’ of debt; rather, our discussions of citation are likely dominated by the notion of giving credit where credit is due. And credit is due whenever we use the words or ideas of another writer. Simple as that. (261)

Students who “give credit” to cited authors can certainly be viewed as being in relationship with those authors, as economic exchanges certainly enact relationships. But Robillard’s description of student versus scholarly forms of citation indicates that she is using “relational” to refer specifically to the affective dimensions of citation: “Citations reveal a great deal about personal allegiances. We cite the people we cite because we feel certain things toward them” (261). When
we tell students to “give credit” to authors, Robillard argues, we miss an opportunity to view citation in terms of affect.  

In Chapter 1, I described how teachers at The University felt a tension between the need to prepare students for future academic writing situations and their sense that there is no singular, universal academic writing for which they can prepare their students. This tension is also present in instructors’ descriptions of citation, in which they frame citation as both a simple mechanical skill necessary for success in college and as a complicated rhetorical activity rooted in affect. Ben asserts that “most of the [first-year] students that I’ve encountered do not know how to do a citation format.” He began introducing MLA Style in his College Writing courses a few years ago because “it’s one, maybe half a class session that’s something that’s going to be very helpful for them down the road.” Tara, who incorporated library instruction into her Basic Writing course because she saw it as a valuable “studenting skill,” views MLA as a similar skill. She required students writing art analyses to at the very least cite the university’s museum website “because I wanted [them] to practice something in MLA.”

Both Ben’s and Tara’s descriptions of citation indicate that they view it as a necessary skill for students’ future success. But the language instructors often use suggests that citation is

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2 Robillard’s argument about affect in composition’s citational practices – specifically, the use of pseudonyms for students depicted in our writing – raises difficult questions about my own citation of interview data. Drawing on Connors’s description of citation as a means of showing “feelings of debt and ownership,” Robillard argues that “when we cite one another but leave students nameless or pseudonymous, we perpetuate an author/student binary that works against our liberatory disciplinary ideals” (“Young Scholars Affecting Composition” 257). Robillard argues that we should refer to the student-scholars in our work by their real and full names; for example, I should address “Tyler” as Matt Smith. When I refer to “Tyler’s” project, changing enough details so that neither he nor his project is identifiable, do I undermine him as a scholar, even as I use my “some-details-changed-to-protect-the-innocent” version of his experience to demonstrate his use of citation?

And yet, it is my very feelings of debt that have compelled me to provide “Tyler” with a pseudonym, a practice I extend to the teachers and librarians in this study. Although part of this decision is enforced – it would be difficult to have my IRB protocol approved without evidence that I was preserving anonymity – another part is a genuine attempt to protect the real people whose jobs and grades could be adversely affected by what I write.

*This is not his real name.
a relatively easy skill to master. Ben chose Diana Hacker’s short manual for his class in part because of its simple presentation of citation styles:

It’s really thin. Most students, if you hand them a style manual that’s like [shows large width with fingers] that’s the end of it. They’ll never pick it up. It will creak when you open it because they haven’t cracked it at all. But the Hacker manual is pretty thin. It’s very concise. They can spend two minutes looking at an entry and get a pretty basic idea of what’s going on there, and it has a very comprehensive documentation section in the middle that deals with MLA, Chicago, and APA Style, although in my classes we only do MLA and Chicago.

Ben’s description of the style guide (a small volume emphasizing documentation) suggests that citation is relatively easily mastered, a mechanical exercise that requires only knowledge of what information needs to go where.

But Ben also acknowledges that successful citation requires more than strict adherence to a style guide, and wants students to ask themselves

How do you want to manage the number of citations so that your paper doesn’t just become a mass of quotes and statistics? So I also talk about proportion. Maybe in the course of your research you’ll find six sources that are great sources with great quotes. You’re gonna choose the best one or two at most. You don’t want to overwhelm your reader with information in that way. I try to get students to think in terms of the editing component of being a writer. Yeah, I have a lot of information, but choose the items that are most important, that are most important to the point I’m making at this juncture in the paper. Any others you have to let go.

Ben’s explanation of “managing” citations reflects his awareness of how writers rely upon citations. Strings of poorly-integrated quotations are undesirable, Ben claims, because of the effects they would have on a reader, specifically, the ways in which they might come to judge a writer. Ben’s description is reminiscent of Anson’s warning about using multiple citations to assert expertise. A student may use multiple quotes or citations as if to say “Look at this wealth of information I’m aware of and can cite” (145). Ben’s description of citation suggests both remediacy and complexity. The mechanics themselves are simple enough to master, but the stylistic balance of what information to include is more complicated. While Ben offers a nuanced portrayal of citation, he still prioritizes positioning functions over ideational ones, even if those positioning functions are different from the ones students described. Here, the main function of
carefully selected and sophisticatedly incorporated quotations is to avoid alienating or “overwhelming” the reader.

Although careful integration of well-chosen quotations is an important concept, this emphasis on positioning over other possible functions obscures the more complicated motives underlying professional citation. Like Ben, Brandon, a fourth-year PhD student in literature teaching his first composition course, initially describes citation in terms of mechanical correctness. He describes the plagiarism lecture he gave students at the start of the term: “We’re all required to at the beginning of the semester. We have to talk about plagiarism on our syllabus, so I read them that. When we’re talking about citing things, if you have any work in there that is not your own, it needs a citation.” In this beginning-of-the-term speech, Brandon presented citation as a safeguard against plagiarism, and a way of properly giving credit to sources. The boundary between “debt” and “ownership” is clearly drawn; students use citation only to designate work that is not their own. From this opening lecture, Brandon discussed citation in terms of formal features, focusing on the required elements of MLA in-text citations and the punctuation used to separate these elements.

After students submitted their third assignment, an essay requiring quotation and citation, Brandon chose to cover in-text citation again because his students continued to struggle with mechanical issues:

A lot of them don’t know how to do it at first, but most of them now understand, you put the parentheses, the name, the page number. The thing that is really difficult for them is punctuation. They will put the comma inside the quotation marks and then put the citation. Or they’ll finally learn that you put the comma after the citation, but then when they put quotes around the name of an article, they’ll put the comma outside the quotation mark, too, because that makes sense. That’s consistent, and it’s a stupid thing that we have to change. So that was what I repeated to them again yesterday, because there was a huge comma problem in the last papers.

Brandon’s description of citation as a formal practice of correct punctuation, one that he has had to repeat multiple times to students who have a “huge comma problem,” suggests a view of citation as a routine process; though the rules are complicated to learn (and, in some cases,
“stupid”), once students learn these rules they should have no trouble incorporating properly-formatted citations into their work.

Later in the term, Brandon realized that his black-and-white portrayal of citation as a simple mechanical marker distinguishing between “mine” and “not mine” was incomplete. After reading a set of assignments in which some students had merely parroted class discussions, Brandon was frustrated: “Doing stuff that we talked about in class is wasting paper at best, plagiarism at worst.” At the time of our interview Brandon had not yet discussed the issue in class, but thinks he should explain that “a lecture is also intellectual property that needs to be quoted.” But, then again, he fears that after such a speech, he will “get someone overzealous who starts quoting or citing every fact in his paper he heard from me.” Brandon pauses and reflects on the difficulty of choosing when to cite:

I think it’s a very difficult thing to do, too. I mean, I don’t cite the conversations I have with colleagues in my papers, because there’s that sort of tacit agreement that that’s what you put [in] the acknowledgments at the beginning of the dissertation and not worry about it after that. It doesn’t get cited like that. So it’s nebulous even for me.

This reflection on his own choices about citation suggests that Brandon views citation in more complicated terms than he uses with his students, and that when to cite is less a simple matter of punctuation but a “nebulous” decision based in part on relationships. In this model, positioning becomes not just a means of identifying oneself as an honest scholar, but of identifying allegiances and other relationships.

Both Ben’s and Brandon’s descriptions of citation as first a simple and easily mastered mechanical process and then as a more nuanced means of positioning oneself as a writer demonstrate that while citation is often presented as an uncomplicated process of adhering to a formula, it is actually a complicated rhetorical choice. While both instructors expand the available positions from “non-plagiarist” and “knowledgeable student” to a range of alternatives, they are still emphasizing positioning functions over other possible ideational functions. Perhaps such emphasis is inevitable; the rhetorical situation of the writing classroom – and the “research paper” assignment in particular – signals to students that they must position
themselves as knowledgeable and honest writers. But this emphasis on positioning, Anson suggests, obscures the ideational functions without which, ironically, student citations act as safeguards against plagiarism or proof of knowledge.

One final example suggests that, in order to better equip students to see citations in terms of function, instructors might do well to de-emphasize the positioning functions commonly exhibited through citation. Like both Ben and Brandon before her, Amber devotes a small portion of in-class time to discussing citation rules. Where she differs from them is how she chooses to present these rules. At the start of a class period toward the end of their research unit, Amber addresses the class: “What do you do if you don’t know how to cite something in MLA format? There is a link on the Purdue OWL that you can use. There are handouts on MLA at the Writing Center. There’s no point in memorizing MLA Style, because it’ll change next year.” In these few short sentences, Amber presents citation much differently than her colleagues. Although there are rules, no one should expect to know them by heart because they are available through multiple channels. Furthermore, these rules are not fixed, but fluid. Although Amber does not explain why the rules change, her emphasis on this change hints at an important element of citation systems absent from the previous descriptions: citation systems change as their users’ needs change.

This brief discussion about MLA format was intended to direct students to sources of help for their final presentations on their community-based research projects. Amber was pleasantly surprised that none of her students chose a “traditional” paper format for their projects, and is “happy not to read a research paper. It would be great to not comment on people’s MLA format.” “The actual mechanics of the research process,” she claims, “are relatively easily taught, and maybe better taught in their disciplines, where they’ll have to know this.” Amber’s comments highlight the contextual nature of citation and how it functions within disciplines.

What most sets Amber apart from her colleagues is not her sparse instruction about MLA Style or even her suggestion that citation is better learned in upper-level, discipline-
specific courses, but her near-constant emphasis on function. Amber, whose course I described in Chapter 1, wanted students to consider topic selection in terms of goals. For their community-based research projects, students had to develop a goal, choose a format to help them achieve that goal, and choose research methods in service of that goal. To facilitate goal selection, Amber provided her students with a brainstorming exercise that forced them to consider issues that were important to them, ways to execute projects related to these issues, what knowledge they had or needed to develop, and the value their projects could have. Amber’s description of citation is perhaps equally focused on function. Instead of having students focus on the mechanics of a style format, Amber wants to “prioritize their ability to pursue their own interests, to answer their questions, and to use other people’s ideas responsibly in building their own arguments.” Source use, as with topic selection and source selection, is based on goals. This emphasis on goals provides a useful starting point for helping students to make use of ideational functions of citation, a possibility I explore in the conclusion of this chapter.

Conclusion

What exactly do we mean when we say “citation”? The term certainly refers to in-text citations and bibliographic entries, but Anson and Robillard, as well as the instructors interviewed in this study, are using “citation” to encompass a much broader set of practices. “Citation” refers to the tidy, parenthetically-contained attributions contained at the end of quoted, paraphrased, or summarized information, as well as the alternative integral citations that do away with the parentheses but still acknowledge source information. But as Anson, Robillard, and the instructors in my study have demonstrated, “citation” is not an impassive and mechanical process, but an affective decision. Successful citation, then, requires an understanding of both the mechanical and affective dimensions of citation.

How do we help students come to see these aspects of citation? Because students’ descriptions of Wikipedia so often invoke the positioning function of citation, and because we are likely and at times even expected to discuss this resource with students, we might use Wikipedia as a starting point into conversations about citation functions. We might begin by
having students explore what role they imagine such citations to have, both in terms of evidence and in terms of their own credibility. After opening these conversations about citation, we might make two changes to our approaches to teaching: changing what we have students read about citation and encouraging students to write about citation.

Changing what students read about citation

Wardle and Downs’s *Writing about Writing* offers a useful, if perhaps too limited, introduction to citation as a nuanced and contextual practice. Through reading the excerpted section of Hyland’s work included at the end of the text, students could certainly begin to identify various functions of citation. One potential flaw of Wardle and Downs’s treatment of citation is that it is not sufficient to challenge or reverse the attitudes students may already have about citation prior to entering FYC (their explanations of Wikipedia certainly suggest some previous drilling in a particular use of citation-as-positioning). To help students confront their previous understanding of citation, we might expand upon the readings that Wardle and Downs have included, first to highlight the ways in which citation systems function and then to help students make use of these functions.

Although seasoned academic writers have likely had to learn new or revised rules for citation as part of their scholarly work, thereby understanding that citation systems change often, most entering college students are likely to see the parenthetical style now en vogue in APA and MLA formats as a given. And this is a reasonable assumption; born in 1984, MLA’s parenthetical citation format is older than they are. In Part II of his study of citation systems, Connors suggests that the MLA’s shift to parenthetical citation is one in a series of moves to make MLA and its adherents more closely aligned with scientific inquiry (240). In his response to Connors, Robert Hauptman establishes this link more directly by arguing that in the 1980s, MLA modeled its style after the APA, in part, to bring the prestige from this more “scientific” style into language studies (179). Connors argues that the shift from footnotes to parenthetical citation has eliminated or dampened the dialogic functions of citation, which, under parenthetical citation, becomes a means of displaying knowledge: “parenthetical reference
systems were formulated to allow authors to display complete control over previous work in their special field” (238). We might share Connors’s and Hauptman’s work to show students how MLA citation has changed, and have them reflect on the social and technological factors that precipitated this change.

These kinds of exercises will help students see how citations differ across time and disciplines. We might follow these exercises by sharing our own discipline’s discussions of citation functions with students, a practice in keeping with WAW scholarship. In his at turns warm, tepid, and frosty review of Research Writing Revisited, the collection in which Anson’s “Citation as Speech Act” appears, Richard Fulkerson argues that Anson’s “really smart piece,” “nestled among the detritus” of the last section of the book, should be read by all graduate students in English, because Anson’s description of his decision points “provides a terrific shortcut to key knowledge that is more usually acquired only tacitly if at all and with frequent painful missteps” (159). I argue that this “shortcut” can be useful to undergraduates as well; Anson’s article, although reliant on a number of heavy composition terms, could offer undergraduate students a rare glimpse into scholarly citation practices.

Anson argues that by making citation-functions more visible, instructors can help students negotiate the transition to academic writing, “but to do so, they also need more clearly defined contexts, audiences, and purposes for their writing” (212). To help students identify the functions their sources can fill, and to see what citation does in particular contexts, we might take a lesson from Robillard and teach citation as a noun instead of a verb (“Situating” 31), a practice consistent with WAW’s emphasis on teaching about writing over teaching how to write. Adding Anson and Robillard’s discussions of citation to a WAW-based course could be helpful in

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3 Connors argues that in parenthetical citation systems, authors’ names, reduced to “nametags,” “lose agency” (“Citation Systems Part II” 239). The parenthetical style does no favors to readers, either, who face constant interruption: “The elective reading of footnotes is here replaced by the inescapable reading of parentheses, some of which may be long enough to seriously interrupt the stylistic flow of the prose and all of which force the reading process from content to reference issues willy-nilly” (239). In the spirit of his article, I have relegated Connors to this footnote.
delineating ideational and positioning functions and then expanding the range of available positions.

*Encouraging students to write about citation*

WAW pedagogy already employs primary research as a means of teaching about writing, but secondary research, as we saw within descriptions of libraries and librarians in Chapter 2, often takes on a “how-to” quality. Teaching citation functions can help WAW maintain its focus on teaching about writing while also helping students translate their knowledge about writing to more traditional researched assignments. We can help students replace their limiting economic model of citation with a broader relational model by demonstrating that the mechanics of research are always changing, and that these changes reflect the ways in which particular communities of writers view themselves. A common assignment in WAW-based courses is discourse analysis. To broaden students’ understanding of citation, we might ask them to compare the citational practices they observed with those that their classmates observed. Such an assignment can help students view citation as a product of genre. But students could also benefit from seeing how the citations in their chosen disciplines have changed over time, and that these changes reflect the priorities and values of a discipline. Students could explore how the author-year format of many scientific citation systems reflects the research paradigms of those fields; including a date inside a citation, for example, privileges currency. That MLA citations require page numbers for both quotations and paraphrases might reflect the primacy of the source text.

We might also challenge our use of annotated bibliographies to help students determine how they will use sources before ever putting ink to paper or fingers to keyboard. So often, these assignments are tools of measurement, designed to police students’ progress on their papers. If the student respondents in my study are representative of other students at other universities (and I expect that they are), their last-minute scramble to collect sources and make up plans for their use is perhaps not the most helpful way to get students to consider citation functions. In place of the annotated bibliography, we might substitute an exercise similar to the one Anson
uses in “Citation as Speech Act.” After sharing Anson’s and Robillard’s articles with students and generating a list of possible functions, we might ask students to mark the “decision points” in their essays, explaining their choices to cite (or not) and what the anticipated results of these choices are. Whether or not students identify the “right” functions or execute those functions perfectly is less important than the larger principle they are learning: citation is a purposeful rhetorical choice tightly bound to function.

Both of these changes – implementing readings that emphasize citation functions and encouraging students to narrate their own use of such functions – offer ways for students to develop stronger understandings about research. One final means of improving students’ understanding of citation would be to present it as a more fully-integrated component of the recursive research “steps” explored in Chapters 1, 2, and 3. We should share our sense of source selection, evaluation, and citation as simultaneous processes; we search for, analyze, and incorporate sources based on the functions we understand those sources to have. I explore ways of more fully integrating these processes in the concluding chapter.
CONCLUSION: ABOUT RESEARCH

You might wonder why it is more helpful to learn about writing than to simply be told how to write. What good will this do you as a writer? We think the answer to this question is that changing what you know about writing can change the way you write...If you change your ideas about what writing is supposed to be, you’re likely to do different things – better things – with your writing. – Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs, Writing about Writing: A College Reader

Throughout this dissertation, I explored a tension between my instructor-participants’ perceived need to prepare students for writing assignments in future courses and their sense that there were few, if any, principles common to all academic writing situations. Although these instructors readily identified the varied and nuanced contexts of different academic writing situations, and often shared this view of academic writing with their students, they also portrayed research as a generalizable process, easily transferred to future writing situations. I observed a similar tension in the scholarship on Writing-about-Writing. WAW scholarship has enriched composition’s understanding of genre and transfer, and has allowed its practitioners to use disciplinary writing to teach genre awareness. But while WAW pedagogies depict primary research as a “messy” and recursive process (Downs and Wardle “Teaching about Writing” 573), they also, at times, portray secondary research as a mechanical process of retrieval. Such a depiction, I argued, threatens to perpetuate the very generic view of writing WAW advocates wish to subvert.

In the previous chapters, I have argued for ways in which the researched assignment in first-year composition can be an “especially rich antecedent genre” (Devitt Writing Genres 203). Researched assignments can help students understand “topic selection” as a process of asking relevant questions. Researched assignments can help students view “secondary” or “library” research as a recurring and rhetorical process of active selection. Researched assignments can provide students with opportunities to view previously undifferentiated experts as writing and acting within particular disciplinary, subdisciplinary, and institutional contexts. Researched assignments can allow students to view citation as enabling particular relationships. But not all
researched assignments can achieve these results. We cannot teach the diversity of academic writing in one unit and expect students to intuitively transfer this knowledge to a subsequent assignment, especially if that assignment – such as “the research paper” – is likely to trigger prior knowledge that contradicts the understanding of academic writing that we wish our students to have. We need to provide detailed scaffolding that helps students to successfully transfer our messages about academic writing to their researched projects. Additionally, if we wish to help students develop writing awareness, we need to generate more accurate terms to describe the moves that academic writers make. In this closing chapter, I explore some limitations of my study and suggest opportunities for both future research and classroom practice.

Limitations
There are several limitations to this study. First, many of the arguments I make in this dissertation hinge on the notion that students can develop meta-awareness of their use of genres and see genres as constructing and constructed by specific contexts. Recent studies have allowed us to make provisional claims about meta-awareness and transfer. We know that students may not develop writing awareness (including research knowledge) without explicit instruction (Beaufort), and that even with this instruction, may transfer incomplete or incorrect writing knowledge (Bergmann and Zepernick). We know that successful transfer requires both an understanding of how writing situations differ and a good use of well-selected antecedent genres (Devitt “Transferability”). We know that antecedents, as a form of prior knowledge, can only help students when that prior knowledge is “activated, sufficient, appropriate, and accurate” (Ambrose et al. 14). We know that even when prior knowledge meets all of these criteria, transfer may not occur. Wardle and Nowacek have demonstrated that even when students are capable of engaging in transfer from FYC to other courses, they may choose not to (Wardle "Understanding Transfer") or be prevented from doing so (Nowacek). Many of the studies that have been used to reach these conclusions are relatively small; Wardle’s interview study of 7 participants and Driscoll’s survey of 153 students are representative of the kind of
work that has already been done. But, as Wardle says of her own study, such work “allows us to look deeply at patterns and raise questions that can later be pursued in larger studies” (Wardle “Understanding Transfer” 72). Likewise, my study, which includes interview data from a group of students, instructors, and librarians during a single college term, does not allow me to make an argument for whether or not students are able to transfer their knowledge about research to other courses. What this data does allow me to do is identify new patterns and raise more questions to drive future studies of transfer. Specifically, I argue that the current vocabulary we use to describe research writing (such as “the research process”) suggests a mechanical and decontextualized set of skills that, based on the lessons of transfer studies, is unlikely to result in successful transfer to future writing situations.

A second limitation is that I lacked access to the actual texts students produced through their research. I conducted the student interviews toward the end of the term, and thus during the middle of students’ research projects. Most students did not submit their projects until finals week in mid-December, and in their rush to leave campus for the winter holiday neglected to send their finished projects to me. The absence of these final drafts was not particularly concerning at the time of data collection, as my stated aim was to uncover students’ perceptions of research, information that was much easier to obtain through interviews. Even as I shifted my focus to questions of transfer, the absence of students’ written texts did not pose a problem. As both Carroll and Smit have suggested, student writing may not be the best available source of evidence for studying transfer. With access to a student’s text, it may have been easier to elicit information about what a student was thinking when constructing that text. For example, when asking students to explain their motivations for citation, it may have been more useful to refer to specific citations in their drafts.

The original questions developed for this project present a third limitation. The qualitative interviews I conducted for this project allowed me to describe students’, instructors’, and librarians’ understandings of and experiences with research in rich detail. In using ethnographic tools, I committed myself to following my participants through their experiences
with writing and research. My original interest in digital literacy and patchwriting changed as a result of my interviews, in which respondents appeared more interested in issues such as “the research process” and credibility. The emergent nature of the project meant that the questions I posed in my interviews may not have been the most useful questions for learning about genre, transfer, or the ways in which we might teach secondary research more successfully. A study of how students cultivate and employ research knowledge could be more successful if it explored not just what students wrote in FYC and high school English courses, but what they learned about research in FYC and how they applied (or did not apply) this knowledge to research-based projects in other courses.

**Suggestions for future research**

In ethnographic work, “knowledge and experience are approached as ‘partial’ in all senses: neither complete, fixed, disinterested, universal, nor neutral but instead situated, local, interested, material, and historical” (Horner 14). Therefore, I recognize that the conclusions I have drawn about research are partial and contextual. There are a host of other possible studies I could have conducted, other groups I could have included, other texts I could have alluded to, other people I could have interviewed, and other conclusions I could have drawn. Additionally, the time that lapsed between data collection and writing may mean that “the culture has gone elsewhere” (Bishop 3). In this section, I deal with two key possibilities for future research: 1) expanding the size and scope of studies of research and transfer and 2) applying my findings about research to a first-year writing classroom and/or program.

The most obvious direction for future research would be to expand upon the size of this study to learn how much larger cohorts of students develop research knowledge and whether or not the gaps I presented in this study exist in a wider range of classrooms, especially those specifically devoted to WAW. Hood’s work suggests that first-year writing programs continue to teach research; both Wardle’s and Driscoll’s studies suggest that writing awareness is the most useful and transferrable writing knowledge gained from FYC. My study creates a tenuous link between these two kinds of studies, suggesting that awareness about research needs to be the
focus of research instruction. Larger studies of how students transfer research knowledge could help us solidify these conclusions.

But just what kind of larger study would be most useful? A longitudinal study, while it would have the advantage of following students from a WAW-focused course through years’ worth of other writing situations, also comes with disadvantages. First, longitudinal studies can lead researchers to see future writing situations as directly (and solely) influenced by the initial writing situation (such as an FYC course). Brent cautions us against this conclusion, reminding us that even when students consciously acknowledge the wealth of writing lessons they learned in FYC and later applied elsewhere, we cannot erroneously conclude that FYC provides all that students need to know about writing (589). Longitudinal studies have also, according to Nowacek, focused primarily on positive, negative, or zero transfer, terms that do not adequately describe the complexity of transfer (53). To successfully determine whether or not students are able to and choose to transfer research awareness from one writing situation to the next, we need to ask questions designed to explore the constraints on transfer.

In place of a longitudinal study, I would expand my study laterally to what Nowacek calls a “thick synchronous slice” of students’ writing lives (3), interviewing students from a WAW-based FYC course about their writing not only for that course, but also for their other courses and activities during the term. Adjusting the timing and number of student interviews so that I met with students nearly immediately after completing various “steps” of their projects (topic selection, data collection, first draft), would aid with recall and also probe students’ motivations for making particular choices. While retaining many of the questions included in my interview guides (see Appendix C), I would also ask more questions designed to identify, in Nowacek’s terms, moments of “seeing” (when students identify opportunities for transfer) and “selling” (how successfully students understood themselves to be making that transfer).

My study has been particularly useful for the ways in which it considers another group of campus stakeholders – librarians – and what this group knows about research. Further studies might consider the competing perspectives of other campus stakeholders interested in research:
first-year experience programs, other academic departments or programs, campus offices for faculty development, co-op advisors, and administration, to name a few. Such studies might also permit a broader picture of the politics of knowledge-making in the academy, and how what we as a field know about research is valued or recognized in this larger setting. This knowledge would help explore barriers to replacing instruction in how to research with instruction about research.

The instructor-participants in my study did not use the vocabulary of WAW in their interviews, suggesting that while their work exhibited WAW-like features, they were perhaps unfamiliar with this body of scholarship. One way to test the tentative conclusions of my study while opening questions for future research is to put these conclusions to work in first-year writing classrooms or programs with an overtly WAW-centered approach.

**Suggestions for classroom practice**

My findings demonstrate that if a WAW approach to research instruction is to be successful, it needs to approach secondary research with as much care and detail as it does primary research. Studies of genre and transfer have already demonstrated that students do not automatically transfer knowledge gained from one assignment to another; therefore, we cannot assume that the rich, contextual descriptions students develop in a discourse analysis assignment like those common in WAW pedagogy will transfer to another assignment that requires a different form of research. Furthermore, even when students actively transfer writing knowledge from a previous task, that knowledge may be incomplete or inappropriate. The “research paper” is an especially problematic antecedent genre because students and instructors carry mismatched “genre baggage” (Devitt) but assume that they have the same understanding of what the research paper genre entails. If researched assignments in FYC are meant to prepare students for future types of researched writing, these assignments require more explicit instruction in genre awareness, with emphasis on how to generate and refine a research question, source selection, source analysis, and citation.
Our attempts to teach research would be more effective if they relegated procedural knowledge (such as teaching students to use discrete tools like catalogs and databases or to format their papers in MLA Style) to the background and foregrounded teaching about research, helping students to develop a research mindset, the meta-aware, critical frame of mind required to participate in different discourse communities or activity systems. Cultivating a research mindset does not mean knowing just “how to research,” but knowing about research. A research mindset is important not because it allows a writer to find information (although that is part of the process), but because it allows for information literacy. In the sections that follow, I describe three propositions for integrating more fully theorized research instruction into WAW pedagogies.

**WAW-based courses need to teach about research**

I envision a course in many ways analogous to the one Wardle and Downs present in *Writing about Writing: A College Reader*. During the first two months of the course, students would read selections from that textbook to develop their knowledge of key concepts in composition, such as error, process, literacy, and discourse community. The readings would help students develop fluency with composition and familiarity with some of its core concepts, not so that they would be experts in composition theory, but so that they could cultivate awareness about writing. The readings from *Writing about Writing* would expose students to many of the key concepts of the field and help them develop questions to test these concepts.

My proposed course would also build upon current WAW courses by incorporating readings and writings about research. Throughout the previous chapters, I have argued that for a WAW approach to researched writing to be successful, students must have a real exigency for their work. “Research paper” assignments do not help teach about writing or about research because they are often based on a version of “how to research” so generalized that it is nearly meaningless. The researched assignment in this course would require students to apply their writing awareness to a specific community: the readers of and contributors to *Young Scholars in Writing*. Rather than write a “research paper” on a topic plucked from the air, students would
begin with the questions or challenges raised by their reading of articles in \textit{Writing about Writing} and explore these questions through submissions to \textit{YSIW}. The “Guidelines for Submissions for Spotlight on First-Year Writing” specify the permissible topics of exploration (“topics tightly related to composition, rhetoric, and/or literacy studies”), as well as formatting guidelines (page count, MLA Style, e-mail submission). \textit{YSIW} would give students a venue for presenting their relevant questions while enforcing the lessons about research and writing developed through \textit{Writing about Writing}.

In Chapter 2, I argued that we need to exchange the metaphor of finding sources with collecting sources, because such a metaphor encourages students to select sources that will help them develop strong answers to their relevant questions. One benefit of using a book such as \textit{Writing about Writing} as the primary text for FYC is that it offers students a concept map of the field that will help them as they begin their research. Such an approach could help librarians teach a much more targeted version of library research while also helping students develop awareness about research. In Chapter 2, I argued that Maureen’s instruction session was especially successful because she encouraged students to locate themselves within an academic discipline before searching for articles or books. In a course built on WAW pedagogy, the students’ first step would be to locate themselves within composition’s conversations.

A student who enjoyed reading Wardle’s “Identity, Authority, and Learning to Write in New Workplaces,” for example, and who was interested in exploring the concepts of identity, authority, and workplace writing through further research, could use this article as a starting point. A research instruction session would not begin with typing the phrase “writing in the workplace” into a catalog, database, or Google search, but would instead begin with the article itself and place that article within a discursive context. The library instruction session might include any or all of the following steps:

1) Use the article’s reference to locate the full issue in which the article appeared, then review the other articles published in that issue.

2) Use the article’s Works Cited to find related articles (“backward chaining”).
3) Find out who has cited this article, using both library resources like Web of Knowledge and open web resources like Google Scholar ("forward chaining").

4) Search for more information about the author to find out what other writing that author has done on the topic.

5) Find the article in a library database and identify the specific search limiters associated with the article. Use those limiters to conduct more precise searches.

6) Search for topic-organized annotated bibliographies written by prominent members of the field.

7) Use the library’s subject guides (sometimes known as “lib guides”) to find leading publications in the field and to learn acceptable research methods for exploring questions in that field.

This approach to research instruction more accurately reflects the kind of work that academic researchers do; researched writing is preceded by a long period of increasingly focused reading. Although the single semester requires a somewhat abbreviated version of this process, it preserves the habits of mind of more seasoned researchers.

It bears repeating that this course would not be designed to teach “how to write” academic essays; there are significant differences between the kinds of writing that students would do in a course about writing and the kinds of writing they would do in a course designed to prepare them to do “academic writing.” For example, an FYC course in “academic writing” might include a research paper assigned out of a sense that students in FYC should learn some basic research skills that they can unproblematically apply in other courses. I am not advocating this kind of assignment. I am instead aligning myself with proponents of WAW pedagogy, whose goal is to introduce students to what the field of composition has come to learn about writing, including what we know about academic writing. A WAW course can teach students about academic writing, just as it can teach them what the field has come to know about literacy, grammar, and other concepts explored in textbooks like Writing about Writing. The research unit of a WAW course is a short look into worlds of academic writing, but it is a look far more productive than teaching students “how to” research.
Instead of being an information dump on a haphazardly chosen and impossibly broad topic, the researched assignment in the WAW course I envision would be evidence of what students have learned about ways of doing research, evidence that they have developed a research mindset. Ultimately, it would be most valuable to embrace the “meta” nature of WAW pedagogy and supplant “the research paper” with an exploration “about” research. Along with the researched assignment, students would complete a reflective essay like the one that I described in Chapter 4, describing the “decision points” (Anson 203) they encountered as they incorporated sources.

WAW instructors need to cultivate their own research awareness

Such a course will only be successful if we as instructors cultivate our own meta-awareness about research and writing. Thaiss and Zawacki argue that what students are taught about academic writing “relies too much on a teacher’s limited personal experience of particular classrooms or on commonplaces that have been passed down” (4-5). Although many instructors of first-year composition work hard to dissolve such commonplaces such as “Never use ‘I’ in an essay,” we are perhaps the worst offenders of the “limited personal experience” problem. In Rehearsing New Roles, Carroll points out a problem unique to English faculty. Writing training for English faculty likely came through literature and writing courses, leading them to portray “writing” in terms of the discipline-specific model of writing they learned in these courses (10).

To be successful, WAW requires instructors who do not mistake the disciplinary expectations of their “home” academic communities for universal rules of writing. One recurring concern among composition professionals is that the instructors teaching composition – and FYC in particular – are not composition professionals. None of the faculty participants in my study identified themselves as composition specialists; two held PhDs in literature and took jobs teaching composition upon graduation. One instructor, who holds an MFA, hopes to eventually teach poetry. The three graduate student TAs are pursuing literature degrees with no plans to teach composition, and the senior TA is thinking about graduate work in library and information science. Staffing FYC courses with professors outside of composition or with graduate students
who have yet to specialize in a discipline contributes to the perception that writing is a basic skill, easily taught.

Making the course about writing appears to exacerbate the problem of nonspecialists, and especially graduate students, teaching composition. But making a switch to an about writing pedagogy may actually make it easier for graduate students to teach, and may even make graduate students ideal instructors for discussions about research. Thaiss and Zawacki demonstrate that academics are not always able to see how they have gradually acquired disciplinary and subdisciplinary knowledge (59). Ambrose et al. found that most faculty at the college level have an “expert blind spot”; that is, they make intuitive leaps in their own work, but are not always able to articulate how they make these leaps (99). Graduate students, however, are thought to be in a state of conscious competence: “they have considerable competence in their domain, yet still must think and act deliberately and consciously” (96). Because they so often need to make these conscious choices about their writing, graduate students may be ideally suited to be the co-investigators of writing called for within WAW pedagogies.

This type of co-investigation would be especially valuable in a WAW course that incorporated an “about” approach to research because the graduate students in English so often tasked with teaching FYC, while perhaps not experts in all of composition’s core concepts (such as grammar or literacy), are in the process of cultivating knowledge about research. Through their coursework, they are learning various research strategies (such as archival research and human subjects research) that challenge and extend the types of research they relied on as undergraduates. Through creating and/or reading exam lists, they are actively constructing their own maps of their disciplines and subdisciplines. Through writing theses and dissertations, they are learning to situate themselves within those maps and citing strategically to show, among other functions, moments of connection, allegiance, disagreement, and consensus. And they are doing all of these things while learning what it means to be “relevant” in their chosen fields of study.
WAW approaches to research require extended conversations with research experts

The approach to research instruction that I am advocating requires increased attention to librarians’ research practices and instruction methods. One way for librarians and compositionists to help students develop a richer contextual view of research and more useful antecedent research genres is for both librarians and compositionists to recognize their mutual goals and to share knowledge and resources.

Part of a strong collaboration is exploring our use of research terms. Jeff Purdue, writing to librarians about the problems of the murky term “information literacy,” makes a point that should sound familiar to those in composition: “literacy” is often interpreted as a base minimum skill, but it should be viewed as a continuum (656). “Information” presents an even thornier issue, as it seems to suggest that it is a discrete point along the path to knowledge, not part of the knowledge-making process itself (657). Rebecca Albitz suggests that librarians and faculty use two terms – information literacy and critical thinking, respectively – that are extremely similar, but that faculty are suspicious of “information literacy” because of its association with basic skills. Both fields could benefit from a closer examination of our shared and overlapping terms.

Another component of stronger collaboration is to acknowledge that our current collaborations are often one-sided; we should reflect on whether we are really “collaborating” with librarians at all when we request library instruction.¹ Rather than presenting librarians with the final draft of an assignment and asking them to tailor their instruction to it, or perhaps not providing an assignment at all, we can ask librarians to participate in the drafting process, offering their insight about successful researched assignments. In doing so, we would recognize

¹ Edward Owusu-Ansah argues that both one-shot and course-integrated instruction “subordinate the library to the activities and concessions of those who have come to be accepted as the mainstream teachers on campus – the faculty in departments with the institutionally unquestioned mandate to award credit” (416). Owusu-Ansah takes issue with librarians’ enthusiasm for library instruction sessions, “those limited engagements that have fashionably been labeled ‘collaboration’” (419). His frustration with these “collaborations” is that library instruction “removes control from the library and almost exclusively deposits it in the hands of non-library subject faculty” (419). These collaborations are especially problematic, Owusu-Ansah argues, because they discourage librarians from pursuing credit bearing courses, the “currency of recognition” of the academy, “denoting the significance or value of an educational activity or experience in higher education” (419).
librarians as scholars in their own right. Librarians’ instruction about how to use libraries is a product of their research, just as our instruction about writing is a product of our research. We need to learn about librarians’ work at a local level, but also about library scholarship. We should be attentive to journals like portal, which establish scholarly communication between composition and library and information science, and keep this portal open by making more contributions to it. Another way to help students (and ourselves) better understand library research is to do what we do best: interrogate language, in this case the language of libraries, inviting the librarians to explain what a librarian is, and how librarians fit within the research process.

Instructors at The University, like those I have encountered on many campuses and through countless journal articles, often have well-articulated descriptions of what they are teaching, and know why they want to teach it. They schedule library instruction sessions, for example, to familiarize their students with the library, to learn how to use search engines, or to develop research topics. What many instructors, both at The University and beyond, do not appear to realize is what effects their requests for library instruction have, both on librarians, who are viewed as passive repositories of knowledge, and on students, whose attitudes about research as a mechanical retrieval process are confirmed by the one-hour bibliographic instruction session. If we in composition wish to teach research as a contextually situated, genre governed practice, we must develop new approaches to research instruction that value librarians as teachers and scholars of information literacy, which in turn can help us help students to use sources more critically and to enter into discourses of knowledge production.

I opened this chapter with an excerpt from Wardle and Downs’s introduction to students in Writing about Writing. In that introduction, Wardle and Downs assert that learning about writing is more valuable than learning how to write because “changing what you know about writing can change the way you write” (2). The approach to research I have described throughout this dissertation is meant to promote the same kind of attention to research. By
teaching about research rather than how to research, we might shift the focus of research away from generic notions of what good researchers “should” or “are supposed” to do, which embody the very kind of rigid prescriptivism that the field of composition has challenged for much of its history. In its place, we might substitute a more critically informed model of research that encourages students to develop relevant questions, to collect and map sources, and to make strategic use of those sources. Through this model, we might teach students that research does far more than “show.”
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT BIOGRAPHIES

All participants were interviewed between October and December 2009. All of the participants helped bring shape and substance to my project, so I have elected to include short biographies for all of them here, even those whose words do not appear in the completed dissertation.

Students

Unless otherwise indicated, students are first-year first-semester students.

Aaron, age 18, is applying for entrance to the organizational studies program for next fall. This term, he is taking a contemporary sociology course, and finds this perspective helpful in his research for his paper for Sabrina’s class, in which he has chosen to focus on beatniks. He studies at the undergraduate library almost daily.

Adrian, age 18, is writing about presidential personalities and their influences on polling data for Sabrina’s class. In addition to College Writing, he is also taking a political science course.

Allison, age 18, was a Starbucks barista in high school, and this experience inspired her to research the history of coffee and the atmosphere of three local coffee shops for Amber’s class. She is applying to the business school next term. Although she goes to the undergraduate library four times a week for various group meetings or to escape from her routine, she prefers to research from the couch in her dorm room. All of the printing she has done for research assignments has eaten through her print quota of 400 pages, so she is planning to print everything she needs for her research paper while home for Thanksgiving.

Christopher, age 18, describes himself as “a math and science guy,” and likes “things that have right answers and exact procedure.” He is working toward a dual degree in computer engineering and business, and is taking physics, math, and engineering this term. In his spare time, he plays video games, and likes to compete in local Super Smash Bros. tournaments. This extracurricular activity inspired his research on video games and learning for Sabrina’s class. He
is a native of University City, and frequents the public library. He also makes use of the University Libraries, including the undergraduate library, where he goes for printing, and the engineering library, where he goes to work on group projects as well as to relax with the library’s large collection of video games and gaming systems.

**Derek**, age 18, recently joined a yoga studio downtown, which inspired him to write about the history of yoga for Sabrina’s class. He will apply for entrance into the architecture school next year. Like many of the students in this study, Derek has a full schedule. He had a gig singing and playing guitar at a cafe across the street before our interview, and dashed off from our meeting to an appointment with his academic advisor. Derek primarily goes to the undergraduate library cafe for breakfast, and occasionally studies there between classes. For longer study sessions, he uses the graduate library’s reference room.

**Eric**, age 19, knew he wanted to major in sports management as a high school junior, and picked The University specifically because of its sports management program. He is enrolled in a sports management class this term, for which he researched barefoot running shoes. In Alan’s class, he is writing about gun control. He does not go to the library unless he has a group project, as the library is a long walk from his dorm room.

**Erin**, age 18, is an undeclared Arts & Sciences major applying to the organizational studies program for next year. The program is competitive, so her back-up plan is psychology. Erin sees the library as a social place, so when she needs to study she prefers the floor of her dorm room, the gym, or the cafe where we met for our interview. For her research paper in Alan’s class, she is researching paranoia in the 1950s and the present, with a focus on government officials’ reactions to the Cold War and the attacks of 9/11. The printing she has done for this project has caused her to exceed her print quota for the term.

**Ethan**, age 18, is applying to the organizational studies program because of his interests in psychology, sociology, economics, and political science. Because he has so many interests, he chose to focus on different fields for each of his papers for Sabrina’s class, researching political science for the discourse community project and psychology – specifically, the extralegal factors
influencing jury decisions— for the research paper. He prefers to study in the quiet of the law library, but finds it intimidating, “because if you cough you kind of get the death stare from a bunch of people.”

James, age 18, is on the swim team, and finds it difficult to squeeze in studying between multiple daily practices. James visits the library to meet with his project partner for Amber’s class, a study of urban agriculture as a means of supporting low-income city dwellers. He has “no idea” what major he will pursue, but knows it is “definitely not English”; “I’m just trying to find something I’m interested in, find a passion.”

Jay, age 20, was an engineering student for his first two years at The University, but has recently switched his field to political science. While engineering did not require College Writing, political science does, which is why Jay is enrolled in this course as a junior. He wants to attend graduate school to study public affairs, and so has registered for classes that relate to themes of war, religion, and politics, all of which he plans to study in graduate school. His future plans influenced his paper for Sabrina’s class, which he chose to write about the threat of nuclear war. He feels “a distinct advantage” taking the course as a junior, because he already knows his field and has had a lot of practice with writing. Although he feels at an advantage when it comes to writing, his research skills make him feel behind his peers in Sabrina’s class. As an engineer, the textbook was often sufficient for research, and so Jay feels limited in his knowledge of the library resources. He is excited by the range of materials at the library that he did not even know about until this third year of college.

Keith, age 18, is currently a kinesiology major, but in taking his first course in the major has learned that he would rather watch sports than study them. He is drawn to communications, journalism, drama, and music industry, and plans to take courses in these areas to narrow his interests. He considers many of these topics for his research for Sabrina’s class, but ultimately settles on the influence of jazz throughout the history of New Orleans. Keith studies in the graduate library reference room because “it’s the nicest,” but does not go there for books; instead he uses the library’s book retrieval service to avoid getting lost in the stacks.
**Kevin**, age 18, is a sports management major. He was not available for an interview, but asked to answer questions about his research process through e-mail. He uses the undergraduate library and graduate library for research and group work. For his paper in Alan’s class, he is writing about war propaganda.

**Kim** is so enthusiastic about her group project for Amber’s class that despite two long interviews, I run out of time to ask her any quantitative questions. After attending a panel that discussed food deserts in a nearby city, Kim decided to write about that topic for Amber’s class. She conducts interviews and observations in a nearby city, and through the process learns about the significant time and energy required for this kind of research. Her friends tell her that this project is her life, which she does not mind because she is passionate about her subject. Toward the end of the project, Kim experiences major issues of trust with her group mates, and is concerned that her grade is in their hands.

**Nick**, age 18, has written multiple research papers this term, one on the Indonesian Revolution for a seminar in Dutch colonialism, and one on Shostakovich’s 5th Symphony for Sabrina’s class. Although he has not yet declared a major, he is considering biology. He usually studies in his dorm, and uses the library only as a “placeholder between classes” for an hour or two each week.

**Sam**, a kinesiology major who is a regular at the campus gym, chooses to write his paper for Amber’s class about workout nutrition. He plans to interview fellow students to learn what they eat and drink before workouts, with hopes to educate them about how they should change these routines for maximum health. He will publish his results in poster form and hang the posters around the gym.

**Susan**, age 20, spent the year after her high school graduation in Mexico, and is now in her first semester at The University. She enrolled in Tara’s Basic Writing course because she struggles with writing and heard that the course would provide one-on-one time with the professor and TA. She has been pleasantly surprised by the class, enough to consider enrolling in a creative writing class in a future term. She is currently a nursing major, but isthinking
about switching to anthropology because of her love of languages and cultures. She uses the public library in her hometown to access Spanish language materials, and learned how to fill out a purchase request form at University Library, which she used to request the Rosetta Stone in Portuguese. Next term she will be taking Portuguese, Spanish, and Introduction to Anthropology. Susan is comfortable in libraries, in part because her mother worked at the local public library. Susan uses the undergraduate library to “read and relax” between classes.

**Theresa**, age 18, is a student in Alan’s class contrasting the public perception of the FBI under Hoover with accounts from ex-agents. She is also writing two research papers for her art history course, one on the origins of modernism and another on painter Gustave Courbet. She is thinking about majoring in English or Art History, and would “love to be a journalist or a writer, but that’s just such a scary thing to devote yourself to.” She also imagines herself as a buyer for museums. Essentially, any job that will permit her to travel and/or write is appealing. Theresa is also a copyeditor for the school’s newspaper. Although much of her job is correcting AP Style, she also does fact-checking research. Theresa says that she does not spend enough time in the library, but loves to work in the carrels in the graduate library.

**Tiffany**, age 18, did not previously think much about what she was writing, but as a college student has come to see that good writing must have a purpose. She wants to write “something with purpose” for Sabrina’s class, so chooses to research diabetes and its effect on the economy. She is a nursing major, and uses the medical library because of its proximity to the nursing school, where most of her classes are held. She mostly uses the library to meet with study groups.

**Tyler**, age 18, is a double major in biochemistry and chemistry, and plans to pursue medicine after graduation. His prior experiences with medicine (both of his parents are in the field) encouraged him to select the H1N1 vaccine as his topic for his research paper for Sabrina’s class. He is not a frequent user of the library, and guesses he has studied there 8 times this term and conducted research a handful of times.
Composition Instructors

Many of the instructors listed below declined to be interviewed. They are listed here, however, because of their involvement in the library instruction sessions or because their students did elect to be interviewed. Those instructors that were interviewed are marked with an asterisk (*).

**Alan** declined to be interviewed for this project, but did invite me to his College Writing classes to recruit participants for the project. During the library instruction session for one of his College Writing classes, he marvels that students can do all of their research from the chairs in their dorm rooms, which he likens to *Wall-E*. He requires his students to write an “old school” project: an 8-10 page research paper.

*Amber*, age 41, is in her sixth year teaching for The University, where she teaches Basic Writing and College Writing, as well as mini-courses in new media and upper-level writing. This term she is teaching a special section of College Writing on food and food policy for the Scholarship in Service Program, which includes units on academic writing, community research, and persuasive writing. For the community-based research project, her students must identify a local food-related issue and develop a research project with both library and observational research components. Amber holds a PhD in 18th and 19th century British and American literature, which she was able to finish at a distance in part because of the vast holdings of University Library.

*Ben*, age 53, has been teaching at The University for 10 years. He earned his PhD in English from The University in 1996 and taught elsewhere for a few years before returning to teach College Writing, Persuasive Writing, and Introduction to College. For the past 7-8 years, he assigned all of his students a library scavenger hunt, which he designed with help from the librarians. When Ben came to The University as a graduate student, he still used the card catalog. Since then, he has witnessed an “enormous change” and does most of his research online, limiting his time in the physical library.
Brandon, age 27, is a TA in his fourth year in the PhD program, and is writing his dissertation on 18th century British literature. After earning his Bachelor’s degree in English and prior to joining the PhD program here, he was a substitute high school teacher, a job he refers to as “glorified babysitting.” Brandon has also taught elementary school students enrolled in a summer computing course. At The University, he has taught a discussion section on Shakespeare as well as Writing about Literature, and this term is teaching College Writing. Students are not required to conduct outside research for his course, but he still thinks it important to introduce students to the library, and takes students from all of his classes every term, whether or not they are writing research-based papers. Brandon has a carrel at the library, which he mainly uses for writing. He would visit the library more often if it did not hand-deliver books to him.

Caitlin, age 21, is a senior double majoring in anthropology and American culture. As a freshman, she participated in a summer program designed to orient students to college, and was asked to be an assistant for that same program the summer before her senior year. Following that experience, she took on a role of Teaching Assistant to Tara’s Basic Writing course. In her role as TA, she holds office hours at a local cafe, and meets with half of the class each week. She also created a model e-portfolio and taught students how to use e-portfolio software. She describes herself as more “mentor” than “teacher,” but is interested in teaching and applying to Teach for America for next fall. Teaching has taught her a lot about her own writing process, which has been useful as she works on an ethnography of beer pong players for a folklore course. She uses the library once or twice a month, initially holding her office hours in the undergraduate library cafe but later moving when it was too crowded and noisy. She is considering graduate work in information science.

Eve teaches Basic Writing and College Writing courses, and in both is having students write 4-6 page researched essays within the broad topic of learning. Students are required to frame these essays with personal narratives.
Jamie teaches College Writing, and brings her students to the library for assistance with the 7-page, 3-source papers they will be writing about pop culture art forms such as comic books. After Damien finishes his instruction session for her class, Jamie immediately asks if she can schedule another session with him for next term’s classes.

Jonathan brings his Persuasive Writing students to the library to find sources to help them complete projects modeled after Malcolm Gladwell’s “Big & Bad.” Student projects include “how technology is ruining relationships” and “how social networking changes society.”

Kristen, age 32, is in her fourth year of the PhD program at The University, and has taught Writing about Literature and College Writing. In her earlier teaching position in her Master’s program, she had her lessons “so neatly structured and timed out,” but found that “because of where the class took us, these ideas didn’t seem as relevant as they had when I was planning the course.” She now makes her courses more “open ended,” which this term resulted in the synthesis paper she created to cap off the course, for which students wrote about such topics as women in math, the success of Geico’s marketing strategy, and the Motion Picture Association of America’s change from 5 to 10 Best Picture nominations each year.

Lindsay is a first-year student in the PhD program in English, and is teaching College Writing for the first time. She brings students to the library for assistance with their position papers. She banned “common” topics like abortion or the death penalty, but otherwise allowed students to select whatever topic interested them, which resulted in a wide range of topics, including “effects of media on different generations, start times of high school, universal healthcare, concert etiquette, genetic modification of foods, capitalism versus socialism, crime and sentencing, age of consent, and tobacco advertising.” Her assignment is significant because the wide range of topics is what inspires Maureen to completely redesign her instruction session. Lindsay requires her students to write an annotated bibliography with 5 sources, only one of which can be an internet source. This requirement leads Maureen to clarify whether Lindsay means “open web” sources or the entire internet.
Lisa takes her College Writing students to the library to learn about persuasion and plagiarism. At the end of Raeanne’s session, Lisa exclaims “hold on to these slides!” and tells students that the presentation will help them throughout their entire time at The University.

Matt is an adjunct instructor teaching College Writing who brings his class to the library for instruction. It is not clear what assignment his students are working on at the time of the library visit.

Rebecca does not have a specific researched assignment in her College Writing class, but brings students to the library to find scholarly articles about their majors. Additionally, she allows students to revise an earlier paper by adding a source to it.

*Sabrina, age 26, is a TA working on a PhD in comparative literature, and has a Bachelor’s degree in English and an MFA in poetry. Prior to coming to The University, she taught high school students for three years and college students for two years. Sabrina visits the library to return books, but not to retrieve them, as she uses the library delivery service to have books sent to her campus mailbox. Her College Writing students are writing 8-10 page research papers with a minimum of 10 sources, all of which must be print-based.

*Tara, age 31, has been at The University for five years, and has taught Basic Writing, Writing about Literature, College Writing, Persuasive Writing, as well as courses in creative writing, blogging, and graduate writing. Her Basic Writing students are not required to include sources from the library in their art analysis papers, although they are welcome to do so. Tara has an MFA in poetry from The University. Recently, Tara’s friend’s laptop was stolen from her locked library carrel. The incident has made Tara nervous about working in her own carrel, which she normally uses for writing. Furthermore, because of the library’s retrieval and scanning services, which deliver books and articles to her campus mailbox and e-mail inbox, she has fewer reasons to visit the library in person.

Willow encourages her College Writing students to select a narrow, local problem that is personally relevant to them and write a 6-8 page paper incorporating 3 outside sources to argue a specific solution to that problem. Her assignment sheet carefully explains the role of
research in the paper: “This research will show that there are other problems like yours in the world, that people are concerned about them, and that they are serious.” Her students are writing about a range of topics, including the implications of standardized testing on high school teaching, compulsory CPR and AED training for high school students, and the inclusion of nutritional information on chain restaurant menus.

**Librarians**

All but one of the participants were interviewed and observed teaching one or more library instruction sessions; the one participant declined to be interviewed but welcomed observation. The end of each biography lists the instructor-participants whose courses the librarian taught this term.

**Damien**, age 40, graduated with a Master’s degree in Library and Information Science in 2007 and completed a two-year fellowship at another university library before coming to The University. Along with Jennifer and Maureen, he is a Learning Librarian in his first-term with University Library. He shares an office with Jennifer, with whom he frequently collaborates on instruction ideas. His duties include planning and teaching instruction sessions to undergraduates (which he does 3-4 times per week), working at the reference desks in the undergraduate and graduate libraries, staffing the virtual “Ask a Librarian” instant-messaging service, and managing e-collections. In addition to these responsibilities, Damien works on programming for the library; for example, just after our interview, he participated in the grand opening of a new library screening room that can be used for both education and entertainment. Damien led or co-taught library instruction sessions for Alan, Ben, Jamie, Jonathan, Kristen, Matt, Tara, and Willow’s classes.

**Dennis** coordinates information technology at the library, and refers to himself as “the tech guy.” He has worked at The University for the past 28 years, and tells students he is “paid to work for people who have research inflicted upon them.” Dennis led a library instruction session for Brandon’s class.
Jennifer, age 25, knew that she wanted to be a librarian since the fifth grade, when she joined a summer book club at her local library. She loves to read, and jokes that a career as a librarian will allow her to continue to read without having to “nail down a subject.” She received her undergraduate degree in History and English in 2007 and went straight to the School of Information at The University, from which she graduated with a Master’s degree in 2009. As an undergraduate she enjoyed folklore, so briefly considered a career in archival work; however, after working in the archives at a public library, she knew she wanted to be on the front end, working with library patrons. As one of the three Learning Librarians, her main job is instruction. She teaches approximately three instruction sessions per week and staffs “Ask a Librarian.” She is especially interested in “community informatics,” which focuses on people’s information needs. For one recent project, she supplied all of the library bathrooms with health information, and was thrilled when all of this information was gone within the month. She is also interested in issues of library resource accessibility, and is attending a conference on usability later this term. In addition to these responsibilities, she sponsors activities meant to make the library inviting to students, among them a spelling bee with prizes (for which she served as the moderator, even though she admits to being a poor speller). Jennifer led or co-taught library instruction sessions for Amber, Ben, Eve, and Sabrina’s classes.

Jocelyn, age 42, has been employed by University Library for 15 years, the first 14½ of which she spent at the medical library. As an undergraduate, Jocelyn studied French language, literature, and culture. She received a Master of Information and Library Studies from The University, then worked in another university library system for three years before returning here. Earlier this year, she became the director of education for the entire library system, and is responsible for matching the disparate parts of the library with other offices and departments around the campus. She is currently collaborating with the Teaching and Learning Center to make the library a part of TA training. She chairs the instruction steering committee, and holds weekly instruction meetings with the Learning Librarians. She is also mentoring Katie through her internship. Although Jocelyn does not teach many one-shot library instruction sessions, she
does teach a credit-bearing course designed to teach students how to conduct digital research for their disciplines, a class that, she is excited to note, has a waiting list for next term. She is also working on a proposal for a second- or third-year course on research in the disciplines. Her responsibilities extend beyond the university community as well; later this term, she will be showing a group of 150 tenth graders learning legislative history how to use government documents. Jocelyn did not lead instruction sessions for any of the instructors who were interviewed or observed for this study. She prepared the materials Jennifer used to teach Sabrina’s class.

Katie, age 23, was a practicum student from a nearby university who received her Master’s of Library and Information Science with a concentration in academic libraries at the close of the term. Throughout the practicum, she frequently co-taught with the other librarians, gradually taking on more responsibility. She spent roughly 10-12 hours per week teaching, both in the classroom and at the Reference Desk. At the time of our interview, Katie was preparing for her first solo instruction session. By the end of the term, she had been offered part-time employment at University Library for the upcoming term, and in a follow-up interview with me in Spring of 2010 was happy to report that she had just received her first full-fledged librarian job at another university, which began in the Fall of 2010. In this role, she has had the opportunity to teach a first-year composition course, which blends her skills from her undergraduate degree in English literature and journalism with her graduate degree in library science. Katie led or co-taught library instruction sessions for Alan, Amber, Eve, Jonathan, and Kristen’s classes.

Maureen, age 39, is the third of the Learning Librarians at University Library, a job she views as the culmination of two decades of preparation. She received an undergraduate degree in English and History and considered teaching, but felt too young and inexperienced, so worked in libraries. She worked in Technical Services, the “back end, behind-the-scenes” aspect of the library, for ten years, but decided that she preferred working with people, and so earned her teaching certification in English and History for grades 7-12, and took a series of
“educational odd jobs” in middle school, high school, and adult and alternative education. She graduated from The University’s School of Information earlier this year, and started working this fall. In addition to teaching instruction sessions, staffing the Reference Desk, and working on e-collections, she also mentors undergraduates who staff the Reference Desk. She is currently working on assessment measures, including one to assess how well students understand scholarly and popular resources, and is writing a conference proposal with a fellow librarian for a conference about assessment. Maureen taught a library instruction session for Lindsay’s class.

**Melissa**, age 35, is the instruction coordinator for the undergraduate library, where she has worked for nine years. All of the library instruction requests go through her. She teaches 1-3 instruction sessions per week, depending on need. Additionally, she staffs the Reference Desk and “Ask a Librarian.” Melissa has a Master’s degree in English and a second Master’s in Library Science, both of which she uses in her work as a selector for British and American Literature. She also selects Art History texts. She recently implemented an evaluation system to facilitate assessment and to market the library to other departments and groups on campus. She is also creating library guides and videos that students can access from the library website to assist them with their research. She coordinates events for the library, from poetry readings to poster presentations for a Swahili class. Melissa shares an office with Maureen, and each of them joined in the other’s interview to share insights. Melissa led library instruction sessions for Eve and Rebecca’s classes.

**Raeanne**, age 32, received her Master’s degree in Information Science in 2008, with a specialization in library and information services and human/computer interaction. She worked in libraries as an undergraduate, where she studied political economy and European unification. She is a public services librarian who came to work for the University Libraries, first as an intern from 2006-2008 and then as a full time employee in Fall 2008. Her position was created so that a professional librarian would be available to students during evening and weekend hours; as a result, she works the 9pm-12am shift at the Reference Desk in the graduate library, as well as some “Ask a Librarian” shifts. She teaches technology workshops, including ones on
bibliographic management programs such as Zotero and EndNote. She also steps in to teach if an undergraduate instruction session goes unclaimed because she wants more experience with instruction. Rebecca led library instruction sessions for Lisa and Willow’s classes.
APPENDIX B: METHODS

This project began with one question: What is “research”? My work was influenced by Emily Martin’s *Flexible Bodies*, for which she collected interviews to understand how people with substantially different kinds of expertise (among them “the media,” “non-scientists,” “scientists,” and “alternative practitioners”) imagined the immune system. Martin describes the interviews as a “collectively-produced text, a kind of encyclopedia of what a diverse population thinks is sayable, imaginable, or thinkable” about the topic (10). I wanted to develop a similarly complex picture of research. What images and associations did the word “research” conjure for people? Was research viewed as a primarily school/workplace activity? Did people associate research with other settings as well? How was the perception of research evolving with our growing dependence on web-based search strategies?

Researched assignments are hardly limited to first-year composition; with the growth of advanced writing courses and writing across the disciplines approaches, the formal research assignment may be found at various points along the curriculum. I narrowed my focus to first-year writing because it is here that the generic “research paper” appears most frequently, and because library-based research instruction is most often embedded within first-year composition. I was interested in this library visit, often the first time students experience the college library, and certainly the first moment in which librarians, students, and instructors converged to talk about research, because it offered an excellent opportunity to observe students’ developing attitudes toward research, as well as the differences among each group’s approaches to research. How did students, instructors, and librarians approach a research project in FYC, from reading or writing the assignment to turning in or grading the final draft? How did each group assign authority to particular web-based or print sources, and how are citation and attribution practices affected by those texts? What conceptions of authorship did each group hold, and how might their use of research have upheld or challenged these conceptions?
As I began searching for a field site, it also became clear that such a study would need to observe the relationships between these different groups, and how these relationships influenced participants’ understanding of research. How did students position themselves relative to librarians and composition instructors, and how did this positioning affect their understanding of research? How did their relationships with students and each other affect librarians’ and instructors’ perceptions of research?

Choosing a field site

I conducted an ethnographic analysis of three groups at The University, a large public university in the Midwest: students enrolled in first-year writing courses, their instructors, and librarians who interact with both groups. Because this project relied on participation of human subjects, it required approval from Northeastern’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). My IRB protocol, which included my intended research questions, a description of my proposed field site, permission letters from my main contacts at the field site, acknowledgment from the IRB office at my field site, recruitment letters, informed consent forms, interview guides, and certificates of completion of the National Institutes of Health “Protecting Human Research Participants” training course. My protocol was approved in October 2009, and this approval was renewed in October 2010, September 2011, and August 2012.

I describe my field site in more detail at the start of Chapter 1, but here outline my reasons for selecting it. The undergraduate population at The University was particularly appealing because of the mix of students in attendance. After having taught at private universities where the yearly cost of attendance now hovers above $50,000, I was interested in conducting research at a public university offering in-state tuition. While incoming students to my own institution paid $34,950 in tuition for the 2009-2010 school year, incoming in-state students to The University paid less than $15,000. The University draws from in-state student populations that might not be able to attend a more expensive private school, which suggested a wider variety in academic preparation, specifically in exposure to research.
The CCC “Guidelines for the Ethical Treatment of Students and Student Writing in Composition Studies” advise researchers to “avoid situations in which students feel that their decision to participate or not to participate in a study might affect their treatment by their instructors” by choosing “student participants from other classes or other sources” (488). I have no professional affiliation with The University, and thus was not in a position to unduly influence students, instructors, or librarians to participate. At the same time, I was sufficiently connected with the campus community to gain access to classrooms and libraries. Although there are many colleges and universities in the area where I could have conducted similar research, I already had friends and colleagues at The University who, while they did not participate in my project directly, helped me to gain entrance to the campus community.

Appropriating ethnographic methods

In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz defines the goal of ethnography as “the enlargement of the universe of human discourse” (14). Previous studies of researchers researching suggest that students, instructors, and librarians have widely varied understandings of research, and specifically discourses of knowledge production. Schwegler and Shamoon’s qualitative interviews, for example, revealed that students’ and instructors’ conceptions of research are so incompatible that they might as well be speaking different languages. Studies of composition scholarship and textbooks conducted by academic librarians, especially Virginia Tiefel (“Libraries and Librarians”); John Lent; Trudi Jacobson and John Vallely; Julie Still; and Christy Stevens, suggest that instructors and librarians often fail to speak the same language. Students, instructors, and librarians can often feel as though they are from alien worlds. An ethnographic approach to studying these three groups’ understandings of research and sense of position in relation to each other can help contribute to this expanded understanding that Geertz describes.

I chose to use ethnographic interviews and observations because they allowed me to gather information about each group’s perceived position in relation to the other two groups, information not usually available in the literature, and even when available, not always useful in
its typical formats. Students’ feelings about their instructors, for example, tend to be found in
course evaluations. These evaluations sometimes come long after the research paper is done,
and their completion usually signals the end of a course. These two factors can lead to recall
problems and rushed evaluations, both of which limit the usefulness of the results. Furthermore,
the standardized nature of these evaluations leaves little room for reflection about how the
student feels positioned in relation to instructors or librarians. Students also have few
opportunities to discuss their experiences with and feelings about librarians. An ethnographic
approach was one means of obtaining information on how each group understands itself in
relation to the others.

Ethnography allowed me to give voice to librarians, who often go unheard in
composition scholarship but whose perspective and expertise are valuable to our field’s
discussions about research. In “Librarians as Teachers,” Scott Walter notes that librarians’
voices “are typically aggregated and presented in an impersonal way through reports of local,
regional, and national surveys.” A qualitative research method, Walter suggests, “provides an
opportunity to restore the voice of individual librarians to the literature while still coming to
conclusions that can inform broader scholarly inquiry and professional practice” (65).

Ethnography was also appealing for the role it allowed me to inhabit: a participant in a
collaborative, dialogic engagement between researcher and participants. Although the
dissertation is frequently presented as the work of an individual intellectual making her way into
a field, this model of composition is at odds with the theories of writing that I use in my
descriptions of research. The ethnographic approach that I have chosen encourages
collaboration and helps me to avoid the “lone genius” model widely critiqued in composition.
Throughout the dissertation, I quote heavily from my respondents, in an attempt to keep their
textual presence nearly as visible as my own. Although my respondents’ real names are not
included here, my research method stands as a reminder that this work would not be possible
without the contributions of others.
Ethnography is a research method focused as much on its practitioners as its participants, and as such, forces ethnographers to consider the myriad ways in which they influence their data. David Fetterman claims that “the ethnographer enters the field with an open mind, not an empty head” (1). I began with research questions, biases, and assumptions that must necessarily color the study. One significant influence on my data was my teacher-identity. Although a strong advocate for reciprocity in ethnographic research, I followed Ellen Cushman’s argument against “intervention without invitation” (29), and attempted to limit my teaching moments to those times when participants asked me a direct question about their work. When Kim, a student struggling to find willing interview participants, asked me what she was doing wrong, I talked with her about how to design enticing but non-intimidating interview requests. When Caitlin, a senior conducting her first ethnographic project, told me her interviews were not producing rich data, we collaboratively generated more open-ended research questions. Other students, recognizing my role as a writing teacher, often stopped, mid-interview, to ask a question about a draft, and one student asked if he could schedule a second interview to get my feedback on his research paper. None of the instructors in my study identified as composition specialists, but knew that I am a composition instructor, which led to different types of correctness checks. Emily Martin’s respondents often felt “tested” on their scientific and medical knowledge, and sometimes asked to be contacted after the interview to learn about their “wrong” answers (12). I experienced a similar difficulty in my study, especially with one TA, Kristen, who often interrupted herself with a correctness check, as she did after drawing connections between the “genres” of definition, evaluation, and proposal: “And again, I preface this...this is me coming from my literary perspective. So I wonder if maybe you’re cringing and saying ‘No they’re not! They’re not blended that way!’”

Throughout the dissertation, I occasionally include reflective footnotes to serve three main functions. First, they allow me to explore the ways in which my presence influenced or disrupted data collection. Second, they allow me to describe the ethical choices I encountered when presenting participants in my text. Third, they allow me to demonstrate the ways in which
my own research practices – and the dissertation that resulted from them – are shaped by many of the same issues my participants faced. I have relegated these reflections to footnotes to preserve the flow of the dissertation, but did so with hesitation. These footnotes suggest that I have neatly extricated myself from my data and explained away all the confounding factors in my research. But, as Bruce Horner warns, such self-reflexive moves, meant as a “cautionary practice,” can backfire and “become a textually commodified guarantor of professional purity” (27). There is no way to know all the ways my presence shaped my data or the ways my study shaped me. Instead, I hope these reflections are a reminder that the researcher is always present, influencing and being acted upon by her work.

Collecting data

I collected nearly all of my data (with the exception of follow up meetings and e-mail exchanges with some participants) in the Fall 2009 semester. My primary sources of data were 34 open-ended qualitative interviews with a mix of student, instructor, and librarian participants. One of the interviews was conducted over e-mail. The remaining 33 were face-to-face interviews, held in offices, coffee shops, and restaurants, all of which were digitally recorded. Of these interviews, one was accidentally deleted before transcription. The remaining 32 interviews ranged from 29 minutes to 117 minutes, with an average length of 1 hour, 7 minutes. Interviews with librarians ranged from 50 minutes to 117 minutes, with an average length of 1 hour, 21 minutes. Most of these interviews were held in participants’ offices or in a library conference room. One interview was conducted at a local coffee shop. Interviews with students ranged from 29 minutes to 78 minutes, with an average length of 56 minutes, and were held in various coffee shops and restaurants around the campus. Interviews with composition instructors ranged from 48 minutes to 103 minutes, with an average length of 1 hour, 19 minutes. Interviews were held in a range of locations, including participants’ offices, local coffee shops, and restaurants.

The interviews were designed to understand how participants understood research, as well as how they perceived themselves in relation to the other participant groups in the study. I
styled the interview guides for each group of participants (see Appendix C: Interview Guides) after the guides Robert Weiss describes in *Learning from Strangers*. I chose a roughly chronological format, asking participants to describe a research paper, research unit, or library instruction session from start to finish. Following Weiss, I wrote two sets of questions under each section of the guides. The first of those question sets focuses on specific experiences. The second set focuses on the participants’ feelings about and analysis of those experiences (49-50). This format made it easier to use the guide as just that – a *guide*, not a script. By knowing the basic topics and following them in order, I was able to pay closer attention to my respondents’ experiences instead of marching them through a survey. I closed each interview with quantitative questions, which gave me basic demographic information about respondents. I included these questions at the end of the interviews so that respondents would not view the interview as a set of yes/no or short answer questions, but as a “full and detailed narrative account” (51) of their experiences with research. One danger of including these questions at the end of the interview was that when an interview was especially rich I did not want to rush or suspend the interview to ask the qualitative questions, even if the respondent had to leave soon. As a result, I did not obtain all of the demographic information from some participants, who spent the full interview time describing their research experiences.

Although the interviews were my primary source of data, they were not my first source. From my early conversations with friends at The University, I knew that instructors teaching in the first-year writing program have creative control over textbook selection and assignment design. My sense, then, was that this population could give me access to varied and competing definitions of research. In the summer of 2009, I met with the Director of the Writing Program at The University to request her permission for and participation in my project, specifically, that she either provide me with contact information for instructors or provide my information to the instructors.

The Director declined to participate for two reasons. First, she did not want to distribute contact information because she wanted to protect graduate students’ opportunities for
research; her sense was that department members might be less inclined to participate in any upcoming graduate student research projects if they had just participated in mine. Second, she did not expect that speaking with instructors would yield valuable information about research, because students are not supposed to do research in first-year writing.\footnote{The Director’s choice not to participate in my research, and specifically, her assertion that first-year composition at The University did not cover research instruction, encouraged me to shape new questions about composition at The University, many of which I address in Chapter 1. Why were the FYC instructors teaching research and bringing their students to the library for research instruction, despite a departmental directive not to do so? Why were even those instructors not teaching a researched assignment taking students to the library?}

Although she declined to participate in the project, the Director did grant me permission, explaining that I was welcome to contact composition instructors whom I observed through library instruction sessions. This conditional permission impacted not only my early data collection (which I describe in more detail below), but also the available instructor population. Rather than having access to the full population, some of whom may not have incorporated research instruction into their courses, I only had access to instructors who choose to include research instruction.

Because I did not initially have access to instructor or student participants, I began my data collection in the library by observing 20 research instruction sessions, in most cases led by the same librarians I interviewed, and used these sessions to form relationships with students and composition instructors. These sessions provided me with critical contacts for instructor and student interviews, but also offered insight into how librarians describe research to students. I wanted to learn what differences there were between library-based and composition-based descriptions of research and how these different descriptions influenced students’ understanding of research.

Because the students and instructors did not meet me until the start of the sessions, I elected not to record them, instead relying on notetaking. I used a two-column format for my handwritten notes. I used the left column to record what happened and the right column for questions and analysis. Whenever possible, I sat down after the session to make corrections to...
the notes. I draw from these notes in the dissertation, but recognize that they do not tell “what happened,” but what I, the notetaker, interpreted (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 8).

One additional source of data was classroom observations. Four composition instructors invited me to visit – and sometimes participate in – their classrooms throughout their research paper units. I made three visits to Amber’s class, one visit each to Sabrina’s and Tara’s classes, and one visit to each of Alan’s classes, for a total of seven classroom visits. To keep my classroom presence as unobtrusive as possible, I did not record these sessions, instead using my two-column notetaking method while students took their own notes.

Analyzing data
I transcribed the interviews using the playback strategy that Jennifer Matheson describes in “The Voice Transcription Technique.” To transcribe an interview, I played the digital recording through headphones and, using my computer’s internal microphone, repeated the interview word-for-word. I used Dragon Naturally Speaking (voice recognition software) to transcribe my speech. Then, with a completed transcript in front of me, I re-played the recording and checked for errors (555-56).²

This method led to a number of transcription errors that help highlight interpretive issues even in the transcription process. Some of the mistranscriptions were easily recognized. It was unlikely that a teacher respondent was excited to receive a “four page beer review” from a first-year student, nor did she assign students to “liquor groups” (although the trend of alcohol-based substitutes for “peer review” might indicate the pain of the exercise, which was also transcribed as “pure abuse”). A teacher may not think of a student’s “first draft” as a “present,” although it would be interesting to think of it this way. Librarians probably encourage students toward “advanced searches,” not “dance urges.”

The more interesting of these errors significantly altered the meaning of a participant’s responses, as in the following cases:

“Nobody’s proposed a traditional research paper” became “Nobody’s opposed to a traditional research paper.”

“I’ll just keep banging my head against the wall” became “Others just keep banging my head against the wall.”

“I hate threatening students” became “I hate writing students.”

Dragon is programmed to recognize an impressive technological and corporate lexicon; it had no trouble recognizing and reproducing VAIO, YouTube, and Windows, all with correct capitalization. The word “incorporated” is automatically represented as “Inc.” The corporate influence became a bit more insidious with Google: “people correct” became “Google corrects,” and “people came up with community” became “Google came up with community.”
After transcribing the interviews, I completed two rounds of coding: open and closed (Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw 143). During open coding, I wrote a line-by-line summary of each interview. As I completed these summaries, I kept a running list of one- to two-word themes that described the data. In closed coding, I matched each summary to these themes (see Appendix D: Coding). The themes I generated could easily produce ten dissertations, so I narrowed my focus by writing theme memos, short descriptions of the interview data related to each theme. I then combined similar themes to make coherence memos, with which I drew larger connections across the data.

This description of my transcription and coding methods should not be taken as evidence of objectivity. As Cindy Bird notes, “a transcriber constitutes a social and political being; any act of transcription produced by such a being must of consequence be subjective” (227-8). Before moving onto a discussion of my use of ethnography, I want to tell “a story behind the making of the story” (Chiseri-Strater 183) to demonstrate how even the act of recording others’ words requires conscious and deliberate action. In an attempt to preserve the speech of respondents, I have made very few changes to the interview data. Some of these changes aid readability. I have used ellipses to indicate material deliberately excised from the interview data, usually a false start or repetition. I also removed gap-fillers such as “um,” “uh,” “you know,” and “I don’t know.” But even these small changes leave me feeling conflicted. Even though they are gap fillers, and do not appear to contribute to the meaning of the statements, they are interesting in light of the power dynamic in the interviews, where I – a teacher – was interviewing students. “I don’t know” does not necessarily signify ignorance; when used as a gap filler, the phrase might instead reflect deference to the teacher-interviewer.

The most difficult choices dealt with conveying emotion, a significant source of difficulty for transcribers (C. Bird 234). I wish I could adequately convey one librarian’s enthusiasm for

3 Major themes included academic, access, audience, authority, background, clarity, collaboration, continuity, control, credibility, critical thinking, ease, enough, independence, inoculation, knowledge, original, process, rapport, relevance, research, selection, specificity, structure, summary, synthesis, teaching, and technology.
teaching or a composition instructor’s wearied tone about MLA format. Student sarcasm (“I was only a little bit intimidated” or “maybe there is some value to this”) was particularly difficult because the meaning intended was the very opposite of the words used. I considered using italics to demonstrate emphasis, but given the subjective nature of such a choice, I decided to limit these choices to punctuation; exclamation points indicate that the participant raised his or her voice and question marks indicate instances of upward inflection.

**Member checking**

Although I offered to share interview files and transcripts with participants, only two students requested them. Both students wanted the MP3 files of their interviews because they had come to new understandings of their topics by speaking about them in their interviews.

Since the initial set of interviews, I have had a number of informal coffees, lunches, and dinners with the original participants, as well as campus groups interested in the outcomes of this research. I outline three of these meetings below.

Katie, who graduated from her Master’s program in Library Science shortly after our interview, began full-time work at another university library in the fall of 2010, where she had the opportunity to redesign library instruction for the composition courses at her university. She asked for readings that would help her better understand what the composition instructors were expecting, so I shared my bibliography with her and offered preliminary findings from my work.

In January 2010, I was approached by an assessment committee studying research instruction at University Library. I met with the committee during the planning stage to discuss my methods, with a specific focus on successful and unsuccessful lines of inquiry.

In August 2010, a new library hire at The University invited me to talk with him about my research and offer suggestions for changes he might implement in the library, specifically, for how to form stronger relationships between the library and English Department.
I have reproduced these guides exactly as they appeared in my original IRB protocol (approved October 28, 2009).

Interview Guide for Students Enrolled in First-Year Composition Courses

1. THE DAY THE PROJECT WAS ASSIGNED
   a. Ask respondent (R) to walk me through the class day on which the research assignment was introduced. What did the assignment ask R to do? How did R react to the news that R had to research? What went through R’s mind? How did R feel about the assignment?
   b. Develop R’s attitudes and feelings toward research and toward the assignment in particular. Develop R’s sense of position relative to the teacher.

2. CHOOSING A TOPIC
   b. Develop R’s interests in topic as well as R’s understanding of what makes a good topic for research.

3. CONDUCTING RESEARCH
   a. Once R had a topic in mind, where did R go to research that topic? What sources did R go to first? Ask R to describe searches of online and print materials. How did R decide what parts of the research were important? How did R evaluate sources? How did R decide what sources to use? How did R decide what sources not to use? Did R take notes, and if so, what did these notes look like? Did R receive help with the search, and from whom?
   b. Develop R’s sense of “research process.” Develop R’s sense of position relative to librarians and teachers throughout the research process. Develop R’s attitudes toward online research.

4. WRITING UP RESEARCH
   a. When did R begin writing? What part(s) of the paper did R work on first? What problems did R encounter when writing? Did R go back to researching while writing?
   b. Develop moments when R felt stressed or excited during writing process. Develop R’s understanding of the function(s) of research.

5. PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE WITH RESEARCH

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1 I have ordered the sections of the interview in a loosely diachronic format, but it is possible that students did not follow this format when working on their assignments. After probing respondents about the day the project was assigned, I will ask about areas 2, 3, and 4, but do not expect all students to describe their experiences in this order. After exhausting each respondent’s recollections of the day the project was assigned, I will ask “How did you begin your research project?” and follow the respondent’s lead through his or her process of research and writing.
a. Ask R to describe previous training in research. When did the trainings take place? Who led them? What resources did R learn about?

b. Develop R’s attitudes toward research. If R doesn’t volunteer information, ask about library orientation at U of M or experience with research in high school.

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What is R’s age?
2. What is R’s academic year?
3. What is R’s major?
4. What computer(s) does R access for school and/or personal use?
   For each computer R owns:
   What model does R own?
   When was the computer bought?
   Does anyone else have access to the computer, and if so, who?
   For computers R does not own:
   What model(s) does R use?
   Who else has access to the computers?
5. How much time does R spend in the library each week?

[INTERVIEWER TURNS OFF RECORDER]

CLOSING QUESTIONS

1. May I contact R by e-mail or phone with follow up questions, either at the end of the Fall 2009 semester or the start of the Winter 2010 semester?
   Best e-mail at which to reach R:
   Best phone number at which to reach R:
2. May I contact R by e-mail to request electronic copies of R’s research assignment (drafts and final version)? If R is interested, I can also send R a copy of my study results.
Interview Guide for Composition Teachers

1. DESIGNING THE ASSIGNMENT
   a. Start with current class section(s) writing research-based assignments. Ask R to describe the process of designing the assignment. Why did R choose to incorporate this assignment into the course? What objectives did R want students to meet? Did anyone help R design the assignment, and if so, who?
   b. Develop R’s attitudes and feelings toward teaching research. What function(s) does research have in first-year writing courses?

2. INTRODUCING THE ASSIGNMENT
   a. Ask R to describe the day R introduced the research assignment. How did R describe the assignment to students? What did R want students to get out of the project? What questions did students ask R about the project? How did students react to the assignment?
   b. Develop R’s attitude toward the research assignment, and expectations for students completing the project. Develop R’s sense of position relative to students.

3. TEACHING THE ASSIGNMENT
   a. Ask R to describe the unit in which students conducted research. How long was the unit? How did R teach research skills to students? Did R work with the library staff to develop lessons in research?
   b. Develop R’s attitudes toward online research. Develop R’s sense of position relative to librarian(s).

4. GRADING THE ASSIGNMENT
   a. What are R’s expectations for the research assignments? What will R look for when grading the papers? If R has begun grading, ask R to discuss an example of a successful paper. What made for a successful research assignment? Ask R to discuss an example of an unsuccessful paper. What made for an unsuccessful research assignment?
   b. Develop R’s expectations for good research.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE ASSIGNMENTS
   a. How might R change this assignment for future classes? What did R learn about the research process from this class?
   b. Develop R’s attitudes toward research in first-year writing courses.

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What is R’s age?
2. What is R’s position in the department?
3. What is R’s academic specialty?
   What degrees does R hold or is R working toward?
4. How many years has R been teaching?
5. What computer(s) does R access for school and/or personal use?
   For each computer R owns:
   - What model does R own?
   - When was the computer bought?
   - Does anyone else have access to the computer, and if so, who?
   For computers R does not own:
   - What model(s) does R use?
   - Who else has access to the computer?
6. How much time does R spend in the library each week?

[INTERVIEWER TURNS OFF RECORDER]

CLOSING QUESTIONS

1. May I contact R by e-mail or phone with follow up questions, either at the end of the Fall 2009
   semester or the start of the Winter 2010 semester?
   - Best e-mail at which to reach R:
   - Best phone number at which to reach R:
2. May I contact R by e-mail to request electronic copies of R’s syllabus, assignments, handouts,
   and lesson plans for the research assignment? If R is interested, I can also send R a copy of my
   study results.
Interview Guide for Instructional Librarians

1. SETTING UP AN INSTRUCTION SESSION
   a. Ask R to recall a specific class with whom R has recently worked (ideally, a first-year writing course). How was R approached to work with the class? What class was R matched with? Ask R to describe conversations with the class instructor about the library session. What role would R have in teaching the class? What did the teacher want R to cover? What issues did R think were most important to cover?
   b. Develop R’s attitudes toward library instruction. Develop R’s sense of position relative to teachers.

2. PREPARING FOR AN INSTRUCTION SESSION
   a. How did R prepare for the instruction session? Did R develop any handouts for the session? What did the instructor ask R to include? What did R want to include?
   b. Develop R’s attitudes toward library instruction and R’s sense of position relative to teachers.

3. LEADING AN INSTRUCTION SESSION
   a. Ask R to describe the session. What did R tell students about online research? What questions did students ask? What did R answer to these questions? What did R have students do during the session? Ask R to evaluate the session. What did students learn?
   b. Develop R’s sense of position relative to students. Develop R’s attitudes toward online research.

4. LIBRARY INSTRUCTION VS. OTHER DUTIES
   a. Ask R to describe duties at work. How do these duties conflict with/complement research instruction? Ask R to describe a recent day (previous day, if possible).
   b. Develop R’s attitudes toward research instruction relative to R’s other job duties. How vital a role does research instruction play in R’s job?

QUANTITATIVE QUESTIONS

1. What is R’s age?
2. What is R’s position in the library?
3. What is R’s specialty in Library and Information Sciences?
   What degrees does R hold or is R working toward?
4. How many years has R been working as a librarian?
5. What computer(s) does R access for school and/or personal use?
   For each computer R owns:
   What model does R own?
   When was the computer bought?
   Does anyone else have access to the computer, and if so, who?
For computers R does not own:
   What model(s) does R use?
   Who else has access to the computers?

6. How much time does R spend in classrooms/instruction sessions each week?

[INTERVIEWER TURNS OFF RECORDER]

CLOSING QUESTIONS

1. May I contact R by e-mail or phone with follow up questions, either at the end of the Fall 2009 semester or the start of the Winter 2010 semester?
   Best e-mail at which to reach R:
   Best phone number at which to reach R:

2. May I contact R by e-mail to request electronic copies of R’s handouts for instruction sessions? If R is interested, I can also send R a copy of my study results.
APPENDIX D: CODING

What follows is a section from an interview transcript, with closed (lowercase) and open (uppercase) coding.

I: What exactly did you ask the person? Walk me through the interaction you had.

R: Well the person was very nice, very friendly. I asked her if she could help me find architecture journals, specifically about like, because a lot of them deal with exhibits and shows, but I wanted more residential kind of stuff. Because that's what I'm interested in, is residential architecture. So I asked her if she could gear me in that direction. And I personally hate the database that we have at [University], like the catalog. I think it sucks. I've tried multiple times to navigate it. It always causes me problems. I had to actually, twice. In art history I had to find architecture journals, too. And both times, the catalog just failed horribly for me.

I: Can you walk me through why you think that happened?

R: Yeah. Well, I was hoping to get online articles for the most part. And a lot of them were in libraries spread throughout campus. So that means there's no instant gratification. Which is like Google, I'm all about finding something in 5 seconds. So, you know, that's my impatience again. Not to say that I couldn't find something, necessarily, but I'd have to go to the library, have a bunch of books picked out, and then pick out each one and see what actually dealt with what I wanted. Which is a huge time commitment. It's the old school way of doing it. I'm not, I just, especially as I'm pressed for time. So I wasn't, I wasn't willing to do that, basically, whether that's my fault or not, you know. So I was trying to find online stuff. And every online article I'd find would either fail to open, or it would give me like a half preview, or it...
wasn't what I wanted. So I mean, I would spend like
an hour or two looking for stuff, and after an hour and
a half, we'll say, of trying to find a good article and
coming up empty handed, or coming up with
something that is just sort of half what you need, it's
really frustrating. Because I want to spend time, you
know, actually writing the paper and getting it worded.
Because I think a lot of what good writing is is just the
presentation of material. It's not like, I mean,
eventually you're going to have to have some solid
material to work off of. But you can have as much
good material as you want. If you don't word it right, it
won't sound right. You won't get a good grade. So I
like to spend more time on the writing process than the
research process, which is probably because I like
writing more than I like research. But yeah. I guess
I've hit a wall there.


---. “’Mutt Genres’ and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?” *College Composition and Communication* 60.4 (2009): 765-789. Print.


