

READING MATTERS:  
THREE STUDIES OF SITUATED LITERACY AND A CALL FOR  
READING ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

by

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## DEDICATION

To my dad, who always encouraged me to get as much education as possible.

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## ABSTRACT

Reading is often thought of a decontextualized skill rather than as a complex practice that involves many different factors. In order to further understand how reading might be theorized as a situated practice and the role that a First-year Composition (FYC) course can play in helping college students develop an awareness of their reading practices, this dissertation explores reading in multiple contexts. First, by surveying and interviewing faculty and students in an Atmospheric Science course, an Anthropology course, and an Architecture course, I demonstrate how students do (and do not) develop a disciplinary identity through their reading practices. FYC courses are often thought of as spaces to prepare students for their future academic writing and reading, but reading is not a decontextualized skill. In Chapter 2, I studied students who completed a genre-based course in order to connect their genre awareness and their reading awareness. Chapter 3 follows one student as she builds on her genre awareness and reading awareness in her STEM Courses.

As a whole, this dissertation adds to the growing literature on college students' reading practices and demonstrates a need for faculty involvement at all levels in helping students develop disciplinary reading practices.

## CHAPTER 1

### An Invitation to Think about Reading

Dear Reader,

Writing a dissertation is a complicated endeavor. “On the one hand, it is the ultimate student paper, the final school-based display of knowledge and ability. On the other hand, it is often—in whole or in part—the first significant contribution to a disciplinary conversation” (Paré et al. 179). But it is also an under-taught genre. As I began my own dissertation journey, I read other dissertations as examples to study the format, content, etc. of this new genre. I noticed many differences in structure across disciplines, certainly confirming genre theorists’ point that genres are fluid and dynamic (Devitt 90). Paré et al. confirm my own experience in reading dissertations by stating, “Not only does the dissertation contain variations on a number of distinct sub-genres (the literature review, the essay, the experimental article), it also responds to various exigencies and performs a range of social actions in several different contexts...” (180). As a genre, this dissertation, and this introduction, accomplish many actions. However, genres are not fixed. Paul Prior suggests that “goals structuring generic activity need to be viewed as multiple rather than unified, varying with time, place, and participants” (55). Genres evolve to meet the needs of the writer and genres can change as “individual writers take liberties with textual conventions” (Ramanathan and Kaplan 182). As I wrote in this new genre of the dissertation introduction, I borrowed conventions and textual features from the letter genre in order to help accomplish my goals as a writer. One action that I would like this introduction to accomplish is actively bringing you as the reader into this conversation about reading.

Much of the reading that we do is done unconsciously; we make decisions about reading that we may not be aware of. Writing my dissertation introduction as a letter is a way to invite you to actively think about the ways you are reading this particular text. As I describe my own experiences with reading and how I came to write this dissertation on the subject of college reading, I hope you'll actively think about *how* you are reading this introduction and dissertation.

Thinking actively about my reader also complicates my goals as the writer. I can change the genre of the dissertation slightly as it fits my goals, but there are constraints. You, as the reader, also have certain expectations of what the introduction should do as a genre and by blending genres, this may not meet your expectations. There are also institutional constraints about what my department and graduate college expect to see in a dissertation. However, as a graduate student who has studied genre theory nearing the completion of a PhD, I feel some freedom (not a lot, but some) in borrowing and blending genres in order to accomplish my goals. It also allows me to see the bigger picture of how readers' expectations are so closely tied to particular genres, an idea that I continue to write about in this dissertation. Borrowing from the personal letter genre helps me to accomplish the goal of inviting the reader into this story about reading in a way that a traditional introduction might not.

My own reading journey has taught me just how complicated the reading process is. I began my undergraduate degree at St. John's College in Annapolis, MD participating in a curriculum based on the "Great Books" program. I was taught to read texts very slowly and carefully. Mortimer Adler, one of the founders of the college, wrote a book called *How to Read a Book* in which he describes the process for analytically reading a

book that includes a structural stage (understanding structure and purpose), interpretive stage (understanding the author's arguments), and a critical stage (critiquing the author). He asserts that all three can be accomplished during one read. One guiding principle of the program at St. John's was that reading the original source was superior to reading about an idea from a secondary source. This approach for me meant very slowly reading the assigned texts while taking time to think about the argument from the text and then developing my own thoughts and opinions about the text.

When I began my PhD program here at the University of Arizona, I tried (unsuccessfully) to continue this approach with my readings. While I was talking to another graduate student about being overwhelmed with the amount of articles and chapters I was assigned to read, he told me I was reading them the *wrong* way. I was surprised because I didn't think this slow and careful reading was *wrong*, but he assured me that no one is reading all the assigned reading, and I needed to learn to skim and just find information.

In *Chasing Literacy*, Daniel Keller describes the reading of nine high school students and how they had learned to "game" the system by only doing surface reading and finding information that would be needed for a quiz or test. In discussing this surface level reading, Patrick Sullivan says, "Much of this appears to be dictated by an educational model and curriculum design that puts a premium on quantity and 'covering' content in the classroom" (qtd. in "Deep Reading" 151). Skimming articles to find the main idea, an interesting point in the chapter, or just something so that I could "get by" felt like this "surface reading." After four years of graduate school, I still find this approach problematic for me. I feel like I'm cheating the author by not reading the entire

selection. But being a strategic reader is an important part of graduate school—knowing when to skim an article and knowing when to do a deeper reading. I much prefer to sit down with the text, slowly read the text, and pause to write down my thoughts about an idea, how the argument is unfolding, etc. Perhaps because I have always been a slow reader, I find this way more comfortable. Skimming a text is a skill I have struggled with, and I wondered if it was possible to learn to read in this different way. How do I learn this new skill and how am I supposed to know when to use it? As I thought about my reading process for this dissertation, I did not deeply read every article cited in this dissertation, and others I have read deeply many times as I determined what I needed to focus on and continued to develop more strategic reading.

This sort of reading as strategic skimming seems different from David Joliffe's view when he claims that "reading is a constructive activity that begins with a reader's experience and personal response to a text" ("Learning to Read" 19). At St. John's, I was taught that it was possible to determine an author's purpose and meaning in the text. The meaning was inherent in the text as opposed to the view that reading is a meaning making activity that is more of a conversation between the writer and reader.

Through my doctoral studies, my own understanding of reading practices has changed, however, my teaching experiences have been very much influenced by my past experiences as a children's librarian. As a librarian, I felt my job was to instill a love of reading in those coming to the library. I saw a desire to read, or motivation, as the important part of the reading process. But I also recognized that children were coming to the library to read for very different purposes. Many came looking to read nonfiction books about something—to find information about some new idea they were interested

in. Others came looking for novels, eager to find a good story to read. The texts and genres and purposes for reading were different depending on the child.

After working as a children's librarian for many years, I began teaching at Arizona Western College, a community college in Yuma. However, my view of myself as teacher was influenced by my perceived role as a librarian. I thought my students needed to love reading in order to become better readers. The first class of my teaching career was ENG 100: Introduction to Composition. It was a night class with a diverse student population that included parents working full time who decided to go back to school, first generation students, and students who just graduated from high school. The major course requirements included 4 essays: narrative, descriptive, compare and contrast, and argumentative. Very much influenced by my experience as a children's librarian, and informed by research such as Jim Trelease's popular book *The Read Aloud Handbook*, I created a children's book unit, where students used the children's section of the college library to find a picture book that they would read aloud to the class. They wrote a short summary of the book, reflected on their own experiences with reading, and read the book out loud to the class. Some students very much enjoyed the assignment, which was meant to be fun, but admittedly, some disliked it. Not every student found reading that particular type of text as fun. As I look back on this assignment now, I see my underlying assumption about reading: if students *enjoy* reading in their spare time, then they will do more of it. If they do more reading, then they will be better prepared for the reading and writing they will do in college. But this assumption was not made explicitly clear to those students, nor do I necessarily think it is true.

I made the same assumption that Patrick Sullivan seems to make in *A New Writing Classroom* where he tells first year high school students that “students who are ready for college like to read. If you don’t like to read, you are going to find college very difficult...Students who are ready for college enjoy reading” (167). I have come to realize that motivation is indeed important in reading tasks, but it probably won’t determine a student’s success when assigned reading tasks. Reading is a complicated practice that involves many factors, including the reader’s purpose, whether or not the reader knows the purpose, and what kind of text it is. For example, students who love to read novels in their free time may not be motivated to read the science textbook for a general education course. I very much enjoy reading, but it depends on the text and why I am reading it. As I was reading texts for this dissertation, I read some articles and texts knowing I was looking for very specific information. Others, I read the entirety not knowing what connections I was looking for, but taking notes about ideas that seemed important at the time.

But what is reading? During my coursework, I decided to take a course on Literacy in the Dept. of Education and began to see that a better question to ask is *what happens when you read?* Learning to read is the process of “acquiring the several types of statistical knowledge that support rapid and efficient comprehension, starting with phonological structure, orthographic structure, the mappings between orthography and phonology, vocabulary, and grammar” (Seidenberg 88). Making sense of the linguistic and other sign systems is a complicated process. Kenneth Goodman, instrumental for his research into “miscue” analysis, called reading a “psycholinguistic guessing game” (“Reading” 127). As you are reading, your mind is constantly trying to guess what will

come next and therefore must be selective in what your mind is reading. The mind “must develop schemas and strategies for perceiving and making decisions quickly before all the available information has been processed” (*On Reading* 41). An example of this is how the mind does not process individual letters, but whole words (Kucer 174). Here’s an example from a popular email that circulated years ago:

Aoccdrnig to a rscheearch at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it deosn't mtttaer in waht  
oredr the ltteers in a wrod are, the olny iprmoetnt tihng is taht the frist and lsat  
ltteer be at the rghit pclae. The rset can be a toatl mses and you can sitll raed it  
wouthit porbelm. Tihs is bcuseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey lteter by  
istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe.

The text, even though it is a hoax, went viral. According to Mark Seidenberg because “it is interesting, not because it is true. It is a curious effect, being able to read the text without knowing how it is done” (89). You can make sense of the words in this sentence, but the rule that your mind can process words even if they are jumbled is not completely accurate, as Matt Davis, a researcher at the Cambridge Cognition and Brain Sciences Unit, explains by giving the following examples:

1. A vheclie epxledod at a plocie ceheckipont near the UN haduqertares in Bagahdd on Mnoday kilinlg the bmober and an Irqai polcie offceir
2. Big ccunoil tax ineesacrs tihs yaer hvae seezueqd the inmcoes of mnay pneosenirs
3. A dootcr has aimtted the magltheuansr of a tageene ceacnr pintaet who deid aetfr a hatospil durg blendur<sup>1</sup>

These sentences become progressively harder to make sense of. Goodman states, “Expectation of form, structure and –most of all—meaning is what reading is all about. What we think we see is partly what we see but more what we expect to see” (*On Reading* 41). Reading is a process of trying to make sense of the text, and this includes

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mrc-cbu.cam.ac.uk/personal/matt.davis/Cmabrigde/>

more than just decoding the linguistic sign system. Alderson describes the many things that are going on for the reader this way:

Not only is the reader looking at print, deciphering in some sense the marks on the page, “deciding” what they “mean” and how they relate to each other. The reader is presumably also “thinking” about what he is reading: what it means to him, how it relates to other things he has read, to things he knows, to what he expects to come next in texts like this. He is presumably thinking about how useful, entertaining, boring, crazy, the text is (3).

Kucer describes this as the cognitive dimension of literacy. Your mind needs to make meaning out of the text and does this by using mental strategies and processes to create and construct meaning. But this is also related to the sociocultural dimension of literacy, which involves knowledge of how social groups use literacies in various transactions. (See James Paul Gee’s discussion of literacy and identities). Reading is more than just controlling the linguistic sign systems. It also involves “cognitive, sociocultural, and developmental dimensions of written language in a transaction fashion” (5). Kucer also offers a developmental dimension of literacy to focus on the idea that students use these dimensions of learning in the process of *becoming* rather than *being* literate (*Dimensions* 7).

So when you are reading this text, these dimensions are all working together as you make meaning of the symbols on this page. You are consciously reflecting on what you’re reading, but are also unconscious of many of these aspects as you are reading. Reading is not simply decoding marks on a page. Reading, for Helmers, is a “process of investigation and articulation...as a reflexive practice, rather than as pure absorption, reading becomes a dialogue with ideas” (22). Morrow also discusses reading as an interaction saying, “By reading, we enter into a social conversation that enables us to shape our own thoughts and give voice to our own readings of the world through writing”

(466). As a conversation or interaction between texts, factors involve the reader such as knowledge about subject content, cultural knowledge, linguistic knowledge, to name a few.

Reading is a meaning-driven activity and can be thought of as a conversation, but the specific text also influences *how* the reader creates meaning—the specific text structure and genre also influences the reader and what this conversation between reader and text looks like. The conversation changes as the text changes, but also depends on the reader's purpose for reading a text. The purpose will often determine how you as the reader make sense of the text. Goodman discusses reading events in terms of purpose and function. He gives the example of reading labels on a pill bottle. The purpose is to identify pills and check for warnings and the function is informational. He provides the following functions of reading as environmental, informational, occupational, recreational, and ritualistic (*On Reading* 19-20). Knowing what information you are looking for and what you will do with that information often determines how you read something. Halliday suggested that every language event with a text fulfils at least one of seven functions (*Explorations*) and Kucer suggests seven different functions (*Dimensions* 28). A reader might use a text to seek an answer to a question, fulfil material needs, or to be entertained, but students' understanding of genre and functions can affect strategies readers use (Langer *Children Reading*). These purposes also affect what meanings are constructed (Kucer). The same text can also fulfil multiple functions at the same time, but how do students become aware of the functions of texts that they are told to read? Much of the reading we do, we can choose to complete and therefore have a better idea of the

purpose or function of the text. But this is not always the case for reading in the classroom.

Reading in the classroom is different than reading in other contexts and involves more stakeholders. Academic reading is a popular topic amongst educators and policy makers. Ever since the publication of *Why Johnny Can't Read* by Rudolf Flesch in 1966, educators have acknowledged (and constructed) a reading crisis in America for today's youth. In the past few decades, there have been many large-scale studies bemoaning the fact that literacy rates among youth have been steadily dropping. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, a Washington advocacy group, reading scores of U.S. high school students "have not improved over the last 30 years" and 11<sup>th</sup> graders rank near the bottom internationally" (Kamil). A report sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) also showed that teens today read much less on their own than youth in 1982 ("To Read or Not to Read"). K-12 educators are concerned with teaching reading, but once students arrive at college, the crisis would seem to have been averted. Why don't we talk about how students are reading in college? Stahl and King, critical of the lack of respect that college reading deserves, have even called the "specialization of college reading [an] intellectual pariah within the liminal spaces of the discipline of Reading" (3).

Some scholars have tried to shift the conversation so that reading becomes more prominent. According to Patrick Sullivan, the most fundamental of college-readiness skills is reading ("Deep Reading" 166) and Ann Johns has reported that college instructors think that "reading is more important to academic success than writing" (qtd. in Bosley 286). Many other scholars discuss reading's importance because of its

connection to writing (Carson and Leki 1). Despite this, reading is often not explicitly taught in college. Instructors assign reading assignments, students read their own writing, placement tests often require reading, but the actual reading is often invisible—instructors do not see the students' actual *reading process*.<sup>2</sup> According to Robert Scholes, “we do not see reading. We see some writing about reading, to be sure, but we do not see reading. I am certain, though, that if we could see it, we would be appalled” (166).

Even though many readily agree that reading skills are important for successful navigation of college, most instructors feel that students should have already mastered the skill of reading by the time they enter college (Helmets 4, 20). For David Joliffe, the reading problem starts before students arrive in college stating, “. . .by the time students come to college, it's been a long time since students have had any instructor say to them, ‘OK, let's work on how to read’” (“Learning to Read” 473). Many instructors believe that reading is simply the decoding of symbols—once you have figured this out, then there is no need to discuss reading any further, but especially in college, when texts become more complicated and become ways for students to enter disciplinary communities, then reading most definitely needs to be discussed in the classroom.

This interaction between text and reader is complicated also by the assumption that the process of reading is connected to the process of writing. If students become better readers, then they will be better writers (Hirvela; Spack; Peritz), but “students often have little understanding of the connections between reading and writing” (Morrow 454). With my community college students, I tried to connect the reading and writing for

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<sup>2</sup> According to Harold Bloom, reading is “not an invisible practice, but has come to be a *fetishized* practice: equated almost exclusively with literary fiction, misunderstood by teachers and students alike, and not fully actualized as the subject of pedagogical discussions” (qtd. in Helmets 5). For more on equating reading with literary reading, see the Lindemann/Tate debate.

them, but even that connection was too vague and focused on only one aspect of reading: enjoyment. And enjoyment of one particular kind of text. Even if students enjoy reading for pleasure, and enjoy reading academic assignments, that does not mean they will do so strategically. Their purposes and strategies in reading a novel for pleasure may not be connected to purposes and strategies in reading academic texts. How motivation connects the reading for pleasure and the writing they might do in academic contexts is unclear, and what a “better” reader looks like is unclear as well.

Dan Melzer also discusses the connection between reading and writing saying, “Clearly, reading improves writing...Students who don’t read or aren’t active readers find that their writing suffers because of this” (Melzer 20). Melzer and others outline what seems to be a clear connection between reading and writing, but this scholarship reminds me again of my past librarian experiences and the notorious character of Junie B. Jones and the series by Barbara Park. This favorite series for many kids is on the American Library Association’s (ALA) list of frequently challenged children’s books, and I remember having conversations with many parents who were concerned with Junie’s sassy attitude and her “improper” grammatical usage. For example, in this first book, when Junie’s mother tells Junie’s teacher that she’ll be riding the bus, Junie responds, “That made me feel scary inside. ‘Cause I never rided on a bus before” (Park 5). Many parents were concerned that by reading Junie’s grammar, their children would imitate this in their own writing and speech. But others loved the books because their kids enjoyed reading them and could relate to Junie’s experiences. For parents, reading served different purposes: to enjoy the silly stories or to mimic the language being used in the stories. If reading is connected to writing, what does that look like? Will students

mimic the language? Will their love of Junie lead to a love of other books and this love will lead to eventual reading success? To say that reading is connected to writing seems too broad of a claim.

In my research as a graduate student, I read about this “clear” connection between reading and writing, but I began to ask myself, *what kind of reading?* As a writing teacher, I know that the definition of “good” writing varies by context, but reading is also a situated activity that involves many factors. So what does a “better” reader look like, and how am I expected to use my writing classroom to help students become both “better” readers and writers for various tasks? As I talked with my students at the University of Arizona about the kinds of texts they were reading and the kinds of texts they were writing, I was unsure how to make the connection between the two explicit. For example, a student who is an avid graphic novel reader and reads graphic novels for pleasure will not necessarily have an easier time writing an academic essay than the student who does not read at all for pleasure. And a student who is reading a novel for pleasure outside of class may read that same novel very differently if assigned to read it for a class. How do these different *kinds* of reading influence the student’s writing? I share Judith Langer’s sense of skepticism when she says,

While it is sensible to conclude that reading and writing are deeply related activities of language and thought and share a common cognitive core, surely it is equally sensible to note that reading and writing are also very different activities...because they serve different purposes in people’s lives, they cannot be treated primarily as similar language activities. (1)

If I want to connect reading and writing in the composition classroom and teach students to become more proficient readers, I need to know what characteristics about reading could be connected to which characteristics about writing.

What does a proficient college student look like? Goodman describes proficient reading as “both *effective* and *efficient*. It’s *effective* in that the reader is able to make sense; it’s *efficient* in that this is accomplished with the least amount of time, effort and energy. An *efficient* reader uses only enough information from the published text to be *effective*” (*On Reading* 91). As college students began their reading assignments for my class, I could see that in order to be efficient, they needed information from me, knowledge about their purpose in reading the text, and how it might be connected to their assignments. But how can I do this more effectively? And is this a skill that students can transfer to other settings? What might the role of the composition classroom be when reading and writing are both situated activities?

I began looking at these questions by conducting a pilot study in my ENGL 101A course during the Fall 2016 semester. I wanted to know more about how students felt about themselves as readers and writers, how they connected those skills, and how genre impacted their reading. When I asked students if they considered themselves to be a writer, 12 said yes and 4 said no. When I asked if they considered themselves to be a reader, 8 said yes and 8 said no. Those who considered themselves to be readers often mentioned reading for pleasure outside of class or not enjoying reading because it was associated with a grade for a class. Answers were similar for writing. Some responded about writing in a journal or writing as some sort of outlet, and those who did not consider themselves writers related the idea to a lack of motivation or struggling with writing in class. This separation of academic reading and writing and the reading and writing that students choose to do outside of class made me think further about the purposes for reading and writing. In the responses, I also noticed a limited understanding

of what the purpose for reading the text was. The majority of the students responded that the only purpose was to understand what the author was saying. They had little understanding of how the text might be used in their own writing, how the text would be used in class, and how their reading strategies might change depending on those factors. As a reader of this introduction (and following dissertation chapters), you might also think of your own purposes for reading: to give me feedback, to critique my ideas, to hopefully learn something about reading you hadn't thought of before, but there are also institutional constraints such as being part of dissertation committees as part of your job requirements, which might also influence your motivation!

Students often need explicit instruction and conversations about how to read. In my pilot study classroom, during one class session, we did an exercise using Bunn's "Read Like a Writer" approach where students specifically looked at the author's purpose for writing, looked at generic features, contemplated their purposes for reading, etc. I wondered how students would approach different genres thinking about how genres can shape a reader's purpose. Students had many different texts such as a textbook, a travel magazine, and a literacy narrative. The general impression I got after doing this activity was that students did not pay enough attention to the specific genre to think about how it was shaping the way they read. The purpose was to understand the content and they were generally not aware of how they might be reading different genres differently. But I admit that this was an unfair and tricky activity as we used these texts in the context of a FYC classroom instead of a different context. The genre itself did not seem to influence the way the students read the texts, but it is unclear if students would have read them differently in the context of another class.

These experiences led me to reconsider my role as a reading instructor in the composition classroom. I agree that "...there is compelling evidence to suggest that writing and reading abilities develop concurrently and should be nurtured together" (Vacca et al., qtd in Hirvela 70), but I also can see that there are distinct differences in the processes of reading and writing, particularly in regards to purpose. After the experiences with these students, I began to re-evaluate and question the role I had, and the role of the composition class more generally, in explicitly teaching students to be aware of purpose, genre, and context when I assigned reading assignments. I revised my dissertation research questions because I wanted to know more about how students understood their purposes for reading their college texts, how that understanding might be influenced by knowledge about genres, and how they might connect this knowledge in other courses. What would it look like for a composition instructor to assist students in becoming "better" readers and writers?

This dissertation is an attempt to answer these questions.

In Chapter 2, I present the results of a study I carried out during the Spring 2017 semester. I first surveyed instructors in various disciplines in order to understand their expectations of students and how they talk about and use reading assignments in their various undergraduate classes. I then surveyed students in three different courses: Atmospheric Sciences, Architecture, and Anthropology in order to understand the ways they are reading texts differently in those classes and how they begin to take on disciplinary identities through their reading assignments. Through these various responses, I make the claim that reading should be seen as a vital part of the classroom as a Community of Practice (See Lave and Wenger). Reading cannot be studied as a

decontextualized skill, but is something that differs by discipline and by classroom and often students need assistance from the instructor in order to figure out the different way of reading for that class and for each assignment.

In Chapter 3, I move toward the question of the role of the composition classroom. If reading, like writing, is a contextualized skill, then how can I teach my students the various ways of reading that they would be using in their various academic settings? One way I answer this is by using genre-based pedagogy and relating students' genre-awareness with how that impacts their reading practices. The few composition scholars who study reading have to date not focused explicitly on genre and how a student's genre awareness impacts their reading. In this chapter, I present results from a semester long writing course and data gathered through multiple surveys, reflections, essays, and prompts. I discuss what aspects of genre that students become aware of throughout the semester and how they think this impacted their reading habits.

In Chapter 4, I present a case study of one student as she continues with her academic progress. The semester following their completion of my course, I again surveyed her about their genre-awareness and how she perceives that awareness influencing her reading practices outside of the composition classroom. I critique common conceptions of the word "transfer" as a metaphor and instead use the term "building up" to more accurately reflect how Isabella uses her genre knowledge in contexts very different from a FYC.

Because reading is more than simply decoding symbols, readers must be aware of the context in which the reading takes place. As you read through this dissertation, I hope you will contemplate your own purposes for reading and think about how those purposes

influence the *way* you read this dissertation. Does knowing your purpose influence the strategies you use while reading? Does it influence what you are looking for as you read? In what ways does your own background influence the way you enter this dissertation? How do your “personality traits, memories of past events, present needs, and preoccupations” (Rosenblatt, qtd. in Carillo “Preparing” 195) impact the way you are reading this text? What other factors impact how you are making meaning of the symbols on these pages? Does explicit questioning make you more aware of your reading practices?

These are questions that I continue to ask of myself as I read various texts, and questions that I discussed with my students. I hope the responses from these students help to raise further questions and continue the conversation about reading that will aid other educators as we strive to develop more strategic readers and writers in the composition classroom.

Sincerely,

*Rachel Buck*

## CHAPTER 2

## Reading as a Situated Activity: How Reading Can Create a Disciplinary Identity

“I never thought of it before, actually. I actually am reading differently for different classes.” (Emma, Anthropology student).

I am interested in it before I am taking the class, but it is so hard, so it makes me less want to read. (Takashi, Atmospheric Sciences student).

“I think some level of required discussion is definitely really helpful for reading strategies and knowing what to look for because even with this class, it’s from the discussions, and the quizzes, and the interactions in class that I have figured out, oh, anthropologists do this” (Scarlett, Anthropology student).

Students’ reading practices in college has become an increasingly important topic of conversation among writing scholars, and for many, it is a problem. Alice Horning, for example, refers to students’ college reading practices as an “elephantine problem,” stating that reading is “both a problem of students and a problem of instructors; both groups need a clearly defined goal and expectations for every class in every semester” (“Elephants”). Discussing expectations and goals is not something that all instructors do in their classrooms although Ann Johns reports that college instructors think that reading is more important to a student’s academic success than writing (*Text, Role, and Context*), but instructors also think that students should have already mastered the skill of reading by the time they enter college (Helmert’s “Introduction”). Reading often remains an invisible practice. According to Robert Scholes, educators “do not see reading. We see some writing about reading, to be sure, but we do not see reading. I am certain, though, that if we could see it, we would be appalled” (166).

Reading itself is a complicated activity. In *Social Linguistics and Literacies*, James Gee discusses how literacy cannot be separated from the other practices that simultaneously impact how a person reads. Learning to read is also a process of

socialization and cannot be abstracted into a decontextualized skill (41), and so learning to read in academic situations cannot be separated from the many activities that accompany it. According to Shanahan and Shanahan, reading and writing are not generalizable skills. Different texts require different sets of skills (40-41). Brian Street speaks of a New Literacy Studies approach to academic literacies that acknowledges that reading practices are socially constructed and need to be learned (Street 5). Horning has argued that reading is the same in different contexts: Horning's "proposal furthermore suggests that reading is the same fundamental activity whether it is carried out with paper or digital texts, whether it entails topics like theoretical physics or trash novels, and by implication, that reading must be closely integrated with writing in critical literacy" ("Reading Across"). This psycholinguistic approach to reading posits that reading in any context is the process of making meaning from a text.

Reading may be the same fundamental activity, but how readers create meaning varies by text and context and there some distinct disciplinary differences. These differences in reading practices have been studied by Bazerman (*Shaping Written Knowledge*; "Physicists Reading"), and more recently by Shanahan, Shanahan, and Misischia who interviewed faculty members from three disciplines and found that the disciplinary experts "evidenced a sense of the role text structure played in disciplinary argument, though these text structures were quite different across the disciplines. That is, all the experts showed sensitivity to the text structures that were specific to their fields, and they used structural knowledge in ways that were somewhat unique to their disciplines" (415). How disciplinary experts create meaning by reading depends on many factors including the context and genre. This point has also been made recently by

Nowacek and James who noticed the following reading behaviors of “expert” readers in STEM fields: they read selectively, they read nonlinearly, and they read with a mental map of their disciplinary field (“Building Mental Maps” 296-297). They urge disciplinary instructors to act more as mentors in helping students develop these expert reading strategies.

Because reading is often thought of a decontextualized skill, i.e. as a skill that will work the same in every context, and also one that many instructors do not discuss in their classes, many students struggle as they move from novice to expert readers in various classes and disciplines. Horning suggests that in order for students to be an expert reader in disciplinary contexts, they “need to come to understand the genres and conventions of that discipline” (“Reading Across”). Theorizing reading a situated activity allows us to see that there are distinct ways of reading that vary by discipline, context, and the reader’s purpose.

### **Reading and Identity**

This study seeks to make college students’ reading practices visible by further understanding how students take on particular identities when they read. James Gee’s sociocognitive view of identity asserts that when people interact, they are recognized as a “kind of person” (“Identity” 99), which changes based on the particular context. People do not have a core identity, but have multiple identities. This leads to Gee’s idea of Discourses as particular ways of being in certain contexts; Discourses are “identity kits” that provide members of communities with “saying (writing)—doing—being—valuing—believing combinations” (“Literacy” 6). People change their dress, the way they talk, the

way they act, or their values based on how they think they will be accepted in a particular group. This also includes reading in specific ways.

This identity influences how people read and reader identity has been studied specifically alongside religious identities. Drawing on theories of identity development from developmental psychology, specifically the work of Erikson (*Youth in Crisis*), Schachter and Galili-Schacter contrast cultural literacy, critical literacy, and identity literacy. They define the latter as “readers’ proficiency in the practice of engaging the meaning systems embedded within texts, considering while doing so whether to adopt, adapt, or reject these as part of their own personal meaning system” (3). In their study of 12 Jewish teachers, they show how these teachers use reading as a way for students to either adopt or reject a certain identity. The way that students made meaning from the text was influenced by their religious backgrounds.

In another religion-based study, Rand studied the spiritual struggle of Seventh-day Adventists describing reading as a “spiritual battleground.” She shows that “wrong reading for Seventh-day Adventist Christians clearly has the ability to put religious identity at risk” (56). Rand discusses Peter Elbow’s “believing game,” which invites readers to read as believers and doubters, but this risk taking is contrary to religious faith. Rand suggests that teachers be “up front about the very real ways that our culturally constructed identities shape our attitudes about text and the uncertainties that we feel when confronting beliefs different from our own” (67).

These views of identity point to how the content of what is being read often conflicts with other identities that a person holds such as a religious identity. Hall has studied how students feel about themselves as actual readers, which can influence the

content of what's being read regardless of the specific text. Hall defines reader identity as "how capable individuals believe they are in comprehending texts, the value they place on reading, and their understanding of what it means to be a particular type of reader in a given context" ("Rewriting" 369). The identity that students have as readers is often decided for them by others—teachers, parents, peers. Many scholars have studied reader identity where students are misunderstood, devalued, ignored, or labeled as "struggling" (see Alvernon "Reading Adolescents"; Hall "Negative Consequences"; Frankel "Intersection"). Identity matters in reading development, but this doesn't end after students enter college. Students develop identities as readers, and this may impact how they are able to develop a disciplinary identity that accompanies reading texts.

Like developing a religious identity, developing a disciplinary identity can also be complicated. Gee mentions that there is a specific identity that he enacts as a linguist—there are specific ways and combinations that he says, writes, values, and believes as a linguist. Disciplinary identities are often enacted through writing and these forms of writing can be thought of as social interactions that help to "create a view of the world. This is because texts are influenced by the problems, social practices and ways of thinking of particular social groups" (Hyland 3). Much attention has been paid to actual written disciplinary differences (see Hyland; Bazerman) and differences in reading practices of faculty members who are more aware of the structure of the text and use "structural knowledge in ways that were somewhat unique to their disciplines" (Shanahan et al. 415). Ivanič has studied how students enact identities through their writing and how the "self" that is expected to be represented in academic writing is often unfamiliar to students (*Writing and Identity*). Much less attention has been paid to how students enact

disciplinary identities through reading, with the notable exception of Christina Haas, who studied a biology student throughout her undergraduate career showing how her understanding of the function of texts and roles of readers and writers grew in complexity (“Learning”).

Greenleaf et al. recognize the role of disciplinary instructors in helping students achieve disciplinary reading success. They propose a “reading apprenticeship” model of reading instruction in urban public secondary schools in which subject-area instructors explicitly discuss “*how* we read and *why* we read in the ways we do” (89). In arguing for this model of “literacy apprenticeship,” Greenleaf et al. recognize that “for all students to attain high-level literacy, apprenticeships that demystify the literacy practices and discourse of the academic disciplines must be embedded in subject-area instruction across the curriculum, rather than becoming the sole purview of the English department” (89). Much like thinking that writing is a “one size fits all” approach for every writing situation, it would also be a mistake to think of and teach reading in this way. It’s evident that reading is a context-dependent skill, but it’s unclear how this affects college students entering various disciplines.

Disciplinary reading is a complicated process because it requires students to read about new content, but also in new genres, and this becomes problematic for students when they are unaware of the purpose of the reading in a class or when reading remains a solitary and internal process. In an ethnographic case study exploring undergraduate writing in two upper-level anthropology courses at a Canadian university, Boba Samuels found that reading was a strong focus from participants, although the “value placed on reading by professors and students differed, but it was recognized by all participants as an

activity to which attention needed to be given” (154). Samuels quotes one student who saw the reading as separate from “actually doing anthropology” (154). Being able to see oneself as a disciplinary expert is complicated by the unique situation of the classroom as thought of as separate from actually doing the work of disciplinary experts.

Through surveys and interviews conducted for this chapter, it’s clear that students are often not consciously aware of how their reading changes based on the context, and a prominent theme that arose out of the data is that instructors, as experts, play a huge role in assisting students in reaching a metacognitive view of their own reading practices.

### **Communities of Practice, Rhetorical Genre Studies, and Activity Theory**

In order to further understand the role that reading plays in a classroom, I use Natasha Artemeva’s unifying theory of learning in which she brings together concepts from rhetorical genre studies (RGS), Lave and Wenger’s situated learning, and activity theory as a theoretical framework in order to further understand the role of reading in various college classrooms. By using this framework, we can move toward seeing reading as a contextualized practice that involves many individual and community factors.

Lave and Wenger’s work with Communities of Practice (CoP) moves a theory of learning from the purely cognitive to the social. This emphasizes the relationship between participants, activity, and community drawing attention to the social and contextualized nature of learning. To do this, they discuss learning through a process of legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) in which “learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the master of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community” (29). Learning

then is a situated social practice in which learners gradually construct various identities within specific communities. As such, learning “involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person” (53). This happens as members actually practice a skill.

Although Lave and Wenger specifically “steer clear” (39) of the idea of school settings as CoPs and discuss professional settings, many scholars have applied the principles of situated learning to the classroom and see that space as a CoP (see Haneda; Canagarajah; Toohey). These extend the principles of LPP and contextualize “school” knowledge as students participate in particular classroom activities. Both situated learning and activity theory draw heavily on Vygotsky’s work with what he terms the Zone of Proximal Development, the distance between what a learner can do individually and what that individual can do aided by others. Thinking of the classroom as a CoP, the instructor is seen as a sort of mentor who can lead apprenticed students into certain kinds of practices. Artemeva states,

Activity theory recognizes Vygotsky’s internalization and externalization as two basic processes that operate continuously at every level of human activity. Internal activities cannot be understood if they are analyzed in isolation from external activities because they are connected through mutual transformations—that is, through internalization and externalization. (168)

Reading for most college students is an internal process, but cannot be separated from the external factors that happen in the classroom. RGS also focuses on the social aspect of genres (see Miller “Genre as Social Action”), and in a CoP, the particular genres or texts cannot be separated from each individual classroom as each genre serves a different function.

Using this framework for reading moves us beyond seeing reading as a decontextualized skill and helps us further understand the role that students and instructors play in developing disciplinary identities. Horning suggests that in order for students to be expert readers in disciplinary contexts, they “need to come to understand the genres and conventions of that discipline” (“Reading Across”). Certainly some reading skills may be transferred between contexts, but it seems clear that some reading skills are context dependent as demonstrated in studies with “expert” readers. How novices in those classes and majors understand how their practices vary is an area where more research is needed and the following study adds to this growing conversation about students’ struggles and successes reading in various disciplines. This includes surveys from faculty in various disciplines, and surveys and interviews from students in three undergraduate courses: Anthropology, Atmospheric Sciences, and Architecture. This qualitative study seeks to further understand how students perceive their developing disciplinary identity and their ways of reading in disciplinary contexts through the following research questions:

- What expectations of students do instructors from various disciplines have for their assigned reading?
- In what ways, if at all, do instructors talk about the readings in class?
- In what ways do students enact different disciplinary identities through reading?

## **Methods**

The design of this study was influenced by Maxwell’s “critical realism” approach to research, which retains “an ontological realism (there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions, theories, and constructions) while accepting a form of epistemological constructivism and relativism (our *understanding* of this world is

inevitably a construction from our own perspectives and standpoint)” (*Realist Approach* 5). This sort of approach acknowledges that individuals create meanings and those meanings influence how they act, think, and make sense of this world.

Qualitative inquiry values participants’ knowledge, and the ways their understanding is revealed through their particular responses (Maxwell *Qualitative*). In order to understand both instructor and student interpretations of reading practices, a variety of methods were utilized including surveys, focus groups, and interviews. These methods provide insight into the meanings that individuals create. The purpose of this particular study is not to find a representative sample from which generalizations about disciplinary ways of reading might be drawn. Rather, this study may help to raise questions about disciplinary reading and students’ and instructors’ interpretations that might be used for further research. Themes and conclusions were drawn from the available participants’ responses in order to explore situated reading practices.

This project was deemed “exempt” from full review by the university Institutional Review Board. Purposeful selection, which involves choosing participants because they are “potentially rich and illuminative” (Patton 40) was utilized, and participants of the university Faculty Learning Community were then invited via email to participate in the survey. Some of the instructors I knew through my own participation in this community where we met biweekly in small groups during the Fall 2016 semester in order to discuss the book *Small Teaching*. This group of teachers from various disciplines was chosen because of the potential insights about reading they would have and a potential investment in the topic. Ninety-three instructors were contacted and twenty-one

completed the survey (23% of those contacted). Those who completed the survey received a \$10 gift card. (Faculty survey questions are included in the appendix.)

After instructors completed questions related to their expectations of students' reading practices, they were asked if they would be willing to let me visit their classroom in order to recruit students to take a similar survey and observe the class. From who agreed, three instructors were selected based on scheduling availability and class size: Atmospheric Science 170: Intro to Weather and Climate; Architecture 222: Building Materials and Methods; and Anthropology 307: Ecological Anthropology.

I visited each class to obtain consent from students. The consent form explained that participant identities would remain anonymous, participation was voluntary, their grade in the class was in no way dependent upon participating in the study, and that they could end participation at any time. Each participant was given a \$10 gift card for completing the survey.

Survey questions for both student and instructor participants included closed- and open-ended questions about reading strategies, challenges, and expectations in order to understand the "real views of the respondents" (Fowler 88). (Survey questions are included as Appendices A-C.)

Students who selected in the survey that they were interested in participating in a focus group were contacted and focus groups were formed based on scheduling availability. Maxwell stated, "the realities of access, cost, time, and difficulty necessarily influence *every* decision about what settings and participants to include in a study, and to dismiss these considerations as 'unrigorous' is to ignore the real conditions that will influence how data can be collected and the ability of these data to answer your research

questions” (95). Timing and time constraints certainly limited the number of participants, and the amount of data collected.

The focus group and individual interview questions were semi-structured to allow for “sufficient flexibility” (Wilkinson and Birmingham 45). Questions were predetermined based primarily on general themes from the survey responses and a focus group was chosen specifically because it is a situation where participants would feel comfortable discussing their class experience with peers and “responding to comments made by other members of the group in supportive or critical ways. Consequently, the intention is that the discussion will be richer, deeper and more honest and incisive than any interview with a single participant could produce” (Wilkinson and Birmingham 92). Before the interview began, participants were reminded of the purpose of the study and that the interview would be recorded. Participants discussed and added further insights into how they understood the role of reading within their specific class. The Anthropology focus group had four participants and lasted approximately one hour. Six individual interviews were conducted with students who were not able to participate in focus groups. These lasted between thirty and sixty minutes. All focus group and individual interviews were held in a study room in the Main Library on campus.

Audio recordings were then transcribed following Elinor Ochs’ caution that transcription is an interpretive act: “The format of a transcript influences the interpretation process carried out by the reader (researcher)” (47). In order to facilitate ease of reading the transcripts, I utilized Bucholtz’s “naturalized” transcription approach, which places primacy on the written features of the text over the oral (“Politics of Transcription”). In the transcriptions, I inserted commas, periods for full stops, and

removed many “idiosyncratic elements of speech (e.g., stutters, pauses, nonverbal, involuntary vocalizations)” (Oliver et al. 1273). Many nonverbal cues were kept in the transcripts and represented with brackets when the signals seemed to set the tone as when other participants nodded at another’s comments, but were deleted when they did not have “bearing on the content of the interview at all, and instead obfuscated participants’ meanings” (Oliver et al.). Words like “um” or “uh” were often taken out in order to make the final transcription easier for readers. Transcription is an interpretive act, and I attempted to represent the participants’ words as they intended. Transcripts were then sent to participants for “member checking” and students were given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym.

The interview transcripts and the responses from the open- ended questions were exported from Qualtrics and manually coded for emerging patterns or “open coding” (Corbin and Strauss). Emergent codes were then grouped into categories (axial coding) and those categories were then combined into final categories that described the data (Cresswell). This research process was iterative, and I borrowed from the constructivist grounded-theory method that relies on concurrent data collection and data analysis (see Charmaz) so that each step in the research process informed the next. The responses from the faculty survey responses helped to inform the questions asked on the student surveys, and the responses from those surveys helped to create the questions used in the focus and individual interviews. Table 1 shows the number of participants from each class.

Class Name	Number of students in class	Number of survey participants	Number of students in focus group	Number of Individual interviews
ATMO 170	44	16	0	2
ANTHRO 307	32	11	4	1
ARCH 222	68	25	0	3

*Table 1 Number of Student Participants*

### **Findings: Instructor Expectations**

There were 21 participants in the survey from various disciplines and departments across campus. When asked if they gave students instructions about how to read the assigned texts, eleven instructors selected yes, and ten selected no (almost half).

Instructors reported that they ask students to read in multiple genres including textbooks, e-textbooks, academic articles, books and book chapters. Often students in multiple genres within the same course and for ten instructors, all reading assignments are online. When prompted about how they use the texts in class, responses were varied. Many use activities in class such as small group discussion, worksheets, or other activities that directly relate to the reading assignment. But others do not use the reading assignments in class other than as a preparation for the class lecture. One instructor responded that “Time is too valuable to spend time doing more than reading a new problem that we will be solving as a class. There, I give them 3-4 minutes to conceptualize the question and start to work on it” (Chemical and Environmental Engineering Instructor). A mathematics instructor responded, “The students complete a 5-question multiple-choice quiz based on each reading assignment. We do not discuss them in class.” In Nutritional Science, the instructor responded,

In class, students will read peer reviewed articles or abstracts – usually a piece of an article is assigned to each of 4 students in a group, or each has a different abstract. They are instructed to read their portion and then locate information to answer questions. A typical question would be ‘what research design was used in the study?’ or ‘summarize the key findings’.

Many instructors expressed uncertainty about how students are doing the reading or whether or not their methods were working. Two instructors mentioned that they don't give instructions, but will change that in future classes. One instructor teaching an upper level Chemical and Electrical Engineering course, responded, "I leave it up to the student to decide how they will utilize the reading assignments. Upon reflection, I'm not sure that is a very good idea."

When asked about the purpose of the reading assignment, eighteen responded that they expected students to use the text as a resource and eighteen selected that texts were meant as preparation for the class lecture/lab/class discussion. This was followed by sixteen selecting that texts were to be used by students to understand course content.

Instructors also give students writing assignments in multiple genres including reflections, short answer exam questions, discussion posts, research papers, weekly journals, and essays. Often these multiple genres are assigned in the same class.

When asked about the challenges that students faced with reading assignments, sixteen responded that "lack of motivation" was the most challenging, while twelve selected that a "lack of knowledge of specific reading strategies" was a challenge. This was followed by eleven selecting time, academic preparation, and critical thinking.

In the open-ended question about how instructors expect students to connect their reading and writing, the most common responses were about how the writing was used to help students further explore or understand the content of the reading and demonstrate an understanding of new terms and concepts in their writing or design projects. Responses from the mathematics classes included using the text to answer the questions and formulas.

In the next section, themes from the student participants were coded and analyzed and used to provide a more detailed glimpse into each of the classrooms that participated in this research.

### **Atmospheric Sciences**

Atmospheric Sciences 170: Intro to Weather and Climate included forty-four registered students. Of the sixteen who participated in the survey, twelve were freshman, three were sophomores, and one was a junior. In this general education course, none of the students who participated was a science a major. The reading assignments for this class came from an e-textbook about weather and climate. The most common strategies that students used was taking notes on another sheet of paper (n=10), taking notes on a computer (n=9), re-reading sections, and summarizing passages.

On the Instructor survey, this instructor had marked that he does not give instructions about how to read the text.

### *Reader Identity*

When asked how capable students feel in comprehending the reading assignments, open ended responses were varied. These included responses such as “pretty capable;” “somewhat capable;” “partially capable;” “not very capable;” “moderately capable;” and “very capable.” Time and motivation were factors that influenced students’ abilities with 8 students mentioning either a lack of motivation or interest and finding time. The majority of those responding did not seem to have a strong reader identity in this particular class.

When asked how important the readings are, the majority of students responded that they had value because of a test or grade driven assignment, they were not valuable

because the class was unrelated to student's major, or that they weren't important because the instructor lectured during class, and one student responded that the readings are "kind of important."

#### *Reading like an Atmospheric Scientist*

When asked what it means to read like an atmospheric scientist, many of the responses included reading "formulas" and "categorizing" information, reading "through the lines and notice patterns or similarities in data," or pulling out "specific pieces in readings to help determine certain weather patterns and things like that." However, there was also much more uncertainty about how to read and 3 students responded with having no idea or not being sure.

#### *Writing like an Atmospheric Scientist*

Writing like a scientist includes having discipline specific knowledge. Students mentioned accounting for variables, using numbers, equations, and figures. Many students responded that writing was "explaining" various concepts. One student responded, "Writing like an atmospheric scientist should recall all the knowledge which I learned from the previous chapters and should research the complex contents which I cannot understand, and should connect the relative aspects about atmosphere." Another stated, "I think to write as an atmospheric scientist, you must write clear and concise as sometimes the information you will be writing about can be difficult. Quite frankly, I have no clue—based on the online textbook, it doesn't seem too different from any other writing done by an expert." The responses are interesting because it seems students don't imagine themselves as atmospheric scientists and are not imagining what it would be like to write in that way.

This seems connected to the responses about how students connect their reading and writing assignments. Six students responded that they don't see a connection between the reading and writing, while others responded that they use the reading to answer questions that the instructor asks and students connect the content and vocabulary of the reading to other assignments.

Two students from the class volunteered for an individual interview. In her interview, Eva was visibly frustrated with the class. She felt like she was a hard-working student, but expressed confusion about how the reading assignments were used in class. She said, "Usually we have to ask [the instructor] for the chapters in the book because he just says go over your slides, but he has a slide from every single day, so it's hard to tell what exactly we're going to do." Eva specifically mentioned the classroom environment contributing to her confusion and expressed a desire for the class to be more interactive. She said sometimes it was, but students were not motivated to participate. Eva also felt frustrated because she couldn't connect all the ideas. She said, "We're covering everything about atmosphere everything!" and she wasn't able to connect the ideas together and the textbook was so full of information that she didn't know what to listen for during the lecture or look for when reading. She responded that she did not feel like she was reading like a scientist at all, but in her Anatomy class, she felt like she had an easier time connecting the knowledge to her own body.

Takashi, the other student who offered to be interviewed, was in his first semester as a student from Japan who wanted to major in Sports Management because of his love of baseball. Takashi admitted not doing the readings for the class, but took notes during the class lectures. He especially liked when the instructor drew and explained diagrams

and visuals saying, “If there are a lot of visuals, it is very helpful to me.” Motivation and a lack of prior knowledge were also challenges for him. He said, “there is vocabulary that I don’t know so I have to look up the words and translate and it takes a long time.”

Takashi had a sports magazine in his backpack during the interview, and he said that reading it in English was easier to “understand with the words and vocabularies” because he already had some knowledge about it. Takashi also discussed his Economics class and how that was easier to read because he was more interested in that topic and since it was an introductory class, he was just working on memorizing definitions and terms. The instructor also gave the class a study guide that was helpful for Takashi to prepare for exams. At the end of the interview, Takashi asked me if I knew the “best way” to read. He said, “Yeah, I want to know. Do you know? You know, right? You know.” Takashi discussed in the interview how reading is complicated and how he switches strategies for each class, but that it’s a struggle for him as an international student because of a lack of background knowledge, but this is also something that other students mentioned in the atmospheric sciences class. Many mentioned how the content is brand new, so reading becomes even more challenging in these instances.

### **Anthropology**

The eleven students who completed the Anthropology 307: Ecological Anthropology survey included one freshman, three sophomores, five juniors, and two seniors. None was an Ecology major. The texts for this class included academic articles and books including *Toxic Archipelago*, *Living Downstream*, and *Toxic Injustice*. Student utilized multiple reading strategies including summarizing passages (n=8), connecting one part of the text to another (n=8), re-reading sections (n=8), looked up definition of an

unknown word (n=6), and reflected on what they learned (n=6). The biggest challenges in reading were time (n=11) and amount of reading (n=9).

The Anthropology instructor responded on the survey that she gives the following instructions for the readings: “Look at the chapter title and subtitles, try to make an outline as you read, pay attention to terms or words you don't know and look them up or ask me about them in class. Suggestions for skimming if you don't have time to complete whole chapter.” On the student survey, when asked if the instructor gave instructions about how to read the texts, six students answered yes and five answered no. In the focus group, students offered some clarity into this discrepancy by discussing the instructor adaptation saying that initially,

there weren't instructions given about how to read the texts and then when students weren't doing very well on the quizzes, [the instructor] adapted to that and said, ok, you guys know close reading and this is kind of the framework I want you to work with so you'll know the quotes that relate to the bigger picture. It was only once we had failed that [the instructor] was like, ok, let's change that. (Focus Group Interview)

The teacher adaptation was a really important topic for students. When asked on the student survey how the instructor talks about the readings in class, every student responded with specific ways and activities that the instructor uses such as quizzes on the reading and then discussing the quizzes, discussion about important quotes, and small group discussions about the readings. One student responded, “We also go over relations between texts and how ideas/experiences from one text connect with another.”

### *Reader Identity*

When asked how capable students felt in comprehending texts, the majority of the students who responded felt they were “pretty capable,” “fairly capable,” and “very capable” and many mentioned receiving high scores on the quizzes. One student

mentioned specifically the idea of looking for the “big picture” that the instructor seems to be helping students find:

I think I can comprehend the main subject and topics very well for class, but sometimes the specific details are harder for me to understand due to the density of the texts and how they are written... Sometimes I do not follow the specifics of the story, or I get hung up on details while not following the larger topic, however as I have different classes and get more experience I can see myself doing better with the big picture ideas.

When asked how valuable or important the readings assignments were, open-ended questions included nine responses about feeling connected to the readings because of a chosen career (n=1), being personally connected (n=2), real world connection (n=2), and the connection to the grade in the class (n=4).

One student said the readings were interesting, but not valuable because of feeling no connection to a chosen career path, and one student responded that they are not applicable to everyday life. Another student wrote about a personal connection to only one of the readings, but not to the other texts.

Using Hall’s definition of reader identity as “how capable individuals believe they are in comprehending texts, the value they place on reading, and their understanding of what it means to be a particular type of reader in a given context” (“Rewriting” 369), most of the students considered themselves to be capable of reading the texts and felt connected to the texts for various reasons. Overall, the students who responded to the survey seem to have a strong reader identity.

### *Reading like an Anthropologist*

When asked about reading like an anthropologist, five students mentioned the multifaceted nature of problems and reading like an anthropologist means looking for multiple perspectives. One student wrote, “To read like an anthropologist means to view

it from a holistic perspective. You can't just be on one side, there are always multiple sides.”

Reading like an anthropologist also means making connections. Two students specifically mentioned connecting the readings to people and cultures. Along these lines, reading like an anthropologist also means making connections between texts and ideas. Three students mentioned how anthropologists make connections between the texts and make “broad connections.” One student stated, “I think that reading like an anthropologist means reading materials from a wide variety of disciplines and people, because anthropologists do need to bring together information from many sources (data/document archives, individual interviews, scientific reports and data, political documents) to reach informed conclusions about issues.” Another student made the following analogy: “Anthropologists meander through the valley with the landscape, looking at everything that is revealed rather than digging a trench through the middle and then analyzing a sample in a lab far away. (I know anthropologists analyze samples in labs, but it's how they relate those samples to other concepts that is different than lab scientists.)”

#### *Writing like an Anthropologist*

Writing like an anthropologist also means taking on a sort of identity, according to the students. This includes connecting the writing to groups of people; students are thinking about various problems, but trying to find solutions to those problems. Students also mentioned making arguments by citing credible articles and using evidence to support claims. One student mentioned keeping the “large concepts in mind” as they write. The majority of students also saw a clear connection between the reading

assignments and the writing assignments. The short answer quizzes were the main connection with one student remarked, “I like the quizzes because [the instructor] goes over them to make sure we understand. The readings connect to what we write on the quiz and we use the readings to connect to our other writing assignments.” Another student stated, the writing and reading “closely mirror each other. The books and articles we read are very different than most scientific writing because they almost all contain personal narratives or informal/relaxed/conversational language.” The writing assignments seem to be a way for students to demonstrate that they understand the concepts, but the instructor gave specific directions about what kinds of concepts or ideas students should be looking for as they read.

These student responses give an insight into the Anthropology classroom. Because of the way the instructor talks about the readings, the students who responded to the survey seem to have an easier time taking on the identity of an anthropologist. They are able to see that they are making connections between their reading assignments, writing assignments, and how the reading connects to thinking like an anthropologist.

Finding these connections is not something that comes naturally to everyone. In the focus group, students discussed the narrative structure of some of the texts. Ella stated,

I like connecting the dots and that’s fun for me, but I could see that if your brain doesn’t work that way, how annoying that would be to have to map it all out and draw connections like a crazy person mapping out things on paper to even make sense of it. And then throw in vocab you don’t know.

In order to help students with this, it seems the role of the instructor is paramount. Emma stated, “Our professor facilitates conversation on it, and we discuss it whereas in my history class, it’s lecture and it’s boring. I can’t do it.” Scarlett also stated,

I think some level of required discussion is definitely really helpful for helping reading strategies and knowing what to look for because even with this class, it's like from the discussions, and the quizzes, and the interactions in class that I have figured out that this is how anthropologists do this. (Focus Group Interview)

All the students in the focus group agreed that the classroom environment including the class activities and how the instructor talked about the texts in class contributed to them taking on the identity of an anthropologists. In an individual interview with Valerie, she also discussed the importance of the role of the instructor saying that “anyone could learn to read like an anthropologist because of the way [the instructor] talked about the texts.”

### **Architecture**

The twenty-five participants from Architecture 222: Building Materials and Methods included twenty-two sophomores, one junior, and two seniors. All are Architecture majors and this was a required course for the degree. The majority of the readings for the class came from an online textbook. When asked on the student survey if the instructor gave instructions about how to read the texts, ten said yes, and fifteen said no. On the instructor survey, the instructor for this course responded that he does not give instructions, but then responded, “I answered no, but next semester, I will probably give instructions to students about how to more effectively read the texts - such as reading for specific content and for the flavor of broader subject matter and not having to read every word.” During an interview, one student shed light on this discrepancy by saying that the instructor originally had not given any instructions on how to read texts, but in the middle of the semester had the class complete an evaluation and a common student complaint was that there were questions on the quizzes on information that

wasn't covered in class, and the instructor re-evaluated how he approached the readings in class and gave more instructions.

Students in the survey responded that the texts were used as the basis for class exercises, which included tests and quizzes, and the content was the basis for the class lecture. The most mentioned strategies being used to read the texts were summarizing passages (11%), taking notes on another sheet of paper (8%), and re-reading sections (10%).

### *Reader Identity*

Many of the students felt like they were capable of understanding the texts and responded that they were “pretty capable” or “capable for the most part.” But many students responded that they were capable “if” they had more time, felt more motivated, or were more interested in the text.

When asked about the value of the assignments, responses were mixed: 16 students responded that the reading was valuable with 7 responding that the readings prepare them for the test or quiz or class activities; 4 connected the readings to career relevance; 3 said they were valuable; and 2 found connections to other courses. 9 students said they were not valuable with 6 responding that the reading was not important, 2 said the information was covered in class, and 1 student responded that the readings did not connect to the other courses. One student responded, “The readings for the building technologies class are very valuable to me because it explains everything clearly and consolidates all the material we're learning in one place. It helps connect things we learn in the specific class as well as in other classes.” However, another student discussed how

the readings seemed redundant: “it's basically just something that just adds sprinkles to the sundae of learning when I don't even like sprinkles in the first place.”

### *Reading like an Architect*

Reading like an architect is a complicated activity that involves multiple factors. The most common theme from the student responses was about reading visually: architects visualize what they read and think of applying that knowledge to their own design process. One student specifically stated, “Reading like an architect means you take what you read and think of it in a very visual way that can be applied to a project.” Another mentioned that “Architects are more visual people, they would rather look at pictures or diagrams rather than read a description of someone or something if it could be.” Other ways of reading students mentioned included learning new vocab or disciplinary specific terms, skimming for key concepts or methods, engaging in critical thought while reading, and paying attention to specific technical details that will be important. One student said, “I think it means that you are seeing things in perspective. We are creators and we see beyond things that the untrained eye sees. We draw in detail specific elements and I think we read the same way. We have to go between the lines and see things that are not seen to the untrained eye.”

### *Writing like an Architect*

Writing like an architect also involves this visual way of thinking. Architects need to connect the visual with the text: “to express a design in words means to be able to draw it as well.” The written texts that architects use need to be precise and technical, but students also mentioned the idea of persuading an audience about their design, so the language also needs to “sell” their design. Students also mentioned using discipline

specific terminology. Writing like an architect involves a combination of being technical and artistic or creative. In the interviews with the architecture students, the idea of how architecture combines the technical and artistic came up many times. Oliver stated,

Eventually you can teach yourself this way of thinking, but for some people it's such a reorientation of the way they think that it's either too hard or they just don't like it. And you have people on both ends of the spectrum. It's not just people who are artsy. There are people who are strictly math and the design thinking is what gets them...because they're so strictly focused on reason based thinking that the design, the creativity, they're like, what?"

Steve also described being an architect as designing "amazingly drawn things and they tell such an amazing story. However, there's just so much technical aspects to it." To an architect, then, students are trying to develop ways of thinking that involve visuals with technical and precise language. Sophie also struggled with the kinds of writing assignments that she was working on in the class. She said about the writing assignment,

It was structured so differently. It wasn't formal where you go paragraph to paragraph. There were headings and subheadings and you put pictures in kind of like a newspaper, and I'm like, I'm not sure we should be calling this a research paper, you know? This I not like anything I've done before."

### **Discussion: Communities of Practice, Reading, and Identities**

Oliver, an Architecture student, ended our interview with the following thoughts about reading:

Reading is a great tool for learning, but it has to be used in supplement to what you're teaching in the class. Almost any reading you have will not be able to stand alone without some sort of explanation in the class, and not just how to read it, but even if you know how to read it, but how to use what you did read.

Reading is only a part of a larger system that involves many other factors including the instructor role, the classroom environment, a student's motivation and interest in the course topic, and the amount of time students have for the readings

Communities of Practice is a useful framework for thinking of classroom learning because of its connection of learning and identity formation. Thinking of reading as an activity within a community broadens the perspective of the learning that can happen in classrooms. As the Architecture and Anthropology students demonstrate, they are reading the required texts in very specific ways based on the instructions from the instructor. Texts such as *Toxic Injustice* are aimed at a general audience and if a student were to read it outside of this class, the way that student would read the text would be very different because the purpose would be different and it would be removed from the particular classroom context. In the Anthropology classroom, the students may be seen as novices and the instructor as the “old timer” who is apprenticing students in LPP. The students in the focus group had successfully created for themselves identities as anthropologists because of the way they were reading texts, interacting in class with peers, instructors, and completing the writing assignments.

In the Architecture classroom, students were also creating identities for themselves and this process began earlier than the current classroom in this study. Participants mentioned how students can find connections between each of their classes in the Architecture major. Students mentioned factors such as reading the texts in disciplinary ways, but also the role of instructors. But students disagreed. In the interview, Steve stated, “Because the instructor is basically providing that foundation so you can end up starting and becoming more successful and so you're building your confidence a little bit being able to read all these things.” But Oliver mentioned that there is also a responsibility on the student: “The professors aren't necessarily like, here, this is how it's gonna work. They're very much like, they'll just say things at key points in the

semester and if you're not really listening for it, you're not gonna catch it.” All three Architecture students mentioned that the instructor from the study had played an important role by adapting his teaching methods in order to better facilitate reading strategies for his students and making time to discuss how to do the readings. The result of the participants from these two classes was that many students were able to read the texts in discipline-specific ways. The Architecture students focused on visuals and applied the readings directly to their own projects. Students discussed how the reading, writing, and thinking visually were interrelated processes resulting in an identity as an Architect. The Anthropology students, despite not being Anthropology majors, were still able to read in ways specific to Anthropologists such as looking at the many sides of an issue, looking for cultural aspects of problems, and trying to find the larger key terms that relate to Anthropology. Many of those who participated were able to successfully take on the identity of an Anthropologist and felt they had achieved success in the course.

This is contrasted with the Atmospheric Science students, many of whom did not complete the readings, were frustrated with classroom activities, and expressed confusion about an identity of a scientist. Many could project or image what they thought it would mean to read or write like a scientist, but they did not see themselves as scientists. Lave and Wenger state that learning implies “becoming a different person...To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities” (53). Learning in classrooms involves creating disciplinary identities, and this happens through many activities, but reading has been neglected as part of the conversation of learning, possibly because the reading process is often a solitary process.

But when reading is actively used and discussed in the classroom, students are able to read in situated ways that contribute to this construction of disciplinary identity.

CoPs as a framework also encourages instructors to think of their classrooms as communities of learning and inquiry where everyone participates in knowledge creation. Haneda suggests, however, that in order for this to happen, the “notion of community needs to be enriched by consideration of who its members are as individuals, with particular dispositions shaped by their life trajectories—past, present, and envisioned future” (815). This life trajectory includes their reader identity, that is, how they feel about themselves as readers. Many college students arrive in college already with a fixed reader identity that has been assigned to them. In the Anthropology and Architecture interviews, many students mentioned novels they were reading in their free time or lamented not having more time to read novels. They felt of themselves as strong readers and this impacted the way they were able to take on disciplinary identities. When asked about this connection, Oliver responded, “Well, I definitely think it helps, that's for sure. To have been a strong reader” (Architecture Interview). This reader identity also encompasses confidence as well. Emma, in the Anthropology focus group interview, stated,

I just think that having confidence in anything helps you perform better. And at first, I was getting like 87% on the quizzes, and I was like, no. [participants laugh]. And so I had to adapt. What I was doing wasn't working. And so I don't know. I just had to change and started to change and relate it back to the people.

Students' confidence, motivation, and ability to comprehend the texts impacts how they feel about their identity as readers. Students need to find connections between the readings and the world, their personal lives, their future careers, the quiz or test for that class, larger themes, concepts or ideas, etc. but from these student responses, the

instructor is a vital part of facilitating those connections. Students also connect various strategies across contexts. There are strategies that students may use across contexts, but not all strategies work in all contexts. In reading texts for her Anthropology course, Scarlett said, “I always scan for broader connections and themes when I read because, you know, in all my English classes, that’s what you gotta figure out what you’re writing your paper on.” But in the same interview, Ella stated, “You can’t teach someone English close reading and then hope that it applies to their art degree or hope it applies to their architecture degree....the bigger questions you’re asking will be different in every single field.”

This last comment is interesting when we think of the complicated space of general education courses, which are often on the periphery of college campuses. Often, students are not intending to be majors in that particular course. Of the 16 student participants from the Atmospheric Science general education course, none was an intended science major. In this case, the students’ reader identities may have been impacted by the situation of the class as a general education course. Students had a harder time being motivated to read, but also by their own positions as freshmen and sophomore students. Many were new to the content of the course, but also new to college life. When discussing general education courses, Winzenried stated that although they are “complex and contradictory, they can also be rich sites for writing instruction” (“Brokering”). They may also be rich sites for reading instruction as instructors think of the role that reading plays within their general education classes. In discussing STEM readers, Nowacek and James assert,

What defines novice readers is not their age, institutional position, possession of an ability to read any text rhetorically, or even a metacognitive awareness of

different reading strategies—but the fact that they don't yet have a highly elaborated map on which to position themselves as the text as they engage with a particular reading. (301)

Building these mental maps within general education courses can be challenging.

### **Implications and Suggestions**

This study demonstrates how some students in different disciplines read in different ways and how they struggle with knowing how to read in a particular way. Although generalized claims cannot be made from the student responses, the data do provide some interesting insights into disciplinary classrooms, and this may have implications for those involved in WAC/WID research, which has primarily been invested in studying the different ways of writing within disciplines, neglecting how students *read* differently within disciplines. In *Writing in the Academic Disciplines*, Russell states, “Faculty are rarely held formally responsible by institutions for initiating students into the discourse of their disciplines (and therefore of the professional roles tied to them). And, thus, disciplines have found it easy to ignore the role that writing plays in students’ preparation for and admission to the professions” (28). Because of the nature of reading as a primarily solitary activity that happens outside of the classroom, many faculty find it even easier to ignore the role that *reading* plays in preparing students for academic success.

Students from the Architecture and Anthropology courses both mentioned how the instructor adapted teaching methods when noticing the students struggling. These students, who already perceived of themselves as strong readers, were also able to adapt their reading methods and consequently, read like anthropologists and architects. They were able to take on a disciplinary identity while reading. The students in Atmospheric

Sciences struggled with the reading assignments, were less motivated to complete the assignments, and did not readily see connections between reading assignments and class activities.

There are several implications for future research involving reading in disciplinary contexts. First, consider who “readers” are. In extending research about Communities of Practice, as Haneda suggests, instructors should consider the individuals in their classrooms. This includes who they are as readers. Instructors might use Hall’s definition of reader identity as “how capable individuals believe they are in comprehending texts, the value they place on reading, and their understanding of what it means to be a particular type of reader in a given context” (“Rewriting” 369) as a way to assess students as they enter the classroom, and as a way to begin conversations about reading in particular contexts.

Second, talk about ways to read. In CoPs, reading should be an active topic of discussion and the instructor, as the expert, may need to help students as they move toward more expert reading practices. Reading is multifaceted and complicated process, and despite being the same fundamental activity in different contexts, Horning suggests that in order for students to become an expert reader in disciplinary contexts, they “need to come to understand the genres and conventions of that discipline” (“Reading Across”). But it goes beyond just knowing the genres and conventions. If we take a RGS view, we need to look at how each genre is being used in specific classroom. This may involve modeling reading practices, or explicit instructions about expectations of reading assignments.

Third, General Education courses are in a complex position. Instructors are disciplinary experts, but students may not see themselves as moving toward being an expert, or may not have a desire to be an expert. Instructors in these courses have unique challenges as they urge students to take on disciplinary identities. Future research is needed about how students do or do not see themselves as taking on disciplinary identities, but how instructors may assist students with specific ways of reading. Nowacek and James discuss the importance of students building mental maps within disciplinary contexts. This is further complicated in General Education courses as students often have less background knowledge about the subject. How a lack of background knowledge impacts students' reading practices within such courses may provide useful information that instructors may use.

Although these results are limited in the number of responses, they are interesting in highlighting the views of instructors and students from various disciplines. The faculty responses show the complications of teaching—knowing how to talk about the readings in class and how to fit into the class all the activities that they want to accomplish. Of the 21 faculty who completed the survey, almost half responded that they do not talk about the readings in class. But the student responses show that when instructors successfully discuss the reading in their classes—specific ways of reading—some students are able to enact a disciplinary identity that influences how they read, write, and participate in class. When instructors discuss the ways of reading within the class and use the readings in explicit ways in classroom activities, students are able to construct a disciplinary identity within that space. Scarlet demonstrates this with her quote at the beginning of this paper stating, “required discussion is definitely really helpful for reading strategies and

knowing what to look for because even with this class, it's from the discussions, and the quizzes, and the interactions in class that I have figured out, oh, anthropologists do this" (Focus Group Interview).

As the student examples from this study show, students need to be guided to know which strategies might work, "how" to read texts, and how the texts are used in the larger CoP, however, the goals of the course also greatly impact this, especially with General Education courses where the instructor may only have the goal of teaching students new content. Drawing on principles from activity theory, rhetorical genre studies, and situated learning may provide further insights when instructors think about how the reading is part of the larger system of factors, both internal factors, and external factors in the classroom and how instructors mediate these various activities.

CHAPTER 3  
The Role of Genre Teaching in Reading Pedagogy in a FYC Classroom

*I think of myself as a better reader now knowing about how genre can be applied to situations* (Sofia, Final Course Reflection).

In the last chapter, I explored how reading can be considered a situated activity; that is, even though reading is the same fundamental activity in various contexts, students sometimes do and sometimes do not *read* differently based on the situation. Students need to be equipped with a reading toolbox in which they can use various tools as they navigate different and complex reading tasks.

The next two chapters explore the overarching question about how the composition classroom helps students fill their reading toolbox, and explores the questions of how I, as a composition instructor, can teach students to become more conscientious readers (Ch. 3) and whether or not those skills transfer to other contexts (Ch. 4). David Joliffe defines the reading problem as the “failure of the field in general to interrogate the roles that reading plays in high school and college and to recognize the paucity of theories, methods, and materials teachers have in both settings to develop more informed perspectives about themselves as teachers of reading” (“Learning to Read” 3). The Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA) has attempted to alleviate this “failure” through their recent Outcomes Statement (3.0) (see Appendix F for full statement). In the original statement published in 1999, readers are portrayed as people with “expectations” that writers must understand and meet. Reading is something that is used along with writing for “inquiry, learning, thinking, and communicating.” Reading

takes a more prominent role in the revised outcomes statement published in 2014<sup>3</sup> as it “acknowledges in several new places that improved reading practices is a desirable outcome for FYC” (Dryer et al. 139).

One of the stated outcomes of this revised statement is that by the end of first-year composition, students should “gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers’ and writers’ practices and purposes.” As a suggestion, faculty in all disciplines should help students learn the “expectations of readers in their fields.” Another notable addition to the revised version is that students should “read a diverse range of texts” and that faculty members can help students learn “strategies for reading a range of texts in their fields.” These last additions help students move from imagining the audience of their own writing to how they themselves are reading various texts within different classes. The CWPA has become what David Joliffe calls the “intellectual and professional center of gravity—in teaching, administration, and scholarship of first-year college and university writing” (“Learning” 11). Despite the influence this professional organization holds, revising the outcomes to include reading more prominently has not necessarily impacted all composition classrooms.

How instructors achieve this outcome is complicated as many instructors find talking about reading a challenge. In one study, Linda Adler-Kassner and Heidi Estrem found that instructors “wanted students to read for particular purposes, although they could not always identify those purposes. Reading heuristics—reading questions, prereading prompts, or class activities—often reflected other purposes” (40). In a series

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<sup>3</sup> The CWPA amended the Outcomes Statement in 2008 with an additional section called “Composing in Electronic Environments.” The rest of the document remained unchanged until the revised Outcomes Statement (3.0) in 2014.

of interviews, Lisa Bosley shows that many English Department faculty members do not teach reading. She claims that “that many college freshmen have little experience with critical reading and need to be taught explicit strategies for this type of engagement with a text” (298).

Knowing the purpose for reading a text is a vital part of the activity and can direct a student’s reading practice, but it’s also clear that students (and instructors) often do not know the purposes of and for the reading, and/or instructors do not articulate the purpose clearly. The Outcomes Statement further complicates the issue by combining “composing and reading” in the statement saying they should both be used for “inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts.” Students are also urged to “gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers’ and writers’ practices and purpose.” But those purposes may look very different. A student’s purpose for reading a particular text in a class may be different than her purpose for writing a particular text about that reading and then trying to imagine a purpose for someone reading that particular text. Reading as a form of inquiry can be different than composing as a form of inquiry.

The purpose of a text (either reading or writing) is an important move toward a more rhetorical understanding of reading and writing and is important in genre theory. In the revised Outcomes Statement, there is also more of an emphasis on genre. In the original statement, “genre” is mentioned only three times, but it is mentioned ten times in the revised statement in the outcomes, explanations, and suggested activities. This revised statement “revises its construct of genre by consolidating it with the purposes and foci we now understand to be shaped by genre” (Dryer et al. 138).

There is an assumption in the Outcomes statement that students should understand how their genre awareness impacts their reading, but no clear connection or clarification about how this happens or what it might look like for students. It is within this research that I place my own teaching as I wondered about how to talk about reading with my students in a First-year composition (FYC) course in a way that would make them more aware of their reading strategies and practices. To this end, I created a genre-based syllabus in order to further understand these outcomes and the impact of genre awareness on students' reading awareness.

In this chapter, I first review schema theory to describe the relationship between a text (including structure of texts) and a reader's background knowledge. Text structure is an important component of genres and one aspect of genre theory. After reviewing schema theory, I briefly review genre-based pedagogical studies that explore genre awareness in order to demonstrate that while "genre awareness" is often used to describe a goal of genre teaching, it has different meanings within different approaches. This distinction is important as I define genre awareness for my own study showing what aspects of genre students in a first-year composition course become aware of. After explaining the design of my own genre-based curriculum in ENGL101A during the Spring 2017 semester, I show how students' definitions of genre changed during the course of the semester and how this genre awareness impacted their reading practices. Student responses shed light on how students might meet the CWPA Outcomes that students should "gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes."

## **Schema Theory and Genre**

Kenneth Goodman's theory of reading in 1967 as a "psycholinguistic guessing game" ("Reading") has been extremely influential in reading theories. This psycholinguistic view influenced Frank Smith, who also discusses the importance of making predictions in the reading process: "Language is understood by keeping ahead of the incoming detail. By having some expectation of what the speaker or writer is likely to say, by making use of what we know already, we protect ourselves against being overwhelmed by irrelevant information" (39-40). In schema theory, then, "comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text" (Carrell and Eisterhold 556). Carrell and Eisterhold draw a distinction between what they call formal schemata (background knowledge of organizational structures of a text) and content schemata (background knowledge of the content of the text) (560).

This background knowledge relates directly to a student's knowledge of genre and helps students make predictions when they read. For Smith, genre schemes "help both readers and writers. Their characteristic forms help readers by giving them a basis for predicting what a text will be like, that a novel will be constructed in a particular way, that a scientific article will follow a certain format, that a letter will observe typical conventions" (46). This knowledge of the relevant structures of the text, helps students to predict what the next part of the text will be about. Genre theorists have also discussed how the internal patterns and structures "exist to provide orientation for both readers and writers" (Tardy and Swales 565). This orientation and background knowledge also help readers as they comprehend texts (Grabe and Stoller). Proficient readers are able to guess

what will come next as they read and this prediction guides them as they read and as they write. For example, knowing the format and structure of a formal report can help a reader as she scans the headings for the information needed.

But there is more to predicting (and reading) a text than knowledge of structure. In Ann Johns' socioliterate theory of genre-based pedagogy, she stresses the need to include more than just text content and form in genre schemata saying that "considerable knowledge about context, about readers' and writers' roles, and about the values and registers of cultures and communities also affect genre knowledge" (*Text, Role, and Context* 15). There is limited research about how students connect their socioliterate genre knowledge to their reading practices.

### **Genre Awareness and Reading**

There are various approaches to teaching genre in the classroom. One difference is the emphasis that instructors place on teaching explicit genres (acquisition) or teaching a genre awareness. Many educators have written about how explicit instruction is an important part of pedagogical approaches that seek to give access to genres of power (Cope & Kalantzis; Delpit; Lee; Rose & Martin). But this approach has been critiqued by Aviva Freedman who argues that the explicit teaching may not be necessary (students implicitly learn structures), and sometimes is not even possible ("Show and Tell"). By teaching the structure in decontextualized settings, students may not learn other social aspects of the genre, which according to Carolyn Miller, are tied into the idea of genre as social action based on recurrent situations ("Genre"). Instead, those like Amy Devitt express the goals of teaching genre awareness as a "critical consciousness of both rhetorical purposes and ideological effects of forms" (192). Although genre awareness is

defined in different ways, in the research presented here, I specifically use the term “metacognitive awareness of genre” to distinguish between the way Devitt and others define genre awareness involving ideologies and the way students define their awareness in this study. A reading awareness as well acknowledges students’ understanding of the ways they are reading and how those ways change.

There have been numerous studies in foreign language contexts studying reading practices of students connecting a student’s genre awareness with improved reading. Hyon in particular has extensively studied the effects of genre-based instruction in ESL students. In a graduate-level reading course at the University of Michigan, Hyon used an English for Specific Purpose (ESP) approach to genre theory in order to study students’ reading practices of specific genres including news articles, textbook entries and research articles looking specifically at the content, structure, language style, and purpose of these texts. Hyon suggests that “explicit teaching about genre features can be useful for building ESL students’ genre awareness and for facilitating their text processing and production” (“Genre and ESL Reading” 139). Swales and Lindemann also studied formal and functional features by looking at how graduate students learned literature reviews claiming that “students can be helped to become more observant readers of the discursal conventions of their fields and thereby deepen their rhetorical perspectives on their own disciplines” (118). Other researchers have shown how a focus on generic features can help students become aware of discipline-specific features (Cheng; Spector-Cohen et al.).

In a study of Iranian undergraduate students, students were placed in two different classrooms—one class using a genre-based approach and another using traditional models. In the genre-based classroom, students were taught explicit terms for description,

cue words, and graphic organizers. Sadeghi et al. found that students in the genre-based course showed significant improvements in their reading comprehension. They conclude that being aware of text structure helps students better remember the information they read. In another prominent study about reading, Negretti and Kuteeva researched undergraduate L2 students in Sweden in an Academic Reading and Writing course. Their ESP genre-based approach included concepts such as purpose, audience, discourse community, rhetorical moves, and Swales' CARS model and the end of the course, all students demonstrated "declarative (what) and procedural (how) knowledge of genre-relevant aspects of academic texts" but only a few were able to demonstrate "conditional (when and why) knowledge of the genre" (108). Even though they tried to move beyond a focus on generic structures, students often had difficulty trying to understand more sociorhetorical aspects.

Mary Schleppegrell has studied extensively how young writers learning English in academic contexts could be guided to make effective language choices. In a four-year study, Schleppegrell shows that as students develop a generic metalanguage, they develop a deeper reading comprehension. The children in the study learned to categorize clauses in the texts they read as presenting, doing, saying, sensing, or being ("Supporting" 27). She concludes that students became more aware of their language they read and also wrote as they developed this metalanguage about structure.

The common theme of these studies is that by teaching students in foreign language contexts to be aware primarily of structural aspects of a text, they are able to become more proficient readers. This awareness is related to how students acquire new genres as this awareness may become a part of the student's formal schematic

knowledge, but students may not have enough content schematic knowledge. As students are learning English as a second language, focusing on text structure and discourse communities is helpful, although potentially problematic when there is also a focus on discourse communities that students are not members of or are just becoming members of. As Negretti and Kuteeva demonstrate in the study discussed above, moving into that conditional knowledge of when and why is harder for students to accomplish. One possible explanation is that they do not have any “insider” knowledge about these communities and this lack of content schemata knowledge affects how students read.

In Rhetorical Genre Studies (RGS) approaches, the definition of genre “must be centered not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish” (Miller 151). Form, social action, and context are all important. Johns has even argued that all genre approaches should take seriously the context in which the genre appears saying that the “nature of the social...is fully, if not more important, than any other aspect of communication” (“Rhetorical Genre Studies” 4). RGS stresses that many communities may call a genre by the same name, but use the genre differently or the form of the genre may look different. Teaching this complicated idea to students is something that Anne Beaufort has studied in relation to college students. The problem that Beaufort sees is that students are taught that genres or types of writing are universal. For example, students mistakenly understand the “essay” as a type of writing that looks in the same in every context.

What connects these various genre-based approaches is the “commitment to the idea that genres reflect and coordinate social ways of knowing and acting in the world, and hence provide valuable means of researching how texts function in various contexts”

(Bawarshi and Reiff 5). It may be easier to understand this (non)awareness as it relates to writing genres, but what about how students *read* genres? Much of the reading that college students complete is done outside of class and instructors do not “see” the reading. Many composition scholars have studied reading practices, however, genre does not seem to be an active part of the discussion. Patrick Sullivan, for example, has offered six guidelines in his “deep reading” approach that connect reading with thinking, but genre knowledge is not mentioned. Alice Horning offers a pedagogical approach that she labels “expert reading” which includes a meta-awareness of organizational structure, context, and also purpose (“Where to Put”). To date, there have been very few studies about college *reading* from a RGS theoretical view, although there have been many about how students *write* genres. Ellen Carillo, one of the most prominent advocates of teaching reading in composition classrooms, has advocated for a “mindful” approach to reading using the term mindful to “underscore the metacognitive basis of this frame wherein students become *knowledgeable, deliberate, and reflective* about *how* they read and the demands that contexts place on their reading” (*Securing a Place* 117). While this is not specifically categorized as a RGS approach, Carillo does include the notion of genre in this framework stating that facilitating transfer is more productive if students have an

*awareness* of the relationship between genres and reading practices...taught apart from a metacognitive framework that fosters the recognition and generalization of the transferrable element, namely awareness (and not the genre per se), the same might be said about rhetorical reading. (107)

Carillo is not categorizing her own approach as a genre-based pedagogy, but this “rhetorical reading” has much in common with an RGS approach, although it’s unclear how students understand the relationship between genre and reading practices.

A reader's awareness and understanding of text structures is important for comprehension. Smith states, "If we don't know the relevant structures, then we won't understand the text, or our reading of it will be distorted" (47). But this understanding of generic structures or formal schemata is only part of the complicated reading process because it leaves out the social aspect of reading, beyond just knowing the context or the content schemata. This includes background knowledge about the content, but also background knowledge about how a text is used within different communities. Students also need to be aware of the action that is being accomplished through particular genres, which also involves purposes. "A reader has several possible purposes for reading, and each purpose emphasizes a somewhat different combination of skills and strategies" (Grabe and Stoller 9). For example, a student might read a novel for a class knowing the instructor would be testing on certain aspects of the novel. The student might underline, take notes, and pay attention to different details while reading. However, the student reading the same novel for the purpose of personal enjoyment and not for a class might read the same novel very differently. The context in which a genre is being read can make a profound difference in *how* a student reads something. An RGS-based approach highlights the importance of the context rather than focusing on structure alone. This approach may help students become more aware of their specific reading practices, but there is a gap in studies related to reading in composition studies (Carillo). This exploratory study of a group of students in a genre-based first-year basic writing course looks at how their changing definition of genre influences their awareness of their reading practices.

## Course Design and Methods

As teacher-researchers, “We don’t look for what’s replicable, reliable, or statistically valid. Rather, we look for what’s singular, particular, and unique” (Chiseri-Strater and Sunstein 21). In this sense, classroom research is more qualitative than quantitative, and this study presents a snapshot of my own students and teaching in a genre-based pedagogy course rather than providing data that is generalizable to all classrooms. The data provided by students do provide some insights and further questions for future study about genre awareness and reading practices.

I designed a genre-based pedagogy course that connected reading and writing for a section of English 101A, a 4-credit basic writing course at a public Southwestern university that met twice a week as a large class and in one 50-minute studio session with half of the class. This course was the first of a required two semester sequence. The studio provided extra support for students’ reading and writing skills in a small class setting. Other versions of this first semester sequence do not have the additional studio time. Many scholars have written about how many basic writers “are in need of intensive help with reading” (Horning, “Trouble” 36) and have advocated approaches that connect reading and writing in composition classrooms (Goen and Gillotte-Tropp; Skomski).

The assignments I created met the following Course Goals and Outcomes influenced by the CWPA Outcomes and mandated by the university Writing Program categorized as Rhetorical Awareness, Critical Thinking and Composing, Reflection and Revision, and Understanding Conventions.

In order to resolve some of these tensions about explicit teaching and awareness, I designed a course that promotes a metacognitive awareness of genre for both reading and

writing. Although “awareness” is a complicated and tricky term, I discuss this metacognitive awareness of genre in terms of what characteristics of genre students noticed throughout the semester based on their own responses. This awareness leads to conscious decision-making. The relationship between acquisition and awareness is also sometimes blurry. In order to develop students’ awareness, they completed cover letters with major essays that were meant to help students develop awareness as they learned acquisition of certain genres. In these cover letters, students addressed questions about their purposes for writing, their reasons for deciding certain structural aspects, and questions about how the reading assignments influenced their writing assignments. As they were acquiring knowledge of new genres, they were also becoming aware of this knowledge.

The genre-based curriculum drew from multiple genre theories as we discussed genres in discourse communities and read selections from John Swales. We discussed specific linguistic patterns in genres, but also focused on genres as tools to accomplish a social action. To further students’ understanding of genre, they completed the following major writing assignments:

Assignment Description	Percentage of Class Grade
<p>Project 1: Literacy Narrative</p> <p>In this essay, students will reflect on the ideas we will discuss throughout the unit about language, both written and oral, and identity creation/transformation. Students will explore their own literacy “story,” their personal engagement with writing, reading, language, and how that has created their identity. Students will pick an event from the past, either positive or negative, dramatize it, and then explore it with the purpose of coming to some kind of statement, or insight, about how writing or language has created their identity.</p>	15%
Project 2: Discourse Community Ethnography	20%

<p>Building on the previous assignment of individual writing, this unit will broaden students' understanding of how groups and communities influence readers, writers, and texts. We will study John Swales' and James Gee's ideas of discourse community. In this essay, students will analyze a community that they are a member of in order to further understand how the purpose and audience of writing can change according to group. The purposes for writing texts, and the members they write to and with, also influence how they write, what they write, and how the texts are used and how members create meaning from those texts.</p>	
<p><b>Project 3: Academic Discourse Community Analysis</b>          In this unit, we will further discuss the ideas of genre and discourse community and apply this understanding to academic settings. In this assignment, students will take two assignment sheets from at least 3 classes they are currently taking in order to understand the different expectations that instructors have about writing in each of those courses. Looking at each course as a discourse community, students will understand that instructors have different definitions of terms such as <i>essay</i>, <i>research paper</i>, and what constitutes "good" writing. The final essay for this unit will include research and proper formatting (as defined by my MLA standards), and may include interviews or correspondence with instructors from other courses as students begin to further explore and problematize the role writing plays in their other courses.</p>	30%
<p><b>Project 4: Collaborative Report</b>          In this assignment, students will take what they have learned from the Academic Writing unit and create a class report compiling all the information from everyone's papers. We will choose a relevant audience for this report and discuss the way language is used when writing in this particular genre. This collaborative report will be accompanied by individual reflections about students' participation in the creation of the report.</p>	5%
<p><b>Project 5: Final Reflection</b>          For this final assignment, students will reflect on the ideas we have discussed all semester and make their own conclusions about how they will "transfer" that knowledge throughout their academic, personal, and public lives.</p>	10%
<p><b>Daily Reading and Writing Reflection Assignments</b>          These assignments have two sections. First, students describe <i>how</i> they read the assigned reading: students' process before reading, what happened while reading (for example, looking up unknown vocabulary), define purposes for reading. The purpose of this section is to reflect on how the process of reading might change depending on the purpose and the genre of the text.</p>	10%

Second, students briefly discussed the content of the reading—what questions they had, what they found interesting or confusing. This section is meant to be a preparation for the next day’s class discussion.	
Studio Activities	10%
Total	100%

Although influenced by various genre-based approaches, the implementation of course assignments followed primarily a RGS pedagogy foregrounding community, but not disregarding language and texts. For example, in the first unit, we read many of examples from the Literacy Narrative genre from authors including Amy Tan, Malcolm X, and Sherman Alexie. As we read them, students kept a log of specific strategies being used within the narratives such as the author’s use of “I” or using humor, dialogue, descriptive language to describe scenes, and other strategies (the form and function). Students discussed what those strategies accomplished both for the writer and for the reader. Then students thought about what strategies they might want to use in their own narratives and what those strategies would help them accomplish as the writer and also for their peers and instructor as readers. But an RGS approach also recognizes that students *are being written* by the particular genre and that students perform a certain role or idea about literacy in their narrative (Bawarshi 128-129).

As students completed a reading assignment, they also turned in a reading reflection in addition to a writing reflection. In the reading reflection, students discussed their process of reading the text. In the writing reflection, they discussed questions or feelings they had about the content of the reading. The purpose of these short assignments was to make explicit their reading practices, while also connecting the reading to their writing. One of the benefits of an RGS approach is the emphasis on genre

and purpose and understanding the purpose of reading and writing tasks depends on the context or situation in which it takes place.

Informed consent was obtained from students by a colleague, so I did not know which students had agreed to participate until the end of the semester. In order to avoid showing any favoritism toward students who chose to participate in the study, I waited until after the semester had ended and grades had been posted for all students and then assigned participating students' work a pseudonym. Of the eleven who consented to be in the study, eight completed the course and the majority of assignments. Those who participated in the study received a \$25 gift card.

The purpose of this particular study is not to find a representative sample from which to generalize the relationship between reading and genre-based pedagogy. Rather, this study helps to raise questions about reading and genre awareness that might be used for further research as there is a dearth in the research about genre awareness and reading in composition studies. Themes and conclusions were drawn from the available participants' responses in order to explore the following questions:

- How does a student's metacognitive awareness of genre change during a genre-based pedagogy course?
- How do students' reading strategies change during a genre-based pedagogy course?
- In what ways, if at all, do students' perceived metacognitive awareness of genre impact their reading practices during the semester?

To answer these questions, I collected from eight students the work they completed as part of the course curriculum: surveys about readings, major essay assignments with cover letters, unit reflections, and the end of semester reflections. Data was inductively coded and then categorized in tables for each student.

## **How does a Student's Metacognitive Awareness of Genre Change during the Semester?**

At the beginning of the semester before students had been assigned any readings, they were asked to define genre and give some examples. All eight students defined genre as a category or type of book, movie, television show, or song. Students gave examples of horror, romance, comedy, poetry, Science fiction, Jazz, hip hop, and country. No students mentioned sociorhetorical aspects of genre such as audience, context, or purpose.

During the second unit of the course, students were assigned selections of reading from James Gee, John Swales, Ann Johns, Kerry Dirk, and Mary Jo Reiff. Students were asked to define genre as they completed their second major assignment, a Discourse Community Mini-Ethnography. In their definitions, students mentioned how their definition of genre was “broadened” or “expanded” beyond thinking of only literary, movie, or music categories. One student mentioned tweets and informative emails, and another discussed posts on a Sorority GroupMe page. Students’ examples became more broad (beyond movies, books, or music), but students still defined genre in terms of similarity of form or style or having similar characteristics. One student got at this idea by stating, “Though my knowledge was *broadened* by the amount of new information I was given, I was able to use my base knowledge and then apply new information that was given to me about genre” (Simone, Cover Letter 2, emphasis added). The way of thinking about genres did not change as much for students, but what they considered genres changed. Only two students mentioned more rhetorical aspects of genre mentioning how genres help to accomplish a goal or respond to a situation.

This lack of explicit discussion of rhetorical aspects of genre is interesting because the mini-ethnography assignment asked students specifically to “analyze a discourse community and how a genre(s) are working to create the identities, cultures, politics, genders that influence and are influenced by you.” Students chose genres that they use in a discourse community in which they are a member and analyzed how it was being used. So even though students’ definitions on the cover sheet did not explicitly mention rhetorical aspects of genre, they all analyzed a genre or some aspect of discourse communities, such as conflict and authority, within their paper demonstrating an understanding of the sociorhetorical nature of genres. This may be a demonstration of the differences between procedural and declarative knowledge (see Bruning et al. 46). Declarative knowledge is conscious and can be verbalized, while procedural knowledge involves being aware of how to do something, but students may not be able to explain it.

The third major writing assignment was an exploration of academic discourse communities in which students analyzed assignment sheets from their various classes in order to further understand how reading and writing change based on the context. Their definitions focused very much on structural aspects of genre discussing categories based on “tone, pattern, content,” (Chloe); “writing styles” (Simone); “style, structure, or subject” (Charlotte). The same two students who discussed sociorhetorical aspects of genre in the second cover letter assignment also discussed sociorhetorical aspects in the third, but one additional student mentioned having a “better understanding of genre and categorizing things based on similarities and their *situations*” (Aiden, emphasis added).

The focus of this assignment was to explore how genres change based on the context, and students studied their other classes as academic discourse communities. So

as with assignment two, students were studying sociorhetorical aspects of genre, but many did not explicitly link the definition of genre with these aspects, instead focusing in their definitions on structural ways of categorizing genres. But there is an understanding of the social nature of genres. For example, Charlotte defined genre in her unit cover letter as “a type of category that is distinguished by the resemblance in *style, structure, or subject*” (emphasis added). But in her essay, she explored Anne Beaufort’s argument about generic writing styles. She said the point of her essay was to “further explore Beaufort’s point about generic writing by looking at [her] own experience with the Jane Schaeffer format of writing that [she] was taught in high school” (Cover Letter). She discusses the difficulty she had in college by trying to use this one form of writing in all her classes.

Isabella, a Biosystems Engineering major, defined genre in her Cover Letter as “something that can be categorized by certain characteristics and rules.” For the assignment, she interviewed peers about how effective they felt their Freshman English class was in preparing them for their major. She stated, “I wanted to model my paper based off of a lab/research paper. I used ‘I’ in my paper, which isn’t normally used in this form of text but I felt like it suited this assignment more than being a step by step layout.” She shows an understanding of genre and formulaic rules, but also knows those rules change by context.

Aaliyah, however, discusses sociorhetorical aspects of genre in both cover letters discussing genres in terms of similarities in “form, style, or subject matter” but also mentions that these combinations can be vague “when it comes to evaluating one’s goal.”

In her essay, she explores the complicated nature of academic discourse communities with TAs who grade students' work. She stated,

“In different academic discourse communities, the genre of the assignment sheets given change, various forms of writing standards are expected to be met in individual courses. There are experts and novices in every discourse community, but in the particular community I am in, there are not only the experts and novices, but teacher's assistants (TA's) as well. I am going to explain my discourse community and the problems faced within” (Cover Letter).

The focus of the essay was about the difficulty for students in figuring out the rules for writing in this particular community.

Ann Johns discusses the genre theories that students bring with them to college saying that the genre theories students have acquired in school “need to be destabilized, enriched, and expanded” (“Destabilizing and Enriching” 237). The majority of the students in this class arrived with relatively simple genre theories, but through gaining a more enriched and expanded view, were able to destabilize their previous theories. While few of the students mention sociorhetorical aspects of genre in their definitions at the end of the semester, all students in their essay assignment demonstrate a growing genre-awareness that includes an understanding of a genre's use in a particular context or some aspect of the complicated nature of discourse communities. All students in their essay for this unit focused on some written genre for their analysis, but students throughout the semester were also asked to think about how their understanding of genre impacted the way they were reading texts for the course.

### **Students' Reading Strategies throughout the Genre-Based Course**

The CWPA recommends that students should be able to “gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes.” To gain insight into how

students understand this process, students were given a survey after a course reading assignment from each unit which included Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue," Ann Johns' "Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice: Membership, Conflict, and Diversity," and sections of Dan Melzer's book *Assignments Across the Curriculum*. These were chosen as they represented different genres and types of writing (survey questions are included as Appendix E).

Defining the name of the genres was often a challenging task. When asked to name "Mother Tongue," students responded with Literacy Narrative, short story, personal narrative, non-fiction, English, and Language. In order to determine its genre name, seven students discussed what the story about, or the content of the story such as "she talks about her life;" "She speaks about her English literature journey." Two students mentioned the structure of the story as a way to determine the genre: "It is in first person" and "it is shorter than a novel." Students were given a list of purposes for reading (handout in appendix). Of the list of purposes to select for this reading, five students selected understanding genre specific information. Four students selected learning something new, applying new knowledge, preparing for class discussion, and engaging in critical thinking.

When asked about how students determined that purpose, responses were coded as self-motivated, "I just asked myself what I got out of this by reading;" text motivated, "I tried to find the Author's thesis statement;" or class motivated, "we are starting to prepare and brainstorm to write our own literacy narrative, so reading someone else's work can be beneficial for our own writing skills." Of the nine students, two were text-motivated, three were self-motivated, and four were class motivated.

Of the strategies used during the reading, eight selected specifying a purpose for reading, six specified the author's purpose for writing, five students connected text to own life experience, four noticed language patterns within the text, connected one part of the text to another, and re-read. When asked what was interesting about the text, seven mentioned content details about the story, one student mentioned the language the author used, and one mentioned emotions felt while reading. When asked if knowing the genre influenced the strategies used, four students responded negatively. Five students answered positively saying, "Yes, knowing the genre helped me notice language patterns in the text as well as connect it back to my own experience." Another student said, "Yes, I read it like a short story rather than a research paper."

When asked whether knowing the purpose influenced the strategies used while reading, all nine students responded yes. One student responded, "it made me read it more thoroughly." Another said, "Yes, I knew that I would be writing something similar for class, so it really helped me pick up on the language and genre. It also helped me think of ways I could structure my own short story." However, knowing the genre was not necessarily helpful in determining the purpose for reading the text. Five students responded that it was helpful while four responded negatively. One student responded, "No, the reason is because I was more interested with the purpose than the genre." Another student responded, "Yes, because knowing the genre helps by understanding what the purpose is by giving a flow and specific direction." Table 2 includes the survey responses from students after reading Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue."

Purpose	Determined Purpose	Strategies	Remembered/ Found Interesting	Knowing Genre influenced Strategies	Knowing Purpose influenced Strategies	Knowing Genre influenced purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Understanding genre specific information(5)</li> <li>learning something new (4)</li> <li>applying new knowledge (4) preparing for class discussion (4)</li> <li>engaging in critical thinking (4)</li> </ul>	Text motivated (2) Self-motivated (3) Class motivated (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>specified purpose for reading (8)</li> <li>specified the author's purpose for writing (6)</li> <li>connected text to own life experience (5)</li> <li>noticed language patterns within the text (4)</li> <li>connected one part of the text to another (4)</li> <li>re-read (4)</li> </ul>	Content details (7) Linguistic details (1) Emotions (1)	No (4) Yes (5)	Yes (9)	Yes (5) No (4)

*Table 2 Amy Tan, "Mother Tongue," 9 student responses*

During the second unit, students were assigned to read an academic article by Ann Johns. There was again some confusion coming up with the name of the genre. Students called the section a narrative, academic paper, article, literacy article, and personal. Five students determined the name by looking at the content of the article, three determined this by looking at the structure of the article. Eight students responded that the purpose was applying new knowledge, six responded with understanding course content or learning something new, seven were preparing for class, five selected understanding genre specific information.

In determining the purpose of the reading, there were less self-motivated responses than the literacy narrative. Instead, four students had class-motivated responses such as "being prepared for class;" "based on future assignments;" "by listening to instructions given." There were also four text-motivated responses such as "first understanding the genre and how I was going to go about reading this article."

The most selected strategies used were: re-reading (6), previewing text (5), specifying purpose for reading (5), summarizing passages (5), previewing text (5). Only four students noticed language patterns within the text, two connected the text to life experience. The number of different strategies used by students also increased with this reading. With Amy Tan's "Mother Tongue," the nine students who completed the survey used 63 strategies. With this academic reading, the eight students who completed the survey used 70 strategies. When asked what they remembered about the reading, six students remembered content details, no student mentioned linguistic details about the text, and one student mentioned that it was not interesting.

Five students mentioned that knowing the genre influenced their reading strategies. One student said, "Yes, because knowing the text was an academic article made me want to look up the text before reading so I can have a better understanding of the text." Two responded with no. Knowing the purpose influenced the strategies used for five students with three of those students mentioning the purpose came from class. One student mentioned unconsciously reading it without having a hard time understanding it. One student mentioned finding the purpose in the text, and two said the purpose does not influence strategies.

Knowing the genre had mixed results in influencing the purpose for the reading. Three responded that it was important because it gave the reader "something to look out for like key terms and bolded words." Three said no, and one was uncertain. One student said that reading the text was part of the class discussion, so the genre did not impact how he read it. Table 3 includes survey responses from students after the Ann Johns' reading.

Purpose	Determined Purpose	Strategies	Remembered/ Found Interesting	Knowing Genre influenced Strategies	Knowing Purpose influenced Strategies	Knowing Genre influenced purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• applying new knowledge (8)</li> <li>• prepare for class (7)</li> <li>• understand course content (6)</li> <li>• understanding genre specific information</li> </ul>	Class motivated (4)  Text motivated (4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• re-reading (6)</li> <li>• previewing text (5)</li> <li>• specifying purpose for reading (5)</li> <li>• summarizing passages (5)</li> <li>• noticed language patterns (4)</li> <li>• connected text to life experience (2)</li> </ul>	Content details (6)	No (2)  Yes (5)	No (2)  Yes (4)  Unsure (1)	No (3)  Yes (3)  Unsure (1)

*Table 3 Ann Johns' "Discourse Communities and Communities of Practice: Membership, Conflict, and Diversity," 8 student responses*

During the third unit, students read Ch. 1 and Ch. 6 of Dan Melzer's book *Assignments Across the Curriculum*. The eight students who completed this survey also had difficulty naming the genre calling it a rhetorical analysis, informative text, research study, and educational/informative. Students determined the genre primarily by looking at the structure of the text and what it seemed to be about. For example, one student called the text a "research and information text" and stated, "I was able to identify the genre by the way it is structured and the names of the chapter titles." One student admitted, "I could not really tell what genre it was, but I knew that it was way different from the others because it was so much longer."

The number of purposes students identified increased with the eight students selecting 65 total purposes. All eight students selected preparing for class discussion, seven selected applying new knowledge, six selected understanding course content, understanding genre specific information, learn/use specific disciplinary ways of writing, and understanding research.

In determining the purpose, four students selected class motivations as the impetus mentioning aspects such as reading instructions, preparing for class discussion, and thinking about the writing assignments. One student determined the purpose by “Just asking myself why I read this.” Two students looked for a purpose within the text. One student remarked, “I looked for key statements in every leading sentence.”

The number of strategies used by the students increased for this reading with the eight students selecting 100 strategies. The most used strategies were specifying a purpose for reading, specifying author’s purpose for writing, and looking up background info about the author (7 students). Six students previewed the text, and five students looked for specific genre features, summarized passages, re-read and reflected on what was learned from the text.

When asked what students remember or found interesting about the text, all eight mentioned content details about the text. For example, one student said, “I thought it was interesting how he took a variety of writing assignments for multiple classes and compared the rhetorical situation of the assignments.” Another mentioned enjoying reading about discourse communities in college. And one mentioned remembering that Melzer quoted John Swales.

When asked about the relationship between knowing the genre and determining the purpose for reading a particular text, four students did not think knowing the genre was important, but there was more confusion for this response. One student remarked, “I don’t think knowing the genre influenced the strategies I used to read the text because I wasn’t even too sure of what the genre is of the article.” Four students responded that knowing the genre did influence the strategies used. One student said, “I think knowing

the genre influenced the strategies I used to read the text. It caused me to look for relationships between ideas and recognize types of evidence used.” Another stated that knowing the genre was “research” puts her in a different “mindset, a learning mindset.” Another stated that she took the genre more seriously because she knew it was research.

When prompted about the relationship between knowing the purpose for reading and strategies used, two students responded that knowing the purpose did not influence the strategies they used when they read. One student said, “I don’t think knowing the purpose has ever really influenced my strategies because regardless I am reading it to broaden my knowledge on genres.” Six students did connect knowing the purpose to influencing strategies they used while they read. Of those six, three specifically mentioned a class-related purpose. For example, one student said, “It helped me think of questions about the text which could help me while writing my essay and it helped me summarize key points to use in my writing assignment as well.”

Three students did not think that knowing the genre influenced determining a purpose. One student admitted, “I personally determine the purpose when reading the text.” Five students did think knowing the genre was important because it allowed students to “look for key facts to use in writing assignments,” put more “purpose on how to conduct a study and learn more about how much work you need to put in to get accurate results,” and “helps you know that the author is trying to inform you of something.” Table 4 includes survey responses from students after reading selections from Dan Melzer’s book *Assignments Across the Curriculum*.

Purpose	Determined Purpose	Strategies	Remembered/ Found Interesting	Knowing Genre influenced Strategies	Knowing Purpose influenced Strategies	Knowing Genre influenced purpose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare for class discussion (8)</li> <li>• Apply new knowledge (7)</li> <li>• Understand course content (6)</li> <li>• Understand genre specific information (6)</li> <li>• learn/use specific disciplinary ways of writing (6)</li> <li>• understand research (6)</li> </ul>	Class motivated (4)  Text motivated (3)  Self-motivated (1)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• specifying a purpose for reading, (7)</li> <li>• specifying author's purpose for writing (7)</li> <li>• looking up background info about the author (7)</li> <li>• previewed the text (6)</li> <li>• looked for specific genre features (5)</li> <li>• summarized passages (5)</li> <li>• re-read (5)</li> <li>• reflected on what was learned from the text (5)</li> </ul>	Content (8)	No (4)  Yes (4)	No (2)  Yes (6)	No (3)  Yes (5)

*Table 4 Dan Melzer, Assignments Across the Curriculum, 8 student responses*

The students in this study seem to have arrived in college with narrow definitions of genre based primarily on literary categories. While their understanding was broadened to include more texts as genres, they still continued to define genre through the semester based on structure. This may have influenced the students' difficulty naming the different genres throughout the semester. They knew there were more texts that were genres, but uncertain of what they should be called. Throughout the semester, as students' genre theories evolved, they still tended to define genres by their structure, and defining academic genres can be a challenging task as many of the genres are unfamiliar to students. "Genres have histories. We need to study such histories because it is important to recognize that the naming and identification of genre types is itself a historically relative process, and the application of genre names often shows...instability over the

centuries” (Furniss, qtd. in Gameda 9). Students are often not familiar with the names or histories.

Grabe further discusses the complications of “naming” genres by saying that the research paper, the take-home exam, and the in-class essay are academic genres “assumed to fit certain expectations by the assigning teachers but which are sufficiently loose with respect to purpose, reader-writer roles, content, formal structure, register, and cultural expectations that students should be taught to ‘negotiate’ these expectations with each teacher” (“Narrative” 251). So even the names that students arrive in college knowing, such as the “essay” have been destabilized throughout the course.

Being able to name the genre is important, but not necessarily important when students were thinking about their purpose and strategies when reading. Even naming the text as something like “academic” was enough for some students to then determine strategies and a purpose. Focusing on genre structure can help students become more aware readers (Dymock; Goldman and Rakestraw), but the structure is just a part of the complicated idea of genre, which also includes more sociorhetorical aspects such as context, audience, and purpose. These aspects are also connected to students’ awareness in choosing strategies to use while reading. Talking about strategies was an explicit part of the classroom discussion. Students were given a list of possible strategies to use while reading, and we often referenced that sheet during the units as we talked about the reading process. I also modeled some of the strategies during our studio time in a small group. As the texts moved from personal (Literacy Narrative) into more unfamiliar academic genres, students used more strategies, possibly due to the fact that students possessed less formal schemata knowledge (knowledge of a text’s organizational

structures). This hindered how students were able to predict what might happen in the text and required more strategies as they continued to build this formal schemata knowledge.

Connecting the reading to their writing assignments was only one purpose and students had many purposes while reading an assigned text. Students need some discussion and direction in this area. Chloe says, “I think that everyone should connect the talk about reading and writing because of the skills I gained throughout the semester, I noticed I was writing faster, I had much more ideas for my paper and I could connect articles from the assigned readings to my assignment” (Final Reflection).

These results about purpose, strategies, and genres demonstrate just how complicated reading genres can be. For example, for the last major reading assignment (*Assignments Across the Curriculum*), students did not all agree that knowing the genre influenced the strategies they used, but it seems they are thinking of genre only terms of structural elements and not in a sociorhetorical sense. But that idea did get mentioned as students thought about their purpose(s) for reading the text and many had purposes that came out of explicit instructions or thinking about classroom activities, and students use multiple strategies throughout the text.

A genre awareness about reading practices needs to make students aware about their own reading practices by discussing how the text might be used in the class, what their purpose is for reading the text, and how multiple strategies might be used during the same text. What’s important is that students know the purpose for reading a text. In each of these reading responses, more students agreed that knowing the purpose influenced the strategies they used while reading. In her last reflection, Simone briefly discussed her

frustration with reading in her other classes. She says of her other classes, “We are always given readings and no purpose, or no explanation of what the author’s message is that they are trying to get across, that we forget our purpose of even reading it.” Being able to specify a purpose for reading something is an important part of genre awareness, but this also needs to be connected with the purpose in class. In determining a purpose, students were either motivated by the text, class, or a personal reason. Having a purpose for each of these areas is important, but students may need help determining the class purpose and that needs to come from the instructor.

### **Students’ Metacognitive Awareness of Genre and Reading Practices**

During the second unit, where the focus on genres became more explicit, students were asked how their definition of genre influenced their reading practices during the unit. Many students mentioned that their definition of genre had been broadened beyond thinking of genre in terms of literary categories. This seemed to impact the way students read because they were thinking about the texts we were reading as genres. Many students still thought of genre as a way to group similar items, but now the texts we were reading were thought of as genres. This way of thinking influenced Aiden, who said, “This definition influenced my reading process for the readings during this unit by understanding more and being able to pick up things now that I have a broader knowing of the definition of genre” (Writing Assignment 2 Cover Letter). Sofia mentioned that her broadened definition of genre” helped [her] notice the genre for the readings in this unit.” She did this by paying attention to the structure of the genres and structured her paper in a similar way.

Paying attention to the structure of the genres we read was a common response among the students. Maya also said that her definition of genre allowed her to “pin point parts of the reading, and approach the readings differently based on what the reading was after” (Writing Assignment 2 Cover Letter). Having a broadened definition also helped Isabella to determine strategies for reading. She says, “I was able to decipher the genre of the text and go about reading it from there, whether it was skimming, looking for bolded or italicized words, or reading every word” (Writing Assignment 2 Cover Letter).

Students’ definitions of genre during this unit were expanded beyond literary categories, and this influenced students by having them look at the structure of the texts we were reading, thinking about which strategies to use in their own essays, and think of strategies they used while reading.

By the third unit, more definitions mentioned sociorhetorical aspects of genre, but students still thought of genres in terms of rules or guidelines in terms of structure. Aaliyah states, “The definition of genre has influenced my reading process by allowing me to fathom guidelines, or sets of rules which can direct a form of work into a preferred, or specific style, or classification” (Writing Assignment 3 Cover Letter). Although in her essay, she wrote about how the rules of written genres change based on the specific classroom, the rules for reading and writing are thought of in terms of structure. Sofia also mentions sociorhetorical features of genre discussing how genres are something that is “called for in a particular situation.” She applied this knowledge to determining the genre we were reading. Simone defined genre in terms of “writing styles” and as she read, she paid attention to the “informal or formal” writing style of the genre. Reading to connect to the next essay was still common and Charlotte said her definition of genre

gave her “an idea of what to look for. Throughout the readings, [she] looked for different styles and structures to hopefully help [her] write [her] paper” (Writing Assignment 3 Cover Letter).

These same themes were discussed in the final reflections, but Chloe also discussed the benefit of reading what she called “academic texts.” She says, “In high school, we usually were just assigned poetry, shorts stories or novels. We never read any academic articles. After reading something new and more complicated due to harder words, my reading skills have expanded and I now know how to read academic articles” (Final Reflection). Other students echoed the fact that expanded genres helped them to understand the content of the genre. For example, Simone said, “Learning these different types of genres helped me to understand how to approach a new reading and how I could a better understanding of the article or book all together” (Final Reflection). Charlotte noticed that this expanded genre awareness also impacted her confidence. Sofia’s definition throughout the course became more sociorhetorical in nature, but the structural aspect of genre still influenced her reading practices. She says, “I found it very useful to first look over the text and its structural formatting and then identify the genre and purpose. While reading I started to make notes on specific points of the content, looking to connect them to the story in the book as well as my own background” (Final Reflection). Simone also discussed the social nature of genres saying, “Learning about the discourse communities will help me organize my thoughts, and organize what the genre is and how I can approach the reading in the first place” (Final Reflection).

This seems to be a common theme throughout the semester. Some students’ definitions grew more sociorhetorical in nature, but almost all students focused on the

structural aspects of the texts and how that influenced their reading practices. This structural awareness of the genres we read impacted the use of the texts in the classroom as many students mentioned that they were thinking about the essay they would write and were looking for similar ways of using language or structuring their essay. Perhaps an awareness of structure is where students need to start genre knowledge, but in combination with more socioliterate views of genre that help students to recognize that reading varies by context. This is an interesting theme throughout the responses as it gives an insight into students' recursive genre understanding: students know they will be writing an essay for the class, they pay attention to the genres we read to find structural and languages cues, and try to mimic those in their own writing. Students don't necessarily begin with the classroom situation knowing what kind of language the situation calls for, but try to mimic that through their reading practices.

### **Conclusion**

Purposes shape genres. For example, if a writer wants to write about solving a crime, then she writes a mystery. The situation often calls for a certain kind of genre to fit the prescribed purpose in a writing situation. But this purpose is different when we think of reading particular genres. The genre has already been prescribed by the author, so the reader needs to determine another purpose for reading the text that may or may not be shaped by the particular genre alone. A reader's purpose is also shaped by the role the text plays within a particular context and the reader's motivations and goals. These factors also influence what strategies a reader may use while reading.

The "goal of reading instruction is not to teach individual reading strategies but rather to develop strategic readers, a development process that requires intensive

instructional efforts over a considerable amount of time” (Grabe and Stoller 82). In one semester of a freshman writing course, teaching reading strategies, writing strategies, genre awareness, and connections between all three seems like an impossible task for that short amount of time. It also seems like a lot for students to take in and responses from students often seemed to focus on either reading genres or writing genres.

However, throughout the semester, students were able to raise their genre awareness. They became aware of many facets of genre including an awareness of how a genre is structured, the kind of language that is used within a genre, being able to determine a purpose for reading a genre, and also a purpose for writing in a particular genre. Many students had an increased awareness of specific sociorhetorical aspects of genre such as audience awareness and a genre’s use in context. This raised metacognitive awareness of genre influenced how students read particular genres and how this understanding influenced the *way* they read particular texts.

What’s clear to me as the instructor is an importance of making genre awareness an integral part of reading pedagogy—a genre awareness that introduces students to sociorhetorical aspects of genre such as audience, purpose, and context. By focusing on both structure and context, students move toward developing both formal schemata and building content schemata. When students receive a text, they need to be able to ask themselves about generic elements such as structure and tone, but also about the purpose of reading the text within that particular classroom. This does not seem to be an explicit part of many reading pedagogies. For example, Ellen Carillo’s “mindful reading” framework teaches students to become aware of their own reading strategies and

practices, and as a way for that mindfulness to transfer to other contexts, Carillo suggests that students read many different kinds of texts:

students might have the opportunity to read a scientist's and a historian's take on an environmental issue, as well as a geographical perspective and a human rights perspective on the same issue. Then they reflect on how best to gain access to texts (i.e., which reading strategies to employ) that are not readily penetrable with their default reading practices, the practices they automatically apply to texts they encounter. ("Preparing" 193)

While this does give students the much needed practice of consciously choosing reading strategies, it doesn't ask students to think about the context. A student reading that text about an environmental issue in an environmental science class would be reading the text very differently as compared to reading the text in the composition classroom. The purpose for reading the text would be different, and the ideas and identity that the student takes on as she reads (see Ch. 2 of this dissertation), would be different. So while it is vital that students practice reading multiple genres, an explicit discussion of genre and purpose, beyond strategies is vital for students. This also places a responsibility on instructors to make sure that students are aware of the purpose(s) for reading within that particular classroom.

Writing about the original Outcomes Statement, Liu says that the statement may "unintentionally reinforce some unfortunate misconceptions and relegate an interest in genre to a purely formulaic concern" (73-74). While the revised version does much to move beyond seeing genre as merely product oriented toward thinking of genres as actions, the relationship to reading is still unclear. The current Outcomes Statement seems to identify four separate actions in regards to reading and readers:

1. The Statement integrates reading and writing. For example, students should “gain experience reading and composing in several genres”; “use composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communication...”

2. The Statement draws a distinction between reading and writing. In the section labeled Processes, students are reminded that “*composing* processes are also flexible: successful writers can adapt their composing processes to different contexts and occasions” (emphasis added). But reading as a process is not mentioned in this section except to urge students to develop “flexible strategies for reading, drafting...”

3. The Statement urges students to think of reading by imagining the “expectations” of future readers of the genres they produce and in various fields.

4. The Statement urges students to think of themselves as readers in the moment.

The Outcomes Statement does not distinguish well between these four actions and therefore simplifies reading as a process and its connection to the composing process. By connecting reading and genre, students and instructors can see the relationship between reading purposes and writing purposes. There are many similarities between reading and writing, but they cannot be combined into the same process. Students should think of how particular genres shape their purposes within various contexts as readers, while also thinking of the purposes for writing within various courses, and think of the readers of that particular genre. Reading and writing are both iterative and connected processes with multiple purposes at each step. Genre-based frameworks help students to build both formal schemata that is beneficial to students as they read while also continuing to build content schemata. A student’s metacognitive awareness of genre can impact reading awareness as students become conscious of their reading practices in relation to various

texts across contexts. Using genre-based frameworks that focus on purposes and contexts may also help students as they develop content schemata. Both of these areas are needed as students become more proficient readers.

When the original Outcomes Statement was published, Susanmarie Harrington admitted that the Statement was not perfect, but that it was “important because of the process it should evoke” (xvii). The participants in this study offered insights that help further theorize the Outcomes Statement and might be useful in creating the next version of the Outcomes Statement, especially as genre becomes more of an emphasis in many composition classrooms. Making connections between reading and writing is vital for students, but students also need to be aware of the differences and how reading and writing practices vary by context.

## Chapter 4 Learning New Ways to Learn Genres: Building on Metacognitive Awareness of Genre and Reading Awareness Beyond FYC

In Chapter 2, I discussed the situated nature of reading by highlighting the various ways and challenges of students reading in various disciplinary contexts. Many students had constructed disciplinary identities for themselves through the various reading assignments. This contextual nature of reading complicates the role that a First-Year Composition (FYC) course might serve since reading is not a generalizable skill that “works” the same in each context. In Chapter 3, I showed some of the benefits of a genre-based pedagogy that urges students to reflect on their genre awareness, how genre-awareness changes throughout the course, and how that impacts their reading practices. Genre as a concept is becoming an almost unavoidable topic as it draws more scholarly attention in composition<sup>4</sup> studies and therefore, genre-based pedagogies are becoming more common. As Ken Hyland explains, genre-based pedagogies “promise real benefits for learners as they pull together language, content, and contexts, while offering teachers a means of presenting students with explicit and systematic explanations of the ways writing works to communicate” (150). Genre-based pedagogical approaches allow teachers and students to discuss texts and the reasons those texts are written in certain ways. Texts are always socially situated and a goal and benefit of genre-based pedagogies is to make linguistic choices explicit for students. Hyland calls this rhetorical consciousness-raising. Teachers “demystify the genres that matter to students by making their key features salient. This is done through noticing and reflection, guiding students to

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<sup>4</sup> The term “composition” as opposed to “writing” represents what Janet Emig and Maxine Hairston have called a paradigm shift from thinking of writing as a product to writing as a recursive process that involves prewriting, writing, and rewriting. As a recursive process, this term can also involve the process of reading in the writing process.

explore key lexical, grammatical and rhetorical features of representative samples of target genres, and then to use this knowledge to construct their own examples of the genre” (Hyland “Genre and Academic” 560).

Students use this genre knowledge as they move to contexts beyond the composition classroom. This recognition of the importance of genre has been advocated by others (see Bawarshi *Genre*; Beaufort *College Writing*; Devitt *Writing Genres*). The idea that students can gain knowledge about genres and then apply this knowledge to other contexts is a complicated claim, especially when the topic is not just writing, but reading as well. In this chapter, I explore how students might use their genre knowledge acquired during a FYC course in other contexts. Because reading varies by context, how do we teach ways of reading in a FYC course in a way that will promote transfer between contexts? Many reading scholars have argued for a “reading awareness” approach. For example, Alice Horning says, “No matter which ideas are adopted for reading pedagogy in college classrooms, it is clear that, for successful college reading, students need to become self-aware and reflexive regarding their own processes” (“Introduction” 5). However, to date, very few studies have explored how a student’s genre awareness and reading awareness transfer beyond a FYC.

In this chapter, I first discuss and critique the complicated term “transfer,” then I describe the concept of “genre awareness,” showing the difficulty scholars have had defining this term and relating that to how various scholars have described genre awareness as transferring beyond a writing course. I then describe a case study with a student who completed a genre-based FYC course and discuss how this student perceived her genre awareness influencing her reading practices in other courses.

## Metacognitive Awareness of Genre

In discussion of transfer, genre is a common term and genre-based pedagogies can help facilitate transfer. This recognition of the importance of genre has been advocated by others (see Bawarshi *Genre*; Beaufort *College Writing*; Devitt *Writing Genres*). It's apparent that students need reflective activities in order to provide opportunities to think about what they have learned. Rebecca Nowacek has noted, "Metacognitive awareness may assist in the process of transfer...Genre is not the only cue for transfer, but it is a powerful and underappreciated cue" (17). Negretti and Kuteeva have also connected metacognitive theory with genre analysis ("Fostering"). One of the goals of a genre-based pedagogy is to make language choices explicit for students so that they might use similar moves in their own writing. Tardy characterizes genre knowledge as multidimensional and encompasses many knowledge domains. Expert genre knowledge is "characterized by very sophisticated (though not necessarily conscious) understanding of many textual, social, and conceptual areas" (*Beyond Convention* 142). Genre awareness, however, is knowledge that is not tied specifically to one particular genre (Johns "Future"). Teaching this awareness involves identifying differences among genres and within genres in order to consciously make decisions in one's own writing. This invariably involves reflection and metacognition. Negretti and McGrath claim that scaffolding various metacognitive activities in a genre-based framework can help students make deliberate and conscious choices in their own writing ("Scaffolding Genre").

In order to further understand this last point, Devitt proposes a genre-based pedagogy based on the "process of learning new genres rather than specific linguistic features of specific genres. Such meta-awareness of genres could be applied

immediately” (197) as students move to various academic and workplace settings. Clark and Hernandez develop a course with the goal of teaching this sort of genre awareness claiming “that a metacognitive understanding of genre can help students make connections between the type of writing assigned in the composition course—that is, academic argument—and the writing genres they encounter in other disciplines” (65). For them, awareness was an understanding of a genre’s rhetorical and social purpose, and then being able to abstract principles that students can apply to new rhetorical contexts. Genre awareness allows students to “understand how the text ‘works’ to fulfill its purpose” (67). Through their course assignments, students became more “aware” of the following concepts: audience, author persona, purpose, emphasis on formatting and citation, and structure. Students began to think about disciplinary differences and Clark and Hernandez claim that this “dawning awareness...might become useful for them as they develop as writers and students” (75), although they do not demonstrate how students might “use” this knowledge beyond this one context.

Ann Johns, who expresses frustration with attempting to adequately teach genre in the composition classroom, developed a course that teaches genre awareness that is founded upon New Rhetoricians’ contributions such as Anis Bawarshi. In getting students to develop this “awareness,” she has students answer questions about a text they are beginning to write including: the genre name, purpose, context, writer’s role, audience, content, sources, other specifications of requirements about the text, how it will be graded, and how students can make it their own (“Genre Awareness” 244). Like others attempting to teach this rhetorical awareness, it is difficult to enact in the classroom and

difficult to assess as students must demonstrate an awareness of texts in other contexts outside of the composition classroom.

Awareness is also a component of transferring reading skills. Ellen Carillo, one of the foremost reading scholars in composition studies, has written extensively about reading and transfer. In describing her “mindful reading” framework, Carillo suggests a cultivation of “students’ *awareness* of the relationship between genres and reading practices” (*Securing* 107). By having students reflect on their reading strategies and practices, “students develop the metacognitive skills useful for moving among reading approaches in deliberate and mindful ways” (212). However, Carillo spends little time discussing what metacognitive awareness about genre and reading students develop or what knowledge about genres might be transferred to other contexts. By focusing on generalizable knowledge and also local knowledge, students are able to develop a metacognitive awareness and this awareness is the transferrable element. In her recently published textbook, Carillo tells students, “Mindful reading acts as a framework that is intended to remind you of the importance of becoming an active reader who makes careful and deliberate decisions about the reading strategies you might use” (*Writer’s Guide* vi). The textbook focuses on developing reading strategies and an awareness of when to change strategies through reflection in order to make reading practices more visible for students, and students will be able to use that awareness and change their reading strategies for different texts in different contexts. However, like the Clark and Hernandez study, genre awareness beyond one context is difficult to assess and recognize because the act of transfer is complex. In the next section, I discuss some of the

complications involved with using the metaphor of “transfer” to describe the action of students building and moving knowledge across boundaries.

### **The Question of Transfer**

Transfer is a tricky subject to discuss. In *The End of Composition*, Smit makes the point that

although people seem to learn to write by transferring knowledge and abilities from one discourse to another, from one kind of discourse to another kind, from one situation to another situation, all the time, they do so at levels of abstraction, and we cannot say much about this phenomenon except that it indeed occurs. That is, we know little about the mental processes involved and can generalize very little from what we can observe. (132)

Carraher and Schliemann argue that the benefits of trying to improve the metaphor of transfer do not outweigh the metaphorical baggage of the term transfer (“Transfer Dilemma”). This has not prohibited scholars from attempting to better understand transfer by finding different metaphors to use. Those studying transfer have used terms such as repurposing (Wardle “Creative Repurposing”), recontextualization, (Nowacek; Cheng), generalizing (Beach; Wardle “Understanding ‘Transfer’”), make use of (Reiff and Bawarshi), reshaping, and reforming to describe how students transfer knowledge. There are some parallels in writing studies research about teaching “generalizable” writing skills that students can transfer to new contexts. Downs and Wardle reject the idea that a FYW course can teach students universal writing skills that they can then transfer to other classes or contexts (“Teaching about Writing”). In her discussion of a longitudinal study, Wardle asks pertinent questions about transfer:

Is transfer the act of an individual taking something she knows from one setting or task and applying it successfully in another setting or task? Is transfer the act of transformation in which an individual takes something he knows and is able to repurpose or transform it for use in another setting or task that is similar or not quite the same? Is transfer found in the individual, in the task, in the setting—or

in some combination of all three? And if transfer is found in the combination of individual, task, and setting, how do we understand and explain it? How do we teach for it, study it, and engage in it ourselves? (“Understanding ‘Transfer’” 66)

Drawing on sociocultural views of transfer that focus on interactions between people instead of solely on the individual learner, Wardle uses generalization as a guiding principle in her study of transfer. Beach describes this as “carrying and applying knowledge across tasks—but goes beyond them to examine individuals *and* their social organizations, associations that can be continuous and constant or distinctive and contradictory” (qtd. in Wardle 68). Generalization is also a complicated term to use to discuss a purpose of a first-year composition course. In describing the arduous history of FYC, David Russell states, “freshman composition almost always treated writing as a generalizable elementary skill, independent of disciplinary discourse” (7). The idea that writing is a generalizable skill has been contested by many writing scholars and WAC/WID practitioners including Wardle. Wardle asks FYC instructors in another article, “What general knowledge can we teach students about academic genres that will help them in later courses?” (760). As a solution, Wardle posits a Writing About Writing (WAW) pedagogical approach to FYC that teaches an awareness about writing, rather than writing specific genres. She claims that this “general” knowledge about writing is beneficial as students transition to other academic courses. However, using the term generalization when describing processes of transfer may be misleading when thinking about writing and knowledge about writing as something that can be generalized.

Russell and Yañez also discuss the difficulty of students in general education transferring knowledge and skills to other classes by comparing basketball with other activities. Many games involve using a ball just like many disciplines use writing.

But the ball is different, the rules of the game are different, the object of the game is different. And knowing how to shoot a basketball (or write in one way, one genre) doesn't mean you know how to throw a baseball (or write in a different activity or genre). Learning a new game (or academic field and its ways/genres of writing) means participating in a new activity, and using tools (including the tool or technology we call writing) in different ways. (n.p.)

In this analogy, neither knowledge nor skills transfer easily. But what about an awareness? If someone wants to play a new game, does an awareness of the fact that basketball is different from soccer, has different rules and purposes benefit this person? This idea of awareness is something that Yancey et al. discuss as they developed a composition-focused course that they call Teaching for Transfer (TFT). In this course, students were specifically taught key terms and reflective practices. One surprise from this study was the idea that “prior knowledge—of various kinds—plays a decisive if not determining role in students’ successful transfer of writing knowledge and practice” (5). Compared against an expressivist course and a cultural studies and media writing course, their proposed TFT framework supports students in transferring knowledge in ways that the other two courses did not. Being aware of prior knowledge and skills benefits students as they use these in new contexts.

DePalma and Ringer are also critical of the way transfer has been researched because the term “transfer” implies thinking of discrete knowledge or skills that get used in the same ways in a new situation. Instead, they create a framework for transfer that “acknowledges not only how students carry forward or reuse prior writing knowledge to fit new contexts, but also how they reshape or reform such prior knowledge” (135). Although this framework has been critiqued as too broad (See Grujicic-Alatrisme), this framework helps us move beyond thinking of transfer as a discrete set of skills that are

then used in other situations, but *adapting* and *reusing* still imply a movement of something discrete.

Hager and Hodkinson go even further to argue that the term transfer should be abandoned completely stating that “as a metaphor, the term ‘transfer’ brings associated baggage that leads to a continuing misunderstanding of the processes it stands for...” (621). Because learning is a process, the term transfer too often implies an acquisition of discrete skills. They even criticize Tuomi-Grohn, who influenced Wardle’s conception of generalizability, for “explicitly focusing on the need to achieve learning transfer and the value of boundary crossing as a tool for this purpose” (630). They argue instead that the “successful move from one location to another, such as from school to work, is not a matter of knowledge transfer or knowledge generalisability [sic]. It is an issue about learning” (630-631). Thus, a “metaphor of becoming to understand learning does not entail a fixed state of having become. Put differently, there is not always a clear endpoint to learning, though sometimes, of course, either the learner or other may be explicitly concerned with one” (633). Beach, in positing a lens of transfer as generalization, says that previous ideas of transfer discuss “just plain learning” (40). This is difficult to isolate and therefore study. However, Freedman and Adam have studied the different kinds of learning in schools and in workplaces (“Learning to Write”). One of the difficulties of students transferring knowledge from one context to another is the student expectation that learning will be the same in both contexts. This expectation can lead to “inappropriate transfer of learning patterns” (41). One of the difficulties with the metaphor of transfer, and with the revised metaphors, is that they too often promote the idea of knowledge as a “thing” that moves from one context to another.

Instead of this view of knowledge as thing, Schwartz et al. add to the idea of transfer to include “preparation for future learning” (“Efficiency and Innovation”). For them, using new metaphors such as adapting and recontextualizing are “still too restrictive” for studying transfer because “most studies of transfer also include an unnecessary constraint that stems from measuring people’s abilities to *directly apply* what they have learned previously in new settings” (5). Schwartz et al. rely on Broudy’s framework of different kinds of knowing to develop this theory. This taxonomy includes four kinds of knowing: replicative, applicative, associative, and interpretive (*Democracy and Excellence*). According to Broudy et al., traditional education relies too heavily on replicative and applicative ways of knowing leaving out important interpretive ways of knowing. Replicative knowledge demonstrates “the ability to reinstate what has been studied pretty much as it was originally learned” (*Uses of Schooling*). Interpretive and associate ways of knowing shape how students might begin to make sense of situations. When discussing transfer and genre awareness, these different ways of knowing play a valuable role and let us see transfer as a process of learning rather than discrete events.

This view of learning seems to be supported with the language used in the CWPA Outcomes Statement. In the 2014 version, the authors describe “writing knowledge, practices, and attitudes that undergraduate students develop in first-year composition,” but also suggest ways that faculty members in all disciplines can “build on this preparation by helping students learn” various discipline specific practices. This idea of FYC as a preparation and the analogy of building (rather than transferring) seems to better represent learning as a continual process instead of discrete skills in one context being moved into another.

Many reading approaches teach explicit awareness of linguistic features in order to mimic those conventions (Hyon; Yasuda). But Bawarshi and Reiff encourage instructors to “explore how formal features are tied to rhetorical and social actions, a type of teaching that better ensures the transfer of genre knowledge to performance of genres in the same context or new contexts” (123). So when we talk about reading and genre awareness, how might students transfer or adapt knowledge about reading to other contexts that call for writing that looks different than ones students have read? To date, very few studies have specifically looked at how students with a sociorhetorical understanding of genre gained during a FYC course might use this knowledge in order to understand their reading assignments in contexts very different from FYC. This study follows the experiences of Isabella, a STEM major as she completes a genre-based FYC composition course and then continues with her reading assignments in her engineering and sciences courses. Isabella’s case study is unique because it allows us to rethink transfer not as discrete skills that need to be used or repurposed for similar tasks, but how genre-knowledge can be used as a preparation for future learning tasks. Instead of an analogy of “transfer,” an analogy of building more accurately reflects the movement of ideas in various contexts. I then discuss Isabella’s experiences as she progresses beyond her genre-based first-year composition class and enters her STEM major demonstrating how her genre awareness served as part of her preparation for future learning that she was able to build on.

### **Participant and Methods**

Drawing on socio-cultural perspectives of learning, this study begins with the student’s understanding of the tasks and purposes and draws on other research that

follows one student's experience (see McCarthy; Beaufort) in order to further explore conceptions of transfer. In order to avoid misleading assumptions that using transfer as a metaphor might entail, I instead draw on Hager and Hodkinson who urge scholars to "think instead of learning as becoming within a transitional process of boundary crossing" (635) and Broudy's interpretive knowledge. Interpretive knowledge is "used as a point of departure, a form of sorting, organizing, and making sense of something" (Walker and Soltis 42). First-year composition can be seen as a preparation for future learning by thinking of this learning as a process rather than as discrete skills. The purpose of this study is not to draw generalizations from the participant's experiences, but to detail one student's experiences with reading and transfer and to find areas that deserve further research and influence larger studies moving beyond the metaphor of transfer.

This study seeks to further understand how a student using a genre-based pedagogy in a FYC course used her understanding of genre to influence the way she read in other academic settings by asking the following research questions:

- What characteristics of genre does Isabella remember from a genre-based FYC course? (Genre Awareness)
- How does Isabella perceive of her genre awareness as a preparation for reading in future academic contexts?

In discussing these questions, I relied on the taxonomy proposed by Schraw et al. about declarative knowledge (what I know), procedural knowledge (how I use what I know), and conditional knowledge (why what I know could or should be used in various contexts) ("Assessing").

Negretti and McGrath studied L2 doctoral students in the sciences using the framework of three dimensions of metacognitive knowledge: declarative, procedural, and conditional. They scaffolded this metacognitive knowledge by “helping students reflect on what they know about genres, how this impacts their research writing, as well as how they use this genre knowledge in their own writing. In simple terms, ‘this is what I know about genres’, ‘this is how I use this knowledge in my writing’, and ‘why’” (15).

Following a similar framework in this study, I asked what Isabella she knows about genre, how she uses this in her own reading, and why and when. To answer these questions, I utilized a case study methodology and analyzed Isabella’s written assignments and reflections completed during a semester long FYC genre-based course in Spring 2017 semester and then conducted a follow-up survey and interview approximately five months after the class and another interview during the last week of classes of the Fall 2017 semester. Because I relied on one student’s self-reported perceptions of cognitive processes, in my analysis, I am careful not to make broad claims based on Isabella’s experience. I am also aware of Wardle’s caution that often students may be unaware of when they are relying on previous knowledge (“Understanding ‘Transfer’”).

Isabella volunteered to participate in an IRB-approved study while she completed my FYC course in which I studied how students’ genre awareness changed during the semester. I designed a genre-based pedagogy course that connected reading and writing for a section of English 101A, a 4-credit basic writing course at a public Southwestern university that met twice a week as a large class and in one 50-minute studio session with half of the class. This course was the first of a required two semester sequence. The

studio provided extra support for students' reading and writing skills in a small class setting. Other versions of this first semester sequence do not have the additional studio time.

The assignments I created met the following Course Goals and Outcomes influenced by the CWPA Outcomes and mandated by the university Writing Program in the categories of Rhetorical Awareness, Critical Thinking and Composing, Reflection and Revision, and Understanding Conventions.

In order to resolve some of these tensions about explicit teaching and awareness (i.e. teaching genres as formulaic and decontextualized), I designed a course that promotes genre awareness for both reading and writing. Although "awareness" is a complicated and tricky term, I discuss this genre awareness in terms of what characteristics of genre Isabella noticed throughout the semester based on her own responses. The genre-based curriculum drew from multiple genre-based approaches as we discussed genres in discourse communities and read selections from John Swales, James Gee, Ann Johns, and Kerry Dirk. We discussed specific linguistic patterns in genres, but also focused on genres as tools to accomplish a social action.

After the course was completed, Isabella agreed to continue participation while pursuing her undergraduate degree. Isabella is a self-proclaimed triple minority: Hispanic, a woman, and a STEM major. In this section, I report preliminary results of Isabella's perceived continued learning after one year in this study.

### **Isabella: Building on a Metacognitive Awareness of Genre and Reading Awareness**

Although using transfer as a metaphor is complicated, many scholars still use it to discuss the impact of genre awareness, although the meaning of the term is also

complicated as the studies discussed below will demonstrate. They also demonstrate how a continued reliance on transfer as a metaphor might obscure other forms of learning, or as I have posited above, a metaphor of building.

Smit points out that the only principle we have about transferability is that “transfer can be taught if the similarities of the knowledge and skill needed in different contexts are pointed out” (132). Although there are various genre-based pedagogical approaches, one of the goals of genre-based pedagogies is to make knowledge about writing explicit for students, and many scholars discuss this explicit knowledge in terms of “awareness” or “acquisition.” Isabella’s metacognitive awareness is defined by what characteristics of genre she remembered from her genre-based FYC course and her reading awareness is discussed in terms of how she read particular texts. Both of these terms include sociorhetorical knowledge such as audience, purpose, and context in addition to an understanding of textual features.

*Declarative Knowledge—What Isabella Learned about Genre During FYC*

During the Spring 2017 semester of my FYC course, students included reflections with major assignments with their definitions of genre. At the beginning of the semester, Isabella defined genre as a “certain type of writing, whether it is in a book, movie or music,” and listed examples of “SciFi, Romance, Jazz, Action.” After the second unit, her definition broadened: “Over the course of this unit my outlook on genre has changed immensely. I now see that genre does not only mean different kinds of movies or books, but how anything can be grouped based off of similar characteristics.” She applied this knowledge of similar characteristics to her reading strategies “whether it was skimming, looking for bolded or italicized words, or reading every word.” In her third reflection,

Isabella continued to define genre as “something that can be categorized by certain characteristics and rules,” but moved toward a more sociorhetorical understanding of genre by discussing how different groups might consider something a genre, but it looks different in other groups or communities.

This sociorhetorical knowledge is similar to other studies about a students’ genre awareness. For example, in one study, Cheng created a course with the goal of helping students become more “observant readers of the discursial conventions of their fields” (291). Throughout the course, one student, Fengchen, developed an awareness of the rhetorical purpose and how this interacted with his awareness of the audience’s needs (300). Cheng concludes that Fengchen was able to transfer some generic features into his own writing. But Cheng discusses this “transfer” in terms of what is called “recontextualization” which is defined as “learners’ abilities not only to use a certain generic feature in a new writing task, but to use it with a keen awareness of the rhetorical context that facilitates its appropriate use” (303). In another foreign language setting, Yasuda studied how students incorporate, or transfer, genre into email writing tasks. Genre awareness in this study included a “heightened awareness of the relationship between a genre and the linguistic resources that realize them” (113). Yasuda says that the results “tentatively imply that knowledge of a new genre gained in one language may be transferrable to another language context” (126). However, even this “tentative” suggestion may be too optimistic when we think that students in the class studied models of emails and incorporated that genre knowledge into their own email writing tasks. The writing they were analyzing was similar to the writing they completed. How that genre knowledge influenced students’ writing of different genres was not studied, although

Yasuda mentions this genre awareness may serve as a springboard for learning in other contexts.

These studies demonstrate that genre-based pedagogies can be useful in helping students become aware of specific linguistic patterns and may transfer them into their own reading and writing tasks. In many genre-based pedagogies in foreign language contexts, genre knowledge is connected to transfer in the way of mimicking certain linguistic patterns in students' own writing. This type of transfer is mentioned in many reading pedagogical approaches such as Bunn's "Reading like a Writer" approach and others that teach a genre awareness that focuses on linguistic features. Many students do indeed learn to pay better attention to certain linguistic and formal features of a genre so that they might mimic those features in their own writing.

Isabella, however, in her writing class was not reading with the sole purpose of being able to mimic the discursive elements in her own writing, but was becoming aware and conscious of her purpose(s) for reading individual genres. She used her genre awareness for different purposes than these studies.

*Procedural Knowledge—How Isabella Used her Genre Awareness in FYC*

In her final reflection, Isabella commented on how this genre awareness influenced her reading strategies.

At the beginning of this semester I thought I was a reader capable of comprehending the subjects that would be written about in texts that were assigned to us. I would read all the materials the same way and didn't really grasp what the authors were really trying to express. Unit one and two really helped me improve on my reading and analytical ability. I learned how to analyze texts based off of their genres, whether it was an article with large paragraphs or a passage with headings and bullet points. I am now able to determine if it is necessary to read every word in the article or if it is okay to skim it, also I have learned that finding the purpose of the passage can help you determine how to read it as well. (FYC Final Reflection)

Isabella also discussed how her understanding of genre was connected to knowing the purpose, the audience, and the situation discussing how her writing changed as the audience changed during an assignment in the FYC course:

I first started out by writing a Lab report styled essay to you, my English instructor, showing a survey about the First Year Writing Composition course. With this I was able to go through step by step in what I did to gain that knowledge for my paper. For the second assignment, writing to [Writing Program Director], I had to present my findings in a formal way and in paragraph form since it was going in a letter. Lastly, I presented in front of a fictional audience of English instructors. Since it was a power point presentation, I had to tailor my findings in a more visual way by included charts and bullet point. Just through this one unit my writing had to change based off of the audience and the situation that was given to me. (FYC Final Reflection)

*Procedural Knowledge Beyond FYC*

Sunny Hyon presented a follow-up study (“Long-Term”) to a previously completed study (“Genre”) about eight students in an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) reading classroom to study the long terms effects of such an instruction on students’ L2 reading abilities. During the course, students examined the structure of four genres including a hard news article, a feature article, a textbook, and a research article. In the class, “Language style referred to linguistic features that convey the writer’s stance toward the text content or audience” (“Long-Term” 421), and students completed a move analysis of an introduction. One year after the completion of the course, these students were interviewed, and Hyon found that “some students alluded to the genre features highlighted in the course, such as the research article components or the inverted pyramid structure of news stories” (425) and some commented on the transferring knowledge of text organization into their own writing abilities. But similar to Fengchen in Chen’s study, students were transferring generic features when the reading and writing were

similar. Hyon concludes that, “In some cases, impact of instruction may be less pronounced if students already have relevant genre knowledge or effective approaches for reading certain texts. However, in other cases, it appears that explicit teaching may increase students’ awareness of genre characteristics in texts they may read” (432). Hyon also acknowledges that although this EAP approach did reveal that genre knowledge was remembered over an extended period of time, different genre approaches may yield very different results.

The following semester after completing FYC, Isabella was taking four courses: civil engineering statics, electricity and magnetism physics, thermal systems engineering, and vector calculus. In the first interview at the beginning of this semester, Isabella discussed how her genre awareness, defining genre by rules and characteristics, helped her in these various classes because she was able to pay attention to the different ways the texts were organized when she was reading. While reading the manual for her physics class, she looked for the characteristics of the text: “objectives, titles, which helps, since a lot of readings don’t have titles and headings. So that’s what I look for. So I can skim it. Or sometimes they’ll have pictures, and sometimes step by step features.” She also reported that she used her knowledge of discourse communities by acknowledging that the instructor hands out “different worksheets for different questions... and I could tell my lab instructions from like other kinds of questions through different worksheets.” This instructor wants “something different for a discussion writing than she wants for a clicker question so you kind of have to know how to answer it based on what it is.”

Isabella reports that this way of reading was very different than her engineering class where she stated, “you have to read step by step, and if it’s more scientific, you can

kind of get away with skimming.” Isabella agreed that she knew there were different ways of reading texts, but figuring out that which way works was a challenge. For example, Isabella mentioned her civil engineering texts and she how “kinda went at it as I did with physics where you look for the title and then go based off of that section, but with that, you can’t and I learned that later in the class.”

Isabella also mentioned that the cover letters that she wrote with the major assignments in her composition classroom were helpful because she built on that idea of reflective writing saying, “when you do a lab report, you have, not necessarily a cover letter, but it has certain aspects of a cover letter... Yeah, and then I did a resume, cover letter, and cv for a program, and I’d never written one before so I guess it definitely helps that I did cover letters and stuff like that.”

In writing these texts, Isabella built on her audience awareness and knowledge of what this particular audience wanted. She referenced the collaborative report that we completed in class saying “you have to know who you’re writing for. Where we did something based off of writing to you, we did it based off writing for the class, based off of writing to the Writing Program Administrator.” She also mentioned that writing the collaborative report was helpful because “we had to make it flow, so I guess we had to make sure everything tied in. We knew we were all writing the same aspect. [This] helped me working not just by myself but with other people.” This was a huge benefit as she worked in groups in these classes, but it was still something she was struggling with by the end of the semester.

*Conditional Knowledge Beyond FYC*

In the Negretti and McGrath study of L2 doctoral students, they mentioned that the open-endedness of their questions while allowing for creativity in student responses, “also meant that some students did not elaborate on how they were using their genre-related insights to the extent that [they] would have hoped” (28). As doctoral students, they also have specialized knowledge as they are entering their discourse communities. Novice students, like Isabella, have an even harder time trying to develop what Tardy refers to as “expert genre knowledge” and used when writers “manipulate and exploit genres for their own purposes” (142). In order to develop this, readers also need to draw on their own genre awareness as they enter new discourse communities and develop genre knowledge. Students also need to develop conditional knowledge, which is something that seems context dependent.

After the FYC course ended, I met with Isabella a second time as she was studying and reading for her final exams. The idea of group work was still a challenge for her in her physics class. At the beginning of the semester, students were able to choose their own groups and Isabella chose to work with members who she already knew and knew they worked well together. But after the first exam, the instructor decided to split up the males and females in the class. Isabella said, “It was hard because I already knew how I worked with the other people. We worked really well with each other.” But in this new group, two of the girls rarely come to class, so she discussed how difficult it is to assign roles in this new group. Even before the final exam, Isabella said, “I’m still not used to it. I haven’t adapted to it, I guess.” This also led to a feeling of being trapped. Isabella said she thought about her first group in terms she had learned in the composition

class and used language from John Swales such as novices and experts and discourse communities, but that she can't do anything to change the nature of the group and she is "trying to learn how to even get through the class if you have someone switching it from the outside; it's kind of hard."

The relationship between genre awareness and sociorhetorical aspects such as audience, context, and purpose has been studied in terms of writing, but few studies have explore genre awareness in relation to reading. Brian Gogan attempts to study genre awareness in terms of reading and how that is transferred beyond the classroom. Gogan conducted a study with 75 students in a writing intensive course called "Writing from Research" in which students encountered genres from various disciplines. Gogan looks at genre awareness as a threshold concept, and concludes from survey results that

even though rhetorical genre awareness was introduced in a writing-intensive course, learners perceived rhetorical genre awareness as more helpful to their reading than to their writing. Thus, the data suggests that rhetorical genre awareness does not just apply to reading *as well as* it does to writing, but that the threshold concept might actually apply to reading *better than*, perhaps even *more than*, it does to writing—even in the confines of a writing-intensive course (n.p.)

Gogan describes genre awareness in terms of rhetorical aspects: students understood a scholarly article as mediating activities, audiences, and situations.

One year later, Gogan interviewed students from the course in order to further understand the transfer of this rhetorical genre awareness. In one case, he quotes one student's rhetorical genre awareness as evolving: "According to Derek, 'sometime in between' the course's first assignment and the course's last assignment, he began investigating other major options. Reading the research, as he recalls, led him to change his major to Mechanical Engineering. Thus, the journey that Derek took as he worked to

develop a rhetorical awareness of genre spurred a significant change for Derek, a change that impacts his worldview, knowledge base, and self-perception vis-à-vis a different discipline” (n.p.). This conclusion about changing majors based on Derek’s knowledge of genre seems like a broad connection. Often, students in college decide to change majors. It’s not clear that Derek’s knowledge of genres influenced his change in major or it was just a natural process of learning about new things and deciding another major might be more interesting.

During this semester, Isabella also decided to change her major from Biosystems with an emphasis in Mechanical Engineering to an emphasis in Sustainability. She mentioned specifically her dislike of her thermodynamics class as being a deciding factor in this decision and how she “didn’t like that way of reading.” For this class, Isabella discussed having 82 pages of pressure charts and “you have to know how to read them and know where to look. You have to know which chart to look for.” She gave the example of superheated refrigerant and the problem will tell you that it’s “refrigerant 134a, but when you kind of set up the equation, then you’ll figure out it’s superheated and you know it could be vapor or it could be liquid. So you have to pull all these things out in order to get this.” This kind of reading was not “hands-on” enough for Isabella and was more theoretical. “It’s a lot of numbers. You have to know where to look, and it’s like trial and error, but not trial and error that you can physically do, if that makes sense. You have to write it. You have to go through the charts.” Similar to the student in Gogan’s study, the kind of reading influenced Isabella’s decision to switch majors, but her decision was based on more than just reading the *content* or information, but her awareness of *how* she was reading the texts. But with procedural knowledge, Isabella was

able to deliberately make a choice about her reading—that she did not like that way of reading and switched her major. This seems closer to conditional knowledge. She may not have known all the reasons *why* her thermodynamics class required this kind of reading, but she was able to act on her procedural knowledge.

At the end of her first year composition course, Isabella had demonstrated many of the outcomes suggested by the CWPA Outcomes Statement including those categorized under rhetorical knowledge; critical thinking, reading, and composing; processes; and knowledge of conventions through her genre and reading awareness. However, her situation as a STEM major helps us see the difficulties with the metaphor of “transfer” and thinking of reading knowledge as a thing rather than more of a process. Many of the studies about transfer look at how students read and mimic similar moves in their own writing. In this sense, it may be easier to see these moves as the situations and contexts are similar. However, this limited understanding of transfer may hinder us from seeing other kinds of learning that happens. Even terms such as reusing, generalizing, and recontextualizing still have the connotation of discrete events rather than thinking of learning as a process. For example, in interview 1, Isabella referenced the paper she wrote during her FYC course about John Swales and experts and novices in her workplace. In the next interview, she also mentioned using this discourse community knowledge in how she was thinking of the assigned groups in her physics class. This knowledge is not necessarily a discrete fact, but a way of making sense of her interactions within that class. Using the metaphor of transfer has the connotation that each event is discrete—that is, learning about discourse communities and writing a paper on the topic is somehow transferred to one event in the physics classroom.

Instead, Isabella demonstrates the complexity of the idea of knowledge as something she is continuing to build on. Her feeling of being trapped in the situation built on her previous knowledge, but did not give her a discrete answer to the questions she had about genre. She admitted frustration with the discourse community, and continued to think about the idea.

Isabella also highlights the difference in learning reading skills and learning a reading awareness—an awareness that she needs to change her reading practices based on the context. In the first interview, Isabella mentioned notetaking from her FYC course as a preparation for future classes. “With your texts, when we did the readings, we took a lot of notes on the side, and I think I started to do that in the same way. Like if I’m doing an environmental science reading, it’s more like reading and then analyzing it. But my other [course texts] are like read this and practice [the equation]. So I think I’m doing that a lot more. I’m reading it, and then taking notes. I never used to do that before. Just like jot it down that—like this sticks out when I read.” Practicing notetaking in FYC influenced the way she took notes in some classes. Notetaking is a reading strategy that works well in many different contexts.

But Isabella also knew from FYC that reading strategies and ways of reading can vary by context. This reading awareness—awareness that reading does change—was only a first step for Isabella in preparing for future classes. She mentioned in her example about reading her physics texts that she had to use “trial and error” in order to figure out the best reading strategies saying, “you definitely just have to pick it up per class.”

Anne Beaufort discusses this idea of students learning “through failed attempts at such transfer of supposed ‘general’ writing skills, how to adapt the standards and

purposes for writing in new discourse communities” (11). Thinking of writing as a universal skill can “result in negative transfer of learning: what worked for a freshman writing essay is inappropriately applied to writing in history, or social sciences, or the sciences or in business” (11). These “failed attempts” or in Isabella’s words, “trial and error” do seem like moments of mistransfer or a “failed attempt.” However, by changing the view of transfer from one of discrete skills to a process of learning, these “failed attempts” are seen as merely part of the natural learning process. According to Schwartz et al., assessments of learning with “direct application” views of transfer “make people look much ‘dumber’ (or ‘less educated’) than is actually the case” (6). Students who think of these failed attempts assessed in this way may think of themselves as “dumb” rather than seeing this as a learning process that always involves mistakes.

### **Conclusion**

In Chapter 2, I discussed the results of the 21 faculty who were surveyed. Of those who completed the survey, almost half responded that they do not talk about the readings in class. But the student responses show that when instructors successfully discuss the reading in their classes—specific ways of reading—some students are able to adapt a disciplinary identity that influences how they read, write, and participate in class. In this study, reading awareness and genre awareness served as preparation for Isabella, but she also highlights the issue that is discussed in the CWPA Outcomes Statement about faculty involvement. According to the statement, “Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn” various disciplinary specific ways of knowing. Isabella mentioned how hard it is not knowing information for each class, and she uses physics as an example. “I’ve taken a physics class before. But

even between first semester physics and second semester physics, the teachers are completely different. They want different things. So it's not even you could go to the next step to write. Really you have to know what your instructor wants." Not knowing what the instructor wants was evident in the second interview when Isabella was preparing for her final exams. She mentioned how one instructor created an environment where she felt stupid asking questions. She discussed how one instructor quickly went through his slides and if the instructor didn't get through all the slides, students were expected to finish on their own with no guidance. If FYC courses are to serve as preparation for future classes, Isabella demonstrates some of the challenges if instructors do not take an active role in building on what students already know.

Elizabeth Wardle has also encouraged all faculty to be involved by acknowledging that a FYC course cannot prepare students for the many writing assignments they will write in their academic careers. "That knowledge—and the supports for learning it—must be gained in discipline-specific classrooms" ("Understanding" 82). I will add to this that reading assignments also vary by genre and context and faculty can help students build on their previous preparation in order to develop strategies that will urge success in each classroom.

Smit cautions writing scholars that is it "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). However, Isabella's case study provides insights into future research about how the metaphor of "transfer" might limit our understanding of a student's learning process and how students continue to build on previous knowledge of reading. Isabella developed a genre awareness that

included knowledge of a text's structure, but also a sociorhetorical understanding that included audience and purpose. This awareness influenced the way she read texts in her FYC course, but also how she approached texts in her STEM courses. Studies of transfer that rely on "direct application" provide only one way we might understand a student's learning, but thinking of transfer as a preparation for future learning "entails looking for evidence that knowledge learned in one context facilitates the (re)learning of that knowledge or related knowledge in another context" (Hammer et al. 113).

Isabella's story shows us that thinking of transfer only in terms of replication or direct application would show Isabella as someone who has not transferred knowledge from her FYC course because her reading tasks in later contexts were very different from those in her FYC course. However, she does demonstrate that she used her genre awareness to influence her reading awareness. During Isabella's FYC, she gained both declarative and procedural knowledge—what she learned about genre and how she applied this to reading. This genre awareness served as a preparation for her future reading, not as a discrete thing that could be applied to different contexts, but as a way to make sense of her future learning. Declarative and Procedural knowledge can be taught in relation to genre knowledge and reflective and metacognitive activities help to facilitate this, but perhaps conditional knowledge (knowing the reasons why knowledge is used in particular ways) must be taught within various discourse communities. Isabella also confirms the suggestions made in the CWPA Outcomes Statement about all faculty members helping students to build on knowledge gained in a FYC course. Genre awareness and metacognitive activities helped Isabella learn declarative and procedural knowledge and she shows how that knowledge serves as a preparation for future

knowledge, but also the challenges of trying to learn conditional knowledge in multiple contexts.

## CHAPTER 5

## An Invitation to Rethink Future Directions for Research on Reading and Writing

Dear Reader,

I hope you enjoyed the experience of reading this dissertation and reflecting on your own process while reading. Reading is a transactional process between you and this text and how your reading process created different meanings. I imagine that very few of you would get “lost” in my dissertation in the same way that you might get lost in a really good novel, and I know that no two readers will read this dissertation in the same way. Each of you has a different process of reading based on background schemata, purpose for reading, and the moment in your life you are reading this.

One of my goals and challenges in writing this dissertation was to deliberately construct my identity through my writing. I have attempted to position myself in a certain way as a scholar and educator. One way that I have tried to construct this identity is through the discourses of writing letters as my introduction and conclusion. But you, as the reader, play an active role in constructing my identity as well (Matsuda and Tardy “Voice in Academic Writing”). Often in academic settings, I have felt constrained by the writing and genres required of me and the identity constructed for me. With this dissertation, I wanted to construct an identity that I feel is representative of how I see myself—for me, my teaching and scholarship have been very personal endeavors. I have strived to create meaningful relationships with my colleagues and students, and I wanted to bring this aspect of my identity into this dissertation. As the reader, I’m interested in how you constructed my identity as a graduate student, scholar, and teacher.

Throughout this dissertation process, I have reflected on my own reading process as I researched and discussed reading with those around me. I definitely know more

about reading than I did at the beginning of this process, but my identity as a reader is something I will continue to contemplate. As I began reading the many texts during this process, I became much more conscious of *how* I was reading each text. I made conscious notes of what I was looking for in each text, why I was reading it, and I tried to imagine where it would fit in each chapter. This process became much easier throughout the dissertation process. When I first began, I did not have a clear idea of what my focus would be in each chapter and my reading process was different than it is now at the end. Having read more about reading, when I read newer texts, I had more background knowledge and could connect the content to previous readings. But there is still more to reading than formal and content schemata. Like many readers, I still succumbed to “fake reading.” How deeply I read depended not just on my background knowledge or even my motivation to read, but on how busy I was, how much sleep I received, or how stressed I felt. Sometimes, I would realize that I had read a few pages of a text, but only read the words instead of reading critically.

### **Critical Reading**

In conversations about reading at the college level, it’s hard to avoid the term “critical” when discussing a goal of academic success. In the *Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing*, produced by members of the National Writing Project, the National Council of Teachers of English, and the Council of Writing Program Administrators, the authors give suggestions about how habits of mind can be fostered through “writing, reading, and critical analysis” experiences. In these suggestions, reading and writing are closely connected through suggestions such as reading texts from multiple points of view; producing “written responses to texts that put the writer’s ideas

in conversation with those in a text in ways that are appropriate to the academic discipline or context” (11). Critical thinking, reading, and composing are also listed as outcomes in the Outcomes Statement produced by the Council of Writing Program Administrators. However, according to Adler-Kassner and Estrem, the language in the OS missed “language about the complex interactions between reading and writing that would privilege the kind of grappling with ideas (in written and other kinds of texts) that we hoped to see in writing...” (“Critical Thinking” 61). At their local institution, they added goals that explicitly call “attention to reading practices” (62). In developing literacy strategies, students are asked to “consciously and consistently analyze their own purposes(s) for writing and balance these with their audience’s expectation(s) for writing...At every stage of this recursive cycle of analysis, development, and decision making, students employ critical reading strategies—reading texts, reading people, reading situations” (70).

Although critical reading is often discussed in terms of a goal of education or a skill that students need in order to be successful in their educations, the term itself is defined differently. Critical reading is often discussed from two different traditions: reading for academic purposes and reading for social engagement. One way to think of the difference between the two traditions is the metaphor of literacy as a tool used to help students succeed in a system, while the other encourages students to change or fight the system. Critical reading for academic purposes involves “identifying patterns of textual elements; distinguishing between main and subordinate ideas; evaluating credibility; making judgments about how a text is argued; making relevant inferences about the text” (Manarin et al. 4).

One recurring theme in my research has been the role of instructors in mediating this critical reading for students. In Chapter 2 specifically, I challenged the notion that reading can be thought of as a decontextualized practice. Through faculty and student surveys and interviews, students were able to discuss the challenges and successes they had with reading assignments in Atmospheric Sciences, Architecture, and Anthropology courses. Students' confidence, motivation, and ability to comprehend the texts impact how they feel about their identity as readers. Students need to find connections between the readings and the world, their personal lives, their future careers, the quiz or test for that class, larger themes, concepts or ideas, etc., but from these student responses, the instructor is a vital part of facilitating those connections. Students also connect various strategies across contexts. There are strategies that students may use across contexts, but not all strategies work in all contexts. In reading texts for her Anthropology course, Scarlett said, "I always scan for broader connection and themes when I read because, you know, in all my English classes, that's what you gotta figure out what you're writing your paper on." But in the same interview, Ella stated, "You can't teach someone English close reading and then hope that it applies to their art degree or hope it applies to their architecture degree....the bigger questions you're asking will be different in every single field."

Students from the Architecture and Anthropology courses both mentioned how the instructor adapted teaching methods when noticing the students struggling. These students, who already perceived of themselves as strong readers, were also able to adapt their reading methods and consequently, read like anthropologists and architects. They were able to take on a disciplinary identity while reading. The students in Atmospheric

Sciences struggled with the reading assignments, and were less motivated to complete the assignments and did not readily see connections between reading assignments and class activities. Reading critically also varies by context, and students need the instructor, who likely has expert knowledge, to guide and mediate students in knowing what critical reading looks like in their disciplines and classes. Making inferences, or connecting types of knowledge with other texts and types of knowledge, is an important part of critical reading and instructors can help guide students to look for connections that are important.

The realization that reading differs by context and can impact students' identities in these contexts was eye opening for me, especially as I contemplated my role as a writing instructor. First-year composition (FYC) is often thought of as a preparation for students' future academic success, but I know that writing is not a generalizable skill that can be taught and then applied in every context. Reading can be thought of in a similar way. Genre awareness is often highlighted as a possible solution to the problematic idea of teaching students generalizable forms of writing. When I created a syllabus for my ENGL 101A course, I wanted to further understand how a student's genre awareness would impact their reading practices. Throughout the semester, students were able to raise their genre awareness. They became aware of many facets of genre including an awareness of how a genre is structured, the kind of language that is used within a genre, being able to determine a purpose for reading a genre, and also a purpose for writing in a particular genre. Many students had an increased awareness of specific sociorhetorical aspects of genre such as audience awareness and a genre's use in context. This raised genre awareness influenced how students read particular genres and how this understanding influenced the *way* they read particular texts.

What's clear to me as the instructor is an importance of making genre awareness an integral part of reading pedagogy—a genre awareness that introduces students to sociorhetorical aspects of genre such as audience, purpose, and context. By focusing on both structure and context, students move toward developing both formal schemata and content schemata. When students receive a text, they need to be able to ask themselves about generic elements such as structure and tone, but also about the purpose of reading the text within that particular classroom. “Recognition of genre conventions by itself is not enough to demonstrate critical reading for academic purpose. The student who knows where to find information within an article may still not understand that information because of the rhetorical context...” (Manarin et al. 48). This last point led me to explore how students would use their genre knowledge in contexts beyond FYC.

In Chapter 4, I followed one student, Isabella, as she continued in her STEM major to see what she remembered about genre from FYC and how this impacted her reading practices. I questioned traditional notions of “transfer” as being too limited because they look at knowledge as discrete “things” that can be applied in a similar situation. Isabella's classes after FYC were very different in both reading and writing assignments, but Isabella was still able to build on her genre awareness and contemplate how that awareness influenced her reading awareness. Isabella developed a genre awareness that included knowledge of a text's structure, but also a sociorhetorical understanding that included audience and purpose. This awareness influenced the way she read texts in her FYC course, but also how she approached texts in her STEM courses. The declarative knowledge (what she knows about genre) and her procedural knowledge (how she used that knowledge) influenced the way she approached texts in

these classes, but Isabella still felt frustrated at times with figuring out the conditional knowledge (why she uses reading in that way) in various contexts and in interviews, she discussed her frustration with a lack of instructor involvement in this process.

As I contemplate now my role as a FYC instructor, teaching reading and writing in a way that will benefit students in later academic contexts seems like a monumental task. But I do think that genre awareness is a foundation that students can build on when thinking of both reading and writing. But it's not something that I can accomplish as a lone instructor. The CWPA Outcomes Statement wisely urges all instructors to be involved in the process of students' development. When I surveyed instructors in various disciplines in Chapter 4, I was surprised that only about half of those instructors discussed reading with students. There still seems to be an assumption that students should already be able "to read" by the time they arrive in college. As a whole dissertation, my research challenges this notion by demonstrating that there are various ways to read that involve many factors, and that there is a need for reading across the curriculum if instructors want students to be able to read critically in their disciplines and classes.

Horning and Kraemer define critical reading as the ability to

analyze texts to see how parts fit together. They must also be able to synthesize different readings on the same topic or issue so they can see a range of perspectives and/or research on the topic or issue. In addition, they must be able to evaluate the materials they read...Finally, critical reading entails students' ability to make use of what they read for their own purposes. (10)

Being able to connect parts of texts often requires expert knowledge that students may not have as novices. But through reflective activities in multiple contexts, instructors can help guide students as they move toward becoming expert readers.

I began this dissertation with the goal of wanting to understand how I could help students in a FYC course become stronger readers by looking at the relationship between reading and writing in this context. I wondered what important facets of reading students need to develop in order to become more efficient readers across disciplines. Through the process of completing this dissertation, my own understanding of reading has been greatly expanded as I read current literature about reading, and as I completed research with students in my FYC course and students in disciplinary contexts. As I conclude this exploratory process, I have gained greater insights into how students and faculty can be involved in reading across campus, but I am left with many questions that will continue to drive my future research; questions related to both reading in the composition classroom and reading in disciplinary contexts. I hope you'll continue to think about these and your own questions about reading as I discuss my questions below.

### **Reading in the Composition Classroom**

Many scholars and teachers are now recognizing that students are often not fully prepared to be the kind of readers that they need to be for college level reading and writing. “And the logical and most economical place to look for instruction that might ensure such development is in the FYC courses that are typically required of all entering students at most colleges and universities” (Blau, “How the Teaching” 275). Patrick Sullivan claims that reading, theorized as “deep reading” should be acknowledged as “the central importance” of a composition classroom” (134). Much of the conversation about reading in the composition classroom has revolved around *what* to read rather than *how* to read.

In “A Place for Literature in Freshman Composition,” Gary Tate bemoans the loss of “texts that constitute the traditional canon of literary works” (319). These works should be included if we want “students to think and talk and write about human lives outside the academy” (321). It is unclear how reading literary works as opposed to, or in conjunction with nonfiction texts, will help Tate achieve this goal. To remove these literary texts is to “deprive our students of the linguistic possibilities that just might elevate their prose above mediocrity” (318). There is an assumption that by merely reading these works, students will be able to imitate this in their own writing, but there isn’t an active discussion of reading or research that might test this assumption.

More recently, the conversation about FYC has continued with Patrick Sullivan commenting that FYC is the ideal place to practice “deep reading,” a pedagogy that is “designed to provide opportunities for students to engage in metacognitive thinking about the *process* of learning, and to help students assess and reassess their own mental models for understanding the world” (147). He does this through a unit on Christopher Columbus and using Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* among others in order to have students question what narratives are. By the end of the semester, students were able to “speak thoughtfully about narrative, and most had interesting and perceptive things to say about the power of narratives to shape our lives and perceptions” (162). This deep reading did indeed change the way that students understood narratives, but seeing deep reading as something that will transfer to other courses and into student writing is complicated.

Sullivan even mentions there are different deep readers across disciplines:

They are deep readers in the way they use knowledge, extensive subject matter knowledge, systematic and methodological investigation, careful reading and re-reading of primary and secondary sources, critical and creative thinking, and

working in response to systems, interactivity, context, and communities of practice. (154)

This is an extensive list that relies on knowledge and ways of knowing that are very context dependent. In the student excerpts that Sullivan quotes in this chapter, neither student mentions the word “reading” per se, but they do mention that their ideas have changed. This open-mindedness is certainly a habit that is necessary for reading, but it seems that instructors or experts in disciplines and fields outside of the composition classroom need to help students learn the “big questions” in those contexts and how those ideas and questions then impact the *way* that students read a text.

This idea became apparent to me as I interviewed the students discussed in Chapter 2; many students in the Architecture and Anthropology courses mentioned the instrumental role that the instructor played in facilitating disciplinary-specific ways of reading. This involved not just modeling specific strategies while reading, but it also involved guiding students to see larger themes and “bigger questions” that vary by field. So if reading is a skill that varies by context, much like writing, what role can a composition classroom play in teaching students reading habits that will be beneficial beyond the writing classroom?

Sheridan Blau suggests that through the reading of literature in the composition classroom, students will become better prepared for the reading and critical thinking required of them in college: “...the best way to prepare students to read and understand complex ideas is to have them read literature, and mostly fiction, combined perhaps with selected writing from disciplines such as history, sociology, psychology, or medicine....” (283). If students become stronger readers of these texts, they will be stronger readers of other texts that they will be engaged in reading throughout their academic careers. Blau

also claims that writing teachers and specialists are the best positioned “for the task of teaching college students to be highly proficient readers of literature and thereby stronger readers of any texts, including texts of the various academic disciplines the students will eventually enter...” (283). This is a striking claim to me as a writing teacher. I think back specifically to my interviews with Isabella, an engineering student and the kinds of reading assignments she completes in her STEM courses and wonder how effective a literature course would be in preparing her for the ways of reading she does in these courses. Blau relies on the fact that literature has a unique way of presenting various complicated issues and can help students develop ways of thinking and problem-solving. I don’t dispute this, but after interviewing students in various courses and understanding the context-specific ways of thinking and reading required in various disciplines, I still wonder about the ability of an FYC course to teach students reading skills that would be beneficial to students beyond a writing course. This seems akin to the argument that having students learn one particular way of “good” writing will prepare them for the writing they will do beyond their FYC course. This argument has been critiqued by many WAC/WID scholars.

I don’t dispute the fact that literature and nonfiction literary texts can play a vital role in developing students’ thinking and problem-solving, but I am not necessarily convinced about Blau’s argument that writing teachers can do this better than discipline-specific instructors. Literature can be used across disciplines, but I think it is still used in different ways. In the Anthropology course I visited as part of Ch. 2, the instructor was having students read *Toxic Archipelago: A History of Industrial Disease in Japan*, a book written for a broad audience. I imagine that if I read this book in my composition course,

students would read it differently than they would in an anthropology course because the questions asked and purpose for reading in each context would be different.

But reading still plays a vital role in the composition classroom (especially a FYC course) in helping students develop reading practices. Much of the recent conversation about reading in the composition classroom has moved from *what* to read to focus on *how* to read. One of the complications with discussing reading with students is finding a common language. Salvatori and Donahue discuss this by saying that when they ask their students (both undergraduate and graduate students) to talk about what they do when they read, they are met with students'

initial puzzlement at finding a language to make visible readings' invisible moves, the subtle insights into the processes of reading and writing and the interconnection produced once they learn to do this kind of work, and the understanding of and engagement with student texts that such a work can nurture, are worth calling attention to. (211)

Helping students develop a language for discussing and thinking about their own reading practices can be a primary goal of a composition classroom. Instructors can do this through assignments that ask students to actively reflect on what they do when they read. Ellen Carillo does this with her mindful reading approach.

After completing the research I conducted in my own composition classroom, I think that genre studies can be a starting point to find a common language used in conjunction with activities that foster a metacognitive awareness of students' reading practices and habits. However, that language might also complicate reading for students. Genre can help provide terms and language that help students imagine reading practices in contexts outside of a writing classroom, but many reading terms may still be unclear for students who do not have a strong background in reading or thinking about their

reading processes. This became apparent during beginning conversations in my FYC course when I asked students to think about their purpose for reading a text. Many replied that their purpose was to read it for class. Coming up with specific purposes was a challenge for them.

*Potential Questions Researchers Could Ask About Reading in the Composition*

*Classroom:*

- What common language do students and instructors need in order to discuss their reading practices more efficiently?
- What terms contribute to a student's reading awareness?

A composition class can help students develop a language about reading, but disciplinary faculty members need to help students build on that language and help students actively reflect on how they apply a reading awareness to new situations. As students gain more disciplinary knowledge, their reading will be affected, and instructors can help guide their focus as they enter new disciplinary communities and classrooms. This proposition poses challenges as many have admitted that “It's extremely difficult, even for scholars in composition, literature, and literacy to define reading” (Malette, et al. 15), and Alice Horning in her work with various faculty members found that “while many college faculty members complain about students' poor reading skills, few are specific about their concerns” (Horning and Gollnitz 45). It's evident that faculty training and workshops are necessary for both writing instructors and also disciplinary instructors, and a Reading Across Campus/Reading in the Disciplines program might be combined with Writing Across Campus/Writing in the Disciplines programs.

## Reading in Disciplinary Contexts

In *Writing in the Academic Disciplines*, Russell discusses how writing is seen by faculty members as a “generalizable elementary skill, independent of disciplinary context” (7). Because of this, “faculty are rarely held formally responsible by institutions for initiating students into the discourse of their disciplines (and therefore of the professional roles tied to them). And, thus, disciplines have found it easy to ignore the role that writing plays in students’ preparation for and admission to the professions” (28). However, as more and more research has been completed, there has been a growing recognition of the disciplinary ways of writing and ways of knowing (see Carter).

There is also a growing recognition among many reading scholars that urge us to see disciplinary differences in terms of reading as well as writing although according to Bazerman et al., “The WAC movement from the very beginning implied Reading Across the Curriculum because all disciplinary writing relies on and refers to the prior texts of the field” (115). But simply implying, rather than making explicit, has not been adequate in helping students become stronger disciplinary readers. In Alice Horning’s 2007 article, she moves the Reading Across the Curriculum movement ahead by offering 4 strategies for instructors in all disciplines: understand reading, overtly teach critical reading skills, provide opportunities for students to practice, and learning the genres, conventions, and discipline specific ways of reading. “Reading is clearly the key to work in all courses and in every discipline” (“Reading Across”), and instructors can use these strategies to help students achieve success across disciplines. In 2013, Horning added to this list of strategies with scaffolding suggestions and learning to read critically on screens (“Reading and Writing”). Although Horning suggests a “Reading Across the Curriculum”

program, Melanie Doyle critiques this idea because it inadvertently separates the process of reading from writing. Instead, Doyle proposes a “Writing-Reading Across the Curriculum/Writing-Reading in the Disciplines or WRAC/WRID (“Toward a Unified”). But combining the two terms also might cause potential problems as instructors consider similarities of reading and writing instead of noticing distinct and important differences. Horning has long been advocating connecting reading and writing “because academic writing so often entails the use of what students have read” (Horning and Kraemer 11). However, the connection for me has been unclear as to what this looks like. After reviewing many studies, Langer and Flihan conclude that we “cannot assume strong readers are strong writers, nor are advanced writers necessarily good readers” (qtd. in Harl 53). One distinct difference that has become apparent from my research is the difference between purposes for reading and purposes for writing.

After conducting research in both a composition classroom and in disciplinary contexts and reviewing literature about reading, there does not seem to be enough research about how students develop a sense of purpose for their reading assignments. In Bazerman’s study of physicists’ reading practices, he found that they have a clear purpose for their reading and rely on “structured background knowledge” (236). Instructors can help students develop background knowledge but this also seems to be a process that happens over time as students gain more specific disciplinary knowledge. But there is much more research that can be done about how students develop a sense of purpose for their reading and how their genre knowledge and discourse community knowledge might impact that. In my own composition classroom where purpose was

made a specific topic of class discussion and student reflection, students were able to determine their purpose and how knowing that purpose affected their reading strategies.

*Potential Questions Researchers Could Ask About Reading in Disciplinary Contexts:*

- In disciplinary contexts, how do students determine the purpose(s) for reading?
- In what ways might that purpose(s) inform their reading?
- What role do instructors play in guiding students in determining purposes for reading?
- What activities might be useful in workshops for faculty to reflect on their own purposes for reading in order to guide students in developing effective purposes?

I think this is a valuable area of further research especially if we think of instructors more as guides or mentors assisting students to enter communities where they need to develop new identities, ways of knowing, ways of writing, and ways of reading.

### **Connecting/Segregating Reading and Writing**

Howard Tinberg also discusses how reading has been relegated to community colleges and separated in its own department “reproduced the state of affairs that had occurred at the four-year level: rendering reading as someone else’s business. Faculty, outside of the Department of Reading, were disincentivized from giving explicit instruction in reading, with such instruction marginalized as developmental” (“When Writers” 247). Blau’s claim that writing instructors are best positioned to teach reading seems to do something similar: it makes it seem like faculty outside of writing classrooms do not also have a responsibility to teach students reading skills. The research I have done in this dissertation makes me feel strongly that all faculty members need to be involved in discussing appropriate and efficient reading skills and habits with students across the curriculum.

Howard Tinberg's quote about separating reading and writing also leaves me with many questions. Many scholars have urged compositionists to integrate reading and writing because they are two processes that are similar, but there are some differences. In many community college settings, there is a reading class that is separate from the writing class. Is this the best way to help students develop efficient reading skills? Are they better served to have instructors in a writing classroom discuss both reading and writing? When I began this dissertation process, one of the first books I read was *Reconnecting Reading and Writing*. In the preface, Charles Bazerman et al. said,

By dividing reading and writing, however, we minimize the interactive roles of readers and writers in the composing process and in their co-construction of meaning. We deny students the opportunity to read as writers—that is, to pay attention to rhetorical choices and effects and to consider the texts they read (print or digital) as having *been written* under certain conditions with certain constraints to achieve certain purposes. (xii)

This book was instrumental for me as I developed a syllabus in my FYC course that attempted to bring reading and writing in conversation with each other for students. However, as I reflect on the research completed for this dissertation, I still see where there are benefits of connecting reading and writing, but how this process must involve larger conversations about a reader's and writer's common or distinct purposes for reading and writing. Reading and writing are often taught separately despite the fact that the two are intricately connected. Often, reading involves writing notes, annotations, or summaries. According to Janna Jackson, who took a survey of post-secondary reading/writing centers, "many institutions teach reading and writing as discrete subjects" ("Reading/Writing Connection" 141). In academic settings, purposes for reading often involve writing assignments, so discussions about connecting reading and writing benefit students as they continue to move in academic settings. I wonder if this can be done

adequately in a segregated reading class, ways to effectively do this in a writing class, and also ways for instructors to do this in disciplinary classrooms. Studying how students perceive their reading practices in a segregated reading class transfer to other contexts is an interesting area of research. I understand more fully the complication of teaching reading as a decontextualized skill, and I wonder how a segregated reading class might move beyond that, if it is possible.

According to Hughes and Scott-Clayton, more than half of community college students enroll in remedial or developmental courses. “Yet, despite the prevalence and high costs of remedial assessment and placement, the ultimate benefits of this process are unclear” (328). Do students who enroll in developmental reading classes feel like the course is beneficial for them?

*Potential Questions Researchers Could Ask About Connecting Reading and Writing:*

- In what ways do students feel that a segregated reading course impacts their future reading practices?
- In what ways do students feel an integrated reading/writing course impacts their future reading practices?

### **Content Area vs. Discipline-based Reading**

Much of the debate in Reading Studies revolves around the issues of content-area and discipline-based instructional approaches. Content-area literacy “emphasizes the development of students’ capacity to use literacy as tools for content learning,” however, it also “situates reading and writing as generic, neutral processes that are applicable across fields of study” (Porter 27). Disciplinary-based literacy instruction moves beyond content to involve habits of mind and “positions students as learners of disciplinary ways of communicating, thinking, and knowing, allowing deeper levels of engagement with

disciplinary content and the development of agency and control over their learning” (Porter 27). These theories are not mutually exclusive and may influence each other. One future area of research involves reading strategies across contexts for college students. “If college students are to succeed, they need an extensive vocabulary and a variety of strategies for understanding the words and language of an academic discipline” (Francis and Simpson 99), but how do students learn which strategies might be useful in various contexts? For example, in the Anthropology Focus Group interview I conducted for Chapter 2, one student commented, “I want to say that for me at least, a lot of my strategies do carry over from other classes. I loved *Toxic Archipelago* because my creative writing, my focus is creative nonfiction, and I really love writing braided narrative, which is exactly what that book was. Kind of just a weave of a lot of different topics and focuses and so I read a lot of that in my creative writing classes and stuff.” But in the same interview, another student stated, “You can't teach someone English close reading and then hope that it applies to their art degree or hope it applies to their architecture degree.... That it's not helpful to do just a generic thing when maybe you can only apply some of that and just hope that it works for everybody, because that's a model that doesn't work for everybody.” There may be misunderstanding for students about which reading skills/strategies can be transferred and can be effective in many different classes.

*Potential Questions for Researchers to Ask About Content Area and Discipline-based*

*Reading:*

- How might students learn to better negotiate which strategies are more effective for them as readers in multiple contexts?
- What reading strategies do students feel are beneficial for their reading?

I am left with multiple questions and possibilities for future research about reading in reading classrooms, writing classrooms, and disciplinary contexts that will drive my future research. As I continue with my research, these questions and areas of study will direct the future work that I engage with students. Through this dissertation process, my beliefs about reading have been enhanced and challenged, but my core belief about reading in college is unchanged: a student's success in college depends on reading abilities and that this is an important topic of discussion and research among scholars and teachers in post-secondary institutions. I hope you will continue to think about these issues as well.

Sincerely,

*Rachel*

## APPENDIX A: INSTRUCTOR SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Consent information
2. Your Name
3. Your Department
4. What undergraduate courses are you teaching Spring 2017?
5. What kinds of texts do you typically assign students to read? If possible, give some examples.
6. Typically, how long are these reading assignments?
7. About what percentage of the reading assignments are online? (percentages by 10%)
8. Do you give instructions for students about how to read the texts?
9. If you answered yes, what do you tell students?
10. How do you use the reading assignments in class (if at all)?
11. What are your overall expectations of students for the reading assignments you give students? (Check all that apply).
  - a. Understand course content
  - b. Apply new knowledge
  - c. Prepare for lecture/lab/class discussion
  - d. Engage in critical thinking
  - e. Synthesize information
  - f. Understand genre-specific information
  - g. Learn/use vocab
  - h. Learning/use specific disciplinary ways of writing
  - i. Demonstrate knowledge through writing assignment
  - j. Understand research
  - k. Conduct research
  - l. Be strategic readers
  - m. Use text as a resource
  - n. Other
12. What do you think the challenges are that your students face with reading assignments? (Check all that apply).
  - a. Specific genre is new for students
  - b. Assumed background knowledge by the author
  - c. Lack of motivation
  - d. Time
  - e. Vocabulary and grammatical complexity
  - f. Academic preparation
  - g. Amount of reading
  - h. Critical thinking
  - i. Lack of knowledge of specific reading strategies
  - j. Access to texts
  - k. Following directions

## 1. Other

13. What kinds of writing assignments do you assign students?
14. In what ways do you expect students to connect their assigned reading with their assigned writing?
15. How do the reading assignments help to achieve the course goals?
16. Are you willing to allow Rachel Buck to visit your class and administer a similar survey to your students?

## APPENDIX B: STUDENT SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. Your Name
2. Your Major
3. Your year classification
  - Freshman
  - Sophomore
  - Junior
  - Senior
4. What kinds of texts are you given to read for this class? If possible, give some examples.
5. Typically, how long are these reading assignments?
6. Does your instructor give instructions about how to read the texts?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
7. If you answered yes, what are the instructions?
8. How does your instructor talk about the readings in class?
9. What are your overall expectations of the reading assignments your instructor give you? What is the purpose of the assignments? (Check all that apply).
  - a. Understand course content
  - b. Apply new knowledge
  - c. Prepare for lecture/lab/class discussion
  - d. Engage in critical thinking
  - e. Synthesize information
  - f. Understand genre-specific information
  - g. Learn/use vocab
  - h. Learning/use specific disciplinary ways of writing
  - i. Demonstrate knowledge through writing assignment
  - j. Understand research
  - k. Conduct research
  - l. Be strategic readers
  - m. Use text as a resource
  - n. Other
10. What do you think the challenges are that you face with reading assignments?
  - a. Specific genre is new for students
  - b. Assumed background knowledge by the author
  - c. Lack of motivation
  - d. Time
  - e. Vocabulary and grammatical complexity
  - f. Academic preparation
  - g. Amount of reading
  - h. Critical thinking
  - i. Lack of knowledge of specific reading strategies

- j. Access to texts
  - k. Following directions
  - l. Other
11. What strategies do you use when reading the texts? (check all that apply)
- a. Specified a purpose for reading
  - b. Specified author's purpose for writing
  - c. Prepared reading area/ made a plan/time management
  - d. Previewed the text
  - e. Looked up background info about the author
  - f. Looked up background info about content
  - g. Decided on the genre/looked for specific genre features
  - h. Predicted contents of text
  - i. Posed questions about the text
  - j. Checked predictions while reading
  - k. Connected text to background knowledge or experience
  - l. Summarized passages
  - m. Made inferences
  - n. Connected one part of text to another
  - o. Connected text to another text
  - p. Noticed language patterns within text
  - q. Re-read sections
  - r. Guessed meaning of new word from context
  - s. Looked up definition of unknown word
  - t. Checked comprehension
  - u. Used discourse markers to see connections between ideas. For example, "however"
  - v. Recognized types of evidence used
  - w. Identified difficulties
  - x. Critiqued the author
  - y. Reflected on what you learned
  - z. Took notes on another sheet of paper
  - aa. Took notes on a computer
  - bb. other
12. How did you determine what strategies to use while reading and do you think they were helpful?
13. How capable do you believe you are in comprehending your reading assignments for this class? Explain.
14. How valuable or important are these reading assignments to you? Explain.
15. What kinds of writing assignments do you complete for this class?
16. In what ways do you connect your assigned reading with your assigned writing?
17. What do you think it means to read like an anthropologist? Give some examples to explain your answer.

18. What do you think it means to write like an anthropologist? Give some examples to explain your answer?
19. Are you interested in participating in a focus group to further discuss your answers with your peers for an additional gift card?

## APPENDIX C: STUDENT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### *Anthropology*

1. On the survey, I asked students if your instructor gave instructions about how to read the course texts. About half said yes and the other half said no. Can you explain your answers a little more?
2. Here are some of the responses from the survey question about reading like an anthropologist:
  - Scanning for broader connections and themes
  - Understanding the multifaceted nature of problems
  - Read to understand people and cultures and society
  - Look at both sides and look at facts and not just emotions
  - Look at the people in the situation and try to think of their perspective

How do you think you that you have learned to read this way?
3. Reading identity: refers to how capable you believe you are in comprehending texts, the value you place on reading, and your understanding of what it means to be a particular type of reader within a given context.  
Most of the responses were pretty confident about their reading identity.  
Do you feel like there is a connection between being capable in comprehending texts, finding the texts valuable and being able to read like an anthropologist?
4. How does reading like an anthropologist influence the strategies you use when you read the texts?
5. Do you have any final thoughts about your reading in anthropology and how this differs from other classes?

### *Architecture*

1. On the survey, I asked students if your instructor gave instructions about how to read the course texts. 9 said yes, 15 said no. Can you explain some thoughts about this discrepancy?
2. Here are some of the responses from the survey about what it means to read like an architect: Architects are more visual people, they would rather look at pictures or diagrams rather than read a description of someone or something if could be.
  - Reading like an architect means you take what you read and think of it in a very visual way that can be applied to a project.
  - Reading like an architect is for learning new methods and research that can help you with your own design process and expand your knowledge of design
  - We draw in detail specific elements and I think we read the same way. We have to go between the lines and see things that are not seen to the untrained eye.

How do you think you that you have learned to read this way?

3. Reading identity: refers to how capable you believe you are in comprehending texts, the value you place on reading, and your understanding of what it means to be a particular type of reader within a given context. Most of the responses were pretty confident about their reading identity.  
Do you feel like there is a connection between being capable in comprehending texts, finding the texts valuable and being able to read like an architect?
4. How does reading like an architect influence the strategies you use when you read the texts?
5. What are your final thoughts about your reading in architecture and how this differs from other classes?

### *Atmospheric Sciences*

1. On the survey, I asked students if your instructor gave instructions about how to read the course texts. 3 said yes, 13 said no. Can you explain some thoughts about this discrepancy? What instructions do you think might be helpful for you?
2. Here are some of the responses from the survey about reading like an atmospheric scientist:
  - Applying textbook knowledge to current surroundings
  - I am assuming to synthesize information and read carefully the information in front of them. I am assuming that they do, I am not quite sure.
  - I think you'd have to be able to read through the lines and notice patterns or similarities in data.

How do you think that students learn to read this way? Would understanding that you need to read a different way in this class be helpful for you?
3. Reading identity: refers to how capable you believe you are in comprehending texts, the value you place on reading, and your understanding of what it means to be a particular type of reader within a given context. Many of the respondents expressed that they felt somewhat or partially capable and many said they were not interested in the readings.  
Do you feel like there is a connection between being capable in comprehending texts, finding the texts valuable and being able to read like an atmospheric scientist?
4. How does reading like an atmospheric scientist influence the strategies you use when you read the texts?
5. Do you have any final thoughts about your reading in atmospheric sciences and how this differs from other classes? Thoughts about why these readings were challenging?

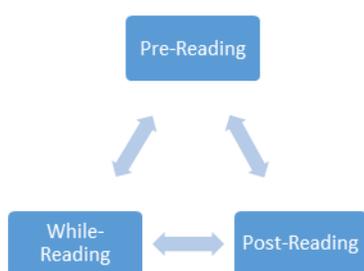
## APPENDIX D: ENGL 101A COMMON READING STRATEGIES HANDOUT

*“One of the most consistent implications of two decades of research on reading and writing relations is that they should be taught together and that the combination of both literacy skills enhances learning in all areas” (Grabe “Reading-writing Relations” 25).*

**Reading for Writing:** reading sources to learn about writing or to use reading to gain knowledge about a topic in order to write about it.

**Writing for Reading:** writing is used to make sense (for example, writing summaries, taking notes).

### Reading Strategies



1. Specifying a purpose for reading (What is that purpose?):
2. Specifying a purpose for author in writing
3. Planning what to do/what steps to take/time management/prepping reading area
4. Previewing the text
5. Deciding on genre/looking over structural formatting (What is the genre and how do you know?)
6. Predicting contents of the text or section of the text
7. Posing questions about the text
8. Checking predictions
9. Finding answers to posed questions
10. Connecting text to background knowledge
11. Summarizing information
12. Making inferences
13. Connecting one part of the text to another
14. Connecting one text with another
15. Connecting the text to your own experience
16. Noticing language patterns within the text
17. Noticing text structure and characteristics of the genre
18. Re-Reading
19. Guessing meaning of a new word from context
20. Looking up definition of unknown word
21. Using discourse markers and phrases to see relationships between ideas (for example, however).

### Some Common Reading Purposes:

- a. Understand course content or learn something new
- b. Apply new knowledge
- c. Prepare for lecture/labs
- d. Engage in critical thinking
- e. Synthesize information
- f. Understand genre-specific information
- g. Learn/use vocab
- h. Learn/use specific disciplinary ways of writing
- i. Demonstrate knowledge through writing assignment
- j. Understand research
- k. Conduct research
- l. Be strategic readers
- m. Use text as a resource

22. Checking comprehension
23. Recognizing types of evidence used
24. Identifying difficulties
25. Critiquing the author
26. Critiquing the text
27. Reflecting on what has been learned from the text
28. Annotating the document
29. Taking notes on another sheet of paper

APPENDIX E: ENGL 101A SURVEY QUESTIONS  
(administered 3 times during the semester)

1. Your Name
2. What is the text?
3. What is the text's genre?
4. How do you know what genre it is?
5. What was your purpose(s) for reading this text ( check all that apply)
  - Understanding course content or learn something new
  - Apply new knowledge
  - Prepare for class discussion
  - Engage in critical thinking
  - Synthesize information
  - Understand genre specific information
  - Learn/use new vocab
  - Learn/use specific disciplinary ways of writing
  - Demonstrate knowledge through writing assignment
  - Understand research
  - Conduct research
  - Respond to the text in a writing assignment
  - Find quotations or specific language to use in writing assignment
  - Other
6. How did you determine the purpose(s)?
7. What strategies did you use to read the text? (check all that apply)
  - Specified a purpose for reading
  - Specific the author's purpose for writing
  - Prepped area/made a plan/time management
  - Previewed text
  - Looked up background info about author
  - Looked up background info about content
  - Decided on genre/looked for specific genre features
  - Predicted the contents of the text
  - Posed questions about the text
  - Checked predictions while reading
  - Connected text to background knowledge and experience
  - Summarized passages
  - Made inferences
  - Connected one part of the text to another
  - Connected text to another text
  - Connected text to own life experience
  - Noticed language patterns within the text
  - Noticed text structure and characteristics of the genre
  - Re-read

Guessed meaning of new word from context  
Looked up definition of unknown word  
Used discourse markers and phrases to see relationships between ideas (for example, “however,”  
Checked comprehension  
Recognized types of evidence used  
Identified difficulties  
Critiqued the author  
Critiqued the text  
Reflected on what was learned from the text  
Annotated the document  
Took notes on another sheet of paper  
Other

8. What was interesting about the text? What do you remember?
9. Do you think knowing the genre influenced the strategies you used to read the text? If so, how?
10. Do you think that knowing your purpose influenced the strategies you used to read the text? If so, how?
11. Do you think that knowing the genre influenced determining the purpose for reading the text? If so, how?

APPENDIX F: WPA OUTCOMES STATEMENT FOR FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION  
(3.0), APPROVED JULY 17, 2014

Introduction

This Statement identifies outcomes for first-year composition programs in U.S. postsecondary education. It describes the writing knowledge, practices, and attitudes that undergraduate students develop in first-year composition, which at most schools is a required general education course or sequence of courses. This Statement therefore attempts to both represent and regularize writing programs' priorities for first-year composition, which often takes the form of one or more required general education courses. To this end it is not merely a compilation or summary of what currently takes place. Rather, this Statement articulates what composition teachers nationwide have learned from practice, research, and theory.[1] It intentionally defines only "outcomes," or types of results, and not "standards," or precise levels of achievement. The setting of standards to measure students' achievement of these Outcomes has deliberately been left to local writing programs and their institutions.

In this Statement "composing" refers broadly to complex writing processes that are increasingly reliant on the use of digital technologies. Writers also attend to elements of design, incorporating images and graphical elements into texts intended for screens as well as printed pages. Writers' composing activities have always been shaped by the technologies available to them, and digital technologies are changing writers' relationships to their texts and audiences in evolving ways. These outcomes are supported by a large body of research demonstrating that the process of learning to write in any medium is complex: it is both individual and social and demands continued practice and informed guidance. Programmatic decisions about helping students demonstrate these outcomes should be informed by an understanding of this research.

As students move beyond first-year composition, their writing abilities do not merely improve. Rather, their abilities will diversify along disciplinary, professional, and civic lines as these writers move into new settings where expected outcomes expand, multiply, and diverge. Therefore, this document advises faculty in all disciplines about how to help students build on what they learn in introductory writing courses.

**Rhetorical Knowledge**

*Rhetorical knowledge* is the ability to analyze contexts and audiences and then to act on that analysis in comprehending and creating texts. Rhetorical knowledge is the basis of composing. Writers develop rhetorical knowledge by negotiating purpose, audience, context, and conventions as they compose a variety of texts for different situations.

*By the end of first-year composition, students should*

- Learn and use key rhetorical concepts through analyzing and composing a variety of texts
- Gain experience reading and composing in several genres to understand how genre conventions shape and are shaped by readers' and writers' practices and purposes
- Develop facility in responding to a variety of situations and contexts calling for purposeful shifts in voice, tone, level of formality, design, medium, and/or structure
- Understand and use a variety of technologies to address a range of audiences
- Match the capacities of different environments (e.g., print and electronic) to varying rhetorical situations

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The expectations of readers in their fields
- The main features of genres in their fields
- The main purposes of composing in their fields

### **Critical Thinking, Reading, and Composing**

*Critical thinking* is the ability to analyze, synthesize, interpret, and evaluate ideas, information, situations, and texts. When writers think critically about the materials they use—whether print texts, photographs, data sets, videos, or other materials—they separate assertion from evidence, evaluate sources and evidence, recognize and evaluate underlying assumptions, read across texts for connections and patterns, identify and evaluate chains of reasoning, and compose appropriately qualified and developed claims and generalizations. These practices are foundational for advanced academic writing.

*By the end of first-year composition, students should*

- Use composing and reading for inquiry, learning, critical thinking, and communicating in various rhetorical contexts
- Read a diverse range of texts, attending especially to relationships between assertion and evidence, to patterns of organization, to the interplay between verbal and nonverbal elements, and to how these features function for different audiences and situations
- Locate and evaluate (for credibility, sufficiency, accuracy, timeliness, bias and so on) primary and secondary research materials, including journal articles and essays, books, scholarly and professionally established and maintained databases or archives, and informal electronic networks and internet sources
- Use strategies—such as interpretation, synthesis, response, critique, and design/redesign—to compose texts that integrate the writer's ideas with those from appropriate sources

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The kinds of critical thinking important in their disciplines
- The kinds of questions, problems, and evidence that define their disciplines
- Strategies for reading a range of texts in their fields

### **Processes**

Writers use multiple strategies, or *composing processes*, to conceptualize, develop, and finalize projects. Composing processes are seldom linear: a writer may research a topic before drafting, then conduct additional research while revising or after consulting a colleague. Composing processes are also flexible: successful writers can adapt their composing processes to different contexts and occasions.

*By the end of first-year composition, students should*

- Develop a writing project through multiple drafts
- Develop flexible strategies for reading, drafting, reviewing, collaborating, revising, rewriting, rereading, and editing
- Use composing processes and tools as a means to discover and reconsider ideas
- Experience the collaborative and social aspects of writing processes

- Learn to give and to act on productive feedback to works in progress
- Adapt composing processes for a variety of technologies and modalities
- Reflect on the development of composing practices and how those practices influence their work

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- To employ the methods and technologies commonly used for research and communication within their fields
- To develop projects using the characteristic processes of their fields
- To review work-in-progress for the purpose of developing ideas before surface-level editing
- To participate effectively in collaborative processes typical of their field

### **Knowledge of Conventions**

*Conventions* are the formal rules and informal guidelines that define genres, and in so doing, shape readers' and writers' perceptions of correctness or appropriateness. Most obviously, conventions govern such things as mechanics, usage, spelling, and citation practices. But they also influence content, style, organization, graphics, and document design.

Conventions arise from a history of use and facilitate reading by invoking common expectations between writers and readers. These expectations are not universal; they vary by genre (conventions for lab notebooks and discussion-board exchanges differ), by discipline (conventional moves in literature reviews in Psychology differ from those in English), and by occasion (meeting minutes and executive summaries use different registers). A writer's grasp of conventions in one context does not mean a firm grasp in another. Successful writers understand, analyze, and negotiate conventions for purpose, audience, and genre, understanding that genres evolve in response to changes in material conditions and composing technologies and attending carefully to emergent conventions.

*By the end of first-year composition, students should*

- Develop knowledge of linguistic structures, including grammar, punctuation, and spelling, through practice in composing and revising
- Understand why genre conventions for structure, paragraphing, tone, and mechanics vary
- Gain experience negotiating variations in genre conventions
- Learn common formats and/or design features for different kinds of texts
- Explore the concepts of intellectual property (such as fair use and copyright) that motivate documentation conventions
- Practice applying citation conventions systematically in their own work

Faculty in all programs and departments can build on this preparation by helping students learn

- The reasons behind conventions of usage, specialized vocabulary, format, and citation systems in their fields or disciplines
- Strategies for controlling conventions in their fields or disciplines
- Factors that influence the ways work is designed, documented, and disseminated in their fields

- Ways to make informed decisions about intellectual property issues connected to common genres and modalities in their fields.

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