

Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019

2017

Consequences of Skipping First Year Composition: Mapping Student Writing from High School to the Academic Disciplines

Craig Bell
University of Central Florida

 Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#), and the [Rhetoric and Composition Commons](#)
Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd>
University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Masters Thesis (Open Access) is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019 by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

STARS Citation

Bell, Craig, "Consequences of Skipping First Year Composition: Mapping Student Writing from High School to the Academic Disciplines" (2017). *Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2004-2019*. 5648.
<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd/5648>

CONSEQUENCES OF SKIPPING FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION: MAPPING STUDENT WRITING FROM
HIGH SCHOOL TO THE ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

by

CRAIG BELL
B.A. Colorado State University, 1996

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Writing and Rhetoric
in the College of Arts and Humanities
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring Term
2017

Major Professor: Kevin Roozen

© 2017 CRAIG BELL

ABSTRACT

Research in writing studies has focused on students who make the traditional transition from high school to first year composition, to the entry level discipline specific courses in their chosen majors (Wardle, 2007, 2009; Sommers and Saltz, 2004; Beaufort, 2007; Carroll, 2002). Very little scholarship addresses those students who “skip” first year composition and find themselves in entry level discipline specific courses classrooms. With three former students, I conduct a case study over the course of eight months via a series of face to face, facetime, skype and email interviews. Each of these students, through earning high test scores in high school, forego first year composition and move directly to entry level discipline specific courses. Using third generation activity theory as a lens (Engeström, 1996, 1999, 2001; Roth and Lee, 2007; Russell, 1995, 1997; Kain and Wardle, 2002), I examine these students’ understanding of what they have experienced in high school writing—specifically high school English class—what they think college writing will demand, and finally what, in fact, they find the college writing demands to be. Not only do I find that each of the students felt very prepared for the demands they will encounter, but they *remained* confident. The study does, however, illuminate unforeseen challenges for both students and those who teach them: student literate lives are incredibly complex, and there is a real potential for a writing gap between formal writing instruction and when students will engage in intensive discipline writing tasks.

An endeavor such as this, completed in a life such as mine cannot be done without the motivation of many. Given the fact that so many have found it difficult to imagine I would graduate high school so many years ago, the fact that this thesis has come about is a testament not only to work I have put in, but to the sacrifice that those around me have endured. It is with great humility and love that I dedicate this expression of something I know to my wife, Beth; my sons, Keegan and Carrick, my grandson Axton, and to my mom and dad—for if it were not for them, many of the others would not exist.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This seems like such an impossible task, as so many people helped me through this process.

First, I have to thank my wife who, on so many occasions would tolerate my late night reading, frantic writing, and utter frustration. She has been my rock. Second on this list has to be Kevin Roozen, for I have no idea how this would have been possible without his guidance and motivation. On more than one occasion, the towel was ready to be thrown in, and he would not allow it. I remember sitting in a methods class with Angela Rounsaville, and having the idea that activity theory is a thing, and that it might work for this. It was her confidence and calm that allowed me to venture into this project. Matthew Bryan has been the perfect addition to this committee in that he has allowed me to maintain my voice, but kept me in check with spot-on editing. Although she is no longer at our school, Elizabeth Wardle was an inspiration to me, even if intimidating. Hers, and so many others who are experts in this field let me see that this is an important project to tackle. Finally, I would like to acknowledge my sons, my daughter-in-law, and my grandson, as it was them who I could not let down while writing this.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE.....	1
Mapping Student Writing from High School to the Academic Disciplines	1
The Traditional Navigation of the Educational System	5
FYC as an Essential Course for Entering College Students	8
What Some of the Current Research Says.....	12
Some Tools for Student Mediation when Moving from Novice to Expert	16
Options Afforded to Students to “Skip” FYC:	19
Although Well-Intentioned, Some Questions Arise:	24
Third Generation Activity Theory and Its Connection to This Project.....	25
Introduction to the Participants	29
CHAPTER 2: METHODS.....	31
Participants and Setting.....	31
Data Collection	34
Analysis	37
How My Use of Activity Theory Evolved.....	38
PARTICIPANT NARRATIVE CHAPTERS.....	39
HARPER	41
Our Initial Interview—Senior year of high school	42
Harper and how much she <i>enjoys</i> writing in different disciplines in high school	50
What about the Next Steps?	53
Our Interview at the Beginning of Her Freshman Year	55

Our Interview Midway through Her First Semester	60
Our Interview after Her First Semester	63
MARIE.....	72
Our Initial Interview—Senior year of high school	73
Importance of Feedback.....	81
Our Interview at the Beginning of Her Freshman Year	83
Our Interview Midway through Her First Semester	86
Our Interview after Her First Semester	88
JACK.....	93
Our Initial Interview—Senior year of high school	94
How Confident Jack Feels about Writing Leaving High School.....	99
Our Interview at the Beginning of His Freshman Year	102
Jack’s English Class.....	106
Our Interview after His First Semester	111
CONCLUSION.....	114
What I Wanted to Know	114
What I found out about what I wanted to know.....	115
What I found out, but didn’t know I wanted to know.....	118
Constraints/Complications: Implications for Research	120
Implications for Teaching	123
APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT QUESTIONS	127
High School Writing and Self-Efficacy Example Questions:.....	128

Follow-up Interview Sample Questions:..... 129

Round Three Interview Questions..... 129

APPENDIX B: APPROVAL OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH 131

REFERENCES..... 133

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Mapping Student Writing from High School to the Academic Disciplines

For a multitude of reasons, high school teachers tend to teach students, get to know them, share in their lives as we see them every day for 180 days, and sometimes for multiple years. They cry in our classrooms, laugh, come tell us things we are not certain we want/need to know, and yet, as they graduate we often lose touch with them. This has implications on a personal level, in that both teacher and student often form a bond during this time together. Teachers often discuss students who have left, and they share tidbits of information about those they have heard about. However, there are questions we might want to ask on a more professional level that we don't often get the chance to do. How well are students prepared when they enter their next endeavor? What did we do in high school that benefited students the most, and what did not work? What are the expectations of the teachers, professors, and employers that students encounter once they leave high school? Few high schools have a system of following students who leave them to determine if what the system is doing works in the meaningful ways in which it is intended. Seldom is there a dialogue between high school and college teachers looking at how well prepared students come to college. Given the constraints of teaching at the college level, few college professors are aware of what occurs in the classrooms and lives of the students they teach—both those HSE classes from whence they

come and the college classrooms they enter. And thus, the gatekeepers of these systems do not fully understand each other.

I teach at a small, public school of approximately one-thousand students that has both a junior and senior high school in it. We are located on the central eastern coast of Florida, and serve a diverse population that has changed over the past several years due to many factors: loss in school budgets, overall economic downturn causing some major employers in the area to shut down, loss of bussing of students from out-of-area to the school, and other reasons. With just over eleven thousand residents in the city, itself, our school draws on this area and given the competitive nature of programs such as ours, about one third of our students travel from other cities in the district to attend. Ours is an IB school, meaning that we are sanctioned by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO) and offer their Middle Years and Diploma Programmes. We also offer diverse Advanced Placement courses throughout the students' time with us, to include AP Language and Composition.

The students at our school often move on to college, and often move on to four-year universities. What we do not do well is follow our students once they leave our walls. We tend to depend on anecdotal and assumed information as to the success of our teaching, which with regards to Language Arts, or English, is often based on tried and true methods of teaching that have changed little over past several decades. That is not to say that there have not been several "movements" over this time, but rather that given the enormity of the task and the logistics of influencing large numbers of educators who work in a rather autonomous space, those who teach at this level will quite often stick to what they know, and this often looks a lot

like how they were taught. This is the case, even in this time of Common Core Standards based instruction and the monetary carrots dangling before the educational system by the No Child Left Behind Act.

What this thesis looks at is a snapshot of the journey that three of these students have begun, and how their unique paths might prepare them, or not, for the rigors of introductory courses in the disciplines they may be entering in college. Each of these students was enrolled in the IB Programme, and each received their IB Diploma. Each of them also took a hybrid class in eleventh grade that combines the IB requirements with AP Language and Composition requirements. In this particular course they complete both IB and AP assessments. Each of these students scored five on their AP Language exams—this is the highest mark. It is important to note, as shown later, that these students are high performing students who move from their high school to their universities and have *earned* the right to bypass the traditional pathway.

These students have entered universities in the south—two attend public universities, while one attends a private university. Two of the students are planning on going into nursing, while one of them is still undecided, but seems to be leaning toward a law degree. What's interesting is their differing experiences with writing within their institutions and their tracks. What is also interesting is the fact that they each must negotiate complex networks of systems, and have been doing so for quite some time.

I began this project with four goals in mind: 1) To understand the students' consequences of testing out of First Year Composition (FYC) via programs such as Advanced

Placement testing or International Bachelorette; 2) To understand what students feel they have learned in their high school English (HSE) classes and how well prepared they feel they are in entering university-level writing; 3) To understand how these students' perception of their writing abilities compare to the actual writing demands of university level introductory discipline specific course writing; and 4) To understand the relationship between the writing goals/expectations of AP, IB, and selected FYC courses and the writing goals/expectations in introductory, discipline specific courses. As a HSE teacher and a person who has spent a great deal of time studying contemporary composition studies, I was curious as to how these students might negotiate their next academic steps with this in mind. From these objectives, several research questions have emerged: 1) How do high school students who will test out of FYC believe their writing skills developed through high school have prepared them for university writing tasks? 2) What do high school students perceive university writing to look like, especially in discipline specific courses? 3) How do students' perceptions change as they take discipline-specific courses (DSC) from high school? 4) Once in their first semester at university, how do students define the expectations of discipline-specific courses? Some of the limitations discussed in the methods chapter are that this snapshot does not allow for a great deal of information on several of the DSC the students will take. It does, however, provide interesting insight as to how well these students both feel they are prepared for the rigors of college writing and how their grades and experiences reflect whether what they feel to be true is, in fact, true. It seems that a good place to begin is to understand how this project looks at systems and tools used to negotiate them.

The Traditional Navigation of the Educational System

From the outside, the movements college-bound students make throughout their education seems to follow common patterns. For example, a student enters kindergarten, navigates elementary school, then middle and high schools where she takes honors classes and the ACT. She fills out applications and writes the personal essays admissions offices require, applies to college and waits for her acceptance letter. It comes, and she enters college, taking mostly prerequisites for the first two years. Then, the “real” classes begin where she learns about what her discipline is really about and legitimate headway begins. Granted, there are circumstances and individual issues that individualize these experiences, but in order for *so many* people to move through *so many* spaces there needs to be *some sort of* process; something that all actors understand—even if just a little. In essence, we have what Clay Spinuzzi, in his book *Network: Theorizing Knowledge Work in Telecommunications*, calls a “black box” (39), where from the outside everything seems tidy and effective, but below the surface, the inner workings are complex and connected.

It seems that as the world in general, and the world of education in particular have become more complex, students still navigate the evolving landscape. In truth, what are their options? Given the intrinsic need for systems to change, the education system, itself, becomes more complex via directives, mandates, financial constraints, and its need to “reinvent” itself, leaving students with an ever-changing environment. To be sure, this reflects a traditional paradigm, but with the rise of private and charter schools, and virtual options for students and

parents, today's actuality is much more layered than in times past. Recess and story-time of kindergarten have given way to choosing electives and moving through seven classes in a day with layers of homework and extracurricular activities, and eventually a job, and personal relationships, and so it goes. One need only to compare today's levels of systemic standardized testing across the country to those of a decade ago to understand this complexity. Public debate concerning directives such as No Child Left Behind and Common Core Standards provide us with the glaring divisiveness in *how* students should be educated. Regardless of the complexities, however, there remains a common goal for education: movement from novice to expert (Wardle, Bazerman, Carter, Russell, Smit). Granted, expertise carries its own litany of conflicting and diverse interpretations, but at its core, the system of education embraces this novice to expert movement. Michael Carter, in his article "The Idea of Expertise: An Exploration . . .," looks at how "social theorists define an expert writer as one who has attained the local knowledge that enables her to write as a member of a discourse community" and also that "Discourse should always be defined by its context," suggesting "novice writers should be initiated into a discourse community by studying the conventions of that community and the way writing is used in that community" (266). Almost twenty years before Carter's article, David Bartholomae thinks "all writers, in order to write, must imagine themselves the privilege of being 'insiders'—that is, of being both inside an established and powerful discourse, and of being granted a special right to speak" ("Inventing the University" 10). So it would seem that the task is, indeed, to allow students access to these communities. To determine if we are doing this we might look at the layers within this system—the "black box"—with the hope

being that they work in concert with each other. It is here, in the system, within a very specific line of movement within the educational system—within the movement past FYC—where the focus of this project finds itself.

Yrjo Engestrom, in “Activity theory and transformation”, states that “Human activity is endlessly multifaceted, mobile, and rich in variations of content and form” (20), allowing for the common idea that within systems and even more so when multiple systems work together, we find process and tradition used in the navigation both within and in between them. A given result of these processes and traditions is the fact that they will change over time in response to multiple factors—a systemic evolution. To be sure, “the most important aspect of human activity is its creativity and its ability to exceed or transcend given constraints and instructions” (Engestrom 26-27). This absolutely holds true for the traditional movements of students from high school to secondary education, as they venture out of a collection of systems they have grown to know for over twelve years and move into a new system containing systems that will be foreign to them. Whether they are aware, or not, even “the solitary writer is part of some activity system(s) that give meaning and motive to individual acts of composition” (Russell “Activity Theory and Its . . .” 6). Students who wish to go on to post-secondary education tend to take preparatory classes such as honors and navigate tools within systems such as Advanced Placement courses, diagnostic tests such as the ACT or SAT, and look to those who went before them for guidance through this process. In this vein, in his article “Expansive Learning at Work” Yrjo Engestrom points out that “People and organizations are all the time learning something that is not stable, not even defined or understood ahead of time. In important transformations

of our personal lives and organizational practices, we must learn new forms of activity which are not yet there. They are literally learned as they are being created” (138). It is my contention that this perspective can be confusing. That is to say that a student can enter the systems and see the space as “not stable” and what they learn might be “being created” within them, as they come bearing great diversity within themselves. This project finds itself looking at students’ movement from high school to university, and more specifically the move from high school English classes (HSE) into discipline specific courses (DSC) without first taking First Year Composition (FYC), systems and spaces where the activities can appear quite unstable. These are students who in their preparation have taken demanding courses in high school that often provide college credit, and thus will not follow the “traditional” path through prerequisite courses at the university level. From the outside, what does this look like? What we find, though, is that even though HSE and FYC seem to work well for comparative purposes, the students’ negotiation of their multitude of systems of learning are multi-tiered and complex.

FYC as an Essential Course for Entering College Students

Student preparedness is nothing new, as post-Civil War Harvard sought to address the issue of students entering the university lacking the skills required to meet the literate demands they would encounter in their disciplinary majors. In 1874, Harvard’s English A was designed as a space in which entering students could start to acquire the voices of their chosen disciplines, a key first step in their movement from novice to expert writers. From Harvard’s English A,

universities developed First Year Composition (FYC) as *the* central place for high school graduates to develop skills to meet these demands.

Over the next century, in the wake of Harvard's English A class, diverse solutions to writing instruction emerged and evolved as the landscape of both secondary and post-secondary education changed, ultimately designed to help students make the transition from high school to college. What we often recognize as the traditional approach to composition studies is a skills-based general approach embedded in a need for understanding the grammar and generalized style of a time. This does not, however, reflect the diversity of writing systems that students experience as they transition into their chosen disciplines. In response, progressive movements such as Expressivism and process focused pedagogy emerged via the likes of Peter Elbow (*Writing Without Teachers*) and Ken Macrorie (*Telling Writing*) and in response to a wider range of students entering academia after WWII and desegregation, and focuses on the voices of students new to post-secondary education. Although addressing the diversity of voice, and providing validity to previously unaccepted student voices, these approaches came, and still come, up against stiff criticism in that although they do provide personal authenticity, they offer little to students in addressing the voices they will need to enter the disciplines. Drawing on the connective, transitional and social aspects needed more in academic writing, Kenneth Bruffee ("Collaborative Learning"), James Britton (*Language and Learning*), Janet Emig ("Writing and a Mode"), David Russell ("Rethinking Genre in School") and others contributed to the Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines that emerged as a means of looking to address the gap between a student centered approach to

writing and the task at hand—the specific needs of diverse disciplines in an effort to have a more focused approach to writing skills acquisition.

In this time, scholarship about composition studies was growing. This is partly in response to those who question the disciplinary features of Composition Studies and also as a means of making sense of the enormous volume of information on writing that has emerged. David Smit looks at the volume of emerging research and pedagogies and argues “that the past forty years have seen research and scholarship in the field [Composition Studies] proliferate in so many different directions that composition studies, which never had a common methodology, has lost touch with its primary reason for being—the teaching of writing,” and he argues that “composition studies needs to go back to the basic questions, such as these: What is writing? How is writing learned? Can writing be taught, and if so, in what sense? And if writing can be taught, how should it be taught? (*The End of Composition Studies* 2). Elizabeth Wardle, in “Mutt Genres”, says that for too long the place of FYC’s goal has been, and continues to be, to teach students “general things about academic language use that will help them write during college—and perhaps after” (766). Understanding FYC, and eventually HSE, as an activity system, she later suggests that we need to “radically re-examine the goals of FYC” (767). What emerges, and given the natural progression via the emerging canon of research and tendencies of Composition Studies to pull from diverse disciplines, is Writing About Writing, in response to the wealth of research on literacy, genre, and writing transfer. Elizabeth Wardle and Doug Downs in their text, *Writing about Writing: a College Reader*, address discipline specific and cross-disciplinary research that treats writing studies as such—a

discipline. Although the iterations of composition we know today look very little like the one offered at Harvard at the end of the 19th century, the goal remains largely unchanged: to serve as a bridge for students as they transition from high school to college and then from beginners to experts in their chosen disciplines.

Given the political, economic, and ideological complexities of education in the twenty-first century, the traditional work of FYC programs, preparation for the demands of disciplinary writing (Elbow, Russell, Wardle, and Bazerman), has given rise to a number of programs that relegate that work to secondary schools—i.e. AP and IB. Other options have emerged within secondary education in response to a need to both better prepare students for the academic rigors of college and to allow some passage through certain courses. Dual enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP), and International Baccalaureate (IB) programs tout pedagogical frameworks seeking to create a transition space for students to prepare for college, at least; at best, they seek to provide courses and programs to replace post-secondary coursework—namely FYC.

By allowing students to receive college credit while still in high school, the increasing popularity of dual enrollment, AP, and IB programs appear to be effective ways to address the rising cost of higher education, but at what cost to the students' education itself? Might there also be costs associated with ushering students from high school to disciplinary coursework without taking FYC? Given the extensive research and implementation of research on the movement to and out of university FYC courses, might there not be a new "gap" students need to navigate? My thesis directly addresses these questions.

What Some of the Current Research Says

High school English classes and first-year composition classes in the universities are different. The degree of difference is rather impressive. Virginia Crank, in her article “From High School to College: Developing Writing Skills in the Disciplines” quotes Tiane Donahue who states, “College faculty seem to know little about what high school teachers are asking students to do and why, and less about what high school students bring with them to the college writing classroom” (49). Marilyn Sternglass claims, “The paradox is that as students are less prepared by the public schools, the colleges are demanding better preparation, as if *saying* that students should have a better education in the elementary and secondary schools actually brings those changes into being” (*Time to Know Them* . . . 98). Being a high school English teacher, I am well aware that most of us who teach English in high school have little knowledge of what FYC instructors are asking of the students we send to them. This is often echoed from the other side—FYC teachers not knowing the demands on HSE teachers. Anecdotally, once I began this MA program, and subsequently began reading the current research and theory coupled with that which had led to the current pedagogies and methods in FYC, I had no concept of transfer, genre, or the richness of the rhetorical tradition available in the university setting. It might be important to note, as well, that according to the prevailing benchmarks within the high school paradigms, I am considered a successful teacher: high test scores on local, state and national assessments at various levels of student ability. Also, as I mentor new teachers, it seems that via my interactions with newly graduated high school English teachers, few of them are well-

versed in the frameworks of the FYC classrooms, but rather find themselves understanding a pedagogy attending to the various demands placed on those teaching secondary students. This makes sense, but in the end, does it prepare students?

In essence, “the gap between high schools and college writing can complicate interactions between students, who often believe that their high school English teachers (particularly in college-prep courses) have given them all the tools they need for success in writing at college, and college teachers, who have only a vague idea of what this high school writing instruction looks like” (Crank 49), and it is this complication, this misunderstanding, that allows for the diversity in students’ navigation of this continuum. And it is in this space where as Susan Fanetti et al. suggest “we think of elementary, middle, and secondary education as occurring on a continuum, with one grade preparing students for the next [that] we must begin to think of postsecondary education occurring on the same continuum, with high school learning intended specifically to prepare students for the next level of study” (“Closing the Gap between High School . . . 77). It seems as if rather than a continuum, we instead act quite autonomously both within the high school and within the gap between HSE and FYC, but this is natural given the repeated suggestion that high school education is designed to be standardized and quantifiable while college education is designed to be theoretical (Crank, Fanetti et al., Beil and Knight). And yet, we know that students often move from HSE past FYC and straight into DSC. If this is the case, then it seems as if the relationship between the two should be more collaborative, allowing for students exposure to what it is they “skip”. No doubt, organizations such as IB and College Board feel their programs and pedagogies might

address this. The argument from WPA's concerning this movement holds merit if, as Crank suggests, "students entering college are not fully prepared to do the kinds of writing tasks required of them in college," (50). However, she continues in that "It would be difficult for those of us who teach and have always taught at the college level to truly understand the power and influence of the external pressures that lead secondary teachers away from using writing more often" (51), and these pressures are many.

The research suggests, and few would argue against, that one of the driving forces for this disconnect is the pressure on HSE teachers to prepare their students for standardized testing. In looking at the gap between HSE and FYC, Susan Fanetti et al, in their article "Closing the Gap between High School Writing Instruction and College Writing Expectations", they address this testing pressure and understand that high school success is "measured against standards set locally and nationally," and that learning this type of focus has "'caused' more writing in high school, but at the expense of actual writing instruction and experience" (78). The results are "when the students learn testing well, their high schools show it in statistics, but the students come to college and have to unlearn before they can learn" (Fanetti et al 78).

Still, students will move from one to the other, and researchers like Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz have conducted research documenting this movement. In the longitudinal traditions of the likes of Marilyn Sternglass (*Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*), Lee Ann Carrol (*Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers*), Shirley Brice Heath (*Ways With Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*), and others, Sommers and Saltz follow students through their

academic lives, looking to see “ways in which students talk about writing and how that language shifts over four years” (“The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year” 126). They discuss the “buoyancy” of the students as they are “asked to refashion themselves as writers” in a year “in which as novices they need to figure out the expectations of college writing while producing paper after paper” (128). Or, as Lee Ann Carroll says, “they [students] must abandon their ‘normal’ ways of writing to adjust to the demands of a new environment and new roles” (*Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers* 47). Linda Bergman and Janet Zepernick, when looking at student perceptions of their gaining off expertise as writers found “a tendency among students to actively reject the idea that what they learned about writing in high school or in first year composition courses could be applied to the writing they were asked to do in courses in other disciplines” (124), but it seems to me that this might not always be the case, as Sommers and Saltz state that the freshmen they studied were “enthused” about the learning via writing not so much because of the writing, but rather “the way it helps to locate them in the academic culture, giving them a sense of academic belonging” (131). It is this belonging that I think resonates with many students, and much of what they have learned might move from their consciousness to a less obvious set of scaffolding that develops them as writers. In other words, there is a quality of “feeling” good about knowing that is more internalized by students and not as overtly, or consciously, taught to them. It is as one of their subjects feels about the paradoxical notion of “writing simultaneously as a novice and expert” (132), as students who both move from FYC and HSE will do as they negotiate their DSC.

As one of the main goals of both FYC and also the advanced HSE courses is to help move students from novice to expert, it is important to note that “writing development is painstakingly slow because academic writing is never a student’s mother tongue; if conventions require instruction and practice, lots of imitation and experimentation in rehearsing other people’s arguments before being able to articulate one’s own” (Sommers 145). It is in this space that I want to discuss how this occurs, and from there how I look at the mechanisms of this transformation. The current research finds traction in the notion of transfer.

Some Tools for Student Mediation when Moving from Novice to Expert

It bears mentioning how we look to prepare students for the writing they will be asked to do beyond the writing classrooms, whether that is the HSE classroom or FYC. The majority of our students will not become English literature majors, and many will not spend any more time in a “writing” class beyond these two options. As we see within the realm of activity theory, language can become one of the tools negotiated as students move from system to system, and this understanding of language as a tool for mediation reflects a growing trend in the college writing classroom. Interestingly enough, regardless of the level in which writing is taught, there is no chance of teaching students all they will need to know to write in all of the contexts they will come into contact with over their college careers and beyond. And, “if there is no such thing as writing expertise, or ‘general’ writing skill, but rather individual expert writing performances, as Bazerman (1994) argues,” Anne Beaufort suggests, “then there is a need to conceptualize writing in a whole other way” (17). If this is the case, as many others seem to

agree (Wardle, Smit, Bartholomae, Yancey et al, and Rounsaville et al), then we might want to look at how students are negotiating the waters and understand these new paradigms on these various levels. David Smit is committed to this rethinking of teaching composition and devotes a chapter to “Transfer” in his book *The End of Composition Studies*, and in this evaluation and reevaluation, he claims that it is the consciousness, the awareness of this shift in context that helps students only if they see the “similarity between what they have learned in the in the past and what they need to do in new contexts” (119). Within the parameters of this thesis, this is paramount, as it is the students’ awareness, their comfort, their understanding of the contexts and what they think of their writing in them, connected to the knowledge with which they enter them that creates the narrative.

As recently as 2009, in Elizabeth Wardle’s article “Mutt Genres” she admits, “We cannot say with certainty why transfer does not occur. In theory,” she adds, it “depends to a large extent on an individual’s ability to recognize similarities between two situations” (770). She understands that in the FYC classroom teachers are “charged with preparing students to write for and in the activity systems of other disciplinary classrooms,” but “neither they nor their students are conducting the work that calls or and shapes those genres in other disciplinary classrooms” (767). Over twenty years before, David Bartholomae understood that a “writer has to ‘build bridges’ between his point of view and his readers” (9). It is building these bridges and in a “writers ability to abstract elements from a known situation and refigure those abstractions into a less familiar situation” (Rounsaville et al. “From Incomes to Outcomes” 99), and allow negotiation. In other words, students must take what confuses them and turn it into what they

know Kathleen Blake Yancey et al., in *Writing Across Contexts*, take from Reiff and Bawarshi, using the term “boundary crosser” for students who accept “noviceship, at least implicitly, often as a consequence of struggling to meet the demands of a new writing task” (15). As I was asking students, over time, how their HSE class knowledge allowed them to build bridges, or to cross boundaries, or how they dealt with the struggles of new writing tasks, then this transfer between systems is important. As is the tool they transfer, or repurpose: genre.

With transfer as the goal, Angela Rounsaville, in her article “Selecting Genres for Transfer . . .,” looks at “high road transfer” via students understanding prior genre knowledge and thus shifting FYC from “a gate keeping to a gate opening function” (1), and this speaks to the boundary crossing above. She suggests that “genres, and in particular ‘genres [writers] carry,’ help knit together genre knowledge over time as writers are never without these generic frames as they traverse literary domains” (3). In essence, students have genre knowledge with them as they navigate their educations. It might behoove them to understand their entrance as a novice to be acceptable and to understand that in moving from system to system, or in moving upwards within a system, they are not expected to be experts but rather to seek a pathway to being such. These build within them, and this makes me question as to whether these students moving from HSE to DSC understand the tools they carry from one system to another. Carolyn Miller argues that “a rhetorically sound definition of genre must be centered not on the substance of the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish” (“Genre as Social Action” 151). Therefore, if we look at the action, or the work, done by the genre, and if we can assert that students carry with them knowledge of genres they have come

to understand, we might then see these as tools used to mediate and negotiate entrance into new areas of knowledge. Elizabeth Wardle, in “Mutt Genres” understands that “FYC’s official purpose is to prepare students for the genres they will write elsewhere,” or as she uses Etienne Wenger who suggests FYC is a “boundary practice, linking students from where they were (and what they were writing) to where they will go (and what they will write)” (776) we might find them “actively functioning as bridges to the varied disciplinary genres students will encounter,” (782). I want to know if this is happening in the less informed world of high level HSE classes, where teachers are either not privy to the developing research, or due to systemic constraints they are not “informed” .

Options Afforded to Students to “Skip” FYC:

While all of this pedagogical and theoretical jockeying has been going on, growth in the alternatives to a traditional academic progression suggests that high school English students might be able to obtain what universities might call adequate levels of writing skill within the often prescriptive realm of high school education. Organizations such as the International Baccalaureate (IB) Programme, and College Board, with their Advanced Placement courses (AP), have provided both pedagogical frameworks and assessment tools to offer “college credit” for students who pass their assessments. Even though these options are often discussed in the same context, many differences exist.

Ideally, IB students follow a sequence of study, but a student can get their IB Diploma by taking the two years of the Diploma Programme—typically 11th and 12th grade. Here is where the lion’s share of work is done with regards to this project. According to IBO.org, IB’s official website, students who complete the Language A Literature Course will “have a thorough knowledge of a range of texts and an understanding of other cultural perspectives. They will also have developed skills of analysis and the ability to support an argument in clearly expressed writing, sometimes at significant length. This course will enable them to succeed in a wide range of university courses, particularly in literature but also in subjects such as philosophy, law and language.” They also report that according to a study done in 2012, Diploma candidates were more likely to enroll in college, to enroll in selective colleges, to stay enrolled and to perform better once there” than the non-diploma candidates, and that they felt “well-prepared to succeed in college coursework.” Students in the United States more often follow Higher Level testing in Language A (English in the USA).

Language A is a four-semester course divided into four parts. The majority of the IB schools in the USA choose the literature track, and as the name suggests finds its focus on literature-based instruction—i.e. the novel, drama, and poetry. The instruction of each part culminates in required assessments that range from oral presentations on books studied in a certain part of the programme, oral commentary on a poem studied, a written assignment in the form of a polished paper based on a translated work read, and two “papers” or what we might call timed essay tests—both of which take place over a two hour time frame. What sets

the IB Programme apart from others is the “Programme” aspect of the curriculum. Students are required to prove proficiency in all disciplines studied and in the end complete an extended essay on a chosen topic. On top of all of this, there is a culminating assignment called the Extended Essay where students will research and develop a 4000-word essay that takes on more academic genre qualities and are discipline specific. IBO reports that students who complete this essay, compared to students who take AP courses only, “felt prepared for college-level research; were proud of their research; intended to conduct future research; and believed research skills were important to their future success.” This particular study also found “a significant relationship between the EE score and college grade point averages.” It is for these reasons, multiple genre writing and extended research-based writing, that provide a rather generous credit program. For example, the University of Florida allows credit for both ENC 1101 and ENC 1102—their FYC sequence—for scores of 5-7 on English A IB assessments. The University of Central Florida allows for ENC 1101 for a score of 4 in English A and for both ENC 1101 and 1102 for scores of 5-7.

Another, and much more popular option for students in high school are Advanced Placement courses offered by College Board who are not subtle in their reasoning as they state, “earning a qualifying score on the AP exam can help you advance and avoid required introductory courses” (<https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/exploreap/the-rewards>). The simple reason for schools offering more AP courses is simple. IB schools have a significant financial obligation to IB. College Board makes its money on selling the tests. According to a

2014 US News report, during the 2012-2013 school years 830 schools in the US offered the DP, while almost 14,000 offered AP courses. The range of courses offered is wide, but germane to this project are AP Language and Composition (AP Lang) and AP Literature and Composition (AP Lit). In AP Language and Composition, students have both written and multiple choice tests to take. The multiple choice consists of reading excerpts from 18th to 20th century non-fiction and answering questions that deal with rhetorical features, documentation, and comprehension. The written portion of the exam consists of three essays written in a two hour time frame. The first asks students to take a position on a provided issue and utilize provided documents as support for this position. The second has students read a piece of writing and then discuss the rhetorical moves made in the writing. The third essay asks students to develop an argument based on a broad issue, causing them to employ their own set of rhetorical skills. More often, if students score well on either, or both, of these courses, they are rewarded with differing levels of college credit—often allowing them to “skip” FYC. As with IB, the University of Florida allows for “skipping” both ENC 1101 and 1102 with passing scores of 4 or 5. A score of 3 allows for credit for ENC 1101 only. These affordances are the same for the University of Central Florida and are common throughout other domestic universities.

According to College Board, the number of students testing in Advanced Placement Language and Composition has increased from approximately 306,000 students in 2008 to over 552,000 students in 2016 (Total Registration): slightly over a 67% increase in eight years. As many, if not most, post-secondary institutions offer some level of credit for passing these

assessments, this has become an attractive option for students, parents, high schools, and post-secondary institutions. In essence, students can “skip” FYC by taking these courses, and few of these courses engage in the current pedagogy and research of writing/composition studies. These are not without their critics. In a 2002 study by Kristine Hansen, Suzanne Reeve, et al., published in the WPA Journal wondered why “At a time when so-called college courses are proliferating in high schools, colleges find themselves offering more remedial instruction than ever” (33). This study looks at students who have skipped FYC, who have taken—and passed—an AP exam and also taken FYC, and those who have not taken AP courses and have taken FYC. They contend that this has “important implications for writing program administrators, who have no influence over courses that are offered elsewhere [in high school], taught by staff they did not hire or train, and evaluated by means of tests they had no hand in designing” (29), and yet these students will often receive credits for these courses. Disagreeing with earlier studies, or rather wanting to qualify the findings of earlier studies that found “there was no difference in the average grades of advanced writing students who had taken FYC and those who had bypassed it with AP credit” (31), they take into consideration the incredible increase in students taking the AP courses, the means with which the College Board assesses the exams, and the fact that there is great disparity between those students who pass the AP exams with the minimum of 3 and those who score 4’s and 5’s. What they find, at least in this course at BYU, is that students who have the AP credit with a score of 3 and FYC, have the AP credit with a score of 4-5 and FYC, and those who have the AP credit and no FYC performed fairly highly on the studied assessments. Those who scored 3 on the AP exam and did not take FYC were

significantly less prepared than the others (48). These results must have had an impact on the university, given that BYU allows for only 3 credits for those students who have scored 4-5 on the AP Language exam, and that there is a note on their registrar's website that reads:

“Entering students with AP English credit are strongly encouraged to take a First-Year Writing course (WRTG 150 or PHIL 150). Studies show that doing so contributes greatly to their success at the university. As part of their major requirements, some departments also require a First-Year Writing course even for students with AP English credit.”

Although Well-Intentioned, Some Questions Arise:

In today's world, high school students and their parents face considerable issues when looking toward post-secondary education, including the rising stakes in state testing, the rising costs of college education, and a push for students to get to their careers as soon as possible. These concerns are real, with motivation falling into two main categories: practicality and validity. Practicality takes the shape of financial concerns that are easy to understand. Within public secondary education, free course work, room and board at home and often free books make for an easy sell to parents who face increasing secondary education costs. According to the Savingforcollege.com website, the average cost of going to a 4-year public university starting in 2015 is close to \$40,000.00, and that goes up to almost \$95,000.00 in the year 2033, when babies born now might be applying. This is assuming a 5% annual increase, that according to College Board has been the norm over the past decade. For most families, this is a significant investment which is either dealt with proactively with saving and planning, reactively

with an accumulation of debt, or a combination of both. Regardless, families are smart to look for ways to mitigate these costs.

Validity comes into play as the courses often taken during the first two years of college are often perceived as gatekeeping or weed-out classes. With many parents having taken these courses more than twenty years ago—before the effects of the emerging writing/composition study’s research—it stands to reason that many would opt for ways to move their children from high school to what they see as the “real” courses. In her book, *College Writing and Beyond*, Anne Beaufort states, “For the majority of students, freshman writing is not a precursor to a writing major. It is an isolated course, an end in itself, a general education requirement to be gotten out of the way” (9). One of the problems that arises is, as David Smit suggests, “we have no consensus about what the purpose of higher education is,” or more specifically, “there is no consensus about what students should be learning when they learn to write” (The End of Composition Studies 143). Not only this, but even in the realm of academia, Composition Studies has sought to legitimize itself among the disciplines (Smit, Wardle, Downs and Wardle). Clearly, this trend will not be going away. So, questions emerge: Are students who skip FYC actually prepared for the work that lies before them? How might these secondary education alternatives reflect their post-secondary counterparts?

Third Generation Activity Theory and Its Connection to This Project

Education, as we know it, exists in networks of both autonomous and connected systems. Clay Spinuzzi looks at Telecorp in *Network: Theorizing Knowledge Work in*

Telecommunications, and I suggest that much of our education systems take on a corporate feel. Spinuzzi's use of Latour's Black Box fits well for both high schools and high school English, for universities and first-year composition and discipline specific courses, as they represent a "discipline" and all of the goings on that occur within them. From the outside, these systems look to appear "single and continuous" (Spinuzzi 50), but once inside, the systems are complex. As students look at the upcoming transition from high school to university, they often see only an application and transcripts, while once sent out, the process enters a "complex and messy sociotechnical system" (Spinuzzi 56). Students wait for the acceptance letter, and look to their courses. These systems take on names such as grade level, public, private, primary, secondary, post-secondary, and they also find themselves as disciplines within each of these. Sciences, Arts, and Humanities hold within each myriad fields of study within themselves. In secondary education, we ask students to negotiate, on a daily basis, six to seven periods of study where they enter classrooms that might have nothing to do with each other and during this time, the claim is that the lessons learned in each will prepare these students for life beyond the walls of high school. For those who move to universities, they reenter a space where the freedom, and fear, of beginning courses takes on a similar perspective, albeit a much less constrictive version of what they had known in high school.

Still, in university life, there are both connected and autonomous systems of knowing to negotiate, and in the early stages, the hope, and the claim, is that standard, required coursework that focuses on "fundamentals" will prepare students for the discipline specific courses they will encounter in their higher level studies. Given the complex negotiation of

diverse systems through which these students will travel, it stands to reason that activity theory is a valid lens from which to observe a portion of this movement.

A brief understanding of how Activity Theory came to its third iteration might be helpful. Yrjo Engeström provides an insightful AT primer in his article, “Expansive Learning at Work: Toward an Activity Theoretical Reconceptualization.” Beginning with the work of Lev Vygotsky in the early twentieth century, the first generation of AT centered Vygotsky’s idea of mediation. Here, according to Engeström, “Objects became cultural entities and the object-orientedness of action became the key to understanding human psyche” (134). Bringing cultural objects into the realm of human action was significant, but had a major limitation—this model focused on individual development/action. Alexie Leont’ev, a colleague and student of Vygotsky, developed the second generation of AT, and “explicated the crucial difference between individual action and a collective activity” (134). In essence, Leont’ev places the individual into the groups within which they interact and “turned the focus on complex interrelations between the individual subject and his or her community” 134-135). It is here where conflicts of action might elicit change within a given system. This leads us to the third generation of AT, where this project finds itself, and specifically the iterations developed by the likes of Yrjö Engeström and David Russell, and then used by both Russell and Wardle in its application to education specifically. The usage is quite natural since, as Engeström states in “Activity Theory and Individual and Social Transformation”, “the central issues of activity theory remain the object—that is what connects [the] individual actions to the collective activity” (31).

Here, the messy movement from HSE to DSC is, in the end, people moving, and we might take to heart that “Actions are not fully predictable, rational, and machine-like. The most well-planned and streamlined actions involve failures, disruptions, and unexpected innovations” (Engeström 32). Engeström moves the work of AT with the likes of Bruno Latour and Lev Vygotsky as he suggests, “keeping one’s eyes open for both vertical and horizontal relations in activity systems and their networks” (“Expansive Learning” 263). In focusing on the movement of students’ writing practices and perceptions from high school settings to those of more discipline specific areas, language becomes the tool AT theorists work with as tools of mediation. By introducing language as a tool, and “probably the most complex tool of all” (Kain and Wardle 1), they provide yet another connection for this project, in that a great deal of it revolves around the use and adaptation of language and to understand that “as people refine their tools and add new ones to solve problems more effectively, the activities they perform using those tools can change—and vice versa: as their activities change, people use their tools differently and modify their tools to meet their changing needs” (Kain and Wardle 1). In conducting this research into how students are moving from one space to another, from HSE to DSC, it is this adaptive component inherent in change that I seek. Students, over the course of their education have used tools over time and thus “operationalized” (Kain and Wardle 4) them.

Case in point is the discussion of zones of proximal development and directed activity that David Russell offers in “Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction”: the “object(ive)-directed interactions among people . . . effectively work toward the objective”

(Russell 56). In the case of this study, the objective is to write and use language to a level allowing entrance into a new system as, “Literacy is always and everywhere bound up with the activity systems that it changes through its mediation of behavior”, and “writing does not exist apart from its uses, for it is a tool for accomplishing object(ive)s beyond itself” (56). In fact, Russell states that academia “exists to select and prepare people for a wide range of activity systems and beyond institutions of higher education” (60). So, in supplying writing the place of tool and by situating the objectives of the systems through which the students travel as being the ability to make these moves, this research helps to provide a foundation on which to base this particular project.

Introduction to the Participants

This study begins with the participants being at the end of their senior years in high school and ends as they finish their first semesters at their colleges. Each had been enrolled in the IB Programme for their entire high school careers, meaning that they are in the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for 9th and 10th grades and the Diploma Programme (DP) for 11th and 12th grades. Each were former students of mine in their eleventh grade year, taking a hybrid class that combined AP Language and Composition and two parts—1 and 4—of the IB Diploma Programme. They then take the IB parts 2 and 3 from another teacher, and complete several other assessments through their other classes. What follows are narratives of a series of interviews conducted before they left for college, and during their first semester of freshman year, to include their literate stories of these students’ journey from their senior year of high

school through their first semesters of college. As the discussions unfold, we find that each has a unique story to tell, and that what I sought to find—how HSE in these challenging programs prepares, or doesn't, students for the rigors of DSC. The reality is that what I do find is the complexity that each experiences in their developments. For each of the students I establish a foundation from the initial interview and then move through the subsequent three interviews in an attempt to understand how well they initially feel they are prepared for the writing demands of college and then to what extent they find this to be true as they experience their freshmen year.

CHAPTER 2: METHODS

Participants and Setting

One of my favorite parts of teaching high school is the long-term impact we teachers have on students. Few moments are as rewarding as those when I open an email from a long-graduated student who takes the time to drop me a note letting me know they have graduated from college, or that they are heading to graduate school or the Peace Corp, or someplace impressive. From time to time, students will take the time to drop by the school and say hello during their spring break, and it always ends with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Invariably, during these meetings or email exchanges I have to ask them how they did in their classes. I always wonder if they felt as if they had been prepared leaving high school for the academic challenges they faced at their colleges and universities. The question is right, but the casual nature of the inquiry is flawed.

During my time teaching at my current high school, many students had taken my course, and through the results such as AP and IB pass rates it appeared that I was doing a sufficient job of guiding the students through the assessments. Three and a half years ago, as I began coursework for an MA in Rhetoric and Composition at the University of Central Florida, it was unclear to me what I would learn. As the coursework continued, however, much of the information on composition studies made me question whether my students were getting the information they needed to be successful in the courses they were subsequently taking at the college level. There was the anecdotal evidence mentioned above from former students who had stopped by after being at a university for a while, and they seemed to feel they were

prepared. However, nothing had been done at our school to provide any empirical data that would validate our assumptions. From this, my project emerged.

Given the constraints of my project—time being the biggest—it seemed to me that I should focus my research on a select subset of the students I teach. As I wanted to know if the students were prepared for the discipline specific coursework they would encounter by “skipping” FYC, I first looked at students who would be most likely to fit this criteria. These are students who had scored five on their AP English Language and Composition exams, as given the nature of university practices with awarding credits for assessments passed, these were more likely to forego FYC. Each of the participants I eventually choose receive their IB Diplomas, as well. From group of about twenty students, I sent an invitation to discuss my research project. Twelve students responded to the invitation, and four of these students expressed interest in taking part in the research. From these four, three of them participated.

The three participants consist of two female and one male, and all come from similar backgrounds, in that they would be considered middle to upper middle class; all attended six years at the junior/senior high school at which I teach; all were determined to attend college at universities upon high school graduation; all come from families where at least one of the parents had graduated from a university, suggesting that education had been important to their families as they had prepared for their lives after high school; and all had older siblings who were attending post-secondary education—albeit with differing levels of communication. One of the areas where they differed were in the choices of universities. In the end, each of these students effectively “skips” FYC by means of high test scores. Each agrees to partake in the four

interviews. I have given each of the participants a pseudo name—Harper, Marie, and Jack.

Let's begin with Harper.

Harper is a solid student. Motivated would be an understatement for her, as she engages in diverse extra-curricular activities, is more than generous with her time with regards to helping others, and all the while maintained a 4.0 unweighted GPA. She was one of the valedictorians of the high school at graduation, and was impressive in her address at graduation. From a broad field of acceptance letters from universities, she chose a small, private research university in the southern United States. She saw herself taking a medical track in college, and it bears saying that this is a common vision of students who graduate from our school. They tend to move to either medical or engineering tracks. Harper's was medical. As her time at the university continues, we see that she changes, and from conversations I have had with her since the end of this study, she has changed her major to law. Harper was enthusiastic throughout the entire project.

Marie, too, is a solid student. Like Harper, Marie is bright and very hardworking. There are those to whom information gets processed easier, but if Marie does not understand something, she will work hard to understand it. Marie comes from a family with a medical background, and her older brother is following a pre-med track at the large public university he attends. Marie, also having many choices, chooses this same, large public university in Florida where her brother attends and follows a medical track, but hers is nursing. Unlike Harper, Marie will have many people who she knows attend this same school, and her brother's insight

helps her to navigate the academic challenges she encounters. During this study, Marie is enthusiastic and helpful.

Jack is more of a free spirit than the other two, and the irony in his choices is not lost. Another solid student who takes his studies seriously, but not too seriously. The irony comes in that Jack enters an ROTC program—not known for its freedom—at his choice of a large public university in Florida, although a different one than Marie. He, too, chooses a nursing track, but his balance of free-spiritedness and the constrictive nature of a military setting is an interesting dynamic. We discover that this is not lost on Jack, either. His sister attends a different school, and is not connected to his course of study at all—she is now in law school. Still, Jack finds some preparation for his journey from her guidance. As I discuss later, Jack actually does have to take a writing class at the university. It is not a FYC course, as the school has coded it differently, but the findings for the purposes of this study are interesting.

Data Collection

Models for such a task seemed both inspirational and impossible. Shirley Brice Heath and her work *Ways With Words*, Lee Ann Carroll in *Rehearsing New Roles*, Anne Beaufort in *College Writing and Beyond*, and others had the benefit of true ethnographic research, allowing them to truly get to know their subjects over a considerable amount of time and through diverse contexts. The likes of Kevin Roozen and his tendency to follow subjects for years, and Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz following students through all four of their initial years at Harvard allowed them to see how what students learned years before provided them with tools

to address the literate evolution that students undergo in their college lives, as they negotiate new and challenging systems of knowing. What became crystal clear to me was that given the constraints of completing a master's program of this nature and teaching full-time, I did not have the luxury of time that these researchers had. I was going to have to truncate my research and rather than engage in messy, revealing, and rewarding work of ethnographic research, mine was to become a case study of three students whom I had taught. It seemed like a smart choice, as my initial question was concerning the effectiveness of what I was doing to prepare these students for their literate lives beyond our high school.

The research took place in a series of interviews. Each of these was recorded—audio video, transcriptions. First, we talked face to face in my classroom. One of the factors that was an interesting dynamic was the fact that I had taught each of these students, and the evolution of this relationship was rather important to this project. During our initial interviews, conducted in my classroom, the participants were still in high school, and our relationship was still very much that of teacher and student. They were shy. During this interview, I recorded audio only, and the discussions were based on a series of questions (appendix), but as interviews often do, these questions diverged as topics presented themselves. The second and fourth interviews were conducted via Facetime or Skype depending on the resources of the students and the technology at the time. During the second interviews with both Harper and Marie the internet connections at their locations were inconsistent. Therefore, we had to reconnect several times. With Harper, we ended up going to an audio recording format with Facetime that allowed for a greater flow of conversation. It was best to have some facial cues

as to see if the students were understanding the questions, but as technical issues arose, we adapted. The third interview was done via email, where I sent a series of questions they answered (appendix), I responded with follow-up questions and they answered in return. During the third interview, I did not get a response from Jack.

During the second and fourth interview, those conducted remotely via Facetime or Skype, the relationship did evolve, moving from the high school student/high school teacher dynamic and more to the researcher and subject dynamic. All of the participants became more comfortable and colorful in their descriptions of their literate lives, and their college lives in general. They would, from time to time, apologize for something said, but for the most part their answers were candid. During the interview process, I was very clear that their should be candid.

From the beginning of the study, I had set up a Dropbox account to allow for the students to share any assignments they thought might be pertinent to the study, and both Marie and Harper did this, but after looking at the documents, it seemed to me that my goal was to determine whether, or not, the students felt as if they were prepared for this transition. It would be interesting to conduct document based interviews and analysis on their writing, but that is for another project.

During conversations with others on the research I planned on conducting, several of those who were more experienced in interviews and transcription thought the lengths of the interviews to be ambitious, as there were hours worth of interviews. As I sat and began to

transcribe, I discovered exactly what they meant. It did not take long for me to seek out an academic transcription service to perform these duties.

Analysis

The pages of transcribed interviews provided a wealth of information to sift through. I decided that I would initially go through each one individually from start to finish to look for trends, categories of discussion, major topics or themes. I then took the notes I had accumulated and then looked for common ground, as my initial thought was to take a thematic approach to the analysis. In the end, themes emerged—the collective nature of writing, the benefits of collaborative spaces for learning to use the tools of language to gain access to systems, the cumulative nature, or scaffolding, that occurs in the development of writing. However, as I read and reread the interviews it was the stories of each of the students, the narrative nature of their journeys that emerged as dominant. It seemed to me that as they moved forward in their literate lives, it would benefit to understand them on their autonomous paths, all the while understanding their common starting point. Then, as their literate lives begin to take shape in these diverse spaces, it was there that I was able to see that there are both common and not experiences and findings that might lead us to better understand how we might better approach how we both prepare and receive these students who are bypassing FYC.

How My Use of Activity Theory Evolved

As I mention in the conclusion, the parallels I assumed existed between HSE and FYC, and the lines I thought to draw for the students as they navigated the systems within high school and then into their university experiences were not as defined as I had thought they would be. While looking to frame the project within an activity theory lens, it made sense to me that there as students move from both HSE or FYC to their DSC trajectories that the language of activity theory would be a natural fit. This thinking has great merit, but I found that as the interviews continued and then as my analysis of them evolved that activity theory took on a different role for me. It also became clear to me some of my own limitations.

Initially for me, HSE and FYC were these bounded entities that prepared the students for the literate activities they would engage in during their time in the universities and then beyond. What I discover is that this is, in fact, true. However, it also discovered that rather than the bounded systems that I thought I could discuss through the activity theory lens, the stories of the participants of this project took control of my analysis. Instead of parsing out the HSE specifics of the participants' work within this system, what emerged was how interconnected all of the systems in which they were engaged in were—English class, chemistry, history, psychology, etc. The way I envision the manner in which this changed for me is that I initially thought I'd be able to look at individual tiles that make up the mosaics of these students, but, in the end, what I saw was the whole of the thing, and the tiles—the systems—became parts of a whole. Clearly my roots in creative writing clashed somewhat with the researcher.

PARTICIPANT NARRATIVE CHAPTERS

This study began with the participants being at the end of their senior year in high school and ended as they finish their first semesters at their colleges. Each had been enrolled in the IB Programme for their entire high school careers, meaning that they began in the Middle Years Programme (MYP) for 9th and 10th grades and the Diploma Programme (DP) for 11th and 12th grades. Each were former students of mine in their eleventh-grade year, taking a hybrid class that combined AP Language and Composition and two parts—1 and 4—of the IB Diploma Programme English course. They then took the IB parts 2 and 3 from another teacher, and completed several other assessments through their other classes. What follow are the cumulative narratives of a series of interviews conducted at different points in their academic lives: first at the end of their high school senior year, second at the beginning of their college freshman year, third mid-way through their freshman year, and finally at the end of their first semester freshman year. These are the literate stories, really, of these students' journey from their senior year of high school through their first semesters of college. As the discussions unfold, I found that each has a unique story to tell. What I sought to find—the clean, linear stories of how high school English prepares these students for the rigors of disciplinary specific courses—does not even begin to address the richness and complexity of each student's academic development. For each of the students I will establish a foundation from the initial interview and then move through the three subsequent interviews in an attempt to show how

well they initially feel they are prepared for the writing demands of college and then to what level they find this to be true.

The participants' narratives are chronological. Certainly, multiple topics of discussion arise, and I attempt to address these in a more thematic manner in the concluding chapter. But in the spirit of a journey, I find that looking at the progressive nature of discovery found in the chronology provides an interesting insight into how the students embrace their experiences. Thus, my goal in presenting the narratives that follow is to somehow connect the great diversity in their literate lives and to explore the multiple themes in a way that respects the richness and complexity of the students' experiences.

HARPER

“Yeah, I was ready. I don't know if I would have been as ready without like the IB program and the tough classes that I took especially compared to – I can hold my own with the people from these big dog schools up there.”

—Harper on how she felt in the final interview of the study

During my time working with Harper, through the initial interviews and then through her first semester at college, one thing became clear to me: the complexity of students' literate lives. I was curious about how students move from high school English class into discipline specific courses in college without taking first-year composition. As mentioned before, this is due to high testing scores that allow the students to make this move. What I failed to realize, or take into consideration, was the diverse literate world that students negotiate during their time in high school, and this was no exception to Harper. As we talked and began discussing her English classes, Harper moved the conversation to chemistry, history, psychology, and math. In the end, it seems, a much richer foundation of her high school literate life emerged, and this travels with her into her first year of college.

Harper is a student who teachers enjoy in their classes. She is inquisitive, balanced, and truly enjoys learning. It is no surprise that she scored highly on all of her assessments throughout her last two years of high school, including earning a 5 on her AP Language and Composition exam. At the time of the initial interview, she had committed to a rather small private university in the southern United States, and, as we will see, is utterly content with her

choice. She is rather metacognitive, in that she seems aware of her choices both on the academic and personal level, and sitting down with her before her embarkation to college and hearing what she had to say about writing and what she expected from her upcoming experience was refreshing. It was equally refreshing to continue this conversation, and I learned a lot through talking with her, and I found having this series of conversations with a former student to be enlightening. As mentioned in the introduction, it seems to me we do not do a very good job of keeping track of whether our students are prepared, never mind if they are *well* prepared. This series of interviews allowed me to gain insight into how well we were doing in preparing her and how we might look to improve understanding and instruction. First, I examine Harper's reflections on writing during her senior year of high school. Next, I explore her impressions mid-way through her first semester at college. Then, I analyze her reflections once her first semester comes to a close.

Our Initial Interview—Senior year of high school

Harper defines writing as, “communicating something that's represented well as your interpretation. I guess—I mean, writing can just be like signage, where there's just titles for things but *actual* writing about something would be deeper than that. It doesn't have to be well done, but I think it should be a representation of you or whatever your perspective is. Good writing is communicated well from what you're trying to say.” What I find to be interesting here is the fact that without prompt, and without any discussion of good/bad, novice/expert, Harper brings the notion of good writing to the forefront. As we will see in her development of,

or in her evolution as a person entering new areas of knowledge, the discourse communities of both academia and the disciplines within which she will engage, what she considers to be good and bad writing hold common themes. Still, she says, “*good* writing is *genuine* writing. It's a *good* representation of what you're trying to say. So to me, *bad* writing and I think I did this sometimes, but *it's excessive* or maybe *it's not enough* but *it's short* on what you're trying to represent” (emphasis mine). Without knowing the language of transfer, or genre theory, she is suggesting that good writing is able to accomplish something. It is doing the work, and thus allowing for understanding.

Given her tendency toward discussing a quality of writing, I asked her how she rated herself as a writer. She’s “still figuring it out,” she says, then continues, “I went through all the phases with writing,” and this we might find entertaining, as how can we quantify the diversity of writing when it morphs itself to the context of use. But I find this fascinating, in that as a high school student, and a solid high school student, she has a sense that there is a quantity, a finite boundary of what writing might be. Words such as “all the phases” speak to me, and I wonder if we, her teachers, have implied that there is an “all” when it comes to writing. And yet, in the same breath, she confirms what so many researchers have been suggesting:

When I was little, I explored a lot and I was more creative about things and then when I got older, I kind of saw what other people did well and tried to mimic that and I don't think that was good writing because that was more copying what they did, rather than speaking from my own voice. Then, when I found my own voice, it was kind of dramatic or big words, over the top sometimes and I was kind of patted on the back a lot for that

because I think people could see that I was trying, and I was, but it wasn't as genuine as it needed to be. And then, I think the AP class, actually, having that time constraint, I learned how to say what I needed to say with less. So having that time kind of dangled over you made you prioritize what you wanted to say and then I kind of mixed that with the background of working on trying to say things well. So, I think that came closest to my truest writing and I feel like I've kind of stayed there since.

It occurs to me that within this series of sentences, Harper crosses so many boundaries and without knowing the research, the studies, or the language of composition studies, she knows so much. Here, we see her explore when she's young. She understands genre and accepted forms of discourse as she progresses; find her "own voice" where she is "patted on the back", looks for acceptance into new communities, but wants to be more "genuine". Learning and understanding constraints of one genre and applying this to another causes her to "[mix] that with the background of working on trying to say things well," and this helps her to come close to her "truest writing." From a researcher's point of view, the list of what she is doing might look like: boundary crossing, mediation of communities, understanding conflict between systems and then adjusting. It seems clear that in thinking about what she is doing, Harper is able to articulate what occurs in the background of learning. Bringing this to the forefront is something discussed in genre and transfer discourse, and offered as a solution in AT. Elizabeth Wardle, in "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write in the Genres of the University", discusses what Etienne Wenger calls FYC, "a boundary practice,

linking students from where they were (and what they were writing) to where they will go (and what they will write).” One issue, however, as Wardle notes is that students she questioned “did not see the class [FYC] as a boundary practice; they did not see any connection between what they were asked to write in FYC and what they would write in other courses later” (776). Part of this might be because these connections are not made conscious. In their article titled “Notes Toward A Theory of Prior Knowledge and Its Role in College Composers’ Transfer of Knowledge and Practice”, Liane Robertson et al. echo Anne Beaufort’s assertion in *College Writing and Beyond* that metacognition is “key to transfer” and that “students can learn to write in new contexts more effectively because they understand the inquiry necessary for entering the new context” (2). David Russell suggests that the US system of teaching writing “has the potential for making students more aware of the uses of written discourse in higher education and society” (“Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction” 51). Finding the gap in earlier research, not addressing those who skip FYC, makes me wonder how making students cognizant of the moves they will make might help them in their transitions.

Even though there is no overt shift in our discussion, Harper makes what she concludes is a seemingly natural segue from her discussion of what is good writing versus bad, or novice and expert to understanding context as we begin to discuss not only the quality of writing but what might we be able to define writing as. How expansive is writing? What are the types of writing, and what does she think writing looks like? Harper is able to see that writing is diverse, as she discusses her own take:

I associate writing more with experiences, which could still fall in a research context 'cause that's still your experience with that but titles or advertising or texting. I mean, texting actually is a communication, so I think that's pretty fair but I think text doesn't really mean anything to me until it has meaning behind it and that mainly comes from the context that it's placed in. So it doesn't have to be a lot but it needs to be something and sometimes that means really deliberate choice of words.

It is as if we are inside of her head as she is understanding what makes writing meaningful. We have a young writer—a novice—who understands that “Text doesn’t really mean anything . . . until it has meaning behind it . . . that mainly comes from the context that it’s placed in.” There seems to be a bit of circular logic here, but this speaks more to the discoveries she is making in her articulations. What is important here is that regardless of the mode, or the type of text that it is, there is no meaning behind it without the context, the exigence for which the text is created. In this short segment of reflection, it is apparent that she comes to understand writing as something expansive and essential to both learning and knowing. The natural question arises, though: Is this revelation a product of the interview, or is it something she has thought about? As much as we, her high school teachers, would like to take credit, the reality is that this is a place in my research where I understand that there is a gap, and an opportunity. The gap is that we do not do a good enough job of making writing more of a “meta” activity. The opportunity is in doing so. This goes without saying to those of us who teach writing, for those who research it, but it seems as if this is one of the goals of

FYC—to make this understanding a conscious attribute. If this is accomplished in the HSE classes, and others to be sure, then how might this young writer engage in the writing asked of her at the next level?

To explain herself—to place context in the thinking—she recalls a tenth grade language arts assignment on *Slaughterhouse Five*—a “thing”—where she felt it was the “first time that I applied a thesis to speaking or just—it wasn’t the normal thesis of this, this and this, but it was just a statement of guiding my listeners.” So, rather than the formulaic five paragraph essay—Introduction, 3 body paragraphs, and a conclusion—her paradigm begins to shift. A sense of audience, without really discussing the notion of audience. Harper does seek to have her voice validated. This is clear as she discusses some of the longer works—different than the *Slaughterhouse Five* “thing”, such as the extended essay:

I need to kind of know what other people are feeling about what I'm writing because it's all about communicating my knowledge well to them, and I know that sometimes it comes off, like it doesn't come off well enough or they're not getting the feeling that I'm trying to put out there or it's not representing what I know well but there's no real way for me to know that 'cause once I read something that I've written so much, it's like I'm numb to it.

Looking back at much of what is said about the new age of FYC, making this knowledge rise to the conscious level would benefit this writer, or as Angela Rounsaville et al suggest in their article, “From Incomes to Outcomes: FYW Students’ Prior Genre Knowledge, Meta-Cognition, and the Question of Transfer”, “Because knowledge and skills do not automatically

transfer across dissimilar contexts, high road transfer requires ‘reflective thought in abstracting from one context and seeking connections to others’” (98). It is my contention here that Harper is doing just this as she makes herself aware of the connections. She specifically discussed the Extended Essay, as it “was also a big thing to tackle, writing wise.”

On the extended essay, an extensive four-thousand word research project that IB students must complete mostly autonomously, Harper “was worried that [she] would either choose something too big or too little” for the assignment, but “found a good balance just because I read the book twice,” and “spent so much time planning and thinking about it that that made it easier to write.” This awareness of personal process fits much of what FYC is today, but its happening here is an indication of her learning this “naturally” through the classes. What stands out to me in Harper’s commentary is when she later makes the connection to other communities. This is clear as she discusses a task she completes for the Student Government Association:

In SGA [student government association], I have to come up with agendas of what I'm going to say each day. So going up there, it's like kind of more impromptu. I don't have things outlined of exactly what I'm going to say but I kind of have to put myself into this position of like, I need to be positive, that way I'm not standing up there and everyone's bored. I need to be attentive to what they're saying and responsive if they have suggestions for things. I also need to balance having a fun-loving attitude with focusing on the work that needs to be done. So that was kind of a demeanor more than a word choice thing.

This sense of audience and how to address their needs is not only interesting in and of itself, but that she can cross boundaries from an SGA meeting to how she might choose enticing and entertaining language for an essay to be submitted for external assessment—read and assessed by someone she has never met—is a skill that I think most who teach FYC would love to see in the students they are sending from their classes to their disciplines.

In reality, what she finds, even if not in her own words, is that the writing of different communities worked in concert with each other to not only help her writing in the class in which she was trying to make the meaning—her extended essay—but also allowing a repurposing of the skills learned in one to build onto another—either through building a skill or through seeing how one does not work with another. In this view, chemistry seems to be a rather large part of her writing life. Granted, my project is looking to understand if a student passing the advanced writing assessments is prepared to engage in DSC, but I contend that it is the whole student in HSE or in FYC that is making the move. It would be naïve to suggest that FYC is an autonomous space for students in their initial semesters at college. We can, I suppose, as ANT looks to do, follow a single thread, but in the big picture, the lives that the students lead are clearly rich fabrics woven together, and this creates a sense of communal learning that we *can* make more obvious to the students. Rarely, I imagine, do students only take FYC, but rather that is one course of four or five that engage the students in their academic writing lives. It seems, then, natural to look at what Harper, and the others, do in their time adjacent to their HSE classes, establishing a motive of the possible student. I think that David Bartholomae makes this clear in “Inventing the University”, as he writes, “that all writers, in

order to write, must imagine for themselves the privilege of being ‘insiders’—that is, of being both inside the established and powerful discourse, and of being granted a special right to speak” (10). It is in this space amongst so many subjects that Harper has this imagining.

Harper and how much she *enjoys* writing in different disciplines in high school

When discussing writing in chemistry, and lab reports specifically, Harper says, “It was a pain, and it’s because what takes up most of that [90 pages of high school chemistry lab report], like 50 of those pages are data things and like lab error tracing.” But then she comes to the connective aspect, the rhetorical component when she adds, “the thing that he wants is he wants you to walk the reader through every step of what you’re doing.” Back to understanding the audience. She understands what the teacher wants, but there is a dissonance within her, as she finds this to be tedious, and even more frustrating as she does not see a clear reason—or purpose—for the extreme nature of the assignments. Math is no bastion of joy for Harper, either—at least, not concerning writing—but it might be a notch above her high school chemistry experience. “There’s not a lot of beauty in it, I don’t think, but I like designing my own investigation,” she says about a project she had done. “So, being able to write about that and have people read it and understand what I did is cool.” What I find interesting here, is that she is able to distinguish different parts of the process, and that writing is a process. She distinguishes between the investigation and “that was boring,” but for her, in the end “when it was represented well, that was interesting, but writing it was kind of a bog.”

This, I think, is a result of her beginning an understanding that in diverse contexts where the writer must employ diverse writing. She begins to see connective tissue between genres and systems. “In history,” she says, “what I usually do is I try and allude to things or reference them. Like you throw in the vocab term and as long as you use it in the correct context, like the person with the historical background knows what you’re saying . . . In chemistry, he wants everything clearly defined.” And yet, in her AP Lang class, with the time constraints, she learned how to “say what I needed to say with less.” These writing contexts speak to each other through her in her ability to be successful in each, and to be able to articulate her understanding. How much of her understanding this, though, is the fact that she is answering questions directed at understanding how she understands writing and how much is simply the intrinsic nature of us learning how to negotiate the systems we move through in the course of living? In the end, she found she resented the scientific writing she engaged in during high school, finding it to be “laborious but also monotonous” and she had “much more fun writing in history.”

So, what about the “fun” aspect of writing. Is that important? Harper thinks so. She thinks that having a balance is necessary—so much so that she was worried “if I go pre-med track and I’m doing science classes and I’m testing out of English or history, I’m not gonna have those fun writing opportunities anymore.” So what about those places where the writing is more fun—history and English?

I think what I’m writing about, too, changes because the substance of history and

English, it’s so interpretive and there’s other people’s interpretations, then I try and put

myself in the perspective of the author and there's my—how it makes me feel, personally, but then in science, sometimes it feels one-sided, like I'm the only person experiencing or observing a phenomenon and I can only really talk or speak from my perspective. So that's probably why it is so very walking through it because people who are reading your work have to follow it that closely but it makes me feel kind of alone. And I think that's what I liked about the other writing styles is I appreciate how much of an experience and a shared experience it is, so I think that's something I'd miss, too.

It seems through several voices in the research that a student's ability to provide some sort of self-efficacy in their academic life as a whole and in the writing component as a piece, that there might be several aspects to consider. Dana Lynn Driscoll and Jennifer Wells link "students' motivation, performance, persistence, and choice-making to the value students place upon a particular task or learning situation" (7). They also state that, "A learner's self-efficacy becomes especially important when faced with a task that at first seems overwhelming" ("Beyond Knowledge and Skills: Writing Transfer and the Role of Student Dispositions" 8). It seems to me, then, that two aspects of writing assignments are paramount: validity and desire. These need not be in conjunction with one another, but students must feel that the task offers them a purpose for the task. This is well documented in the literature on transfer and genre theory. Barring this, a student, and we might suggest that all of us, will tend to do more and perform better on those tasks we deem to be fun.

Images of students mired down into places of solitude do not reflect the sort of positive view we would like to see students take away from writing. This speaks to the notions of

validity and enjoyment mentioned above. But even more, this does not reflect the true nature of writing in the academic world. Well, at least for those who teach writing. These must be tied to purpose. Harper begins to see this purpose in the writing she does in college. Where she seems to excel in preparation for the transition is in that she is open and optimistic to the challenges in front of her, and this comes, in part, to her having the attitude of what she is doing preparing her for what she will be doing. This is important, even if not completely true.

What about the Next Steps?

“I don’t know what to expect,” Harper says when the conversation turns to what her writing might entail in college. She continues: “If no one else is going to [her university] and no one’s been to [her university], versus UF [University of Florida], I think you can kind of know how this person was as a writer in high school and then you ask them, but I don’t really have that to go by.” Here, again, Harper seems to be looking to utilize tools for the mediation of systems and for understanding the contexts of the writing tasks and the writing expectations. She understands the value of discussing with those within the systems she wishes to enter what discursive attributes might help her to gain entry. In her case, however, not knowing what to expect—no access to prior knowledge—other than anecdotal commentary is a tool of preparation in that she is aware of her ignorance and this allows her to enter the situation knowing that she does not know. When looking at writing in college she fears getting “burnt out or overwhelmed with what other people are doing,” and she displays a bit of stubbornness

in not wanting to “change myself to suit it [college writing] because it’s become such a personal thing.” However, she admits, “I do wanna improve on it.”

In particular, the fact that her high school incorporated a combination of AP and IB requirements within the curriculum rather than just one was a benefit to her. She feels, IB has been more about learning a lot and kind of like personal reflection while AP was kind of more stressful in the whole time restraint and more structure of it. So it kind of gave me a balance of both and I think IB, as a program, how it grew and grew and grew, that was also important for me, how it got harder and harder every year and then 11th grade was that big milestone. And then senior year, even, it was hard in a different way with all of the outside assignments, that's kind of similar to college so I feel prepared from the IAs [internal assessments] and the EEs [extended essays]. I think those are gonna be college-like work and working in groups.

Her comments here reflect a belief that what she has encountered in high school will be quite similar to what she will see in college. Because of her experiences, she feels “ahead” but “because it’s a research university,” it makes her think “it’s gonna be a lot of those chemistry and math reports.” This is especially interesting, given how this plays out upon her arrival. “All of our [high school] teachers say, ‘you’re just gonna be a number next year, get used to it,’ and I think they’re basing that on their experiences,” but she doesn’t think this will be the case for every school, but here will be a “wake up” call for many. Then there’s what really happens.

Still, her “wake up” might not be as rough as others, as Harper was able to visit her school of choice, and while there was able to sit through an English class. Not knowing the

course, she still found it fun when “they were going through it [the text] and discussing it and I was like ‘I’ve done this before,’ which was nice, ‘cause it’s familiar but some of the discussion that they were having felt sort of cliché, like some of what they were saying . . . seemed obvious.” Here, Harper had had a glimpse into the world she was entering, and even though she would not be taking this course, it allowed her a sense of comfort before her embarkation. And so she embarks.

This initial interview produces a wealth of rich and meaningful information, touching on an interesting diversity of points. First, she defines writing, and what’s more is that she defines what she considers good writing. Harper touches on a notion of genuineness with regards to writing that directly connects to quality. Second, she shows that she understands audience and genre insomuch as that she knows that different communities, different systems, have their own means of communication. Third, she understands that writing is expansive and essential to learning. Fourth, she makes aware that those who teach writing need to ensure that students are metacognitive of what we teach. Fifth, she makes clear that it is difficult, if not impossible to understand a student’s literate life without looking at all the literate spaces in which they engage—to include diverse disciplines of study. Last, she reminds us that writing can be more productive if it is enjoyable, and that this is often a product of validity.

Our Interview at the Beginning of Her Freshman Year

As it is with having a child, no one can really prepare a person for their first semester at college. There are the stories, and as noted above the cautious tales of those who had gone

before, but until a person is in the fray, has a little skin in the game, it is difficult to comprehend just how different college life is. And so it goes for Harper, as she left for school thinking the 16:1 student to teacher ratio was a plus, only to find her smallest class being thirty and her largest having 140. Fortunately, this was not a deterrent, since the ways in which the university distributed TA's and their time was sufficient for Harper to feel she had the attention needed. A tradition of repelling whip-cream clad students from the dorms and finding trampolines on which to burn off some energy helped her cope, but Harper also found some literate changes, as well.

As Harper stated when I talked with her during the opening weeks of her first semester of college, "I feel like I'm taking a weird break from writing because my writing really transformed in your class in 11th grade, I felt like I found a more solidified voice, and then in 12th grade I didn't apply it so much in formal ways. I was still using it in the IB test, to some degree, but the structure wasn't there as much, so my voice was a little bit less formal. Then, I haven't really written since 'cause I just got here." That is not to say that she had not done any writing, but that it seems that the amount of writing, the volume of it, had changed rather drastically, and we find, I think, that a level of quality is replaced with the quantity that we high school teachers often feel we need to push forward. As Harper thinks about what is to come later in the semester, she admits, "I'm nervous I'm gonna be rusty, but then I think about it more and it's like my voice should be like riding a bicycle. I don't think it'll ever be gone." This might be true, but what about that voice changing pitch or gaining depth. The heart of the

voice may remain the same, but we know that it will evolve and grow with the communities she will enter.

For her first semester, Harper takes on a rather stiff academic schedule: Introductory Chemistry, Chemistry Lab, Calculus, Sociology, History of the United States Presidents, and a freshmen lab on biological and chemistry research. Her choices are predicated on an understanding that she is on track for a pre-med degree, thus the science courses fit into a DSC for my purposes. What is interesting to note, however, is that as I was able to talk to her a year after this interview took place, I know that she changes her major to pre-law, that this allows sociology and history to also fit the criteria. This is important, as it is in sociology that her college writing life begins.

Her first written test was in sociology and consisted of three short answer questions and one essay, where she found that since she could take the test home, she says, "I came in my room and I closed the door, but it was far less pressure." This is important seeing as a great deal of what she discusses from her high school experience revolved around the concerns of time and volume. Here, she has ninety minutes and "I wrote like a paragraph for each short answer and then three paragraphs for my essay and I didn't really have time to go back and proofread anything." Some of the feedback from the professor, or rather one of the TA's from the course contain, "Good overall answer. While you clearly identify how decent and street families are similar, you did not spell out how they were different. The answer is there, but there needs to be a clear argument for how these families differ." Another short answer assessment is simply, "Great!" For the essay portion of the exam the feedback was, "Good

Answer.” Her score was a 93% out of 100%. This is a solid indicator that in this community, in this new system she is gaining proficiency in the discourse, since these assessments are indicators. One reason for this could be that the discourse isn’t so different than those experienced in high school—namely her English, psychology, and history courses. This does not seem to be the case for her writing in chemistry which looks to be more different than others.

The writing in chemistry looks different to her, or at least the process of writing, and even though she says, “I definitely know I don’t wanna be an engineer,” she does admit “I need to give science and math another chance.” In a seemingly about face from her high school experience Harper finds her chemistry course is “actually” interesting. Even with 140 students in the course, there is an effective use of teaching assistants who circulate and work with smaller groups. They engage in concept development questioning where “You have to explain things on a conceptual level . . . So I have to articulate myself in chemistry and I have to do it well.” She takes advantage of Sunday night study sessions run by TA’s and at times she will “talk through it [the problem] with someone, like a friend from the class,” and if she still needs help she asks her TA’s. “I’ve never done something so verbal in chemistry,” and she finds this to be “straight forward and it’s making sure that you—they’re like building our knowledge base from the ground up.” In this particular course, the verbal nature of her chemistry course is surprising to her. Contrasted with her high school experience, this is not due to the volume of writing, but what I find to be quite telling here is the fact that this course provides a new process for her, and with regards to understanding the discourse within a community, they are providing her with the means of entry. Looking at the research on transfer and WAC/WID, this

seems like a positive pedagogical example.

Something else that strikes me is the personal connections she is making in her literate life. This is not something that she engaged in—not to this level—in her time in high school this is something that being here has helped her to accomplish. It is not a HSE thing, nor is it a FYC thing, but it is an adjustment “thing” in that she is engaged so closely with others. Harper conveys this effectively when she states,

Before I do anything online, I usually work it out face-to-face. So for the chemistry stuff, before I type up my answer, I usually talk it through with someone first and then I type it up. Then, for like sociology, he gave us a study guide, so I wrote my own answers to the study guide and then I met with someone and we talked through it together and then I wrote my responses. I took the test like the next day. So before I can confront myself with the online questions, I usually wanna verbalize it or talk it through with someone.

This is a stark difference from just a few months before, when she felt “alone” as she wrote for chemistry. Is this communal work something that is encouraged in this new space more than in high school? Or might this be her filling the gap she had mentioned before with her not knowing anyone going to this particular school? Before she was here, she had already thought to seek out information on the systems, the communities, she would encounter. Here she has the opportunity.

It’s difficult not to become nostalgic when Harper talks about her college setting, the novelty of her beginning life at the university, the pressure of paper deadlines and the communal connection of the 140 student chemistry course. On the one hand, she is in a space

with 30 others that is comfortable and yet centered on the instructor providing information. On the other hand, she is in a space with 140 other students and circulating TA's and the learning is very student centered and driven by a more inquisitive expectation. Regardless, she *feels* prepared as a writer, even though the writing has not taken off yet, she *feels*, as she says, "really self-aware. That's kind of the place that I'm in right now. So, we'll see." We will, indeed.

During the second interview, several interesting points of interest pop up. Something we don't discuss a lot are the non-academic adjustments students must deal with. Then there are the academic adjustments, and for Harper this was a drop in the volume of writing she was doing. Still, she understands her voice, and we see in this interview that she gains greater affirmation in understanding voice adjusts to context. Something else that comes to light in this interview is the fact that Harper enjoys and adjusts to feedback from comments about her writing. This results in an increase in enjoying certain subjects, and this results in a greater appreciation of teaching methods—as she is now aware of other ways to convey information. Harper discusses new processes here, and part of this is her movement towards personal connections, a stark contrast to her sense of isolation in high school.

Our Interview Midway through Her First Semester

Some things never change, I suppose, and Harper reflects this in that she was concerned about grades in high school, and when asked how her classes in the first semester of her college life she confesses "most of my grades are in limbo, which when I think about can sometimes

stress me out., but generally I feel good about it; I just go into everything with the mindset of tackling things with a fresh start, leaving my history of assignments behind me and wanting to do my best as each assignment comes.” Here, she suggests she does not dwell on grades and tasks she has received in her courses. Given that she visited the chemistry TA and went over past tests—a solid tactic, Harper’s process might imply that she is doing a bit more scaffolding to her learning that this “out of sight, out of mind” method might suggest. Still, and even with a high level of confidence, getting a first C and then a D on subsequent chemistry exams “was a big blow to my confidence,” she admits. In looking at how to improve, “there was one major theme—the knowledge was there and justified my responses, but it was either misguided, or I was using the wrong knowledge in the wrong area.” So, she had the knowledge of the system—the concepts and vocabulary, for example. What she lacked was the expertise of knowing how to convey this knowledge. This speaks to the voice of the community. Both need to be present before entry. This reads like textbook dissonance within a system, a space where the novice is seeking expertise and this novice is appropriately seeking help from those in the system—the TA’s. “My TA and I are working on making my answers more concise,” suggesting that this lack of familiarity with the subject can be enhanced through greater exposure to it. This leads her to state, “The concepts have helped me to show that I have the knowledge, but the lack of practice problems is making me apply my knowledge in weird/incorrect ways.” Her lack of exposure gives her a beginner level of how the discourse will look, but this looks “weird” to those who are in the community. She understands that she is not there, an outsider, and is taking steps to do this. However, this is not the only system, and even though she had

experience in chemistry and history in high school, and even though she had experience in writing situations in both and instruction then about rhetoric and timed/high-stakes testing, the adjustments occur in these other disciplines, too.

In both history and sociology she realizes that, “while they don’t want ‘word vomit,’ I do feel rewarded for emphasizing points, and introducing many subsidiary points to support it. I need a more well-rounded argument, with reference to why it’s important, in these humanities courses.” Still, she is keen on feedback and regards what the gatekeepers of the community deem important. In her sociology course she “read the comments [provided by a TA] from the first exam (which I got a 93 on), and took those into account on the second exam, which I got 100 on.” She adds that “100’s are not given easily, either.” In the history course, the feedback asked for “a little more seriousness” in her response, and this she looks to improve by “being more serious, of course.” It is this understanding of voice. Or, rather, the misunderstanding, then the correction and then understanding of voice within the varied contexts that speak to her development in a literate sense in these courses. There are similarities between these and chemistry in that, “I also need to reference everything that applies,” in her chemistry, “but I don’t have the time to ‘cover all my bases’ and develop every point thoroughly; it’s more of a mentioning of my support than a deep development. And this is what bugs me!” It was not so long ago that she pointed out the differences between these areas of study and felt alone in high school and found history and now sociology to be fun. Here she is understanding and more capable of quantifying the differences and understands what needs to happen a bit more than before when it was less conscious.

Concerning the conscious roles that her high school education played in her success, or her frustration it was not the explicit rhetorical knowledge of the English class, or the language structure, but rather the “study habits [and] ability to tackle a hard work load” that have helped her, but she does not feel this in the realm of chemistry, and this is not because her high school instructor is lacking but in this context where she feels “this class is better taught and focuses on really knowing one thing rather than trying to know a little bit about everything.” Here is a perfect example of how diverse these two systems are. It is the place of high school chemistry to provide a more broadly taught curriculum, while the college classroom might allow for more freedom of curriculum and thus a more “direct” approach to the material.

Well into her first semester at college, we see some trends emerge from this interview. The honeymoon period has worn off, and we learn that she is very interested in grades, and that she initially equates, at least on a small level, this with success. She has become aware of some of the rules of entrance into the systems/communities she seeks to enter, and through this her understanding of audience returns, and it seems here that this understanding is more focused. Within the contexts of these new spaces, we see that Harper is also growing in her understanding of voice and how context dictates how voice is conveyed.

Our Interview after Her First Semester

As Harper reflects on her first semester of college, one of the first differences I note is that at this time, Harper is still uncertain about her eventual major, but it is taking shape, as she is “still doing the pre-med in case I want to do pre-med. If I don’t, I might go to law school. I

think I'd really like that because it's a lot of reading and writing." Having seen her in the summer after her second semester, I know that she has decided to follow the law school track. This is important on a couple of levels. One, she had taken and engaged in so much chemistry, and even though this is designed in some manner to "weed out" students, she was doing relatively well. Two, the fact that Harper was more entertained with the writing she was doing with the social sciences, and given the fact that she seemed to feel less distanced from these communities, it makes sense that she would make this choice. Another interesting literate realization, or at least conception, is that her volume of writing has "picked up". After talking with other students, and those she went to high school with she realized she was "actually doing a lot of writing. I was thinking back to high school," she says, "In IB we have to do a lot of writing, more than I think normal high school students do. So I was still doing at probably the same level as junior year writing because senior year we did less writing. But I think compared to other college students, I actually do a lot of writing now because all my tests are written." Here, it might be good to note the diversity within the university systems concerning the intensity of writing.

Interestingly, though, as her volume of writing in the first semester of college was on par with her junior year of high school, when it came to the type, the genres of writing she finds "they were different. Nothing was the exact same. I think I did my history reports for that class which I really enjoyed. Those were pretty similar to my history writing in [my history teacher's class], but different in that I had to craft my whole own topic. It was more – in [high school history teacher's] class when you got to choose your topic for the IB things, it was more

analytical but it was more biographical I think for the class I took in college.” This speaks to my thesis and to the desired outcomes of those interested in transfer and the navigation of systems from high school to DSC. There is a shift, a similarity, but not an equality that allows for a scaffolded understanding of the progression of knowing and thus the movement on the continuum from novice to expert in a discipline. Michael Carter suggests that students “refashion themselves as writers”, and find themselves in a place where the volume of writing forces students to understand that “as novices they need to figure out the expectations of college writing” (“The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year”128). This rings true for chemistry lab reports, which had come later in the semester for Harper.

In remembering her work on them in high school, she admits “I’m actually mad about those [high school chemistry lab reports]. Those were a waste of my weekends it feels like.” This aggressive memory of a not so distant past shifts, however, as she processes. “I’m hesitant to say that it was an absolute waste of my time and I didn’t learn anything from it because I think I took something, but I took so little compared to the amount of time that I spent and now being away from home I wish I could have taken that time to be a kid and be with my family rather than spend 50-page lab reports.” The days of fifty-page lab reports had given way where they “make so much more sense. I never knew what I was doing when I went into his lab station stuff because it didn’t seem like it coincided with the class very well. But they walk you through it more.” The differing approaches were stark. Harper explains:

So the labs are also very observation based. They just coincide really well with the lectures because before lab we have to watch a video and do pre-lab assignments. It just

explains what we're going to be doing, very straightforward and what concepts. You can easily tell what you learned in class. So it just makes much more sense.

It kind of rather than – in [high school chemistry] class [the teacher] made you feel bad for having a question about something that was very basic. He made you feel like an idiot. That was really annoying. Now, it's like you're an idiot if you don't question like how that basic fact got there. I appreciate that that much more.

This appreciation holds true in another paradigm shift, and that is how she looked at her success in this discipline. In high school, Harper got an A in her chemistry class. In her first college chemistry course she earned a C plus, but feels she “learned way more chemistry” and “worked really hard for that C plus.” This is reflected in the attitude of the students concerning their use of transfer credits—those who have earned credit for courses in high school from AP or IB assessment results. In short, they do not use the credits in these types of courses as they do for the AP Language course. In Harper’s words:

A lot of people use the language credits and they'll – I've never heard anyone say, "I tested out of lang. but I'm taking that equivalent at [my university] now." But they do for the STEM. That could be because [this university] is a really big STEM school, too. When you're getting your degree in something I guess you do want a really thorough background. But honestly, I just think the structures are different. I don't know why people would – I think I would probably retake it even if I had AP chemistry credit. I

don't think I'd be ready for organic here.

It seems as if they, the students, know their audience and understand what they will need to be stronger in. It may be that the courses, the DSC, that tend to progress to different levels beyond the introductory. So, then how does the HSE coursework prepare the students for writing they will do in the university? Clearly there are content based genres and knowledge that fit within their boundaries, but what might be transferable? Harper felt that in the writing of her “papers” there was a definite connection. She states:

I was in that class [her history class] with seniors and juniors and I was towards the top, and so that was good. I felt good about that. That's the only major writing based class that I've taken. Then in sociology, I got an A minus on my paper when it was a lot of Bs. So that was also towards the top and I felt good about that. I'd say what I – because you can never repeat a paper. You know?

So what I think I took most from the classes was more of a mentality and a way of approaching writing and I know how to pull the best writing from myself, like how much time to take to plan and how much time I need to proofread and to make – like I realize when I'm going on a tangent, it's kind of just like a self-awareness of my writing ability and my skills.

Harper is maturing as a writer and by this I mean she is understanding the use of writing and exigence of what she is asked to do and how this interacts within the communities she is moving in and out of. She is understanding how they communicate, and this is reflected in a

section of our final interview where our discussion of learning the process sheds light on her growth/maturity:

Harper: Yeah. I learned that [learning/understanding her own writing process went] really well. It's kind of like building a muscle. So that's what I – I use it sometimes in my approaches to chemistry and to math a little bit, less so in math. Math is so technical, that's just kind of hard to make that jump. But to study in like the chemistry concepts sometimes I try and take that mentality of pulling out for a big picture for a little bit.

CB: Right. So do you find that – where did you learn to – I'm thinking about the concision or being concise with your writing in chemistry. How did you develop that muscle?

Harper: From the first test I took when I almost ran out of time. Just realizing that you've just got to cut it short. My TA told me, "You have all this stuff. It sounds great. You don't need these words. You can just have bullets. We just need exactly what you're trying to say without sentences. No sentence structure."

CB: So now we're talking about a genre gap. So we're talking about moving from this ideology or just this paradigm of, "My writing has to look like this."

Harper: Yeah.

CB: So talk to me about that a bit.

Harper: It's just I think I had to compartmentalize writing because in sociology what I got high marks on my paper for was a clear sense of purpose of what I was writing and then it flowed in a way where it was like point and it's significant and reminding of the significance throughout, stuff like that. Where it's kind of building and you carry the reader through. You hold your hand; you walk them through it.

CB: That's more of your traditional genre that you're used to writing?

Harper: Yeah, definitely. Then the chemistry is just like snapshots where you have to be exact and it's not about the structure of word count or anything. It's just like say what you can quickly.

CB: Do you tend to mimic on your tests how you're notetaking?

Harper: No. I guess a little bit in that in my notes what I do when there's a word I can tell. That's another thing that I think I learned from writing is I can tell when something's being stressed or when it's going to be important and I can tell what we're going to be tested on usually. I think that comes from writing and reading, from being – it's just like very contextual.

Finally, during her first semester, Harper was part of a survey concerning a new program implemented at her university for her chemistry class. What she found interesting about the survey is part of what I found interesting about her interviewing process, and I discuss more in the Conclusions chapter. It is the metacognitive aspect of learning that made a big impression on her. The survey “made me think twice about the resources that I had. I kind of thought – I realized in taking those surveys what the purpose was of some of the things. I think when I realized the purpose I took advantage of it more.” This realization manifested itself into changed behavior where she says, “I was embarrassed to say something if I didn't really know what the answer was. But then like taking the survey, they kind of hinted that it was more about like not knowing the answer and just trying to like work your way through it like, “It can't be this but at least we tried that. It can't be this. So like more by default.”

It would be an understatement to say that this series of interviews was overwhelming to me. I think that it might be just as fair to state that the first semester was overwhelming to

Harper. What we find here is that as the semester ramps up, so does the writing, and we also find that the volume of writing she had done in high school does come into play as her load increases. As she engages in her courses, the complexity I saw in the initial interview with regards to how her courses worked together to develop her literate self becomes more developed at the end of the semester here. It occurs to me that this is a natural—or hopeful—byproduct of a well-designed course and curriculum. A marked shift at the end of the semester is how Harper's interpretation of success changes. A C in her chemistry class at the university is seen with greater pride than the A earned in high school. This reflects, what I think is a better appreciation of knowing a subject. And Harper understands that knowing a subject and gaining entrance into a desired system is in great part determined by understanding the writing, or communicating, that needs to be done in these new contexts.

There is no one bit of information that defines this experience. What I take from my interviews with Harper is that complexity seems to be a definitive word for her progression. What I find in the subsequent interviews is that this complexity is determined by context, as the other two participants' experiences are more different than Harper's than similar.

MARIE

Marie is a delightful student who seems to smile at every opportunity. One of her more endearing qualities is that she approaches each task before her with a level pragmatism. She, like the others in this study, has done well in school and have also performed well on both IB and AP testing, resulting in her receiving her IB Diploma. I had the pleasure of teaching her older brother, and as the younger sibling, Marie has adopted a solid sense of learning from those who have gone before. Hers is a family firmly grounded in medicine—her father being a doctor—and this makes her choice to move into nursing rather simple.

As I move from Harper to Marie, and then to Jack, subtle differences in Marie's literate experience make hers different than the other two participants. First, even though she went to the same high school, she chose to attend a rather large public university in the Southern United States. Second, as mentioned before, her major is in nursing, and because of this she is privy to a great deal of information from her brother—enrolled at the same school following a pre-med track. Marie finds great benefit in having both her brother and his girlfriend attending the university before her, and their influence is clear as the interviews progress. Third, where Harper's experience in writing is rich and multi-layered as she embarks on her journey, Marie finds that her entrance into the systems at her school is less writing intensive and focuses more so on a level of knowing general knowledge. The courses she does take are beyond the typical progression of coursework, in that she is beginning further on in the list of courses due to credits gained in high school. From this, an essential question develops for those who both teach AP or IB HSE and those who teach FYC. Each will have students who move on to entry

level discipline specific coursework. The question is: What kinds of lasting ideas, or tools, might we instill in our curricular frameworks that will provide the necessary tools students will need throughout the entirety of their academic lives?

Our Initial Interview—Senior year of high school

For Marie, writing is “a way of expressing your thoughts and recording them on paper so that it can be referred back to or communicated to other people.” To her it is “Everything, from like texting all the way to writing a letter, graduation announcements, that's what we've been doing lately, yeah, thank you cards and then essays of course.” When asked to describe herself as a writer, she says, “I would say compared to other people, like more experienced people, I'm intermediate and then there's also compared to other people, like my peers and stuff, I think I'm sort of on the higher end because I've just practiced so much.” Marie, without prompting, brings to the foreground her understanding of the levels of novice and expert. She then moves quickly to a place of comparison—juxtaposing herself to others. In a different way, but similar trajectory, Marie, like Harper, is very aware of a notion of proficiency. She measures her ability in two ways: macro and micro. She juxtaposes herself in the larger world of communicators and in the much more limited and finite world of her peers. From Marie's perspective, there is a continuum with those who lack experience, and thus more novice, and those who are higher up—and more proficient. She also, without any conscious knowing of transfer or scaffolding, understands the compounding nature of writing. What I mean by scaffolding is the ways in which skills are developed by incremental progression and building

relationships to between these skills. For example, the dreaded five paragraph essay is only dreaded if it is the end result. Given the complex nature of writing—its diverse iterations given the multitude of contexts in which it is used, understood and critiqued—in scaffolding, we should teach it as a point in a continuum of understanding organization and balance that will prove beneficial in certain genres of writing. Marie says it well:

I mean, from first grade you start learning how to write and you start learning how to format a sentence so just as you increase the years, you start to accumulate on your past knowledge and gain experience by writing essays and like, I remember—what were they called? Like book reports, that was also something I did a lot in elementary school and as you get into high school, you realize you need it for college applications and stuff, so I just feel like I've gained experience writing for school and out of school.

Marie sees how what she learns about writing evolves as the contexts evolve—how what she learns in grade school attaches to what she learns in high school. Elizabeth Wardle, in her article “Understanding ‘Transfer’ from FYC: Preliminary Results of a Longitudinal Study”, suggests that “we should attempt to account for the ways in which knowledge and skills are transformed across contexts; otherwise, we risk overlooking manifestations of skills that have been adapted to meet the needs of a new activity system” (69). I see this as an understanding of how students scaffold their skills acquired through various contexts throughout their educations. This understanding of the scaffolding aspects of writing turns to a type of transfer as she moves to connecting the writing of essays to filling out college applications saying, “Well, I think it helps with learning how to organize your thoughts and put it on paper and express

yourself how you're thinking. So even like a college application, yeah, learning how to organize your thoughts and create a thesis statement and stuff like that, that's certainly important or else it's super disorganized.” She is capable of pulling out specific aspects of writing—tools as it were—such as those suggested by Wardle and Russell—that allow her to pick and choose skills for different contexts. Bergman and Zepernick claim students “think of writing skills as ‘portable’ from one discipline or context to another” (“Disciplinary and Transfer: Students’ Perceptions of Learning to Write” 129). For Marie, there is a connective quality between writing in diverse contexts, and her own understanding is unique in that she is very deliberate in that she draws direct connections to this literate relationship—what Mark Hannah and Christina Saidy understand as “writing is not simply something one does to complete an assignment or even solve a problem in everyday life. Writing is a primary means of communicating that shows up in many different forms” (“Locating the Terms of Engagement” 126). Marie admits that she doesn’t “like writing on books very much but [she] still think[s] it’s important so that you can learn how to analyze the book and use direct quotes and stuff.” This skill-set, this tool, comes in handy as she shifts contexts and writes in math.

In an internal assessment for a math class, Marie has to explain mathematical processes in words rather than simply solving a numeric equation. Here, as she encounters an unknown, or at least an unpracticed, form of communication, she was aware that she needed to “tie in both the format of an essay and mathematics and chemistry, lab reports, of course, those are always super long and it’s a different format, but you still have to tie in stuff that you’ve learned in other writing classes, for like the introduction.” In doing this she understands the cross-

curricular nature of writing and that each of the systems in which she engages has its own discourse, but that these are not exclusive of one another. What I find interesting is that this happens without any conscious effort from those teaching the classes. There may be cursory suggestions from teachers, but there is no organized coordination of instruction. And, from this we get a better chance of determining how she feels about her ability and what writing might be like in the university. Marie says:

I feel like English is kind of like the hub that can spread out to other subjects but I didn't really see much of a connection between the other subjects to each other, except for like formatting, like using Word documents and stuff because I didn't know how to input an equation for math until I had chemistry and learned how to do all those chemical equations using Word but yeah, that's about it. Also, oh no, that's also from English, too, like MLA format and stuff.

For Marie, English classes work as the “hub” for understanding Word documents and MLA guidelines, but the disciplines focus on their own vocabulary and genres. Using English class as a tool to convey the discipline specific information is clear to her. In the HSE class, she writes formal literary analysis papers as well as papers that look to understand the rhetorical moves of non-fiction writers such as Op-ed columnists. A common trait between these different types of analysis is formatting, and she makes this connection. Given the ideas of teaching writing from Bartholomae and Wardle and their understanding that students need to understand they are writing within a complex web of systems and a multitude of genres they will encounter, or as Wardle claims that “the only ability students seemed to consistently generalize from one

writing task to another within the various activities of schooling was metatawareness about writing: the ability to analyze assignments, see similarities and differences across assignments, discern what was being required of them, and determine exactly what they needed to do in response to earn the grade they wanted" ("Understanding 'Transfer' from FYC" 76). And so, Marie and the others needs to understand this and the genres they will encounter. It is this awareness of the transferability and the practical and purposeful notions of writing we seek to convey in the writing class. I suggest that Marie might be the exception to understanding the connectivity of literate practice rather than the rule.

An understanding of the connections between systems and their literate practices is what teachers and mentors who provide information should be doing to prepare her for the diverse experiences she will encounter in academia and beyond. One aspect of Marie's academic life might be that, unlike Harper, Marie has the resource of her brother and his girlfriend who provide insight into what she might expect. What does the experience of others do for Marie? She says, "I feel confident in my writing but I feel like next year, because I'm doing a nursing degree, I'm not gonna be writing very much and I do -- compared to my brother, my brother's in medical school, well, he's applying to medical school right now and he hasn't had to do much writing." She is leaving high school feeling confident about her writing ability, but understands that she might not have the chance to use it. She even acknowledges this possibility when she says, "I'm kind of worried 'cause I'm not gonna be writing that much so my strength is kind of being forgotten. So I'm confident that if I had a writing assignment, then I'll be okay but if I don't, then I'm gonna have to focus on math and science." She anticipates

that the writing is going to be limited, as her brother has not had to do much, and she understands that this is a strength for her—writing—but also that this matters very little in the initial attempts to enter the new systems. So, what *will* she be doing? What does she *think* she will be doing?

I think it'll be mostly writing about—I really don't know, probably medical terms and stuff, more like short responses on tests, maybe, and maybe like patient care, like writing about how to transcribe medical notes and stuff like that but I don't think it'll be the typical format of an essay, just little stuff here and there and also job applications and nursing school application and my brother's doing, like I said, medical school applications right now and he's writing his personal statement and he's really struggling with it, it seems like and I think it's because he hasn't written in four years. I mean, hasn't formally written an essay or anything like that, whereas, me, I've had it this year and last year, so to me, it's like 'oh Tyler, it's easy, it's just one page, how hard can it be? Indeed, how hard can it be? This speaks volumes to the issues that we might be looking at in this project and in the purpose for writing instruction in general. One student might ask about writing at the university, “How hard can it be?” While another might ask, “How can it be this hard?” We, as their teachers might ask, “How can we make them understand the complexities of their journeys in such a way as to understand that both questions are reasonable and will be contextually driven?” Other issues exist, such as how inclusive, rigorous, connective, interdisciplinary, and forward-thinking has the writing instruction been. However, the main issue at hand here is how their high school instruction might create an uncertainty for students

as they move forward. Their next steps appear to be an enigma, and this is exacerbated in the lack of communication between HSE teachers and those who teach FYC. Now, we do not have any real insight into the brother's writing life over the past four years, but Marie understands it to not have been much. She also understands, or feels, that if you don't use it you might lose it. However, I wonder if this is not just an example of not using a certain genre. What I mean here is that he is defining writing as many people do—writing essays. With this as his gauge, he might not feel he is writing. What if the brother had been asked to write his personal statement in one of the genres he has grown accustomed to and clearly has used to gain entry into this new community—medical school. For Marie, she feels that nursing is a path she will follow, and it seems as if she understands that what she learns in one context can be applied/adapted to another. A question keeps arising for me: What about those students who will not *write* directly out of either HSE or FYC?

As I mention in the Introduction chapter, and go further later in the Conclusion chapter, there were so many aspects of the movements students make that impact their readiness that I had not initially considered. One of these, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, is that some students have a better understanding of the writing demands of their college courses. Many will not do what we might consider to be intensive writing for quite some time after a “writing course”. Still, and more to the questions I have for this project, the accelerated programs in which Marie is enrolled had a great impact on how she sees her preparedness for the literate life awaiting her. She is still engaged in writing and reading and in gaining entrance into the systems that will dictate many aspects of her life and possibly for the rest of her life.

Not yet certain what she will be doing, Marie speaks to how her experience in high school has helped her:

Well, I think IB has prepared you more for practical uses in college because it's a lot of critical thinking and it's essays in every class, like your internal assessments are all written and it's for, like I said, math, chemistry, history, so you're learning how to write for all those other subjects and AP is more based on multiple choice, for example, for chemistry, or history. Yeah, there's essays in history, too, but that's normal. And then I felt like the multiple choice in AP Lang, what we took last year, that, I don't feel like, prepares you very well for college.

So, the AP Language and Composition multiple choice part of the assessment carries little value to her, but it is fascinating that she focuses on the assessments of the AP course and not the process of what she has learned. Even more interesting is the fact that by the end of her second semester of college coursework she has done more multiple choice testing than written work.

Invariably, students in our IB Programme feel the work load is large. In discussing the demands of it, the direction of the interview takes on a change as she begins discussing a quandary in that she makes a direct correlation between effort and results. She says, "I do really well in school 'cause I work hard and I study and then I take a standardized test and I don't do as well and I don't feel like it shows my true potential in college because other people who are just naturally smart might do really well on their ACT but not apply themselves, so I don't think that's a good indicator of how well you're gonna write in college or do well." This lack of confidence in standardized testing is reflected in many teens, but it seems interesting

that she feels this way but scored a 5 on the AP Language and Composition exam—a standardized test. No doubt that was in part because of the effort she invested in preparing for the test, but she does make the distinction between IB and AP and understanding the importance of both. She says:

Yeah, for like practical purposes in college, like writing for different subjects, yes, but then I feel like I actually learn more in AP courses because they're harder. Like AP exams are a lot harder so actual facts and knowledge, I learn better in AP courses, so I have more knowledge base in those classes but then all around, like being able to express myself and stuff, IB was better because I learned how to critically think rather than just learn facts.

We see the importance of critical thinking, and we see that she understands, or feels that the memorizing aspects of some of the tasks might translate into skills she will need.

Importance of Feedback

With this notion of preparing students for entrance into new spaces, it is interesting to note the difference between the relationships they develop with high school and university teachers, and to understand how this is often quite different. Harper does not really discuss feedback until well into our interviews, but Marie does so from the start. Still, they both see it as something important. Harper looks to the feedback on her tests and papers as means to improve her subsequent grades—read what they write, implement in the next attempt, and then raise the grade. It seems simple enough. And we can see that interaction between novice

and expert is a negotiation of entrance into a system, as it is a way of understanding what they want as a tool for communication. Marie makes it clear that this is not lost on her, as she says:

I think in this class [the class she had with me], my feedback on -- 'cause I realized I sometimes -- 'cause I thought it was good to do direct quotes and stuff, which it is good in certain parts of your essays but I think I was too reliant on the book's words and not my own analysis, so I realized that I tend to rely more on the book's words rather than my own thoughts. So I think that was beneficial criticism that I used to help me learn how to analyze the book and use my own words, rather than just quote directly from it and use evidence 'cause I thought evidence is like all that's needed but I think analysis is also important, which I learned.

I think with the grade and comments because the grade reflects how you did on that assignment. So if I didn't do well, then it gave me incentive to improve it next time, which was probably, like, as much as I didn't like getting a bad grade, I think it helps the most 'cause it gave my incentive to fix it and really look at what's written because like in some classes, they'll give you a good grade and then you get the feedback and I didn't even look at it because I'm like, 'yeah, I got an A,' whatever.

She then moves on to discussion her psychology class, reflecting:

In psychology, that's like one example that it seemed like he'd always pretty much give us an A on it, an A or a B or we knew we'd get an A in the class. So sometimes, I'd get like commentary on my essays and I'd be like, 'yeah, yeah, it's good enough. Whatever,

I'm fine.' I have other stuff to focus on, so it made it less important. So I feel like my psychology writing is not as good because of that.

I find the repetition of the word “incentive” here is interesting, as it seems to resonate in so many areas—doing well for self, doing well in comparison to others, doing well so she can enter the next levels, etc. There also seems to be a good understanding of this feedback being a valid voice of those who are experts, and by revising accordingly gaining entrance into new systems.

During the initial interview, and while reflecting on it, I cannot help but envy Marie’s understanding of where she is going. It also strikes me that as she talks about her literate life, and how she had come to know what she knows about writing, she is able to articulate that she understands the scaffolding of her education—even if she does not know the term. She also carries with her a sense of what it is to be a novice or an expert, and to this end she understands, or at least has a place where she thinks she fits on this continuum. This is important in that she also conveys that she needs to know more in order to move on. Looking at what she says through the lens of this project, without knowing the terminology of activity theory, Marie knows that she must gain knowledge in order to negotiate entrance into new systems. Lastly, she also understands the value of hard work in order to obtain it.

Our Interview at the Beginning of Her Freshman Year

Marie’s experience is different from the others for a couple of reasons. One is that she has spent a summer semester at school, taking some of the prerequisite courses she would have taken in the fall semester. In essence, she is beginning her second semester at college,

but she feels as if it is her first real semester since the summer is both condensed and more relaxed with fewer students on campus. This has us at the second interview a couple of weeks into the Fall semester with her taking some introductory courses for her nursing major— anatomy, human growth and development, and impact of disabilities. What I find, as indicated below, is that her initial assumptions of the writing load for her coursework were spot on.

As the conversation during our interview began to address her writing life in nursing there was a clear void. When asked about her writing thus far, “We haven’t really,” she says. “I’ve only had one exam in my class which was anatomy and that was all multiple choice, so we haven’t had to do any writing.” Granted, so early in the semester there would be little significant writing to do, but she really sees nothing in the future that she calls writing. “Our syllabus basically has like every day what chapters we’re going to be learning and then when the exam is, but other than that we really don’t have any writing assignments,” she says. Rather, “It’s mostly just they give you the information and if you want to study, you can. If you don’t, that’s up to you. There’s no additional like exercises or things that you can do. It’s just basically, ‘Here’s the information and you do with it what you want.’” So, her initial entrance into her literate college life is much less formal than what it had been in high school. She hasn’t had to post anything online, but she does “write down notes though along with the Power Point. Then I study from those. But yeah, other than that I haven’t had to write too much.”

It would seem that we have little to discuss with regards to my thesis—specifically we have this gap of time between formal writing/instruction and more formal writing experiences within the systems into which she seeks entrance. But she *is* in college and taking courses, and

she is engaged in writing activities, even if not in the way that she had felt engaged before, and the truth of the matter is that if she had taken FYC over the summer, as a gen-ed course she would be doing the same level of writing. The question remains: is she prepared, or does she feel prepared for what is being asked of her? In this she feels, “very prepared. Yeah. I mean like there hasn't been much writing so I feel like I'm over-prepared but for my one class, that one is where we had to write essays and stuff that I prepared. It was actually very similar to your class I figured out. Using like information from readings that we had and using quotes and stuff like that.” The one class where she had to write the essays was that course from the summer that all freshmen had to take. In the three weeks she had been in the Fall semester, there had been no “writing” assignments. This, she finds, is both surprising and not.

Yeah, kind of except I knew going into what field I am like if I was – I had most of my gen eds completed so I'm like automatically going into the core of the nursing classes. So I kind of expected it to be more like science related rather than writing and more like multiple choice just based on knowledge rather than expression.

I find this interesting and telling, as she is defining her discipline specific coursework as a place of data input, almost. She understands this community to be one where the quantity of knowledge gained—i.e. terms, concepts, generalities, etc.—is her entry point. Marie explains it better: “I think there is once you get passed the learning portion but I feel like when it's the learning, you're just trying to absorb all the information *from* writings. Yeah, but you're not really having to express it.” This “learning portion” she is discussing here is the time when those in the nursing program are gaining the vocabulary and concepts that will allow them to

“express it” later. The foundations built here in the entry portion of the learning consists of mass quantities of data entry. She envisions later writing to be “more like critical thinking and applying information that I've learned like about the human body or circumstances or stuff like that. So I feel like it won't be as much just solid information and more analysis.”

It seems to me that Marie is, again, understanding the scaffolding nature of any learning. She understands, at this point, that she is on a learning continuum and that to gain full entry she will have to go through the process. She also seems to understand that there will be a gap in this process from the writing heavy system that was her high school coursework and that which she is engage with early in her college career. She understands that in this new system, the nursing system, she will have to gain knowledge before she will be asked to “express it” in a meaningful way. Instead, she will be amassing vocabulary and ideas. She seems to understand that she is reading quite a bit, and the argument is that her earlier writing experiences have prepared her for this task, but there is little doubt that this new community is acclimating her to the new genres in which she will engage. This will be a process. HSE and if she had taken FYC would leave her at the same place. There is a gap.

Our Interview Midway through Her First Semester

Writing does exist in Marie's world as she moves through the semester. And with this increase, and in this new world, her understanding of what writing is has changed, as well.

In high school I was required to do some research papers but most of my writing was analyzing and responding to a prompt. In college all of the writing I have done is

“research style” writing, where I research and write about a topic rather than respond to a specific prompt. The focus of these papers is content rather than fluency or grammar. I, therefore, now define writing as more of a medium to relay information rather than a way to persuade a person or analyze a work.

This last sentence sings a bit. Writing as a “medium to relay information”. She distinguishes this from persuasive or analytical writing. Not that this relaying of information might not sway or analyze, but the exigence from the onset of the task is something she considers new.

Hannah and Saily put it well with, “language as a connector between locations of writing. In particular, language is the vehicle through which members of different communities travel and come to know one another and their understandings of writing” (“Locating the Terms of Engagement” 121). It is, as I see it, a glimpse into how what she knew is being transferred into a tool of what she knows is the new reality of her community. The voice is less “fluent” and more analytical. Harper, in her experience, found this to be the case, as well, in her “scientific” writing, but this was not “fun” for her. Marie seems to take a more pedestrian approach and understands this shift from a more pragmatic standpoint. I think a lot of this difference is a product of the solidity of the chosen majors of each of these students. Harper is in flux at this time, while Marie is simply on her way to the destination she “knows” she will follow. Harper mentions her appreciation of not having a great deal of information about her major or her institution. Marie is quite aware of both and is not deviating.

This third interview is less revealing about Marie’s writing, but what I take from it within the context of this project is the clarity in which she has chosen a major seems to have allowed

her to find more about how to move through it. She understands the nature of what she needs to learn, and she understands that there is not a lot of writing that will happen just yet. Still, she feels that when the time comes, she will be ready. This brings me to the nagging issue that has developed over the past several months in these interviews—how do we address the gap of time that might be a part of many students’ literate college lives?

Our Interview after Her First Semester

Getting the feel for Marie’s experience so far, and getting comfortable in the process, I find out that Marie and Harper have been communicating about their time at their colleges. Interestingly, they have been discussing their literate and writing lives as a direct result of being a part of this study. When asked about how her classes went for the first full semester, her answer was, “All of them were just a ton of memorization.” She continued, “Last semester all of my exams were multiple choice. Not a single one I had to write for and hers [Harper’s] were the exact opposite.” The term was not devoid of all writing, as “In human growth and development, I had to write a review about the volunteer work I did. I also had to write and evaluation about a toy that you chose, how it impacts development. So those were two things I wrote. But other than that, there was no writing.” So, given the limited writing during the semester, what *did* the writing look like she had to do?

Marie: Oh okay. We had to go on like Fisher-Price website and then choose like two toys in like two different ages groups. You had to just write about how the toy impacts that age group and why it's beneficial. Say if it has a

sound and it's in the toddler age group then you can be like toddlers' sense – their sense of sound is developing through these years. So this sound increases their ability to comprehend and evaluate sensations like noise senses or something.

CB: Where do you get that information from? So how do you make that connection?

Marie: We studied it in a textbook. Yeah. So you had to apply what you knew about the age group to what they're doing on the toy to help that development.

CB: That's interesting. So is it like a speculative thing? Were you making an objective observation or were you taking information from the toy itself like, "They said that they're doing this," or were you making the inferences?

Marie: No, on the website it would have like – under the toy it would have, "Enhances motor skills," or something. Then it'll say like, "The small like switches enhance the toddler's motor skills because they're able to press

it and switch things." So you were able to basically confirm that with what you studied. So yeah.

CB: So talk to me then. When you studied this stuff in the textbook, did you have to read any other articles outside of the textbook or was it just out of the book?

Marie: It was just out of the book.

CB: Okay. So you didn't have any academic articles or research or anything like that you had to dive into?

Marie: No. Yeah, no.

In a sense, she is getting used to the language of the community in that there is no need for "filler" language and the writing did not take on any notion of the "narrative" type of writing she had experienced in the HSE classes, or any of her previous classes, as she mentions.

However, this does not suggest that she feels less prepared than others. This is a reflection, I think, of the study habits and the level of work she experienced more than anything else. "I think I was prepared for the studying but content wise, it was all pretty new. But yeah, I was prepared." She feels comfortable in the routine of college and even though her peers feel

overwhelmed, she says, “I was kind of accustomed to that whereas my friends were kind of like, “Oh my gosh, I have to study nonstop. All I do is study.” I’m like, ‘Yeah, but that’s why you’re here,’ which, yeah, it’s like a lot of purpose.” Clearly her earlier ideas of effort directly resulting in positive returns in outcomes is ringing true for Marie. Also, she had, and has, a solid understanding of her volume of writing, and as before she does a solid job of understanding the whys of it, without really being told. She says:

I think the reason I’m not taking many writing is because I had so many pre-requisites and credits from IB that I’ve gotten out of intro classes and a lot of the gen eds which are normally the writing courses. Now it’s basically like the content ones, just for my major. Because I’m doing like – you’re supposed to apply to the nursing major after two years, so after your sophomore year. Then you get into nursing school for junior and senior year. But because I had a lot of credits and a lot of pre-requisites I decided I could probably just do it all in one year. So that’s what I’m doing. But so it’s basically all just like nursing pre-requisites.

She is not wallowing in writing assignments by any means. But as I am reflecting on these interviews and those of the others, it is the holistic nature of the high school education that keeps retuning its part in the equation. In particular, it is the nature of this particular education, the combination of the IB and AP coursework that seems to emerge as a means of preparation for these students. Marie is no exception. She understands that she is in the beginning of the journey and that to gain entry there are levels of disciplinary discourse that must be mastered. First it is the vocabulary and foundations, and then comes the meaning

making. She understands the nature of scaffolding. She also understands that it has so much to do with study skills and looking for ways to gain entry—in essence being conscious that she is a novice and that she needs to engage in the process. This provides her with the self-efficacy that allow her to move into the next level.

I began this project wondering if students who skip FYC are prepared for entrance into the various systems they will need to enter in their academic lives. As with Harper, Marie shows me that this is not an easy question to ask. In the end, and later in the conclusion, it might be too limiting. Marie brings to light a gap that students might encounter with regards to writing that needs to be understood. This gap suggests that it is our task, as teachers, to ensure that we are providing the tools to navigate the diverse literate lives students will encounter. Marie further provides insight in that she shows how having prior knowledge of a destination might help the student to prepare for what they will encounter. This comes in the form of her having a brother going before her in a similar track.

JACK

One of the most important aspects of this project, and of the participants taking part in the project is the diversity of the students' choices and attitudes, all the while still having a great deal in common. Jack, like both Harper and Marie, was a student of mine during his junior year in high school, and like the other two he scored well in his courses and their assessments. His literate life in college is markedly different from both Harper and Marie, but he comes from a similar background in high school—both academically and socially. He, like Marie, is majoring in nursing, but his is a different path in that he is also going through an Airforce ROTC program. His university, Florida State University, is a rather large public institution, and it should be mentioned that many of the students who graduate from our high school attend this university, allowing for the potential for an established group of friends. He, like Marie, has a sibling in college, but, unlike Marie, Jack's sister attends a different university, and she is pursuing a different field of study all together than Jack. His sister provides some advice, but not to the same extent of Marie's brother. Unlike the other two participants, Jack does have to take a writing course at his university, but it is not the typically labelled FYC progression. What this university does is code this particular course as a sophomore writing course, thus creating a writing sequence for student who test out of the traditional FYC track. The introductory paragraph in the course outline begins with:

ENC 2135 fulfills the second of two required composition courses at Florida State University. While continuing to stress the importance of critical reading, writing, and thinking skills emphasized in ENC 1101, as well as the importance of using writing as a

recursive process involving invention, drafting, collaboration, revision, rereading, and editing to clearly and effectively communicate ideas for specific purposes, occasions, and audiences, ENC 2135 focuses on teaching students research skills that allow them to effectively incorporate outside sources in their writing and to compose in a variety of genres for specific contexts.

I had initially thought to exclude Jack’s input into the thesis project, as he did not “fit” the criteria of testing through all of the FYC courses—technically—but while reading through his interviews and hearing what he had to say about this course, the writing in the other courses, and how they connect to what he did in high school, the insight he shares about path to his college writing fits well, and as I draw conclusions from all of these, his voice is one that bears hearing. In essence, his is a reflection that allows for me to see how the HSE course is reflected in a course similar to FYC. So, having one student who writes a lot in her entrance into college—Harper; then another who feels ready, but does not write a lot in the beginning of her college life—Marie; and finally the final participant who writes a bit, but has a window into what the others do not have access to—Jack—and he becomes, in a sense, a gauge on which to juxtapose the others.

Our Initial Interview—Senior year of high school

Jack, like the other two participants, comes to the project with his ideas of what writing is and what he considers to be “good” writing. He reflects, “How do I define writing? Finding a way just to communicate an idea across to someone else. You have the idea in your head and

you want to put the same idea in someone else's head. It's the transfer. It's the process of transferring an idea." Jack understands the epistemic nature of writing—that writing makes meaning and thus as Jack understands that good writing makes connections and thus new meanings. Those who teach writing seek for all our students to share Jack's insight. The next question I had for him involved how, then, are speaking and writing different, as both seem to fit this definition of communicating an idea across to someone else. His response is thoughtful, in that he understands a person cannot write and speak the same way:

But when you write, you can't do that in the same way. On top of that, it's the reflection factor. It's the refinement. When you speak, for instance, if it's not a written speech, if you're just speaking off the top of your head, it comes out very just unrefined and you can make some mistakes really easily or get your ideas across and be beautiful. But when you write, you can write something and then go back and edit it, refine it, edit it, refine it. Your thoughts are a lot more organized then. They're both [writing and speaking] communication, but they're both just doing it in a very different way.

Not only does Jack see writing and speaking as different, and cleverly defined as such, but when we discuss the diverse modes of writing, Jack suggests, "They're all very different in that regard [their presentation], but they're all attempting the same thing, at least to my understanding – putting an idea in someone else's head. An idea from the person who – the author – being translated across to the reader in the form of written language is writing, in my opinion or to my understanding." This conveyance of ideas, or as Jack suggests a "transfer", is astute in that transfer is not something discussed openly in any of his classes. However, the

effectiveness of making connections is not all that Jack suggests is important in writing, and in the end only part of what he feels is “good” writing.

Between good and bad writing, he says, “There's different aspects to that. Effectiveness, like how easily understandable the message is and the beauty with which it's communicated across with. You can be really effective if you're really cut and dry with it, but it's not the same as having a really clear message just dressed up in a really nice, beautiful way that leaves a lasting impression. To me, good writing is something that balances beauty and effectiveness.” This combination of beauty and effect? Jack looks at “bad” writing as “something that either disregards effectiveness, disregards beauty, or loads them up like a salad with too much dressing. That's bad writing.” So, over the first twelve years of education, and more specifically the past two to four years of instruction, Jack has developed this notion of good, effective writing as also needing a sense of beauty to it. It is not enough to get the point across, but it has to be aesthetic, as well. This interests me, in that when I introduce the idea of rhetoric in my class—Jack had the course I teach in eleventh grade—I provide this as the definition: The art of using symbols to create an effect. The definition is simple, to be sure, but this seems to resonate here in the developing definition of good writing for this high school—soon to be college—student. This appreciation for the beauty is evident in Jack’s discussion of writing assignments across the curriculum, as he describes writing for math and science as a “brutal” writing process that he “didn’t like that much.” On the other hand, “creative writing is my favorite, or even historical writing” are enjoyable to him. This really comes to light when he thinks about some of the writing he has done in high school history class. He says:

History. That's always been a lot about writing and recounting facts. Not so much – recounting facts in order to support your evaluation and synthesis of historical things. I just like history as a subject, so writing about it has always been a thing that I really enjoy. There are always essays that usually follow the five paragraph structure, a pretty simple prompt and we just write on it. It's set up to be five paragraphs. That's that.

This connects to Harper's story, in that she found value in the writing that she enjoyed, and found that once she understood the expectations, she was able to enjoy the writing more. Jack, on the other hand, is definitely understanding the idea of expectations and lines of demarcation that allow entry into the spaces he wants to enter. His take is different, though. One might even see it as mischievous. Concerning one assignment in a course called, Theory of Knowledge—a required course for IB students—where he “just tried to deceive the reader there – and just tried to – I just wanted to make myself look smart in doing that.” It can be an art of deception. Where Harper finds enjoyment in understanding and following a new set of expectations as an academic endeavor, Jack looks at it more along the lines of it being a game.

Each of the participants was a candidate in the IB Programme for their high school careers. What this means for them is that they had to complete an extended essay, which is an extended research project students design, research, draft, consult with an advisor, and submit for external assessment. For many of them, Jack included, this is the first writing task of this level—word count is approximately 4000 words. The time and extent of the project helped Jack transition from looking to fool the reader to a place where, according to him, “I actually tried to make it – I had the time to—so that's what really helped me out there. I had so much

time that I could actually make an argument and just not lean on big words and trying to confuse the reader into thinking I'm smart, but actually building up a sound argument in defense of my thesis." It was a process for him, and in this process, in which he draws on multiple aspects of writing learned in high school English and in the discipline in which he writes, he shines. Not surprisingly, his subject area was History, and the topic was that the Protestant Reformation should be credited with the rise of capitalism. What is noteworthy here is the fact that this young student "grew" into the topic. Jack reflects, "I found that really interesting. At first, I didn't. At first, it bored me to death, but then after I actually started to link things together it felt very cool because I felt like I was going someplace that other people hadn't explored that much." Jacqueline Jones Royster, in her article "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own", writes, "Subjectivity as a defining value pays attention dynamically to context, ways of knowing, language abilities, and experience, and by doing so it has a consequent potential to deepen, broaden, and enrich our interpretive views in dynamic ways as well" (29). This area of discovery was meaningful to Jack, as he continues, "It was more of an investigation. The writing kind of just put all that together." So, in a high school assignment, the epistemic value of writing connects to a sense of efficacy in that a sense of value concerning what is done comes into play. Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz suggest that, "Thresholds, of course, are dangerous places" ("The Novice as Expert" 125).

This being his initial foray into extended academic writing, he really had no map, but he did have skills developed through his education up to that point. Still, his discussion of his evolving process is interesting:

Jack: I'm having trouble remembering that. I just remember I was all over the place. I did not have a plan going into that. I made my thesis. I proclaimed that to be the truth, and I was like, "All right, now I need to go find evidence to back myself up." I would find things then I would create paragraphs. I didn't have a plan for it.

CB: Were you open to being wrong?

Jack: I was really open to being wrong. In fact, near the end of my essay – near the end of my EE – I started finding counter arguments. It started freaking me out because there is a lot of counter arguments eventually. I included those in there too. They wanted to see that. That was part of the criteria.

Here, Jack is articulating his developing idea of the process of writing, and this includes being confused in the beginning, but knowing he has to write something. He has the idea of a thesis and support, but he is initially unsure about the order he should take. Then, as the work evolves, he begins to question his assertions. He is open to being wrong, but he still moves forward placing his ideas amongst the voices he is reading on the topic—part of the continuum.

How Confident Jack Feels about Writing Leaving High School

Given the diversity of coursework and the rigor that the IB Programme provides, and then adding on the use of AP courses and assessments in the school that Jack attends, it is not surprising that he, as the other participants, feels secure in his skills moving on to the next

phase of his education. Jack says, “I want to say confident. I want to say that I'm confident, but the only experience I have with college is the Community College of Eastern Florida and the IB program, which people claim is supposed to be harder than college. I've never actually experienced what college is like, so I'm a little nervous on that uncertainty aspect there – the unexplored area. I'm a little worried about that, but I'm confident based on how I've performed in the past. I don't view myself as a bad writer.” Maybe the phrase cautiously confident makes sense here. This works in his favor, if we look to Sommers and Saltz and their work with incoming students who discover “what worked in high school isn't working anymore” (125). In that Jack understands that he is at a level of expertise that works in the context of high school writing, but he also is well aware that he is unaware of what writing will be like at the next level. In fact, his initial understanding of what university writing might look like is “quantity”. “That's what I've heard,” he says, “That's what I've heard from a lot of the teachers and what my sister has told me, that there's just a lot of writing to do. We'll see how that goes.” Like Marie, Jack has his sister from which to draw, but unlike Marie, Jack's sister is not in a similar field of study, nor is she attending the same university as he will attend. So, her input is of a general nature, and although there is merit in this, the specifics are off.

What I find to be telling in Jack's understanding of his own preparedness is his awareness of the affordances and constraints of the IB Programme and courses offered during his time in the high school. Discussing the AP courses and IB Programme he says, “I feel like they've been excellent, both together.” By together, he understands that each has different focus and goals. Jack breaks it down with his own understanding:

AP is very structural, and they really care about the organization you use in communicating your ideas across. They're really big on that organization bit. IB doesn't care about that at all. They were like completely 100 percent focused on – granted, they care a little bit about your organization, but not too much. They care completely about what you have to say versus how you're saying it or in what order you're saying it. Because of that, they've pretty much covered all their bases. One covers its' own respective areas and the other covers its' thing, so I feel like all the bases have been covered in that regard. I feel pretty satisfied. I feel pretty prepared.

I did ask him which one he would choose over the other, if given the chance. “That's a toughie. Probably AP. AP because once you get comfortable with the format, the ideas kind of come easier to you. At least that's the way it's worked with me,” he said, then added, “Yup. Once I understand the organization—once I have the skeleton, it's easier to dress up.” This sounds a lot like a student understanding the workings of a particular genre within the diverse systems, or at least how they should “look”. Angela Rounsaville et al suggest that “the key is to invite students both to articulate and examine the meta-cognitive processes that guide their discursive choices” (“From Incomes to Outcomes” 108). It seems to me that this is an interesting place for the high school student to be, any student. As seems to resonate through the data collected from each of the participants—being aware that there are different expectations within the different contexts that they will encounter is a benefit to each as they navigate their university studies.

The takeaway from the initial interview is interesting. First, Jack understands some of the intricacies of communications. Specifically he uses words such as “transfer” and he distinguishes how written and spoken language differ to him. Second, he creates a sense of effective writing that fuses “beauty and effect.” This plays out later, as he encounters his English class at the university. Third, Jack distinguishes between the writing he enjoys and that which he does not. Fourth, we learn about how Jack develops a process of writing as he delves into the more extended nature of the extended essay. Lastly, there is a confidence that Jack feels moving from high school to the university, and this is, in part, due to his understanding of the systems he has been engaged in over the past four years of high school.

Our Interview at the Beginning of His Freshman Year

It is during this interview that I begin to wonder if Jack will work for my thesis, as we discover that he is taking a course, that although labelled a 2000 level course at his university, is done so in a roundabout way to circumvent the very process I am studying—students moving through FYC. So, technically it is not a first-year composition course, but it is a rhetorically based analysis class, and according to Jack, “it’s what we did in your class, Mr. Bell, basically.” This sings to me as a basis of comparison. I have two participants who fit the criteria of the thesis perfectly. Then there is Jack, who takes a course he initially suggests is similar to my course he took during his junior year in high school. Still, and Jack confirms this, the level of writing in the other courses he is taking, and most of them are second and introductory

courses—statistics, English, sociology, and nutrition. As Jack is in the ROTC program at his school, he takes the ROTC courses, as well.

The semester begins rather slowly with regards to writing, but Jack feels that, “we write a lot more as we progress through the classes but at the moment in these like general requirement classes, it's designed to get us through as smoothly and as quickly as possible whereas writing is reserved for our junior and senior or even more our sophomore year with the exception of English.” This is a quandary for me. There looks to possibly be two gaps here that need addressing—1) that created by students skipping FYC and moving beyond prerequisite classes, and 2) that created by the natural progression of coursework even for those taking FYC. This is interesting in that two students who are pursuing degrees in nursing—albeit in different manners—will both have a gap between when they take a writing course and when writing becomes an integral part of their studies. That is not to say that they do not write. They do. That is to say the negotiation between and into the new systems is done so less by writing and more by gaining knowledge in more passive ways. If students are not writing a lot until their junior or senior years, then there is a gap of time regardless.

We further talk about how Jack feels about his preparedness for the rigors of college learning. Regardless of how he understands the writing demands early on, Jack still feels confident in his abilities in the classes he is taking. He says:

Definitely. Definitely. In terms of just like notetaking – I'm sorry, not with notetaking but just in terms of the assignments that were being given, I feel like if they're not hard – none of the classes really have presented themselves as difficult, really. We have really

generous timelines with studying and accomplishing assignments. It's nowhere near as frantic and rushed as we sometimes felt like high school classes would be, as strange as that sounds. It just feels like these college classes are easier, almost, or actually I would say they feel easier so far than what we had in IB.

Here, it is the “frantic” and “rushed” nature of the rigorous IB Programme that comes to his mind more than the skills he acquired. Almost guiltily he concedes, “It's just – we have a lot of time. We have a lot of time to do everything. It's progressing very slowly and I guess that makes it easier.” This is a result of many factors mentioned before and in the conclusion later, but one of the major constraints of teaching high school is the sheer volume of information mandated to teach. I'd like to briefly discuss this for a moment. In our high school, students in the junior and senior years often succumb to the pressures of the program. This is a perpetual battle in meetings—how do we help the students feel less stress from the volume of work? As we have seen in Harper, then Marie, here we have Jack addressing this volume, and for him, as with Marie, it seems like a crucible of sorts that has made the less ardent schedule of university life seem “easier” as Jack states. Those of us who teach at the high school, well some of us, will even justify the grueling workload as a means of over-preparing students. This becomes a stronger discussion in the conclusion, but bears mentioning here for later reference.

On another interesting note, and as the interview progresses I think, that one of the skills that Jack acquires in his short time at the university is that of networking, or collaborative learning. As mentioned in the beginning of the chapter, our high school sends many students to FSU, but these are not the students with whom Jack interacts here. He finds others who

seek entrance into the systems, those who are engaged in the same courses of study to connect with, and thus create their own community of novices seeking expertise. This is similar to Harper, but the ways in which they arrive at the benefits of this tool differ. Jack places this in an area that he feels is not something he was prepared for.

Let's see. A lot of I guess success here in college relies on how we network outside of class. In the classes that I do – that I have been able to make friends and exchange phone numbers, that's become honestly an invaluable resource. We text each other reminders and we try and help each other through assignments outside of class. There's that. Yeah, I mean that would be the biggest thing. In the classes where I don't have a network outside of class, I feel like that's where I'm kind of weakest, where I can't turn to someone else and ask them for help with notes or with an assignment. Those are like the classes where I'm feeling like the most pressure, where I can't just turn to someone else and ask them for help.

Granted, this is not directly related to HSE and FYC, but if we look at the complex nature of students' lives and how some literate aspects of their lives mediate others, we can begin to see how maybe that time in the beginning of university, those freshman classes might offer, not only, transferable literate skills for later classes, but also collaborative learning tools they can use in this context. If we understand that students will be skipping these classes, then this is an area that those of us who teach high school need be sure to foster for students, as well.

Here, he does discuss the differences in volume, but as he begins to explain his English class, his participation is validated in that he provides an interesting voice into both a university's solution to students testing out of FYC and how that works.

Jack's English Class

As mentioned before, Jack does not "fit" the criteria of this thesis, in that he does take what he calls an English class. The formal title for the course is *Research, Genre, and Context: three Ways of Investigating Genre*. Given the nature of the typical two-year progression of FYC courses in the state university system in Florida, this course reflects many of the components of the second semester FYC course might look like. Offering this in the second year, and making it a required course might, in fact, allow the university to circumvent the ability of students to "skip" the FYC progression that high test scores allows. However, even though the criteria are a bit off, it still seems pertinent to look at the course and juxtapose it against what he experienced in high school, and then to look at how he sees both of these contributing to his confidence in writing in the disciplines. Jack experiences a paradigm shift in moving to this new context. Moving from the somewhat constricted space that is high school, where teachers are more accountable to things such as language and methods, Jack is interesting in how he describes his initial impressions of his class.

Well in our English class and – please excuse me here – but our English professor, she's this young, New Yorker who has quite a foul mouth. So she from day one encouraged us to read this article called "Shitty First Drafts" where she encourages us and after she's

been encouraging us that our style of writing should always start with a shitty first draft and then get better from there. So I mean that's – I never thought about before. I'd always want to start off and then I'd go back and I'd polish what I'd written and then I'd move on and then I'd polish what I'd written. But she really – she wants us to write a terrible start like have a terribly mangled essay at first and then improve with it over time. She's really emphasizing just getting your ideas out on paper, no matter how stupid they are and then just working from there.

Clearly, he had felt a need to be more “perfect” in his writing in high school. The revision process was not an emphasis. As one of his teachers, I find this interesting in that we “feel” as if we do this, but in practice we do not. The reasons for this might be that the time constraints on the types of writing done in the high school classroom do not allow for a lot of revision, or it could be that the curricular constraints do not allow for it. Whatever the reason for this, it still bears reminding that Jack still feels as if this course is reflective of junior year high school English class—rhetorically/genre driven.

Later, in our final interview, I asked Jack about his evolution as a writer in college, and he responded with, “I had to sit down and really show a lot of love and gratitude for my English teacher.” Jack’s takeaway from the course is that “her only goal was to make us love writing and to discover this like – to create a passion for writing in us which I thought was incredible. I recommended her to all my friends who need to take English. That's basically what happened. I learned – I guess I rediscovered a joy for writing again in her class.” In looking at Nancy Sommers and others, it is clearly necessary for students to understand their “place” in the

writing continuum, or as novices figuring out “the expectations of college writing while producing paper after paper” (Sommers and Saltz 128), but it bears mentioning that it might also benefit these students to have a desire to write. This professor, for Jack, created a space where the students could explore, and for one of the assignments that space was history for Jack. He researched and wrote on history. He feels the “enthusiasm so many freshmen feel.” Not so much “for writing per se than for the way it helps to locate [him] in the academic culture, giving [him] a sense of academic belonging” (Sommers and Saltz 131). What’s interesting is that he does say, “I feel bad because you did it, too, Mr. Bell.” He felt the need to make me feel comfortable, and I have to take him at his word, but this enjoyment of writing allowed for an efficacy to develop, and in the end, the project produced a body of work “that they [the students] were proud of and that they had enjoyed making.” Still, and this speaks to the nature of this thesis, is that this course brings out a discovery component in Jack that was also present in his high school coursework—specifically the Extended Essay. If we remember this process, Jack experimented in his research and began to “write himself” into the topic—how the Protestant Reformation contributed to the rise of Capitalism. This epistemic nature of research and in writing in research is replicated in one of Jack’s writing projects for his college English class. He says it best:

Oh it was of various points. First, I researched various points in like U.S. history where we – how did I put this back in my essay. It was we made – we repeated mistakes that were made in the past or that were made in the past. I focused on the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan which had almost like – the more I looked into it, it was shockingly how

similar the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was in terms of like the tactics used and the mistakes made in terms of logistics and just general leadership at the time. We just completely paralleled the mistake. We did that.

I looked into the fear of communists in the Cold War and how we have islamophobia today and the rhetoric used by leadership and politicians. I compared Cormac McCarthy – not Cormac McCarthy, Senator McCarthy – not Cormac McCarthy – Senator McCarthy and Donald Trump and the _____ that they would say. Then I also looked into prohibition and compared it to the government's stance and crackdown on marijuana and how both of those are similar in terms of how the population is responding and how we had Al Capone in Chicago and then we have Mexican drug cartels today. It was just really, really interesting. So that was my second to last assignment.

It might seem obvious, but still the importance of these two spaces matter. No class is entirely redundant, but it is interesting that this college course and the combination of Jack's high school coursework in the IB Programme coupled with AP courses have such similarities. We will not know if Jack would have been as prepared for the other courses, and even more importantly the courses to come, if he had not taken this college course. What we do know, however, is that this course—required by the university he attends—is similar in what it produces with regards to Jack's takeaways from the course. Again, Jack says it best:

I tried to reset my thinking a little bit knowing that I was in college now. So I was trying to just like start anew almost. But then very – so I went in with that mindset like, "Okay,

I'm going to try to go in with a blank slate and start anew and just learn how to write at a college level." But what I discovered is that in your class and in other classes we already were writing at a college level. We already were following MLA format. We already were writing these large, almost extended essay-style papers.

So I guess I kind of tried to take what I learned in high school and fused it with what Rita was doing in terms of an emphasis about drafting and making a very – almost purposefully making a terrible first draft to just – like word vomit. Just get all of your ideas on paper. Just make that your goal. The emphasis she put on just having a terrible first draft, just make sure it's terrible, make sure it's bad. The emphasis she put on that was refreshing and it was very, very cool.

As a writing teacher/high school English teacher, the notion of a student having fun with writing is more than appealing. However, even though Jack admits that the instructor “spent a lot of time focusing on genres . . . she didn’t touch much on the idea of having a professional tone in a research paper.” Jack suggests that “she kind of saw herself as a revolutionary.” So, how does a student then move to other courses—sociology, chemistry, or calculus? Like the others, Jack has writing skills, but he is less certain, or vocal about how he negotiates the systems in which he works.

This section of the interviews carries with it a theme of enjoyment of writing. This course, it seems, has instilled, or rekindled this love of writing for Jack. As it is billed as a course on genres, it strikes me as funny that Jack does not see a lot of ties to writing from this course

to that of the systems he seeks to enter there is a juxtaposition he acknowledges that works for him-implicitly.

Our Interview after His First Semester

I got the sense, from Jack, that the English class—the rhetoric/genre class—was, to him, a space where he was allowed to explore his voice and to develop an enjoyment of writing. Still, and if we believe that a great deal of what writing instruction is at the university level, and thus at the high school level if students are allowed to skip FYC, it behooves us to understand how students navigate those literate spaces that are outside of our instruction. For Jack, this is a simple exercise in mimicry.

I just – hmm, I guess I tried to mimic the tone – not the tone – the word choice and the structure that I would read in a textbook, that I was reading in my sociology textbook, that I would read in the sources that I had to cite, that I would hear in class. I would just try to mimic that. I guess the way I'd always feel when I was writing a paper it's like my eyes would be like half-closed a little bit, a little bit bored, whereas when I was writing a paper for Rita they'd be wide open and excited.

It seems as if the knowledge is there, but the desire is gone. “half-closed” eyes for the one and “wide open” for the other—“bored” versus “excited”. The conflict of what he had to do to gain entry into one system was not what he wanted, but he still attempted. Jack told his English teacher about this, as well. He says, “She used the word academic. I wanted to use the word dull.”

Comparing his English course writing to that of sociology Jack found that in English the instructor wanted “compression”, or for the students to get to the point and move on. This was not the case in sociology where, “He wanted the aspect to be expanded and well-explained and every little facet to be addressed. I was like, ‘No. I’m sure the reader can figure that out by themselves. They don’t need me to show them what this is or to explain this.’ So that got me in trouble. It was not giving enough example or not going in depth enough. But eh –.” I look at these descriptions as a means of seeing just how Jack is seeing the tasks of writing and looking to determine if what he is having to do is something acquired in his HSE course, or as I suggest before and in the conclusion that we need to look at the whole of the education, or is it something that he gets from this required English course? It seems to me that the mimicry and understanding of voice, although are discussed in this genre based English course at his university, are also dealt with at length in his high school coursework. As with most all of what I have learned though these interviews, this is best supported by Jack’s own words.

There were way more similarities than I expected and I realized it when I talked to another student from Rita's class. He told me about the experience he had with his English teachers. I have to say that it made me so happy to have had all of you guys to teach us because the way he made it sound was like they would just like assign them things to write about and they would just leave them to their own devices and give zero input, my friend's teachers. Whereas you guys, all the teachers that we had at [the high school] assigned very good books that everyone enjoyed reading. You guys taught very valuable skills that I wasn't expected to but I've relied very, very heavily on in college.

At the end of Jack's interviews, I was left with a sense of an organized chaos that is his literate life to this time. It is in that space that I find the greatest learning has occurred for my thesis. As has been a common finding for all of the participants, it is not a delineated movement from a HSE course or a FYC course to the disciplines, but rather it is an accumulation of all of it.

CONCLUSION

What I Wanted to Know

At the onset of this research, the questions seemed simple enough: 1) How do high school students who will test out of FYC believe their writing skills developed through high school have prepared them for university writing tasks? 2) What do high school students perceive university writing to look like, especially in discipline specific courses? 3) How do students' perceptions change as they take discipline-specific courses (DSC) from high school? 4) Once in their first semester at university, how do students define the expectations of discipline-specific courses?

I teach high school students who move through many prerequisite courses at the university because of their high test scores and because of their earning the IB Diploma. Since neither my school or I have kept in contact with the students who leave our school, it seemed natural that we should be asking if they feel prepared, and once they enter college if they, in fact, are prepared to meet the literate demands that they encounter in their discipline specific courses and academic lives in general. While teaching, and also pursuing my MA in Rhetoric and Composition, the aspect of students' movement from and in between systems within the academic world, and outside of this, became clear. Seeing as student movement involved leaving one system and entering others, all the while circumventing FYC—yet another system—I thought that this would look interesting by employing an Activity Theory lens to maybe see

how these students navigate these new spaces and thus how they begin to move from novice to expert—or, if not quite expert, then at least less-novice—in their areas of study. From here it seemed natural to include some research voices such as those from transfer and genre theory, as they have established a place in FYC research. So, in the end, I sought to discover how these three particular students felt about how prepared they might be in their new systems, and how this eventual comfort, or lack thereof, might reflect how well they thought they were prepared before leaving high school. The interviews were engaging and informative. Still, after sifting through so much data, I'm not certain what interests me the most: what I sought to find, or what revealed itself on the fringes that need further research. In the end, the initial question revealed a great deal more than what I had initially *thought* I might find.

What I found out about what I wanted to know

Addressing the first two of my initial questions—how prepared students felt they were and what they thought college writing would be like in their disciplines—invariably, the students felt comfortable with their skills moving from high school to college. Each had the notion that even though writing at the university would be different, they felt their skills developed over the previous twelve years would serve them well, even in courses to which they were new. This may have been partially due to the hubris of youth, but given the responses from each, they appeared to be fairly well grounded and humble and more engaged consciously with thinking about what they had done during their time in high school. With regards to my third question—how do their perceptions change upon entering their DSC—this comfort

followed them into the beginning of their first semesters, but was somewhat offset by the fact that, for Marie and Jack, there was little in the way of writing. Harper, alone, found herself writing with any great volume, and even though she had a more vigorous writing life than the other two, she still felt as prepared for the tasks as anyone else, and this includes the writing she did in her history course which consisted of mostly upper classmen. There is an elephant in the room, however. The participants' responses to the first three questions did not surprise me, but it was the movement and discussions about the fourth question that made me scratch my head. The answer was not clean. It was messy.

We cannot overlook the fact that there is often a gap of time that occurs between HSE writing instruction and DSC. This potential gap also exists in the traditional progression into FYC and then to other courses, where students might not engage in DSC for several semesters. It does bear mentioning that, depending on the discipline, often initial DSC are not writing intensive—take for example Marie's experience where her introduction to her new systems involved the acquisition of discipline specific vocabulary. That is not to say that writing in the move from novice to expert within the newly entered systems does not exist and that subtle writing occurs. It is only that for a while the students might take on a more passive role in acquisition of language before putting the language acquired into action in more epistemic writing.

Upon reflection of this component of the project, it occurs to me that this movement between systems and thus the need to understand the tools used within them—to include language—this movement is not necessarily fast. This reveals a constraint of this project, and

that is a larger study is probably the best way to understand the complexities, and in having a broader timeframe to draw from, more patterns might emerge.

What I found is that there is so much to look at: systems of knowing; navigation of these systems; evolution/movement from novice to expert; and understanding both genre and transfer. Much of this has been researched by the likes of Elizabeth Wardle, Doug Downs, Kevin Roozen, and others in the myriad moves from FYC. In truth, this research has led to progressive advancement in FYC pedagogy (i.e. *Writing About Writing*) however, at the high school level the time and content constraints are rather daunting. Even within this deeply entrenched system, not all is the same. Clearly, there has emerged this middle ground of pedagogy, and AP courses and the IB Programme might allow for divergence from the *normal* constraints of HSE classrooms, as they allow for a possible space that better accommodates a student's move into courses that lead to their disciplines of study. However, this freedom is superficial in reality. District, state and federal demands still remain on the AP/IB HSE teachers' plates.

The interviews became a means of reflection for the students, allowing them to better articulate the skill sets acquired during high school that allowed for their confidence. They began making connections, and were able to voice the specific tools that their high school educations had provided, but this was in response to direct inquiry. In short, these tools became conscious when they were asked about them. This made me think about how little we actually do in trying to make visible the connections between years and disciplines. We might, as English instructors at the high school level, look to make the understanding of such things as genre, transfer, discourse communities, systems and more a part of our overt pedagogy rather

than something implied and assumed. Regardless, these high performing students entered college with confidence and this continued.

What I found out, but didn't know I wanted to know

I suppose that regardless of a plan, we tend to discover, or learn, unexpected knowledge as we travel. Maybe there is more truth in that we should allow this discovery to occur. In this instance, the more I asked and the further I reached into the literate lives of these students, what I found was that within the realm of high school it is difficult to distinguish between the impact of the literate nature of disciplines. That is not to say that they are not autonomous. They are. Chemistry is chemistry; math is math; and history is history—with all of their iterations. What I mean to say is that in the high school lives of students that the proximity of the movement between and among areas of study in their lives makes the distinction between the literate nature and the connectivity of the DSC less distinguishable. Students, at our school, attend classes five days a week, seven periods a day, and have five minutes between classes and thirty minutes for lunch. Students are encouraged to engage in diverse extracurricular activities such as clubs and sports and then have hours of homework every night. Think about how this is different from their lives at the university. Teachers are accessible every day in high school; students are amongst a common set of peers for up to twelve years—often having the same, or similar courses; and there are state and federal curricular mandates that dictate the materials presented. It is not hard to imagine that isolating a course within this immense system and its impact would be challenging, at best. The

relationship between FYC and HSE is less reflective than I had anticipated. The transition, then, from HSE to DSC is markedly less direct than I had thought at the onset of this project. What I mean here is it is difficult, in the end, to map a linear move from HSE to DSC. It is more complex than that. Harper drew heavily from several of her high school courses' such as chemistry, history, and English to build up a set of tools to negotiate her entry into the beginning discipline specific courses, namely her chemistry course where she employs tools learned in each. Marie, as we begin the project, reflects on the diverse tools she has acquired over all of her schooling that she feels will help her in the next level of learning. What she learns, however, is that these tools will have to wait for a while, at least, to use as the volume of writing is light to begin with. Jack is unique in that he does have a writing course, and this course looks to engage the enjoyment of writing, but he does not see the connection to it and the discipline specific writing he is doing. Rather, he pulls from his history and English classes from high school. As each of these students embarks on their journeys they find that how they have become their literate selves is predicated on not only their English courses, but all of what they have engaged in. In the same way that students are complex in their entrance to disciplines from high school, we must understand that their movement from FYC to the DSC courses is complex, as well. The truth of the matter is that the literate lives of students in such programs are too intricately woven to successfully dissect one discipline—HSE—out for impact. Rather, the academic fabric is too complex to tease out in this method of research, and so with the initial plan of the thesis, looking at the movement of three students from HSE to DSC, the complications became clear soon after accumulating the data. Rather than HSE, autonomously,

the students' discussions soon took into account the literate nature of *all* they did in their high school education. How could they not?

Rather than simply discussing writing in English class, they thought about all of their classes as being parts of a whole—an educational mosaic of sorts. That is not to say that certain aspects of assignments or genres connect to certain courses, but that the learning in English class and history class and chemistry and others are so close to each other.

It seems as if the students coming from a rigorous program such as the one these students come from might prepare students for the rigors of writing in college. However, it is important that we see that it, at least for these students, is the whole of it rather than the autonomy of it. It was not an English class, or classes. It was not a discipline course that shaped them. Rather, it was the symphony of it all. There is a collective component that cannot be overlooked.

Constraints/Complications: Implications for Research

The main constraint for my project was time. This includes time with the participants and the time I have to conduct the research. Where I found limits, others might find opportunity. It would be good to see research on this topic follow students for a greater amount of time, say through their entire undergraduate years. It would be good to be able to collect sample texts from the students and conduct text-based interviews. It would have been nice to have been able to actually attend some of the writing environments the students were in, as they were composing, especially as they were learning to work more collectively.

Another limit here was the number of students I studied. I envision some different studies that move the focus to either side of what I have done. So much more could be gleaned by mimicking the likes of Carroll, Roozen, Sternglass, and others and following the students through their entire college lives. It would be good to get a more focused look on a single student and their movement throughout their negotiations of diverse systems in their time at the university. It would be good, too, to get bigger data of a more diverse group that might provide a wider lens to see any trends. I think about Sommers and Saltz and it seems that if a study such as their was done on this particular set of students, those who skip FYC, this would provide a lot of answers about a group of students we know very little about.

Another constraint I feel is that these students represent a rather homogenous group—elite in a way. That is to say that their high school program is not indicative of others out there. So, to really understand the effect of testing through FYC, a greater swath in diversity in many ways would allow for a greater sense of understanding what the effects actually are. For example: What about the students who scored 3's and 4's on the exam? What about those who are coming solely from AP or IB programs? What about those coming from a more diverse ethnic background? Socioeconomic? What about juxtaposing students who test completely though, such as these, against those who test partially through, and those who take FYC, a model much like the BYU study.

My project began with a clear focus and theoretical lens with which to observe it. What I found, however, is that I moved from the focused space of activity theory and seeing language as a tool for mediation of tasks within systems. I did see language as a means with which to

create negotiate systems and as tools developed over time. David Russell says, in “Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction”, of texts that they “arise in relation to previous texts (intertextuality) as well as in relation to non-textual phenomena. Every word, as Bakhtin put it, carries with it its history” (55). This is what I consider to be scaffolding, and this is present in the thesis.

What I see, with regards to the thesis as a whole and with regards to activity theory as its lens, is that this is a small crack in a door that opens to a large room filled with many other doors. What I have done here is to take on a rather large, data broad analysis. The next steps would be to recognize some of these constraints and learn more. Activity theory is a valid tool with which to do this. Maybe look more closely to Harper and her movement from high school chemistry to college chemistry and see what linguistic tools she employs for mediation—specifically. Maybe follow Marie for a longer period of time to tell if the literate tools she remembers from high school and middle school and earlier actually do play a part in her entrance into her later academic life. Elizabeth Wardle, in “Mutt Genres” suggests that discipline specific understanding of genres might not occur until a student’s junior year. Maybe beyond this. Maybe do a focused study on Jack’s experience in my AP Language and Composition course, his sophomore writing course, and look to how what he has learned in those spaces might directly transfer to what he ends up writing later in his academic career. These are suggestions to better understand these three students more directly through an activity theory lens. This student population needs more attention.

Implications for Teaching

This group of students who move from high school, a confusing place, to the universities, another confusing place, and do so by skipping some of the steps many before them had taken, is one on which we know very little. Given the disconnect between the systems that teach HSE and FYC, there is little in the way of conversation that occurs. The reasons are many: time, location, interests, institutional demands, time. However, it seems that it behooves us to look at how we might begin to have these conversations. It might behoove us to have those who educate know more about those we educate. A quick story.

Another student who is in my MA program, and who is a Graduate Assistant teaching ENC 1101 at our university—a program that is well thought out and progressive—spoke to me one day. Clearly there was a bit of frustration in the graduate student’s voice, as she asked me if I have students write anything that is over a page long. She meant in my high school classes. I answered, “Of course, I do.” What strikes me as interesting here are several things. First, she is clearly having difficulty having students produce writing more than a page in length, and in subsequent conversations she admits that students convey to her that they have not been asked to do so. Second, this MA student is only five years out of high school and two things might have occurred—1) She has forgotten what writing was like in high school, or 2) Writing in high school has changed over the past 5-6 years. More than likely it is a combination of the two. What this tells me is that as we move away from one system and become immersed in another, we lose our intimate knowledge of the previous. I studied Japanese for years in my undergraduate studies and was able to converse in Japanese and write pretty well, at that time.

Now, twenty years later, my skills are quite a bit more limited. The difference is that what I do, and with whom I do it—educating students on their literate lives—is not directly affected by my knowing Japanese. However, if I were better versed in what the students I teach will need to know on their next steps and if those who will receive my students were better versed in what knowledge they bring to the next level, that has a direct impact on what I do, and on those who I teach. In short, the relationship between HSE and FYC teachers needs to improve.

After spending three years working toward this degree, and in developing this thesis, it occurs to me that HSE teachers need better access to the research, and this needs to be presented in a user-friendly manner. The truth of the matter is that not all HSE teachers are well-versed in the language of Writing Studies research. Much of the information is presented in such a way that it is challenging for HSE teachers to grasp. Given the time constraints on high school teachers through the numbers of students, expectations of sponsoring clubs or coaching, and the administrative responsibilities the academic discourse emerging from rhetoric and writing scholars is cumbersome and extensive. This is another example of systems that have conflict between them that would benefit in understanding each other. Think about Engestrom's article about the health care systems.

It would be nice for those teaching FYC to have a more open exchange of ideas with those who are going to be sending students past them, so that high school teachers can benefit from what is expected from university level writing instruction and so that FYC teachers have a better understanding of where their students are coming from with regards to what the HSE teachers are providing them. It may bear noting that this exchange needs to be done in such a way as

neither sees the other as adversaries but as peers looking to prepare students for their academic and professional lives.

Finally, there were a few institutional/systemic aspects that were interesting which revealed themselves in the process:

- There are mitigating factors that determine progression into the disciplines such as the institution itself, the direction of the given discipline's department or the classes themselves. One institution accepts certain scores for credit, while others do not. One university might have a writing about writing framework for FYC, while another still uses a literature based model. As seen here, one track through the medical field is rich with writing, while another is not. A better understanding of this might help students make choices as to which programs they choose. I don't foresee how those of us who teach at the high school level can know all of this, but it would be good to know it is there.
- The collective, or communal, nature of study at the university level could be better fostered at the high school level. We who teach at this level work a great deal of the time in autonomy. That is not to say that we do not appreciate each others' disciplines, but rather that we lack a great deal of time in which to collaborate. It would be nice if we could model this behavior, or provide a space for students to develop an appreciation for collective learning. We often stigmatize this as cheating, and I think that by taking a different approach we could better prepare students for the university and beyond academia.

- It would be nice to have a more fluid understanding of the university process and what the systems in it expect of these students, as this trend of moving through FYC will not be slowing down soon. After teaching for seventeen years, I am not aware of designated space of communication between those of us who teach high school and those who teach at the university. So much of our understanding comes from guidance counselors, our own past experiences, or hearsay from students. It would benefit all involved to have such a space. High school teachers would be better informed to guide our instruction. University instructors would be better informed as to what students are coming to them with. Students would benefit from those who are sending them beyond and those who are receiving them knowing what each other is doing.

As this population tends to pass by those who are conducting most of the research, I hope that research such as this will instigate a greater sense of interest in those who do this for a living. As I have come to understand my ignorance on what my students will engage in during their times at the university, hopefully I, and those like me, will seek a greater sense of this knowledge. As those who teach and do the research on the university level come to understand the evolving literate lives of students and the pedagogy that drives this emerging discipline, I hope that this information will find a communicative space to operate between these two systems. And from this, the students involved will benefit.

APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT QUESTIONS

High School Writing and Self-Efficacy Example Questions:

The initial interview questions will seek to have the students reflect on three main areas:

- What they feel they have learned during their time in high school as it pertains to writing
- How well they feel that this education will serve them in college level writing contexts
- What they might think that writing will look like in these new contexts.

1. How do you define writing?
2. How would you rate yourself as a writer?
3. What writing assignments have you done in the past two years as a high school student?
4. How do you feel these assignments have helped you to become a better writer?
5. What have you learned about writing across all of your courses over the past two years?
6. How confident are you in moving to the next level of writing assignments?
7. Where are you going to school in the Fall?
8. What is your intended major?
9. What do you envision writing looking like in college courses? Specifically introductory courses to your major?
10. Do you feel that either the IB Programme or your Advanced Placement courses have prepared you for college level writing, as you expect it to be?

Follow-up Interview Sample Questions:

During the follow-up interviews, the line of inquiry will look to address how well the perceived notions of writing, preparation, and ability have matched with the realities of writing in these new contexts. Sample follow-up questions are:

1. What courses are you taking that are related to your major?
2. Tell me about the kinds of writing you're doing in courses related to your major.
3. What can you tell me about writing in other classes that differs from this writing?
4. How well have the writing skills acquired in high school assisted you in writing for the new contexts?
5. In what ways have your concepts of writing changed as you write in new contexts?
6. In what ways do you feel your education has not prepared you for writing in new contexts?
7. In what ways, if any, has your concept of what writing is changed?
8. How important is revision in these new contexts?
9. How do assignments differ from HSE assignments?

Round Three Interview Questions

How is the semester going for you both academically and otherwise?

Do you find that you define writing in any new ways, now that you have had some time in upper academia?

What, if any, new types of writing are you finding yourself doing?

How do your professors provide feedback on your writing?

What sorts of variation in feedback do you find in your different classes?

In what ways do you find feedback to be helpful?

In what ways do you find feedback to **not** be helpful?

How do you find yourself approaching writing tasks? In other words, what is your process now and how might it differ than from when you were in high school?

Essays

Tests/exams

Online posting

Emails to professors or other students

Notes

Other assignments

Communication with classmates on school tasks

After some time in college now, how do you find that assignments, and written assignments in particular, differ from those you received in high school?

Honestly, how well prepared do you feel you are for the writing you are doing in your classes?

Do you find yourself engaged in any extracurricular writing activities that you have not done before?

Would you be willing to talk for any follow-up questions from your responses here?

APPENDIX B: APPROVAL OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Craig A. Bell**

Date: **May 12, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 05/12/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: Consequences of Skipping First Year Composition: Mapping
Student Writing From High School to the Major
Investigator: Craig A Bell
IRB Number: SBE-15-11311
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 05/12/2015 08:26:26 AM EDT

IRB manager

REFERENCES

- Addison, Joanne, and McGee, Sharon James. "Writing in High School/Writing in College: Research Trends and Future Directions." *College Composition and Communication* 62.1 (2010): 147-179. Print.
- Bartholomae, David. "Inventing the University." *Journal of Basic Writing*. 5.1 (1986): 4-23. Print.
- Bazerman, Charles. "Intertextualities: Volosinov, Bakhtin, Literary Theory, and Literacy Studies." *Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language, Literacy & Learning*. Eds. Freedman, Sarah Warshauer and Ball, Arnthea. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. 53-65. Print.
- Bazerman, Charles. "Systems of Genres and the Enactment of Social Intentions." *Genre and the New Rhetoric*. Eds. Freedman, Aviva and Medway, Peter. London: Taylor and Francis, 1994. 79-101. Print.
- Beaufort, Anne. *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*. Logan: Utah State University Press. 2007. Print.
- Bergman, Linda, Zepernick, Janet. "Disciplinary and Transfer: Students' Perceptions of Learning to Write." *Writing Program Administration*. 31.1-2 (2007): 124-149. Print.
- Brent, Doug. "Crossing Boundaries: Co-op Students Relearning to Write." *College Composition and Communication*, 63.4 (2012): 558-592. Print.
- Carroll, Lee Ann. *Rehearsing New Roles: How College Students Develop as Writers*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002. Print.

- Carter, Michael. "Ways of Knowing, Doing, and Writing in the Disciplines." *College Composition and Communication*, 58.3 (2007): 385-418. Print.
- Crank, Virginia. "From High School to College: Developing Writing Skills in the Disciplines." *The WAC Journal*, 23 (2010): 49-63. Print.
- Driscoll, Dana Lynn, and Jennifer Wells. "Beyond Knowledge and Skills: Transfer and the Role of Student Dispositions." *Composition Forum* 26 (2012). Print.
- Engeström, Yrjo. "Activity Theory and Individual and Social Transformation." *Perspectives on Activity Theory*. Eds. Engeström, Yrjo, Miettinen, Reijo and Punamaki, Raija-Leena. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. 19-38. Print.
- Engeström, Yrjo. "Expansive Learning at Work: Toward an Activity Theoretical Reconceptualization." *Journal of Education and Work*, 14.1 (2001): 133-156. Print.
- Engeström, Yrjo. "Interobjectivity, Ideality, and Dialectics." *Mind, Culture and Activity*, 3.4 (1996): 259-265. Print.
- Fanetti, Susan, Bushrow, Kathy, and Deweese, David. "Closing the Gap between High School Writing Instruction and College Writing Expectations." *English Journal*. 99.4 (2010): 77-83. Print.
- Hannah, Mark and Saidy, Christina. "Locating the Terms of Engagement: Shared Language Development in Secondary to Postsecondary Writing Transitions." *College Composition and Communication*. 66.1 (2014): 120-141. Print.
- Hansen, Kristine; Reeve, Suzanne; Sudweeks, Richard; Hatch, Gary L.; Gonzalez, Jennifer; Esplin, Patricia; Bradshaw, William S. "An Argument for Changing Institutional Policy on

- Granting AP Credit in English: An Empirical Study of College Sophomores' Writing." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 28.1-2 (2004): 29-54. Print.
- Heath, Shirley Brice. *Ways With Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 1983. Print.
- Kain, Donna and Wardle, Elizabeth. "Activity Theory: An Introduction for the Writing Classroom." *DTEXT.org* (2002). PDF file.
- Nelms, Gerald, and Ronda Leathers Dively. "Perceived Roadblocks to Transferring Knowledge from First-Year Composition to Writing-Intensive Major Courses: A Pilot Study." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 31.1-2 (2007): 214-240. Print.
- Robertson, Liane, Kara Taczak, and Kathleen Blake Yancey. "Notes Toward a Theory of Prior Knowledge and Its Role in College Composers' Transfer of Knowledge and Practice." *Composition Forum* 26 (2012). Print.
- Roozen, Kevin. "Comedy Stages, Poets Projects, Sports Columns, and Kinesiology 341: Illuminating the Importance of Basic Writers' Self-Sponsored Literacies." *Journal of Basic Writing*, 31.1 (2012): 99-132. Print.
- Roth, Wolff-Michael and Lee, Yew-Jin. "'Vygotsky's Neglected Legacy': Cultural-Historical Activity Theory." *Review of Educational Research*. 77.2 (2007): 186-232. Print.
- Rounsaville, Angela. "Selecting Genres for Transfer: The Role of Uptake in Students' Antecedent Genre Knowledge." *Composition Forum*. Vol. 26 (2012).

- Rounsaville, Angela, Goldberg, Rachel, and Bawashi, Anis. "From Incomes to Outcomes: FYW Students' Prior Knowledge, Meta-Cognition, and the Question of Transfer." *Writing Program Administration*. 32.1-2 (2008): 97-112. Print.
- Royster, Jacqueline Jones. "When the First Voice You Hear Is Not Your Own." *College Composition and Communication*. 47.1 (1996): 29-40. Print.
- Russell, David R. "Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction." *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*. Ed. Joseph Petragalia. Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1995. 51-78. Print.
- Russell, David R. "Rethinking Genre in School and Society: An Activity Theory Analysis." *Written Communication*, 4.14 (1997): 504-554. Print.
- Smit, David. *The End of Composition Studies*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2004. Print.
- Sommers, Nancy, and Laura Saltz. "The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year." *College Composition and Communication*, 56.1 (2004): 124-149. Print.
- Sternglass, Marilyn. *Time to Know Them: A Longitudinal Study of Writing and Learning at the College Level*. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1997. Print.
- Wardle, Elizabeth. "'Mutt Genres' and the Goal of FYC: Can We Help Students Write the Genres of the University?" *College Composition and Communication*, 60.4 (2009): 765-789. Print.
- Wardle, Elizabeth. "Understanding 'Transfer' from FYC: Preliminary Results of a Longitudinal Study." *Writing Program Administration*, 31.2 (2007). Print.