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Millennials Strike Back: Students' Reports of Knowledge Transfer From High School to College

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MILLENNIALS STRIKE BACK:

STUDENTS' REPORTS OF KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER

FROM HIGH SCHOOL TO COLLEGE

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the extent to which high school students from an affluent, college preparatory high school were able to transfer their knowledge about reading and writing from high school to college. The participants' perceptions of the transition from high school reading and writing to college reading and writing revealed that they did not perceive college work to be harder, but faster paced. They generally perceived similarities between high school writing and college writing; those similarities were both literal and conceptual. The participants were able to transfer content knowledge and procedural knowledge about reading and writing from high school to college. The participants who were most successful in their knowledge transfer demonstrated transfer enabling dispositions. This study raises questions about the nature of preparation for college. Implications are discussed for high school students and faculty, for college students and faculty, and for those interested in educational reform.

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CHAPTER ONE: RATIONALE

Several years ago, I was at a dinner party in the California wine country. At the table were several well educated couples, some from the East Coast, the others from the West Coast. The Sonoma wines were flowing, the locally sourced produce was bountiful, the conversation was relaxed and upbeat. About halfway through the meal, someone asked me what I did, so I explained I directed a writing center in a high school, and that I worked with other faculty to help them teach reading and writing in their disciplines. Heads nodded, mouths chewed. Then: "Should we be scared about the future?"

Everyone stopped, forks in mid reach, and looked at me, concerned. I quickly went over all the reasons we could be scared about the future: wars in the Middle East, current unemployment rates, an increasingly divided and divisive electorate, climate change...

"You know, because the high schools today- the kids aren't prepared…"

I had heard this before. Many times. In fact, in my professional life as a compositionist, with one foot planted in post-secondary education and the other in secondary education, as well as an ordinary citizen with an obsession with *The New York Times*, I have heard this from just about everyone. Yet, what does it really mean?

The prevailing wisdom is that if a student has been prepared, they have been taught (and implicitly, learned) the Right Stuff™. In educationese, they have learned the right content; they have acquired appropriate and sufficient content knowledge. Those who argue that the problem with high school graduates is lack of preparation really mean the students have not learned the right content.

However, there are several issues with defining the problem of preparedness as one of simple deficiencies in content knowledge. The first is that it assumes that other kinds of knowledge, like procedural knowledge -- the knowledge of what steps are necessary to take in order to complete a task -- are not as important as content knowledge. It also assumes the learner is a passive recipient of knowledge; their own dispositions, or attitudes and beliefs, are irrelevant.

Most problematically, the content-knowledge-based definition of preparedness assumes that if a learner has acquired the right content knowledge, they will automatically be able to use that knowledge in different contexts. If preparedness is a matter of knowing the right content, then it is assumed that the learner will be able to transfer that content. They will be able to transfer their knowledge.

At the heart of the question of preparedness, then, are actually a host of questions about knowledge, dispositions, and transfer. Is preparedness a matter of knowing the right things? Are there other types of knowledge that are just as important as content knowledge? What about the individual students' roles? Does knowledge transfer occur and if so, under what conditions?

In order to answer my dinner party companions' question, I embarked on a study of the graduates from a college preparatory high school. One important reason I chose this particular school is because it is a school whose curricula are designed, in theory, to prepare students for college. I wanted to see if students who had arguably been taught the right content were successful in their transition from high school to college. Specifically, I wanted to know how they perceived of the differences between high school and college, particularly as it pertained to reading and writing. I wanted to listen as they described their first-year college experiences in order to find out if they reported being able to transfer literacy knowledge, and if so, what kinds

of knowledge. Lastly, I wanted to find out what, if any, role their own individual attitudes and beliefs played in their ability to transfer literacy knowledge. In short, I hoped to discover answers to the questions swimming below the murky surface of preparedness.

In this first chapter, I begin by situating the recent calls for reform, ones based on the perceived lack of preparedness, within a long history of similar calls for reform. I want to show that this is not a new phenomenon. I discuss the data that, on the surface, seem to suggest high schools are not adequately preparing students for college; many interpret this data as a sign that students are not learning the right content. Then, I explain why those who feel that preparedness is a content knowledge issue argue that the solution lies in increasing rigor and creating higher standards. From there, I look more closely at what is meant by rigor and higher standards, and specific suggestions for their implementation. Finally, I argue the data about college preparedness used to argue for rigor and higher standards are actually data that make a stronger argument for further investigations of transferability of knowledge. This, in turn, leads me to the rationale for my study of the college preparatory high school's graduating class and their transition to college.

In the second chapter, I begin by defining transfer and the elements involved in any transfer situation. From there, I guide the reader through a brief history of theories of transfer in order to show how different theories focus on different elements of transfer; I then briefly discuss the implications of those theories on general education. With this context provided, I narrow my focus by looking at the genealogy of theories of transfer within composition studies. I argue that the composition theorists, who ground their thinking in activity theory, undervalue the role of the individual learner within the transfer situation. The theorists also are more concerned with what learners transfer out of a situation, rather than what learners transfer in to a situation.

By exploring theories of motivation, I make the argument that in order to investigate transfer between high school and college, a study of individuals in context is needed.

In the third chapter, I describe my study of the individuals from Mercy High School as they transitioned to a variety of different colleges, and subsequently, different college contexts. I describe in more detail my reasons for choosing to study this particular high school and these particular students. Through detailing my participants as well as my research goals and conceptual framework, I explain the ways in which this study is unique. I then describe my research methods: a pilot study; 52 senior exit surveys; 22 email surveys conducted during the participants' first semester of college; nine face-to-face interviews conducted with participants after their first year of college. I conclude by guiding the reader through my methods of data analysis, validity, and study limitations.

In the fourth chapter, I begin by reporting the results of the senior exit surveys. By providing the reader with a snapshot of the cohort of participants as they were about to graduate from high school, I show that the participants considered themselves to be confident writers and readers, with good habits of mind as well as good work habits. Based upon this information, the reader might conclude that these participants should have had no problems transitioning to college and transferring their literacy knowledge from high school to college. However, as I detail some of the findings from the first semester email surveys, patterns begin to emerge. The participants were attempting to transfer both their content knowledge and their procedural knowledge in their college courses. Yet, when the transfer tasks weren't clearly articulated, the participants were met with obstacles to transfer. If they had developed successful procedural knowledge and dispositions in high school, they were able to surmount those roadblocks by meeting with their professors in office hours or utilizing other resources available to them.

Positive knowledge transfer was achieved. Conversely, if the participants had developed less successful procedural knowledge or dispositions in high school, then they negatively transferred knowledge. After establishing these patterns in the email survey data, I then describe six of the nine case study participants. These participants were most representative of the larger cohort and the data collected from them emphasizes how many elements are involved in the transfer situation. The excerpts from their interviews also demonstrate how nuanced successful knowledge transfer is.

In the fifth chapter, I synthesize the findings from the previous chapter in order to describe how transfer involves many moving parts. I then discuss the implications for each of the parts: the learner; the instructional task; the instructional context; the transfer task; the transfer context. I offer specific recommendations for each piece of the transfer puzzle. In order for high school students to successfully transfer knowledge to college, and ultimately to successfully transition to college, there are responsibilities to be shouldered by everyone. I ultimately end with questions for further study.

There Is Nothing New Under The Sun

Complaints about student preparedness suggest that there is nothing new under the sun. Plato infamously complained about the youth of his time, about how their learning to write (instead of learning to memorize and speak) signaled their weakness and would eventually cause the crumbling of civilization. The rhetoric of education reform hasn't changed much since then. Grubb and Oakes (1997) explain that in America, complaints about preparation and demands for increased rigor have been cyclically emerging and retreating since the late 1800s, when only 4% of Americans completed high school. Since 2004, there have been a barrage of commission reports bemoaning the state of secondary education; some critics have called this

"commissionitis." Based on this history, it would seem that high schools are "perpetually in crisis" (p. 3). Citing some of the hyperbole used in the reports, "'High school is the Waterloo of the current road of school reform'" and "'nothing is more important to the welfare of this society than the reinvention of the American High School,'" Grubb and Oakes acknowledge that reading this type of language can be "alarming, and it's certainly alarmist" (p. 5). Bombastic language may sell newspapers, yet it may not accurately tell the truth, particularly when the truth is deeply nuanced.

Within English studies, complaints have been largely articulated by faculty and directed "down" to their high school counterparts. Surveying the history of high school/college collaborations, Schultz, Lain and Savage (1998) found that as far back as the early 1900s, those collaborations were driven by "…a chorus of complaints from Freshman English teachers that incoming freshmen were 'illiterate,' 'had not thoroughly mastered the conventions of the language,'[and] were 'deficient' in written English'" (p. 141). Since high school teachers were the last to have these students before college, those complaints quickly turned into blame, and blame turned into a "helpful" list of imperatives that high school teachers who really cared about their students' college futures should follow. In 1962, the NCTE Committee on High School-College Articulation wrote, "College English professors have always been generous of advice to their high school colleagues, telling them what they should be doing that they aren't and what they aren't doing that they should be. Lately, moved by the general concern for improving American secondary education, they have been even freer with their suggestions and have made them more specific" (p. 167). The current grumbling about incoming college freshmen is taking place in the context of a long history of similar complaints.

Besides Complaints, How Do We Know?

Though faculty complaints aren't new, there had to be other reasons my dinner party friends knew enough to express concern over the future of education in America. In fact, anyone who at least occasionally tunes into the news or reads a newspaper has likely come across some version of the following, originally published in *The New York Times*:

> At the urging of President Obama, more high schools are making "college readiness" a goal. The percentage of students who attend college is rising; 67 percent of high school graduates now enroll in some sort of post-secondary school after graduation (up from 43 percent in 1973). But the reality is that many don't succeed, in large part because they are not academically prepared. Federal data shows that fewer than 60 percent of students graduate from four-year colleges in six years. Among students at a community college, only one in three earns a degree. Recently released data from ACT shows that only 24 percent of high school seniors knew enough in four subjects — math, reading, science and English — to do college-level work. (Tyre, 2010)

This *New York Times* article succinctly summarizes the commonly cited culprit for the lack of college readiness: the dearth of sufficient pre-college preparation, as evidenced by less than timely college graduation rates and the results of standardized test scores.

The Good News: College Matriculation

The good news is that more students are enrolling in some kind of higher education directly after high school than at any other time in American history. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Aud, 2010), in 1972 only 49% of graduating seniors went to college the following year, whereas now anywhere between 62% and 69% of high school

graduates do. The greater numbers of students applying for college means that selective colleges have benefitted from an increase in the number of applications, which in turn helps them admit a smaller percentage of applicants, thereby making them appear to be more selective. This news may be grim for a student who was one of the 30,000 to apply to Harvard, but in the class of 2009, 79.2% of students report being accepted to their first choice school. Sixty percent enrolled at their first choice college and 25.9% at their second choice. In spite of the college admissions frenzy, America's high school graduates are not only enrolling in college, but are for the most part enrolling in one of their top two choices.

In this sense, high school students, and possibly their families and guidance counselors, are doing a good job of "matching" the student with a school that is likely to accept them based on their grades, test scores, activities, and so on. As Keith Hjortshoj (2001) notes in *The Transition to College Writing*, "For the purpose of orchestrating admission to college, this matchmaking system works remarkably well" (p. 2). So, students are getting in to college. But, what happens once they are there?

The Bad News: Placement Into Remedial Courses

One of the first realities that many first-year college students are hit with is the fact that they a) may have to take a placement test which determines what English and math classes they can take and that b) depending on the institution, the placement tests will decide that anywhere from 25% to 70% of them are not ready for college (Spence, 2009). If they do not meet cutoff scores on college placements exams, these students are required to take developmental ("remedial") courses. Developmental courses do not count towards graduation credit and students cannot use financial aid to pay for them. Having to take a remedial course puts students a higher risk for not completing their degree than their counterparts who begin college in college

level courses (Adelman, 1999). Sixty percent of the students who end up in remedial courses begin college the fall after graduating from high school (Kirst & Usdan, 2009). Many argue this is not simply a matter of refreshing skills that may have been forgotten, but of teaching what students didn't learn in the first place, in high school.

Some might assume that the majority of students being placed into developmental classes were simply bad students in high school, or they came from "bad" high schools. Of course there is truth to both of the allegations: there are students who are not prepared because either they didn't do very well in high school or the curriculum was not challenging. There will always be students who, for a variety of reasons, decide they don't have to work hard. There are schools where teachers are required to teach from a scripted curriculum; the students sit at their desks and dutifully complete required workbooks. It could be argued that students would do better on these college placement exams if they had simply taken more "rigorous" courses and had performed well in them. However, as Spence (2009) explains, "Research and practice also indicate...that taking these courses, and even earning good grades, does not ensure the development of the key learning skills needed for college success. A high percentage of students who have passed core academic coursework need remedial education in reading, writing, and math upon entering college" (p. 35).

One caveat for those who might read too much into the dire placement test results is the fact there is tremendous variation among placements tests. In his Washington Post column, *Class Struggles*, Jay Matthews discussed a report conducted in 2007 by two assessment researchers at The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. Matthews explained, "They looked at California's 109 community college campuses and found 94 different placement assessments. Try to enroll in two different community colleges, and the chances are that not only will you be

given different placement tests, but the magic number of right answers that gets you into for-credit courses will also be different" (2009). Given the fact that no two placement exams are the same, comparing placement rates from each test would be like comparing apples to oranges. Other than the percentage of students not "passing" each test, no information is gleaned about what skills the students are deemed not to have. Additionally, if a student could take one test at one school and place into college level courses and take a different test at another school and not place into college level courses, then which test gives the truest and most accurate information about the student's abilities?

College Preparatory Schools And Remediation

A regional university which does have a system-wide placement test is the California State University. In 2008, 53% of first time freshman in the California State University System were considered "proficient" in English and could register for college level English courses (California High School Academic Reports, 2009). The other 47% would have to register for one or more developmental classes (depending on how poorly they scored on the placement test) before they could take the required college level courses.

In 2008, 31 students from the suburban, college preparatory, parochial high school studied for this project enrolled in one of the California State University campuses (California High School Academic Reports, 2009). The average grade point average was 3.22, and the average Verbal SAT Score (excluding the written essay) was 508 (a few points higher than the average of 502). Of the 31, nine students were exempt from taking the English Placement Test because of their SAT score, their AP test score, or a grade they received in a college level writing class (i.e., one taken at a community college). Twenty two were required to take the EPT, and of those, half were considered "proficient" and were able to enroll in college level coursework. The

other half were not considered proficient and had to enroll in one or more developmental reading or writing courses. In terms of their composite scores, their averages were above those of the California public schools, which was likely little consolation for these students who had graduated from a high school that vaunts its 100% college matriculation rate, and who were now being told they weren't ready for college level work.

The Bad News: Attrition

If 60% of recently graduated high school students are placed into some form of remedial course upon arrival in college, and if being placed in a remedial course increases the likelihood that those students will not complete their college degrees, then there is an argument that the remediation (needed or not) is leading to troubling attrition rates. In between their freshman to sophomore year of college,"35% of first-year students discontinue their studies, at least temporarily...According to current projections, only 54% will graduate within the next six years" (Hortshoj, 2009, p. 2). One problem with the first year to second year data is that it is reported by universities, who know only the number of students who left, but not usually where those students went. Some may transfer to another college but continue their education. Just because students don't reenroll at the same university or take longer than 6 years to graduate doesn't mean they are lost entirely. It is important to acknowledge that students, especially non-traditional students, don't follow the linear path, and that doesn't mean they aren't ultimately successful.

Still, the numbers are a concern. To translate the percentages into concrete numbers, take a hypothetical group of 100 high school students. Sixty three will apply to and enroll in college after graduation, and 22 of those will not re-enroll at that college the following year. Even though some of those students may just be transferring to another school, or taking time off

before returning later, and even though most colleges expect some attrition between their students first and second year, the fact that 22 of those students leave is problematic. Of the remaining 41 students who stay enrolled past their first year, about 20 or so will actually graduate within six years. So, of the original high school class of 100, 20 get college diplomas within six years of finishing high school. This is problematic for both the students and the colleges who want to keep students enrolled and on track to graduate. So, naturally, a hunt begins for the source of the problem, a hunt that usually leads to the places these students came from: high school. The argument is made that if students were better prepared in high school, they would not require remediation and would be more likely to stay enrolled in and graduate from college.

High Schools Are Not Preparing Students For College?

When researching claims that high school students are unprepared, two organizations appear over and over again: Achieve and ACT. Before sharing their reports, it is worth knowing whom they are made up of, and what their missions are. It is also important to remember them as later I will discuss the Common Core Standards movement, in which they each play a significant role. First, Achieve.

About Achieve

Achieve was created in 1996 by government and business leaders, and its mission is to help, “States raise academic standards and graduation requirements, improve assessments and strengthen accountability” (Achieve, 2011). In 2001, Achieve created the American Diploma Project, which brings “governors, state superintendents of education, business executives and college leaders” together in order to “bring value to the high school diploma by raising the rigor

of high school standards, assessments and curriculum and aligning expectations with the demands of postsecondary education and careers" (Achieve, 2010). In 2006, *Education Weekly* proclaimed that Achieve was one of the 10 most influential education organizations in the United States, along with others like the U.S. Congress, The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and The National Governor's Association ("Influential Organizations," 2006).

So, it is clear that Achieve is mostly made up of people from outside the field of education (elected politicians, business leaders, and college administrators- administrators who may or may not have college teaching experience) who have a mission that implies they have already diagnosed the "problem" of college and career readiness. When looking at the studies Achieve has conducted, it is important to notice how conveniently the results align with their stated mission.

Achieve: College Faculty Say Students Are Unprepared

From 2004-2005, on behalf of Achieve, Peter D. Hart Research Associates and Public Opinion Strategies polled a small sample of 300 college instructors from two and four year colleges to find out their perceptions of first-year college students (Achieve, 2005). From these responses they extrapolated that, nationally, college instructors were disappointed with the academic abilities of their freshman students.

A full quarter of the four year college faculty respondents reported their students were "not too well prepared" or "not well prepared at all" for their college courses. Fifty-six percent (56%) describe their students as "somewhat" well prepared, and a scant 18% of college professors feel that most of their students come to college "extremely" or "very well prepared," with only 3% of the respondents saying "extremely well prepared." Even at more selective

colleges, a mere 30% of instructors said that most of their students come to college well prepared (Achieve, 2005, p. 8).

College instructors at two-year institutions offered even harsher assessments, as nearly half (49%) reported their students were inadequately prepared, and only 7% indicated they felt their students came to college extremely or very well prepared, compared with 22% of instructors at four-year colleges (Achieve, 2005, p. 8).

Faculty concerns about student literacy mirrored the concerns about general preparedness. Half of the respondents thought their students were adequately prepared for college-level writing. When asked who was responsible for the lack of preparedness, approximately two-thirds of the college level respondents blamed the public schools for failing to teach students to read and write at the college level (Achieve, 2005, p. 9).

Achieve: High School Students Are Not Held To High Expectations

For the same report, Achieve also surveyed close to 1500 graduates of public high schools (Achieve, 2005). Of those 1500, 861 were enrolled in two and four year colleges and 626 students were not attending college. Within the group not attending college, 267 had started college but were no longer enrolled (p. 2). Participants were asked questions about how prepared they felt and whether or not they felt like they had been held to high expectations.

Achieve found that slightly less than half of the respondents reported they had been asked to do a “great deal of writing” in high school. Of the students who reported that they had written a “great deal” in high school, 79% of that group felt they were “well prepared for the quality of writing expected from them in college” whereas only half of the group who had not done as much writing felt well prepared (p. 11). Achieve concluded that students need “high expectations” in order to be prepared for college. Having not defined “high expectations” it

seems like they are trying to equate volume of writing with raised expectations. While more exposure to writing is better than less, to equate that with high or low expectations is a leap (p. 14). It is a fallacy to assume that if students produce large quantities of writing that their teachers held higher expectations of them than if their teachers had required less. For example, an AP English Literature teacher may only assign two or three essays a semester, but their expectations for those essays might be higher than those of a regular English teacher who assigns daily one page reflections. The students in the AP class may produce fewer pages than the student in the regular class, but that in and of itself is not a valid indicator of the level of the teachers' expectations.

When asked if they would have worked harder in high school had they known about the expectations of college and work, the students in their survey responded affirmatively (p. 11). It is hard to take statements about what someone would have done differently in the past as evidence that they would behave differently if they were in that situation again.

Taking the college instructor data and combining it with the high school graduate data, Achieve made its case that high school students were unprepared for the demands of college (their instructors said so) and that had expectations of their performance in high school been higher, they would have been more prepared (the students said so). It is almost as if Achieve designed a study that would produce the data they needed to support their mission.

ACT (Formerly The American College Testing Program)

ACT annually does its part to sound the alarm about the state of secondary education when it disseminates the press release indicating the average ACT scores from the previous year. This press release then turns up in articles in many major newspapers across the country. In 2008, ACT noted that of the 1.2 million students who took ACT's standardized college readiness

exam, about half didn't meet the "benchmark" score for reading, 32% didn't for writing, and the news was worse for math and science (ACT, 2008). Only 25% of test-takers met or exceeded the benchmark scores in all four areas (Reading, English, Math and Science). "Not Ready For College" *U.S. News and World Report* declared (Kingsbury, 2005). *The New York Times* softened their pronouncement, qualifying that "Many Going to College Are Not Ready" (Lewin, 2010). Instead of reporting ACT scores, newspapers might find a deeper story by looking at students who, according to their ACT scores, were not "college ready" yet managed to do well in college anyway.

Assigning Blame

Achieve and ACT use their own data to vociferously argue that there is one culprit for the current state of secondary and post-secondary education, the high schools, and specifically that high schools do not have rigorous curricula or give rigorous exams, and high schools do not hold students to high enough standards (which would be measured by rigorous exams).

Spence (2009) echoes Achieve and ACT when he argues that existing standards fail to predict college success and that the high school curriculum doesn't develop key learning skills necessary for college. Even when students complete the standard high school curriculum, even when they complete them with excellent grades, there is no guarantee they have the skills they need for college. Spence argues that this proves that "whatever readiness standards do exist, they are not sufficiently rigorous to predict success" (p. 36). For Spence (2009), Achieve (2005, 2010), ACT (2011), and others, the solution is to increase rigor and standards. For Hjortshoj (2001), Grubb and Oakes (2007), and others, the idea that increasing rigor and high standards will predict college success is a myth, and worse, is missing the forest for the trees.

Rigor As Curriculum

One way rigor could be manifested in high schools is through the curriculum. Some point to the Advanced Placement curriculum, and its exams, to show what a rigorous curriculum might look like. Outside of courses sanctioned by organizations that profit from the corresponding tests, other conceptions of rigor are murky. As Grubb and Oakes (2007) note, Achieve's partner organization, the American Diploma Project, issued a 2004 report *Ready or Not: Creating a High School Diploma That Counts* in which it is not enough to "ask high school students to analyze texts" but students should be "expected to analyze particular kinds of rigorous texts" (The American Diploma Project, 2004, p. 22). Provided in the report is a three page list of "rigorous" texts, including ones commonly taught in many schools (e.g., *A Separate Peace* and *Romeo and Juliet*) as well as some questionable surprises (*The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People).*

Rigor As Test

Calls for rigor usually go hand in hand with calls for rigorous exams, as is the case with Advanced Placement coursework and the AP Exams. Without those tests, it is doubtful the coursework would be validated, meaning that the test itself is what bestows "rigor" onto the course. High school exit exams are another popular source of criticism: first, tests were established in response to criticisms that a high school diploma was meaningless, and now, proponents of rigor (rightly) assert that those exit exams are not rigorous (most are set at an 8th grade skill level). However, as Grubb and Oakes (2007) point out, the idea behind the belief in increasing the rigor of these types of tests is that the fear of not passing them alone will motivate students to work harder and schools to try harder to increase their course rigor. Additionally, Grubb and Oakes express concerns that teachers will be pressured to narrow their curriculum

even further to make sure their students are adequately prepared for the tests.

What Are High Standards?

Standards are closely linked to conceptions of rigor. All states have their own state standards that describe what students should be able to do after passing their courses. However, state standards are not identical, so the argument is that all states should have standards that are equally rigorous. The current Common Core Standards movement is a response to this perceived problem. The CCS (created in part by the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, whose corporate partners include Achieve, ACT, and the College Board) as well as in partnership with Achieve, ACT, and the College Board, are standards that all states except Alaska and Texas have committed to adopting. Further, grants have been given to two partnerships organizations, each made up of the states committed to the CCS, to develop new "rigorous" tests to measure whether or not students will have achieved the standards. The "official management" agency for PARCC (Partnership for the Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers) is Achieve. The SBAC's (Smarter Balanced Asessement Consortium) management partner is West-Ed, and its assessments are being developed by ETS (Educational Testing Services).

The Myths Of Rigor And Standards

The problem with "increasingly standardized high school curricula and testing systems," as Hjortshoj (2001) elegantly explains, is that they "attempt to reduce these uncertainties and bridge the divides between diverse high schools and diverse colleges" (p. vii). In a positivistic educational climate, reducing uncertainties is a goal. If it is uncertain, it can't be quantified, and if it can't be quantified, it may as well not exist. So, educational policymakers would love to find a system which eliminates the unquantifiable, leaving only that which can be measured.

However, Hjortshoj continues, “these bridges lead only to the gates of higher education: college admissions offices” (p. viii).

In her documentary, *A Race to Nowhere*, filmmaker Vicki Abeles explores the impact AP courses have on students. The film shows what is common in many American high schools: stressed out students piling on the AP courses so they can look more competitive on their college applications. Narrating the film, she explains, “High school now has become preparation for the college application, not even more college, just for the application” (Abeles, 2010). Working at college preparatory high schools, I have absolutely seen this play out, over and over again. When we say “college preparatory” what we mean is “college application preparatory.” We focus on preparing students to get IN to college (passing AP exams, getting good grades, scoring high enough on the SAT or ACT, acquiring experiences to put on the application) so that everything becomes about looking good for admissions. However, what we can miss is helping students, and faculty, look beyond that threshold to what comes after.

According to Hjortshoj (2001), this inability to understand what comes after high school is the problem with the myth of standardization. “Standardized classes and examinations cannot prepare students for the richly unstandardized learning environments that lie beyond those gates. When they enter college, students must be prepared, above all, to adapt to these new environments” (pp. vii-viii). College is an extremely unstandardized environment. Most instructors and professors are granted the autonomy to teach what they like and how they like.

There is simply no way to have a common curriculum that would prepare a high school student for every possible college course or assignment they might encounter.

Forest For The Trees

So, if success in high school and in college admissions cannot reliably predict success in college itself (Hortshoj, 2001)--if success in a rigorous, college preparatory school cannot reliably guarantee a student will be qualified for college level work--then there must be a piece to this puzzle that is missing. Grubb and Oakes (2007) argue that the problem may not be the conception of rigor itself, but the narrow views that espouse rigor as either curriculum or exams. They posit that rigor can also be the depth of the curriculum, not the breadth of the curriculum: most high school curricula, especially Advanced Placement courses like U.S. History and Biology, are crammed with so much content that they only allow only surface mastery. Their second argument is that even with a deeper curriculum, "content and course rigor may be useless." They suspect that "many complaints…about skills…are not really about lack of basic academic skills per se, but about the ability … to apply these skills in new …contexts" (p. 14). Implied in all the existing curriculum, standards, and readiness/placement testing is the belief that if it can be proven a student performs above a certain cutoff point, then those *students will be able to transfer what they learned in high school to college.*

What is missing in all of this is the acknowledgement that *knowledge transfer,* or the ability to take what is learned in one context and apply it successfully in another, possibly different context, is not only an issue, but *the* issue. In other words, the problem with rigor and standards based approaches to bridging the high school to college gap is that they misidentify the problem. If we don't know that students can, or will, be able to use what they learn in one place in another place, then it is missing the forest for the trees to focus on rigor and high standards. If we don't know how transfer does or doesn't happen, then do we even know that students are learning?

Why Transfer Is The Point, And Problem, Of Education

According to Haskell (2001), "there is no point to education apart from transfer...practically all education and training programs are built upon the fundamental learning premise that human beings have the ability to transfer what they have learned from one situation to another" (p. 41). This is, of course, the whole point of school. We believe in educating our students so they will apply what they have learned to their later schooling, their eventual careers, and their lives. So, "If transfer of learning is at risk, much of the point and process of schooling is at risk as well" (Perkins & Salomon, 1990, p. 2). Why is transfer so conspicuously absent from discussions of school reform? One reason is that transfer is often assumed to happen. The entire premise of standardized curriculum and vertical alignment rests on the assumption that transfer occurs. When students perform well on standardized tests, or exit tests, it is easy to claim that the students have, in fact, learned what they need to know.

However, even when those tests show that specific skills have been acquired, "The transfer of skills to situations outside the school, however, cannot be taken for granted" (Barnett & Ceci, 2005, p. 295). Perhaps more than any time in recent history, the accelerated pace of career change, from both a societal perspective and an individual perspective, makes the ability to transfer knowledge to new and possibly unanticipated settings crucial. Recent research suggests people will change "vocations (not merely job locations) five times" in their life, which can mean that, "the particular information and concrete strategies learned to navigate one's chosen profession quickly become outmoded, not once but many times" (Haskell, 2001, p. 5). So, the ability to transfer knowledge is as important as ever, and yet, when educators have studied the extent to which transfer occurs, the results have not been encouraging. In the next chapter, I will discuss the history of studies of transfer, and different types of transfer, but for

now, it is sufficient to say that researchers have had an easier time showing how people don't transfer than showing how people do transfer (McKeough, Lupart, & Marini, 1995). Most teachers and many employers would agree with this since it is very common for a teacher to exclaim, with frustration, that students learned something the previous year so they should be able to apply it to the current year. It is for this reason Haskell (2001) refers to transfer as the "Holy Grail" for educators. It is "something we are ever in search of, that hope pretends lies just beyond the next experiment or reform program" (p. 8). Like the Holy Grail, transfer is missing. Haskell continues, "I can't stress enough the evidence demonstrating the wholesale failure of transfer in most educational situations. Without exaggeration, it's an educational scandal" (p. 16). Haskell's indictment is not of transfer itself, but rather reform programs that don't improve transfer because that is not what they are designed for.

A Glimmer Of Hope

It is indeed an educational scandal, but all hope is not yet lost. Perkins and Salomon (1992) assert that while it seems as if the research on transfer is discouraging, "a closer examination of the conditions under which transfer does and does not occur and the mechanisms at work presents a more positive picture. Education can achieve abundant transfer if it is designed to do so" (p.10). Haskell would agree; his argument is that curriculum and other programs-of-the-moment have not been designed with transfer in mind.

Since the current emphasis on standards and curriculum alignment which allegedly will lead to seamless high school to college transitions is misplaced, at best, and misleading, at worst, and since we know that successful knowledge transfer is the key to using what is learned in one setting and applying it to another, it would seem that in order to truly study the high school to college transition, we need to be studying transfer. Specifically, we need to know if students are

transferring what they have learned in high school to college. Are they transferring content knowledge? Procedural knowledge? If they are, how is that happening? If they aren't, why not? Could curriculum be redesigned to foster more transfer? Could teachers and students approach learning in ways that would lead to abundant transfer? Are there factors that affect transfer beyond learning strategies or academic environments? Answers to these questions might serve to push the discussion of the high school to college transition past politically charged rhetoric to practical, useful solutions.

For this study, I proposed to examine the issue of transfer between high school and college, specifically within the areas of reading and writing. Since literacy skills are utilized in all college courses, focusing on these specifically yielded information of value to both teachers of writing and to the general college community as well. In order to research student perceptions about the transition from high school level reading and writing to college level reading and writing, I asked the following research questions:

- How do first-year college students perceive the transition from high school reading and writing to college level reading and writing?
- To what extent do first-year college students report they are able to transfer, positively or negatively, what they learned about reading and writing in high school to college?
- How do psycho-social factors, like a student's self-efficacy, locus of control, motivation, and self-regulation affect a student's transition and/or ability to transfer knowledge from high school reading and writing to college reading and writing?

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In the first chapter, I made the case that the current educational crisis surrounding high school graduates is not new, and that calls for reforms based upon increased rigor are misdirected. The real issue, I argued, is that high school students may not be able to successfully transfer what they learned in high school to college. There is nowhere on the college campus that this issue presents itself more dramatically than in first-year composition. Since first-year writing, or freshman composition, is a nearly universal requirement, composition teachers interact with first-year college students more consistently, and in greater numbers, than many of their colleagues who teach other general education courses. Therefore, it makes sense to look toward composition for theories that explain why students are, or are not, able to transfer their literacy knowledge from high school to college.

While early discussions of knowledge transfer and composition appear in 1985 issues of the journal *Writing Across the Curriculum* (Whitenton, J., 1985; Stricklen, Jr., S., 1985) most of the composition scholarship on this topic has appeared within the past 15 years, and particularly in the past four. David Russell's 1995 chapter "Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction" in *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction* laid the theoretical groundwork for David Smit's 2007 chapter on transfer in his book *The End of Composition Studies*, as well as Anne Beaufort's *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for University Writing Instruction*, also published in 2007. The work of Elizabeth Wardle and Douglas Downs (2007) has led to a new curriculum/pedagogy, "Writing About Writing," which was developed in response to issues of transfer. Most recently, Dana Driscoll (2010) completed a mixed-methods study of first-year composition students and their motivations to transfer knowledge.

In this chapter, I will define transfer, and parse the elements involved in any transfer situation. Then, I will guide the reader through a brief history of theories of transfer in order to show how different theories of transfer were focused on some, but not all, of those elements. I discuss the implications of these theoretical views on perceptions of transfer within general education.

After an overview of general transfer theories, I will then trace the genealogy of transfer theories within composition studies, particularly the dominant activity theory espoused by Russell (1995), Smit (2007), Beaufort (2007), and Wardle (2007). While activity theorists seek to theorize all of the actors in a given learning context, and thus include each of the elements of a transfer situation, because the composition researchers were primarily interested in developing pedagogies and programs to support transfer, the role that the individual's attitudes and behaviors play in enabling or inhibiting transfer was largely ignored. I then turn to Dana Driscoll's recent study, which is grounded in activity theory but focuses on how individual students' beliefs and attitudes affect their willingness to transfer knowledge in order to posit that further studies of individuals within the larger learning context are needed to gain a more complete picture of the transfer puzzle.

Since psychological theories of self-efficacy, motivation, and attribution are used to explain how individuals' beliefs, attitudes and behaviors are shaped by their situational experiences, and since these beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors have been shown to facilitate or inhibit knowledge transfer, I argue that these factors are critical pieces of the activity system that have been under-examined within writing studies. Though Beaufort (2007) followed a college student, Tim, through his four years of college, she was more focused on Tim's perceptions of different writing contexts than on Tim's internal motivations to transfer knowledge from context

to context. Likewise, Wardle (2007), who studied a cohort of students in freshman composition, looked at the extent to which those composition courses and assignments failed to motivate students to transfer knowledge, rather than the extent to which students were internally motivated to transfer knowledge.

In order to further illustrate the relationship between an individual's beliefs and attitudes and their transfer enabling behaviors, I have created a fictional first-year college student, "Megan," who is enrolled in a fictional developmental composition course. Megan is based on a composite of several participants from my study, and the developmental writing course is based on a composite of several participants' descriptions of their first-year writing courses. In order to illustrate the differences between a transfer study of activity theory, and a transfer study of the individual in context, I integrate two perspectives of Megan and the class. One, I describe the learner (Megan) from an outsider's point of view. I also describe the instructional context (the classroom and those in it), the instructional task (the learning materials given by the teacher), the transfer task (what Megan is supposed to transfer), and the transfer context (the context where she learned the skills and the context she is to apply them in). Two, I include some of Megan's inner monologue to describe what is happening inside Megan's head as she experiences the class on that particular day. In order to demonstrate how activity theorists and psychological theorists see transfer or lack of transfer differently, I will introduce these theorists and then discuss the application of their view to Megan inside her classroom. My purpose for using these two descriptions is to illustrate what each research perspective offers to a study of transfer, as well as highlight the limitations of studies that adopt only one of the two approaches.

I ultimately argue for a study of transfer which examines all of the elements involved in successful transfer, particularly the individual learner. In short, I argue for a study of transfer that is focused on the individual, in context.

Defining Transfer

Most definitions of knowledge transfer involve three elements: something learned in the past, something done in the future, and something that enables what was learned in the past to directly affect or influence what is done in the future (Haskell, 2001; Perkins & Salomon, 1990; 1992; Royer, Mestre, & Dufresne, 2005). The differences between what was learned in the past and done in the future may have to do with task differences or context differences. Task differences might involve learning a specific task and then being asked to perform a new task, whereas context differences might involve learning that takes place in one environment and then is applied in a different environment. Broken down, the pieces of the transfer puzzle are:

- the learner
- the instructional tasks (including learning materials and practice problems)
- the instructional context (the physical and social setting, including the instruction and support provided by the teacher, the behavior of other students, and the norms and expectations inherent in the setting)
- the transfer task
- the transfer context. (McKeough, Lupart, & Marini, 1995, p. 2)

Knowledge transfer researchers may emphasize some pieces of the transfer puzzle over others, depending on their theoretical base.

The Role of the Learner in Transfer

While the learner's role is implied in each element of transfer, historically not all knowledge transfer theorists have taken into account what the learner brings with them to the transfer problem. In some definitions, the learner is something transfer happens to, or through, rather than as the one who is the agent of transfer. In discussions of transfer, it is imperative to keep in mind that learners always arrive at new learning situations with baggage. They have: "declarative knowledge" (also called content knowledge) which is knowing *that* (e.g., knowing that a topic sentence is the first one in a paragraph); "procedural knowledge," which is knowing *how* (e.g., knowing how to revise a topic sentence to fit the paragraph); "dispositions," which are beliefs and attitudes that influence a learners actions (e.g., a learner is motivated so she persists and keeps revising her topic sentence); and "processing capacity," or cognitive ability (McKeough, Lupart, & Marini, 1995, p. 3). All of these can either facilitate or inhibit successful transfer. Further,

> Even if a learner has acquired all the resources necessary for a particular transfer task, if he or she cannot easily access those resources, does not recognize the relevance of prior learning to the task at hand (e.g., because the task is presented in a very different context from original learning), or has no desire to take up recognized transfer opportunities, then transfer will not occur." (McKeough, Lupart, & Marini, 1995, p. 3)

This latter point about the learner's motivation to recognize and make use of transferable knowledge will become especially salient toward the end of this chapter.

Theories of Transfer That Emphasize Transfer Between Tasks

At the turn of the 20th century, educational reformers Thorndike and Woodworth endeavored to explain transfer by proposing a theory of identical elements (1901). According to them, transfer would only occur when the original task shared much in common with the task the knowledge was to be transferred to. Without a substantial number of identical elements between the two tasks, transfer would be unlikely to occur.

The type of transfer Thorndike and Woodworth proposed is called specific transfer. As its name implies, in specific transfer, transfer will occur when there is an obvious similarity between the original learning task and another one. The opposite of specific transfer is nonspecific transfer, in which the two tasks may not share any obvious similarities, but learning to do one task clearly influences the ability to successfully complete the second task.

From an educational perspective, the siren song of both specific and nonspecific transfer is tantalizing. Both types of transfer suggest that if one can simply isolate the variables--the similarities or the type of learning--then one could create a system designed to facilitate transfer.

In the mid-1900s, there was a movement to create such a system that "involved careful task analysis of educational content and the attempted assurance that lower-level knowledge be learned before higher-level material was attempted (i.e., mastery learning)" (Royer et al., 2005, p. ix). Called vertical transfer, this implies that a hierarchy of skills exists, and that transfer is a matter of learning a "simple" skill and then eventually, using that skill to acquire a more "sophisticated" skill (Gagne, 1965). If it can be shown that the simple skills have been learned, then vertical transfer suggests the transfer will take care of itself.

What is interesting about this is how closely it mirrors what contemporary educators call backwards design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). In backwards design, the educator thinks about

the final learning objective, and then plans the unit by starting with that final objective and moving backward, step by step, to identify which skills will be needed at what point in the unit. While the educator plans the unit by starting at the end and moving back to the beginning, the student moves from the beginning to the end. Since the educator has identified what skills the student will need to acquire at what point, the student should gain the skills and meet the final learning objective. The premise of backwards design is that once the skills are identified, the student will acquire them at the appropriate time in the sequence, and will automatically apply them to gain new skills later in the sequence.

Perkins and Salomon call task based conceptions of transfer the “Little Bo Peep theory of transfer” and the “default theory of educational practice” (1990, p. 3). Like the nursery rhyme’s verse, “leave them alone and they will come home,” Perkins and Salomon feel that many educators teach as though transfer will work itself out, and that whatever students are learning will “more or less automatically carry over” to new contexts. "It is a tacit theory, not articulated, but implicit in the way we behave in the classroom. It is not that anyone advocates that transfer takes care of itself. Rather, everyday practice presumes that this happens" (p. 4). Educators are essentially acting upon “Little Bo Peep theory” when they assume that because they have taught a skill the student will be able to automatically use that skill in a later context.

For the purposes of education, theories that emphasize transfer between tasks are problematic because they don’t acknowledge the role of the learning context in the transfer situation. Learners need to be able to apply their skills in situations that may not appear anything like the ones in which they originally learned them.

Theories Of Transfer And Cognition

While the identical elements theorists were focused on the similarities between tasks, it wasn't until the rise of cognitive psychology in the late 1960's that transfer theorists began to look at the relationship between learners' minds and transfer. By studying the "mental processes" that learners use when they attempt to transfer, researchers would "understand what it is that individuals are actually attempting to transfer" (Royer et al., 2005, p. xvii). This approach to understanding transfer offers more to educators because if teachers can understand how students "activate and apply prior learning, both productively and unproductively" then "one can begin to think about instructional strategies that may be more conducive toward fostering productive transfer" (Royer et al., 2005, xvii).

One strand of early cognitive research and transfer focused on how learners "activated" their prior knowledge. Schema theory (Anderson, 1984) was emerging as a way to explain how people connected new information to past events, and cognitivists began to wonder if comprehension and transfer might be the same thing. Literacy theorists were particularly interested in schema theory because they found it was a way to explain how readers could make connections between things they had learned in the past and new information they were currently encountering in a text. The old and new material would share conceptual similarities. Schemas worked like a filing cabinet: if a user wanted to retrieve a file, and the file was located at the very front of the cabinet, the file would be retrieved more quickly than if it were hidden among the dusty papers at the back of the cabinet. In order to make connections, learners had to move the "file" from the back of their long term memory to the front, where they would easily be able to access it when making a connection to new material. This retrieval from long term memory was called the activation of prior knowledge. When applied to transfer, schema theory suggested that

if a learner could bring forward a piece of knowledge from their long term memory then the learner could successfully transfer that knowledge to a new task.

A similar strand of cognitive research in transfer focused on finding out how the human brain notes conceptual similarities. Royer (1979) used the phrase figurative transfer to explain why metaphors and similes were powerful learning tools: they rely on the brain to be able to note the conceptual similarities between two seemingly different things. From an educational perspective, figurative transfer is appealing because learners can be taught to create analogies that are broad enough to be applicable to a host of learning situations.

Theories Of Transfer And Context

Some transfer researchers have critiqued task-based and cognitive theories of transfer because they do not consider the role the initial learning context plays in facilitating or inhibiting transfer. Wardle (2007) explains that these theories separate cognition from the social world, and then, citing Tuomi-Grohn and Engestrom (2003), offers three context oriented "corrective" theories: transfer as situated, transfer as socio-cultural, and transfer as activity based.

A situated theory of transfer looks at transfer not as the passing of knowledge from task to task, but as the participation in processes determined by the individual. Toumi-Grohn and Engestrom (2003) use an example of chairs: individuals participate in the process of sitting in chairs because they have determined that chairs are something to sit upon, and that this applies to chairs in all contexts. A socio-cultural theory of transfer focuses on how people interact with each other and how tasks are actually socio-culturally constructed. Successful transfer does not depend on the individual, but on the contextual relationships between groups of people and tasks.

Activity-based theories of transfer are the ones most consistently embraced by composition researchers, and so more attention will be given to them in the following section.

Lobato (2003) argues for a theory of transfer that focuses on how the individuals perceive the transfer task. This theory should enable researchers to look at how the individual perceives the two situations as similar, thereby allowing the researcher to abandon their own definitions of transfer in exchange for meaning made by the individual. The activity-theorist is less concerned with whether transfer is successful or not, and more concerned with figuring out how the individuals being studied make connections between two potentially dissimilar contexts.

Since the focus of contextual theories of transfer is not on the transfer of skills, most context-based theorists argue that knowledge transfer is a misleading term. Instead, theorists prefer to call what they are observing “generalization” (Beach, 2003). As Wardle explains, “Generalization includes classical interpretations of transfer -- carrying and applying knowledge across task -- but goes beyond them to examine individuals and their social organizations, the way that individuals construct associations among social organization, associations that can be continuous and constant or distinctive and contradictory” (p. 41).

While the terms “near transfer” and “far transfer” were coined in the 70s (Mayer, 1975), they are useful when looking at transfer through the more contemporary context based theories of knowledge transfer. Near transfer “occurs when knowledge or skill gets used in situations very like the initial context of learning" (Perkins & Salomon, 1990, p. 2). It is called near transfer because the individual perceives both the learning and application contexts to be very near each other, and so it is no big leap to attempt to transfer knowledge from one to the other. Far transfer, on the other hand, occurs when the knowledge or skill is used in a situation that may be very different from the one in which it was acquired. Since school settings are usually vastly different from the outside of school settings where educators want students to be able to transfer

their knowledge, far transfer should be “of special concern to educators” (Perkins & Salomon, 1990, p. 2).

Theories Of Transfer That Synthesize Both Cognitive And Context

In their “Good Shepherd Theory of Transfer,” Perkins and Salmon (1990) draw upon both context and cognitive theories to explain near and far transfer using the terms “low-road transfer” and “high-road transfer.” To them, low-road transfer essentially involves skills that have been repeated so many times that when a learner has to transfer them, they are transferring them into familiar contexts. In contrast, high road transfer requires the learner to apply knowledge and skills to seemingly foreign contexts. This type of transfer, they argue, does not happen easily or on its own. It requires “the mindful abstraction of a principle, the effortful search in one's memory, the selection of the appropriate principle and, finally, its application to a new instance” (p. 7). Since Perkins and Salomon’s theory relies on context as well as the individual’s mental efforts, I will argue it offers the most useful synthesis of cognitive and contextual theories and is commodious enough to provide a rich picture of transfer in action.

When considering transfer in terms of high or low road transfer, it is important to acknowledge that transfer happens, even if it is not always the type of transfer needed. Perkins and Salomon explain this as the difference between “positive” and “negative transfer” (p. 2). Positive transfer is what it sounds like: a situation in which transfer has occurred successfully. The individual has conceived of the task in such a way--whether the task is contextually similar or whether they have mentally abstracted similarities--that they successfully take their knowledge from one learning context and apply it to another. Negative transfer happens when the learner attempts to transfer knowledge, but the tasks aren’t similar, the learner misappropriates past learning, or the contexts are so different that transfer is inappropriate.

Negative transfer is unsuccessful. When a writing teacher observes a student using the five-paragraph essay structure to write a 15 page paper, negative transfer is occurring.

Interlude: Megan, The Hypothetical First-year Student

Somewhere, not in the middle of campus, but adjacent to the middle, is a composition classroom. The course is developmental writing; it is a requirement for all students who didn't receive the passing score on their English placement exam.

Megan is sitting near the front of the class, but not in the front row. A middle of the road, B student throughout high school, she hasn't ever felt completely confident about her writing abilities. She casually looks through her backpack for her copy of the handout her professor gave on the first day, "Lies Your English Teacher Told You." It was a description of things that the professor assumed Megan had learned in her high school English classes that she should absolutely not do in this class. She recalled being irritated when she had received the handout; her senior English teacher was one of her favorites, and she didn't think Mrs. Goran would have purposely lied to her. She had studied the list when it was handed out, noting that the five-paragraph essay was banned. Now, she returned to the list to make sure she hadn't broken one of the rules on her assignment.

The assignment was to write a restaurant review. In high school, Mrs. Goran would have walked them step by step through a writing assignment; in this college class, the professor had had them working on writing and revising sentences for two weeks. Megan felt okay about the fact the professor hadn't spent much time on the assignment itself, because, after all, this wasn't a big deal. How hard could it be to write a restaurant review? True, she hadn't done one before, but it seemed simple enough. The students had had to bring in a rough draft, and the professor

put them in peer review groups. Megan and her peers had edited each other's papers; the person who got Megan's put smiley faces in the margins.

The professor is now walking around the room, dropping graded reviews on the desks of the authors. Wearily, the professor prepares for the looks of surprise, dismay, and horror. Every fall semester it seems the same. This isn't even a particularly challenging assignment, the professor thinks, and the students had done peer review in class.

Megan casually glances down at her paper, and as she sees the professor's scribbled questions, the underlined sentences, the arrows, and the dreaded "awk," her eyes widen a little. She immediately flips to the last page and she sees her grade: a "NP," which means it is not passing, or below a C-. She feels her face flush with heat. She can't tell what she did wrong; the professor's comments seem arbitrary to her. She flashes back to the smiley faces in the margins of her rough draft, and briefly glares in her peer reviewer's direction. She decides the professor hates her and tunes out for the rest of the class.

Theories Of Knowledge Transfer And Writing

Davis Russell's 1995 chapter, "Activity Theory and Its Implications for Writing Instruction" is frequently cited by composition scholars, particularly those who are Writing Program Administrators or Writing Across the Curriculum Coordinators, in order to describe the limitations of freshman composition in facilitating knowledge transfer. It is understandable that those in charge of directing programs would be drawn to Russell's depiction of activity theory, since it is a theory that takes into account the subjects (in the case of first-year composition or "FYC," the students and the teacher), the objectives or goals, and the tools that are used to reach that objective. In other words, activity theory offers a theoretical framework by which to examine many different aspects of FYC, rather than focusing on only one. However, in practice,

it seems as if compositionists have used activity theory frameworks to focus primarily on the instructional contexts at the expense of including relevant information about the role of the learner. Compositionists have also been almost exclusively concerned with what first-year writing students are able to transfer from first-year writing courses; they have overlooked what learners bring into first-year writing.

Russell: First-Year Writing Courses, Like Ball Handling Courses, Fail To Foster Generalization

Russell explains the elements of an activity system by drawing an analogy between learning to handle a ball and learning to use that ball in games that require different uses of the ball. "The originators of each game have appropriated this tool for the object(ive) of each, the 'object of the game.' The kind of game (activity) changes the form of the ball (tool)—large, small, hard, soft, leather, rubber, round, oblong, and so on. The object(ive) and the history of each game also condition the uses of the ball" (p. 57). As novice ball players begin to acquire the skills they need to handle the ball in one game, or context, they should be able to use those ball handling skills in other contexts, as long as there are similarities between the two (i.e., baseball and softball both require pitching, even though the technique of pitching, overhand or underhand, is different. The objective is similar: to get the ball over the plate). The ability to use the ball in similar ways for similar objectives is not called transfer within an activity system, but generalization. Activity theorists prefer to use the term generalization because knowledge isn't being transferred from one task to another, but generalized from skills gained in one particular context to another. As opposed to identical elements theorists, who think transfer will only happen when the tasks are similar, activity theorists think that transfer will only happen when the contexts, or socio-cultural situations, are similar.

Russell uses the ball analogy to explain why "General Writing Skills Instruction" (GSWI) courses (i.e., FYC) fail to teach students to generalize from those courses to the others in the university. He equates a GWSI course to a course in general ball handling, where students learn how to hold the ball, bounce the ball, throw the ball, etc., but don't learn those skills inside of the context where they would actually use them.

Russell might say Megan's high school preparation was like a course in general ball handling; Megan likely learned writing skills in high school, but she did not learn them in the context where she would have to use them. Russell might argue that the contexts of writing in high school and writing in college are too different, and that students like Megan won't be able to see any similarities between them.

Smit: Institutionalize Instruction To Foster Transfer (Learners Aren't Worth Studying)

In *The End of Composition Studies*, David Smit (2007) devotes a chapter to the issue of transfer and writing. Summarizing research from other fields, he acknowledges that studies on transfer have not led researchers to be able to predict if or when it will occur. Like some activity theorists (including David Russell, whom he cites), Smit argues that transfer can only possibly occur when the contexts of where something was learned and where it will be applied are similar. Thus, he is primarily interested in finding, "The means to institutionalize instruction in the similarities between the way writing is done in a variety of contexts" (Smit, 2007, p. 120). Since the focus of his book is on composition studies as a field and discipline, this is understandable.

To explain how writing might be transferred, he refers to Russell's ball analogy to explain that writing skills, like ball handling skills, are only acquired in the context they are needed, and therefore, "there is a reason to think that what the writer knows or is able to do is

very local and context-dependent and will not transfer to another situation" (p. 122). Like Russell, he critiques FYC for being a place where writing is taught as a set of isolated skills. The FYC context is divorced from the contexts where students will need to use writing skills.

Therefore, in this view, it is unlikely that first-year college students will be able to transfer, or generalize from, what they learn in first-year writing courses to writing in other courses. The contexts for the courses are too different. Even rhetorical knowledge such as knowing that writing style depends on audience, purpose, and genre is considered "weak" because students will only have practice applying that knowledge in the context of their first-year writing course. Smit notes that once students leave first-year composition, they will have to write in new genres and for new audiences, and, "their self-conscious awareness of weak strategies will depend entirely in their ability to determine what those new demands are" (p. 123). According to Smit, that is where the transfer breaks down. The developing writer does not know how to determine in what contexts certain strategies should be used appropriately.

Smit doesn't only hold the students accountable for their lack of transfer; turning to the professors, he argues that it is up to them to make the similarities between writing contexts discernable to the students. Using findings from Walvoord and McCarthy's (1990) study of first-year writers in four different classes, he critiques the history professor for giving a writing assignment with only vague criteria and without sample papers for students to use to understand the discourse requirements. In this example, the professor is not making their expectations for the paper explicit for the student; without transparent expectations, Smit implies, students won't be able to see how the assignment shares anything in common with ones that may have completed in the past.

Since Smit's book is focused on composition studies, its classrooms and its pedagogies, it is understandable that he is more concerned with how educators can either make the contexts of their classrooms similar enough for students to be able to generalize from one to another, or how educators can make the similarities that do exist more transparent. While he acknowledges that transfer in large part "depends on the learners' background and experience," he dismisses these factors because teachers cannot control them (p. 119). This is unfortunate since activity theorists should also be interested in the role the individuals' actions play in the system. Smit argues that first-year composition students often do not see how what they have learned in the past is relevant to the future, but he does not explore why they think that.

With regards to Megan, Smit might agree with Russell that the context of high school is too different from the context of college, and that it is unlikely Megan would have been able to perceive any similarities between the two. He might also acknowledge that whatever Megan's high school experiences with writing were, they would likely impact her ability to generalize from those skills to the college context. But, since the professor could not possibly know every student's previous writing activities, or do anything to change them, there wouldn't be much point in trying to find out what knowledge Megan might have.

He might hold the professor partially responsible, though, for not making the demands of the new context explicit for Megan. He would wonder if the professor had connected the genre of a restaurant review to a specific discourse community, or if the professor had used model papers.

Beaufort: First-year Writing Responsible For Learners' One Size Fits All Mentalities

Anne Beaufort's (2007) book, *College Writing and Beyond: A New Framework for Writing Instruction,* is devoted to the question of transfer. Like Smit, she grounds her research in

the activity theory framework, and as such, she defines transfer as the "transfer of writing skills from one social context to another" (p. 6).

Her critique of freshman composition from the activity theory perspective is interesting. She agrees with Russell's complaint that freshman writing courses are usually mandatory and that freshman writing is not an introduction into a specific discipline. Students who take the course may feel the course is about jumping through a hoop or "doing school" (Russell, 1995).

> Because usually there is no overt linking of the course to any intellectual discipline (even the disciplines of Rhetoric and Composition are not usually invoked in freshman writing), the over-riding social context for students becomes the institutional requirement of the course itself. So writing papers is perceived by students as an activity to earn a grade rather than to communicate to an audience of readers in a given discourse community and papers are commodified into grades, grades into grade reports, grade reports into transcripts, etc. This condition also misleads students into thinking that writing is a generic skill that, once learned, becomes a "one size fits all" intellectual garb. This in turn leads to misappropriation of principles taught in the course in other contexts where some of those principles are not helpful, or, as cognitive psychologists would say, negative transfer of learning occurs. (p. 10)

From an activity theorist's standpoint, when something is learned in a context disconnected from others, it is unlikely students will be able to generalize to new contexts later on. Since the context is divorced from the others, transfer will not occur.

Not only does Beaufort critique the context in which first-year writing is taught, she also faults teachers of FYC for playing a role in creating the artificial context. She argues that many

teachers of writing consider themselves “generalists” who are more concerned with providing students with basic skills than with how their class fits into the context of the university or how their class will support the students in their academic careers. Drawing on Russell’s ball analogy, she challenges the idea that teaching students basic writing skills will automatically enable the students to transfer their knowledge to new settings, reminding the reader that a class in ball handling skills would not equip students to apply those skills in contexts other than the ones in which they were learned. Since writing standards are “largely cultural and socially specific,” Beaufort would prefer teachers of writing teach students “how to study and acquire the writing practices of different discourse communities” (p. 11).

Beaufort takes her critique outside of the freshman classroom and its teachers and applies it to how writing is taught, or not taught, within the disciplines (i.e., within a WAC/WID program). First, she explains that not all writing required in major courses reflects the writing or the discourse community in which it is taught. Some writing is assigned as an assessment tool, rather than an introduction into writing in that discipline. Beyond that, even when an expert in their field tries to teach writing in that field, they may encounter “difficulties in making overt the knowledge about writing standards they have learned from a slow acculturation process, rather than by direct instruction” (p. 15). Again, Beaufort suggests that if both teachers of freshman writing and experts in their disciplinary fields could give students “the kind of intellectual tools and frameworks for being able to become astute at learning to be flexible writers” then students would effectively be taught how to learn (p. 15). In other words, instead of teaching students what to know, students might be better served by teaching them how to learn what they do not know.

Considering Megan, Beaufort, like Russell and Smit, might agree that the contexts between high school and college are too different. She might argue that for most high school students, especially ones who are required to take developmental writing courses, first-year writing is simply about fulfilling a requirement, just as high school English was about meeting requirements to graduate. Further, since Megan's professor was focused on teaching basic writing skills, Beaufort might think that this course was reinforcing the idea of writing as discrete skills instead of writing as communication within a specific context.

Wardle: Transfer Can Occur If Curriculum Motivates Learners

Elizabeth Wardle's (2007) article "Understanding 'Transfer' from FYC: Preliminary Results of a Longitudinal Study" can be seen both as a product of the activity theory and composition genealogy established by Russell, Smith, and Beaufort, as well as the beginning of a new genealogy which eventually leads to the current scholarship on the "Writing About Writing" curriculum. Like Beaufort, Wardle argues that since FYC is required in nearly every university, implicit in that universal requirement is "the assumption that FYC should and will provide students with the knowledge and skills that can transfer to writing tasks in other courses and contexts" (p. 65). Like Smit, Wardle also addresses the limitations of trying to understand the role of the individual in the problem of transfer. Unlike Smit, she doesn't think that their experiences are not useful because they are not controllable, but that researchers would miss crucial information if they only focused on the individual without understanding the individual's learning context. Additionally, Wardle argues that by focusing on the individual, "we may be tempted to assign some 'deficiency' to students or their previous training though in fact the students may fulfill the objectives of their next writing activities satisfactorily without using specific previously-learned writing-related skills (such as revision)" (p. 69). In other words, if a

student successfully meets an objective without utilizing strategies learned in the past, a narrowly focused study of transfer would suggest that no transfer had occurred, and then assign the blame to either the student's ability or the student's previous learning environment. By approaching this example from the activity theorist's viewpoint, a researcher might want to find out whether "participation in the new activity systems failed to motivate the student to use those skills" or if the reason to transfer wasn't "obvious or readily available" (i.e., if the assignment was structured in such a way that the student felt revision wasn't necessary).

Wardle found evidence of the latter in her longitudinal study of sophomore level college students. Generally, students didn't transfer knowledge from their first-year writing courses, "not because they are unable to or because they did not learn anything in FYC. Rather, students did not *perceive a need* to adopt or adapt most of the writing behaviors they used in FYC for other courses" (p. 76). They often didn't transfer knowledge because they didn't find their writing assignments to be that difficult; there was no reason to draw upon skills learned in first-year writing because those skills weren't needed to successfully complete basic summaries or other writing assignments that didn't require research and could be done well at the last minute. Students reported many of their assignments were so similar to ones they had received in high school that there was no reason not to use the strategies that had served them well in that context. This suggests that students were transferring knowledge from high school to college, but not from first-year writing to college, which could either mean that there was not really a difference between their writing in high school and writing in college, or that first-year composition was preparing students for a level of writing that was not yet required in their college classes. However, Wardle also found that students avoided assignments that they perceived to be challenging. She explains that while the students felt they were capable of completing the work,

they were "unwilling to put forth the effort required" to reflect on their past learning enough to use what they had learned to solve these more difficult writing problems (p. 74). In some ways, Wardle's participants were inclined to transfer when the transfer appeared "near" but were unmotivated to transfer when the transfer appeared "far." This raises questions about what was driving their motivation, and perhaps a more complete understanding of transfer could have been attained by looking more closely at the sources of the participants' motivation, or lack thereof.

What students were able to transfer was "meta-awareness 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" (p. 76). Wardle, citing Perkins and Salomon, notes that the ability to be metacognitive is one of the predictors of successful knowledge transfer.

Wardle concludes by acknowledging that it is impossible for first-year writing, just like high school English, to prepare students for every possible writing task they will ever encounter. However, "*Meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies* in FYC may be the most important ability our courses can cultivate" (p. 82). The conclusions Wardle draws from her study lay the foundation for "Writing About Writing" pedagogy, which she and Doug Downs later help promote.

With regards to Megan, Wardle might wonder if the assignment provided adequate motivation for Megan to attempt to transfer. She might be interested in whether or not Megan felt there was a need to transfer what she had learned in high school to the class. Since Megan initially felt the assignment was easy, it is possible that Megan was unmotivated to transfer because the assignment didn't warrant the effort. Had Megan thought the assignment was similar to ones she had done in high school, she might have negatively transferred what she had

learned about writing in high school to the college assignment. Either way, Wardle would be most interested in how the instructional task motivated Megan to transfer.

Driscoll: Student Attitudes And Beliefs Affect Transfer

Recent research on knowledge transfer within composition studies has begun to explore the role that the individual student's attitudes and beliefs play in facilitating or inhibiting successful knowledge transfer. Dana Driscoll (2010) summarizes the work of the activity theorists mentioned above, but notes that within that research, "the role of student attitudes and beliefs concerning transfer are not clear" (p. 4). She points out that teacher training manuals and other composition theories, "often fail to consider the role of student attitudes in a variety of writing situations and pedagogical approaches" (p. 31). Thus, for her study, Driscoll sought to provide some clarity by interviewing students about the extent to which they saw writing as valuable to their future careers, and the extent to which they saw FYC as valuable to their majors and careers.

Driscoll draws from expectancy-value theory (Eccles, 2005) to explain why the value students place on writing and their FYC courses could affect whether or not they were motivated to transfer knowledge. Expectancy-value theory argues that students will perform better, persist longer, and make better choices when they feel that what they are working on, or learning, is valuable to them. Students who don't feel that their writing courses will be useful to them in their future academic or workplace contexts may find little about the course to be intrinsically motivating. Driscoll notes that expectancy-value theory correlates with the high-road transfer theory established by Perkins and Salomon (2002), who argue that for this kind of transfer to happen, learners need to be able to employ "mindful abstraction," or make the choice to be critically reflective of their past learning in order to be able to abstract from that ways of

applying prior learning to new situations. In order for students to achieve high road transfer, they have to be motivated enough to look for it.

In her study, Driscoll utilized expectancy-value theory to categorize participants into four groups depending on how much they valued writing and FYC. The value they placed on both was, in large part, determined by what they thought they knew about writing in their majors and careers, or what Salomon and Perkins (1989) call, "forward reaching knowledge". "Implicitly connected students" were those who thought writing was a valuable skill all around; "explicitly connected students" were those who valued FYC because they thought it would serve them in the future; "disconnected students" were those felt FYC had no connection to their futures, and "uncertain students" were those who were unsure of the value of FYC (p. 2).

The students' attitudes toward FYC and beliefs about the value of FYC affected the extent to which the students thought they would transfer their knowledge from FYC to their future writing situations. In response, Driscoll proposed a model of knowledge transfer which factors student beliefs and motivation more than other activity theory oriented models that rely more on contextual similarities. She explains, "It is important to maintain the distinction between what students have experienced and their perceptions and beliefs about those experiences because…educational environments and experiences can be very different from the beliefs that students hold" (p. 30). In her model, the student and the instructor are shown outside the learning environment, but the arrows indicate they would both enter into the learning environment at some point. The model emphasizes that both will be influenced by previous experiences, and that as they enter into the learning environment, those experiences will influence their knowledge and beliefs.

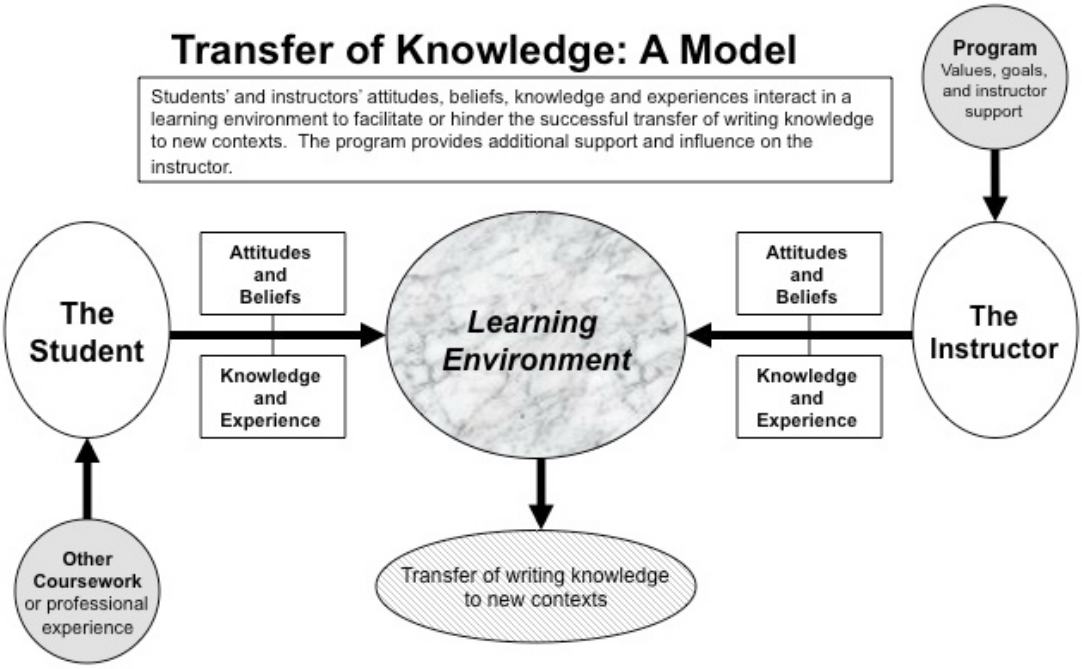

Figure 1. Driscoll's transfer of knowledge model.

Applying Driscoll's line of inquiry to Megan might lead to a different perspective. Unlike the externally focused activity theorists, Driscoll might look at how Megan perceives the activity system, and how Megan's internal motivations affect her ability to successfully transfer knowledge from high school to college. Driscoll might shift from looking at if the assignment itself was intrinsically motivating, as Wardle does, to whether or not Megan's beliefs about the value of the course, now or in her future, provided motivation for her to transfer knowledge.

The Role Of The Individual In Transferring Knowledge

As Wardle found, a student's perception of an assignment can affect their willingness to transfer knowledge, and as Driscoll noted, a student's beliefs about the value of what they are

learning will affect the likelihood they will attempt to transfer that knowledge later on. The role of the learner should not be overlooked.

> Even if a learner has acquired all the resources necessary for a particular transfer task, if he or she cannot easily access those resources, does not recognize the relevance of prior learning to the task at hand (e.g., because the task is presented in a very different context from original learning), or has no desire to take up recognized transfer opportunities, then transfer will not occur. *(*McKeough, Lupart & Marini, 1995, p. 2)

This is essentially pointing to is an issue of motivation. Learners have to be motivated, internally or externally, to look for opportunities to transfer their knowledge, and then be motivated to actually attempt to transfer the knowledge. This is why for Perkins and Salomon, "mindful abstraction" is both crucial and precarious; it requires the learner to purposefully choose to reflect, and then to abstract from their reflections innovative ways to solve new problems.

Socio-Cognitive Theories Of Motivation

In order to explain what motivates students, I now turn to literature from the fields of psychology, social psychology, and educational psychology, which have investigated these questions across a broad range of disciplines and contexts. There are a host of motivation theories, but three focus on learners' perceptions of their own abilities and how those perceptions play a role in motivating their actions: self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), attribution theory (Weiner, 2010), and outcome expectancy theory (Pajares, 1996). Shell, Colvin and Bruning (1995) define self-efficacy as "confidence in one's capability for organizing and implementing the cognitive, behavioral, or social skills necessary for successful performance of a task,"

attribution theory as “one’s judgments about the causality of success or failure in achievement situations,” and outcome expectancy theory as “beliefs about the contingencies between one’s successful task performance and possible outcomes or the expectation that a behavior will result in particular outcomes” (p. 386).

Self-Efficacy Theory

Self-efficacy is defined as “people’s beliefs about their capabilities to produce performances that influence events affecting their lives” (Bandura, 1995, p. 434). If someone believes that they are capable of running a marathon, they are more likely to do the things required to complete a marathon (like maintaining a training schedule), than those who believe that, no matter what they do, they won’t be able to complete a marathon. With regards to learners, self-efficacy can be defined as students’ beliefs about their capabilities to do the things or produce the things needed to influence events (often grades) affecting their lives. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely than students with low-self efficacy to self-regulate their own learning (Bandura, 1977), to work hard (Zimmerman, 2002), to be persistent when faced with obstacles, and to feel less anxious about the work they need to do. Students with low self-efficacy may perceive work to be harder than it actually is, which can cause negative emotions like stress and depression (Pajares, 1996).

In studies of writing and self-efficacy, McCarthy, Meier, and Rinderer (1985) found students who held more positive beliefs about their own abilities produced better writing. If the students who had low-self efficacy held those beliefs in part because of their past learning experiences, then, “one important step in improving writing would be to strengthen individuals’ efficacy expectation about their writing ability” (p. 466). In other words, self-efficacy theory suggests that in order for students to perform better, they have to increase their beliefs about their

own ability. The authors argue that their study offers a way of looking at the results of the work of those like Beach, Perl, Pianko, Flower and Hayes, and Sommers, who found that developing writers don't use all the resources available to them when writing or revising. Self-efficacy theory suggests that the reason more developed writers use those tools is that they believe they have the ability to achieve the goal/grade they want. If a writer has lower self-efficacy, they may not use the resources, not because they don't know about them, but because they wonder why they should even bother.

It is easy to see how Megan's self-efficacy may have played a role in her willingness to use the resources available to her, including her ability to reflect on her past learning and apply it to the new situation. As someone who had never been a confident writer, and someone whose writing was considered average in high school (and likely accompanied by teacher feedback explaining why it was not good enough), Megan may have believed that she did not have the skills to achieve the grade she really wanted. She may not have thought she had the ability to write well, no matter what resources she used, so why try?

The Relationship Between Self-Efficacy, Goal Setting, And Motivation

The relationship between self-efficacy and motivation is suggested when Zimmerman (2002), citing goal theorists Locke and Latham (1990), argues "self-efficacy affects achievement performance both directly and indirectly through goal setting" because "explicit challenging goals enhance motivation and performance attainments" (p. 847). So, if a student has high self-efficacy, they may naturally set more challenging goals for themselves, since they have the confidence in their own abilities to meet their goals. By setting personally meaningful goals, the highly self-efficacious student will likely be more motivated to achieve them than a student who does not set authentic goals.

Since Megan may not have thought she had the ability to achieve goals she set for herself, it follows that she would not purposefully set goals, or if she did, the goals she set would be ones she considered out of reach. Without high self-efficacy to achieve goals, it makes no sense to set goals in the first place. Why set a target that is unachievable?

Attribution Theory

Attribution theory (Weiner, 2010), is a theory about to who(m) or to what people attribute the causes of events that affect them. These attributions are sometimes referred to in terms of a person's locus of control. When an individual believes that their ability or efforts are the cause of their success or failure, they are considered to have a high internal locus of control. On the other hand, when an individual believes that the cause of their success or failure lies outside of their control, they are considered to have a high external locus of control. An individual's locus of control lies on a spectrum, and is also highly dependent on the context of the event. Someone who might have a higher internal locus of control in one context may have a higher external locus of control in another. Having an extremely high internal locus of control can be problematic, especially when the outcome of an event is perceived as failure. Those who believe outcomes are completely in their control may suffer from a loss of self-esteem (Abramson, Garber, & Seligman, 1980).

Studies of high and low academic achievers have shed light on the impact of the location of a learner's locus of control, as well as the relationship between the learner's self-concept and their locus of control. While both high and low achievers think effort is important, low achievers are more likely to place contingencies on that effort (i.e., effort will produce the desired outcome if certain external factors are present, like luck, teacher help, or an easy task). Likewise, if they

are not successful, low achievers are more likely to blame external causes that are outside of their control (Shell et al., 1995).

Megan's response to her not passing grade is telling. Her response is immediate and defensive. She concludes that her poor grade has to do with her professor "hating her" and as a result, she responds by disengaging from the remainder of the class. This suggests she may have a high external locus of control, which is to say she thinks that the outcomes of her work are not controlled by her, but by capricious teachers. In terms of knowledge transfer, again the fact that Megan does not feel in control of what happens to her in school limits the likelihood that she will try to exert some control by attempting strategies that may be useful.

Self-Regulation

Self-regulation, according to Zimmerman (2002), is not an inherent trait that learners either have or don't have, but rather it is a process learners go through when they choose how they will adapt to new learning situations. The ability to set reasonable goals, to choose to utilize strategies to achieve those goals, to self-evaluate progress, to manage the physical and social settings so that they serve to support and not distract from those goals, to practice effective time management, to reflect on the success of choices made or strategies used, to understand how performance leads to results, and to be able to make changes to any of these preceding actions to improve future performance--all of this falls under the umbrella of self-regulation. If it sounds like a lot, it is, and it makes sense when Zimmerman comments, "It is hardly surprising that many students have not learned to self-regulate their academic studying very well" (p. 64). For students to do so would mean they would have to be self-aware, self-motivated, and have control over their own behaviors.

If a student is lacking in one area, self-regulation will be harder to achieve. "Novices…attempt to self-regulate their learning reactively. That is, they fail to set specific goals or to self-monitor systematically, and as a result, they tend to rely on comparisons with the performance of others to judge their learning effectiveness" (Zimmerman, 2002, p. 69). That is, students who do not set attainable goals or have the self-reflective capacity to monitor their progress and then the self-control to change their behaviors, if necessary, will see the results of their work as somewhat disconnected from their own actions. They will compare the outcome of their performance with others in order to ascertain how well they did on a specific task. If they find they are underperforming, they are more likely to blame their own lack of ability rather than to be able to examine the regulatory processes they did or did not engage in. In a sense, the opposite of strong self-regulation is learned helplessness.

Self-regulation is linked to self-efficacy theory because individuals with high self-efficacy tend to be good at setting reasonable and achievable goals for themselves. An efficacious learner already has the predispositions, including motivation, needed to engage in self-regulation.

In Megan's case, without knowing how she approached her writing assignment, it is hard to say whether or not she engaged in self-regulatory processes. Given that she didn't feel the assignment was that challenging, she may have written it at the last minute. Based on the connection between self-efficacy, motivation, goal setting, and locus of control, Megan's lack of confidence might be leading to a host of beliefs and behaviors which ultimately could serve to work against her. If she felt that her actions would have had little impact on her grade, then she might have thought that it wouldn't have mattered if she had spent more time on the assignment. With regards to knowledge transfer, without the belief that she could control her own learning, it

is unlikely Megan would attempt to transfer knowledge, in spite of the fact she may have more of it than she thinks she does.

Revisiting the definition of transfer introduced toward the beginning of this chapter, the following elements make up any transfer situation:

- the learner
- the instructional tasks (including learning materials and practice problems)
- the instructional context (the physical and social setting, including the instruction and support provided by the teacher, the behavior of other students, and the norms and expectations inherent in the setting)
- the transfer task
- the transfer context. (McKeough, Lupart & Marini, 1995, p. 2)

In order to fully understand Megan's classroom performance, and from that, her willingness and ability to transfer knowledge, one would have to understand Megan, the learner, and her beliefs, motivations, and behaviors. As Smit suggested, the instructional tasks themselves can play a role in making transfer explicit. The assignment sheet Megan received might have provided some interesting information about how the assignment was presented, explained, and modeled. The instructional context itself provides some clues; the professor mentions the students engaged in peer review, yet some students find peer review ineffective. The professor, through body language, may have also expressed contempt or resignation about the perceived ability of the students in the class. These factors may have also influenced Megan's performance. The transfer task itself is unclear. Without knowing much about her high school curriculum (other than the fact she liked her high school English teacher), it is impossible to say what knowledge Megan should have transferred *from*; without knowing the specifics of

the assignment for the developmental writing class, it is impossible to know what knowledge should have been transferred *to*. Lastly, as the activity theorists might point out, the contexts of high school and college are dissimilar, so how much transfer can be expected to occur? Would Megan have been able to use anything she learned in that previous context in this new one?

The question of transfer, then, is complex, and requires analysis of multiple elements. In order to gain more understanding of students like Megan, and their transition from high school to college, a researcher would need to be able to focus on the individual learners, while also finding information about the instructional tasks and contexts, and the transfer task. A study of literacy-based knowledge transfer from high school to college would require all of these things; it would require a study of individuals in context.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODS

The bridge between high school and college can be shaky for many students, whether it is due to their academic preparation, their cognitive transfer abilities, their psychological attitudes, or some combination of all of the above. In spite of limitations, many students do manage to adapt to college successfully. Therefore, my research questions were:

- How do first-year college students perceive the transition from high school reading and writing to college level reading and writing?
- To what extent do first-year college students report being able to transfer, positively or negatively, what they learned about reading and writing in high school to college?
- How do psycho-social factors, like a student's self-efficacy, locus of control, motivation, and self-regulation affect a student's transition and/or ability to transfer knowledge from high school reading and writing to college reading and writing?

To conduct my research, I chose to study individuals from the Mercy High School graduating class of 2009. Mercy High School is a college-preparatory, parochial, all-girls high school of 500 students located in the San Francisco Bay Area. There are three reasons I chose to work with this school and these students, and these reasons are in part what makes this study unique.

The first is that in 2007, Mercy High School was studied by an outside group of researchers who were funded by a CCC grant to examine the gap between high school and college. Longitudinal studies of first-year college students rarely look at how students *from the same high school* fare, and so when students say they did or did not learn something in high school, there is little way to compare that to what the high school curriculum or culture was. Having the third party findings about our school helps to provide a context for the findings of my

study, as well as enables my study to add on to an existing body of work.

The second is that the school is a college-preparatory, all-girls high school. Questions about how our students' high school experiences affect the way they negotiate college level reading and writing are critical ones for any high school to be asking, but especially a school like Mercy, that promotes itself as college preparatory. Mercy has support programs most high schools don't have; while these students were in high school, Mercy had a writing center where students could receive one-to-one writing coaching from a professional writing specialist. As a private school, Mercy doesn't have to give state mandated tests, so in many ways what and how Mercy faculty teach is not dictated by those types of external forces: this can be both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, Mercy is free to design curriculum however it feels best supports students; on the other hand, one of the concerns the 2009 visiting WASC accreditation team had was that while there was assessment happening in the school, it wasn't assessment aligned with set benchmarks.

The third is that I had already established relationships with all of the participants, though I had closer relationships with some than others depending on how frequently we had interacted through their high school career. The culture of this school is very close-knit, and this is possibly furthered by the fact it is a single-gender high school and the majority of the faculty are women. Since this research study required access to the students while they were still in high school, as well as after, and since it was be conducted mostly online, I, as a female researcher with member status (Angrosino & Mays de Pérez, 2003), was in the best position to conduct this study in this way. Any researcher conducting a study in this context would have to have the trust of the students, faculty, administrators, and the students' parents, and both my gender and my membership in this community made that possible. Additionally, since I was approximately 13-

14 years older than my participants at the time of the study, and since my position generationally is at the tail end of Generation X and just a few years shy of the Millennial Generation, I was more likely to appear like a teacher/peer than a teacher/researcher, which could have meant I was privy to more candid responses. On the other hand, my insider status could have influenced the participants to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear, rather than what was true.

Research Goals

In studying individuals from Mercy High School's graduating class of 2009 as they went through their first year of college, I invited them to speak for themselves and offer me a window into that first year of college experience from their point of view. Practically, I wanted to hear how they navigated their college level writing and reading. In giving them the microphone, I expected new information to come to light. Personally, I hoped to gain insight into the extent that Mercy High School adequately prepared these students for college. Every year, during their extended Thanksgiving or Christmas breaks, many of the recent graduates return to Mercy to visit their former teachers. We often hear that they feel better prepared, in some areas, than their peers. However, from year to year, anywhere between 25-50% of our students who enroll in the California State University system do not place into college writing, and have to take developmental classes in reading, writing, or both.

By following the Mercy graduates as they attended different post-secondary institutions, I hoped to hear if and/or how their high school education prepared them for community college, for state schools, or public universities, and for private colleges. More specifically, I was curious if our students were able to transfer what they learned (which is not necessarily the same thing as what they were taught) about reading and writing at Mercy to their various colleges. If transfer occurred, was it positive or negative? That is, did students transfer the right things, or did they

try to transfer something they learned at Mercy that didn't match what their college professors expected? Additionally, I was interested in how the psycho-social makeup of each individual student affected both their overall transition from high school to college reading and writing, as well as whether some factors, like self-efficacy, increased the likelihood of positive knowledge transfer.

Theoretical Perspective

Based upon my review of the literature and identification of specific gaps discussed in Chapter Two, I have eschewed activity theory in order to examine multiple elements inside the transfer contexts, especially role of the learner. I have drawn from psychological theories, including self-efficacy, motivation, attribution, and self-regulation in order to delve into the role of the individual inside the transfer context.

Research Methods

Since Mercy's writing program was the subject of a quantitative study several years ago, when the class of 2009 were sophomores, and since the school itself has collected relevant quantitative data about the graduating class, I used existing quantitative data about the writing program, as well as the school, to provide information about the students' learning context. No matter what common cultural background or other typical identifiers used to generalize a population, the experiences of individuals do not always fit neatly into those predetermined categories, and much can be gained by starting an analysis with the individual's perspective (Aspers, 2004). Since students' perspectives are the ones that have been largely absent from previous, largely quantitative, studies on the high school to college transition, qualitative interview methods were used to provide the students the opportunity to represent themselves and their perceptions. Thus, this study's use of both preexisting quantitative data as well as newly

collected qualitative data indicates that this study was based upon a mixed-methods (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) approach.

Pilot Study

In the summer of 2008, I conducted a pilot study in order to determine the viability of a larger study that would focus on students' perceptions of their transition from high school to college. In that pilot study, I sent five participants interview questions via email or Facebook message. Several questions pertained to their perceptions of what they learned about reading and writing in high school, and about how they were able to use what they had learned in high school in college. Even though there were only five participants in the study, and even though I only asked a handful of questions, the findings were not only interesting, but immediately applicable to decisions Mercy was making about curriculum. From the pilot study, I caught a glimpse of what the potential implications and recommendations might be for Mercy, for secondary and post-secondary teachers, and for the field of composition.

The pilot study also gave me a sense of what types of data I would need to collect in order to conduct a larger study. It also made me acutely aware of the importance of building relationships with my participants. Of the participants in the pilot study, the ones who responded with the most extensive answers were the ones I had worked with the most while they were in high school. So, I determined that in order to complete a successful study, I would need time to build good relationships with as many potential participants as possible. I also knew that I would need to collect data about the participants, as well as the participants' learning contexts, during their senior year of high school, and that I would need to be able to interview them throughout their first year of college. With time allotted for building relationships and collecting data, I would need to spend at least two years conducting the study.

Due to the nature of this study, I requested permission to begin conducting the research before I had completed my three chapter defense. Upon approval from my advisor, I submitted my research proposal to Indiana University of Pennsylvania's Institutional Review Board, and once I had received clearance from them, I began conducting the study.

Recruitment

During the academic year 2008-2009, I worked with the majority of the senior class on their college application essays. These college essay appointments in the writing center allowed me to get to know the seniors more than I had through their previous three years of school. Working with the students on their essays also gave me insights into their thinking about college: where they wanted to go, what they wanted to study, what they were excited about, and what they were concerned about.

In the spring on 2009, I spoke to each senior English class to tell students about the study. I explained what their participation, if they chose to participate, would involve. I passed around a sign-up sheet for students to indicate that they at least wanted more information, and I used that sign-up sheet to send initial recruitment emails via our internal school email system, SchoolLoop.

Senior Exit Surveys

In that initial email, the students were invited to complete an "exit survey" (see Appendix A) on Zoomerang which asked them to answer 42 questions about their attitudes toward writing and reading, about their habits of mind, and about their perceptions of their literacy education at Mercy. At the end of the survey, students noted whether or not they wanted to be contacted for further email surveys in the fall, after they had been enrolled in college for a few months. If they wanted to be contacted, they provided me with their contact information. Since the majority

were minors when they took the survey, and since the responses were not anonymous to me (based on the fact they provided their contact information), it was a condition of IRB approval that I not link individual responses to the same individual's later responses to my survey and interview questions. While this limits my ability to show an individual's attitudes and beliefs leaving high school, their attitudes and beliefs after their first few months of college, and their attitudes and beliefs after their first year of college, the data is still valuable in that it provides a rich picture of the attitudes and beliefs of the class as a whole. Fifty-two of 107 seniors completed the survey, and all 52 agreed to be contacted in the fall of their first year of college.

Fall Semester Email Surveys

In the summer of 2010, I created a Gmail account that I would only use to communicate with the participants. I manually entered their contact information so that I could easily send emails to the entire group. In early September, I emailed those 52 students to invite them to officially participate in the study. If they chose to participate further, I emailed them (or Facebook messaged them) two sets of open ended survey questions: one sent in the middle of their first semester, and the other at the end of their first semester. I realized one of the organizational challenges would be keeping track of which participants had begun college in mid-August, and which ones hadn't started until late September. Since I wanted to send the first interview questions approximately eight weeks into their first semester of college, I had to send the questions out in waves.

Once the participants indicated they would like to continue with the study and be interviewed, I sent them the informed consent form with a stamped, return envelope. Once I received a form, I checked the participant's name off a list, and depending on when they started college, I emailed them the questions immediately or soon thereafter.

Since my participants were away at college and therefore geographically spread out, and since the surveys took place over the course of several months, it was not feasible to conduct the in-college surveys in a face-to-face setting. As these participants all had computer access during their first year of college, and as all of them were very familiar with email, and social networking sites like Facebook, I used asynchronous computer mediated communication (CMC) to conduct the interviews. Initial open-ended survey questions were sent via the method of the student's choosing, either through email, through private message on Facebook (which functions like email), or through traditional "snail mail." Follow up questions were sent via email, Facebook private message, or snail mail. Mann and Stewart (2003) assert that CMC can provide a viable alternative to face-to-face interviews, especially since it reduces time and travel costs for both interviewer and interviewee. However, they also report that building and sustaining rapport online can be challenging. Since I already had rapport with the participants, and since, in my experience, building rapport online through emoticons and LOLspeak is relatively easy, I felt that this did not present as big a challenge as it would if these participants had been unknown to me.

In order to protect confidentiality, I first made sure not to ask any questions of a potentially sensitive or risky nature. If students elected to be surveyed in email, I recommended they use a private email account (such as Gmail, or Yahoo) that was not based on their university's server, since university email systems are more susceptible to outside interference.

After each completed interview, I sent the participant a gift card or a "mystery package." Twenty-two of the 52 students completed both sets of email surveys. As the participants generally answered my questions with a level of specificity I was happy with, I rarely responded with follow up questions. I was also cognizant of the fact the participants were busy, and I didn't

want to jeopardize their ongoing participation by sending too many emails. From the 22 participants who completed both sets of interviews, I collected 60 typed pages of responses.

Post-First Year Interviews

From the 22 who completed the first sets of interviews, I invited anyone who was interested to attend a follow up, face-to-face interview in the summer after their first year of college. While fifteen participants expressed interest in being interviewed, ultimately ten participants were able to attend the interviews. Each was interviewed for approximately one hour (see Appendix C for interview questions); the shortest interview was 45 minutes while the longest was two hours. The audio recording equipment malfunctioned during one of the interviews, leaving me with nine usable audio files. Each of nine the interviews was transcribed. There are approximately 360 pages of transcriptions.

The Uses For Each Set Of Data

I collected the three sets of data over the course of 14 months for several purposes. I first wanted to show the beliefs and attitudes of the larger cohort of participants as they were graduating from high school. Since 48% of the graduating class responded to the survey, and since the participants were split among above average and below average achievers, I felt that the conclusions drawn from the cohort generally represented the graduating class as a whole. This gives the reader information about the participants' perceptions of their high school curricula, their confidence in their reading and writing abilities, their habits of mind, and their work habits. In short, this gives the reader information about what procedural knowledge and dispositions the students might be carrying to college.

Second, I used the data collected from the 22 email surveys sent during the participants' first semester of the college to look for patterns or trends early in their transition. Since the first

semester of college is the one in which issues involved in the transition are likely to be most acute, I wanted to capture those as they were occurring.

The senior exit survey and the first rounds of email surveys were used to determine the participants' perceptions of their high school experience in order to draw connections to their perceptions of their transition to college. I then focused on their perceptions of the transition to college writing and reading, and whether or not they reported being able to use what they had learned in high school in college. I also parsed the extent to which their beliefs and attitudes affected their behaviors in college. From all this data, I then choose what I wanted to more fully explore when I conducted the face-to-face interviews with ten participants during the summer after their first year of college.

The purpose of the case studies, then, was to delve more deeply into how the general trends established through the first two sets of data manifested themselves in ten representative case study participants. The face-to-face interview setting enabled me to probe more deeply into the participants' perceptions and reports of transfer. By asking follow up questions, I was able to capture the nuances of their transition more completely. In this way, I used all three sets of data to answer each of the three research questions.

Methods Of Analysis

I used grounded theory to analyze the participants' responses from the email surveys as well as the face-to-face interviews. The originators of this method, Glaser and Strauss (1967), were concerned about the disjunctions they often saw between the empirical study and the theory used to explain the study. They felt that in order to truly discover theory, researchers could neither start out with a theory to be tested nor could they do research and then find a convenient theory after the fact. They suggested a new method: "the discovery of theory from data

systematically obtained from social research" (p. 2). In other words, let the data suggest the theory, not use the data to prove an a priori theory. Since I had the opportunity to conduct the pilot study and to begin my data collection before choosing methods of analysis, I was able to let the early data suggest theories. This, in turn, helped me refine the in-person interview questions. Since I am looking at an under-theorized area, I expect that continuing to employ a grounded theory approach will lead to insights previously undiscovered or unarticulated.

To manage my data and my analysis, I used NVivo8 software. NVivo8 is a qualitative data management and analysis tool. In order to familiarize myself with the software, I spent five hours reviewing NVivo training videos and reading some of their technical documentation.

NVivo enabled me to code data quickly, and the software organized the codes for easy retrieval. I looked for general patterns based upon my research questions and then applied "wide" codes like "perceptions of overall transition." Once I found a phrase or excerpt that fit with that code, I highlighted it and NVivo added the quote to the code's file. Eventually, I was able to search through the broader codes in order to look for narrower codes. For example, "perceptions of overall transition" was sub-coded into "perceptions of professors" and "perceptions of peers." As Glaser and Strauss recommended, I moved back and forth between my codes and my data and used constant comparison to look for patterns in the responses. When it was time to take coded sections and integrate them into my findings, I moved the codes from NVivo to a Word document. This enabled me to further group codes together and to organize them in a way that would be logical for the reader.

I also used mapping techniques (Clarke, 2005) to help graphically organize clusters of codes, as well as to help situate participant responses. I used an online tool, myWebspiration, to keep a record of the maps as they changed over the course of my data analysis. I also kept a

private journal in which I wrote memos about the research process and my analysis of the data, and used both the maps and the journal to guide my analysis.

Research Methods Validity

All participants were given the opportunity to read the comprehensive findings, and to respond to them in writing.

The Limitations Of The Study

There are a number of limitations to the study worth noting. Ironically, one of the strengths of the study is also one of its limitations: the participants were from a small, single gender, college preparatory high school in an affluent area. On the one hand, the participant population limits the extent to which findings, implications, and recommendations can be applied more generally to secondary education and post-secondary education. Many will argue that these students were better prepared because they went to a high school with rigorous course work and that gave rigorous exams. However, the fact that the participant population was so ideal enables the findings about transfer to be more urgent. Even though the participants were arguably well prepared, there were additional factors beyond their previous acquisition of content knowledge which affected the extent of their successful knowledge transfer. These other factors would also affect those who are less prepared, perhaps even more so.

The study is also limited due to the nature of my relationship with the participants. While it is true I was able to gain access to these students because of my member status, and while it is true that without this status access would not have been granted, this member status may have affected how the participants responded to my questions. It is possible they framed their responses in accordance with what they thought I wanted to hear. As someone who had taught them both reading and writing, I may have also been biased in favor of their high school

instruction (even though I have been a critic of some of that instruction during my years at the high school). These are the dangers inherent in research in which the researcher is a member of the community from which the participants are recruited.

While this was a study of knowledge transfer between high school and college, the extent to which this was a study of knowledge transfer on the task level is debatable. Since I did not collect any of their college writing assignments, I had to rely on their reports to determine whether or not transfer occurred. I also cannot make claims about how closely the target of the transfer tasks resembled the training tasks in high school; I can only rely on their perceptions of similarities between tasks.

In spite of these limitations, this study offers new information and new perspectives to the ongoing discussion of knowledge transfer in general, and literacy-based knowledge transfer between high school and college specifically.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The participants for this study came from the Mercy High School graduating class of 2009. Of the 107 graduates from the class of 2009, 100% enrolled in post-secondary education in the fall of 2009. The participants involved in this study were invited to complete one graduating senior exit survey, two open-ended surveys, and one face-to-face interview. The data collection took place over 16 months. The findings I report in this chapter pertain to the research questions, which were

- How do first-year college students perceive the transition from high school reading and writing to college level reading and writing?
- To what extent do first-year college students report they are able to transfer, positively or negatively, what they learned about reading and writing in high school to college?
- How do psycho-social factors, like a student's self-efficacy, locus of control, motivation, and self-regulation affect a student's transition and/or ability to transfer knowledge from high school reading and writing to college reading and writing?

This chapter begins with a description of the participants as they were leaving high school. Overall, the participants graduated feeling confident about themselves as readers and writers, and reported being motivated, curious, and responsible. The second part of this chapter includes findings from the analysis of the open ended surveys that 22 participants completed during their first semester of college, as well as from the face-to-face interviews that 10 of those 22 completed the summer after their first year of college. The findings suggest that the aspects of the social transition influenced aspects of the academic transition. The participants were

accustomed to high school teachers who gave personal attention and helped the participants manage their time in high school. This was not the case for most of the participants in college; for some, this translated into challenges managing their time, especially with reading. With regards to writing, most participants perceived their college writing professors' expectations to be arbitrary and vague. In spite of this, the participants managed to transfer both content knowledge and procedural knowledge about writing from high school to college. Many participants demonstrated transfer enabling psycho-social dispositions through their actions. Their actions helped them bridge the gap from what they knew to what they were supposed to do. In the third part of the chapter, I explore those findings more in-depth by looking closely at case studies of six interview participants.

The Participants' Senior Exit Survey

The purpose of the exit survey in this study was to capture the participants' beliefs about themselves as writers, readers, and students as they were leaving high school. The first survey was completed by 52 of the seniors from the Mercy high school graduating class of 2009 during their last month of high school. The average G.P.A. of the previous two years' graduating classes was 3.4. Sixty percent of the participants maintained a G.P.A. of 3.5 or above and 40% maintained a G.P.A. of 3.5 or below. For this "senior exit" survey, a majority of the participants were above-average achievers.

Table 1

Senior Exit Survey Participants' Self-Reported High School Grade Point Averages

G.P.A.	Percentage of participants
Above 4.5	10%
4.0-4.5	23%
3.5-4.0	27%
3.0-3.5	27%
2.5 3.0	10%
2.0-2.5	6%

The participants in the senior exit survey were asked to self-report their grades for both their high school English and social studies classes. Since English and social studies are the two most reading and writing intensive subjects at the high school, these two questions were designed to point to the range of reading and writing achievement among the participants. The English courses at the high school are largely literature courses in which students read fiction and write literary analysis, while the social studies courses require students to read more expository texts and write research-based expository writing. The questions were posed to also ascertain if the participants were generally stronger in one subject or the other. Three percent of the participants received more "All A" grades in social studies than they did in English, but the number of students who received mostly Cs in social studies was double the percentage who received mostly Cs in English. This suggests that the participants' ability to read and write

expository texts ranged more than the participants' ability to read literary texts and write literary analysis.

Table 2

Senior Exit Survey Participants' Self-Reported High School Grades

Grades	English	Social studies	Writing assignments
All As	15%	19%	2%
Mostly As	35%	29%	56%
Mostly Bs	50%	50%	42%
Mostly Cs	6%	12%	4%

In order to further ascertain the participants' performance on writing in all subjects, I asked the participants to self-report their average grades for major writing assignments. That 58% reported earning all or mostly As on their writing assignments, and 42% reported earning mostly Bs, suggests that the participants met or exceeded the expectations for writing at their high school.

The combination of high grades in writing intensive subjects as well as high grades on major writing assignments may explain why, as a cohort, the participants left high school confident writers. Seventy percent considered themselves good writers. Twenty-two percent said it depended on the type of writing but that they were generally "OK" writers. Four percent did not consider themselves good writers.

The participants' beliefs about their writing abilities were overwhelmingly positive, though the participants felt more confident in their ability to write in some genres as compared to others.

Table 3

Percentage of Exit-Survey Participants Who Reported Confidence Their Ability to Write Well in Specific Genres

Confidence	Reflective Essay	Lab Report	Research Paper	Persuasive Essay	Literary Analysis
Very or Extremely Confident	79%	53%	52%	50%	46%
Somewhat Confident	13%	27%	38%	40%	38%

While the participants were generally average to high achievers and while they generally were very confident in their writing abilities, they were also likely to feel anxiety about writing. Thirty-eight percent of the participants reported that they were "very" or "extremely" likely to feel anxiety when they were faced with a difficult writing assignment. Only fourteen percent felt they were unlikely to feel anxiety. Since some studies have linked anxiety about writing with decreased writing performance, this finding with this group of students suggests that there may be more to discover about the relationship between anxiety and writing.

On the other hand, studies about anxiety and writing have also suggested that anxiety about writing performance can lead the writer to avoid the writing task. The participants in this study reported that they were generally perseverant; when faced with a difficult writing assignment, 43% of the participants reported they were "very" or "extremely" likely to persevere until they were satisfied with the quality of the finished product. Thirty-seven percent reported that they were somewhat likely to persevere, whereas only 6% were somewhat or very unlikely

to persevere. The participants' perseverance probably mitigated some of the negative effects associated with anxiety and writing performance.

The Participants' Predisposition For Transfer

In looking for evidence that the participants were able to transfer what they learned in high school to college, it is important to look at whether or not the participants had developed a mindset or predisposition for transfer (Pea, 1987) while they were still in high school. Fifty-five percent of participants reported that when they were faced with a writing assignment in one class, they were "very" or "extremely" likely to think of what they had learned about writing in another class. Twenty-nine percent reported they were "somewhat" likely to think about what they had learned in another class. The participants' self-reported data suggests that nearly all of them had a predisposition for transfer while they were in high school. This, in turn, suggests that the students would carry this predisposition with them to college.

The Participants' Locus Of Control

Two questions on the survey were designed to gather some information about the participants' locus on control. If participants felt that they earned their grades, then they would have an internal locus of control when it came to their academics. That is, they would feel like there was a connection between whatever they did and what their grades were. If the participants had a high internal locus of control, then they might also blame themselves when they did not get the grades they thought they had earned. This is the darker side to an internal locus of control: people who believe they are responsible for their outcomes may suffer from a loss of self-esteem when their outcomes are not achieved. Forty-six of the participants reported they were "very" or "extremely" likely to feel like they had earned their grades, which suggests these participants had an internal locus of self control. However, 27% percent reported they were "somewhat" or

"very" likely to feel that the teacher had given them the grades, which suggests that nearly one third of the cohort had some degree of a high external locus of control. Interestingly, when participants did not get a grade they liked, 60% reported they were "very" or "extremely" likely to blame themselves, compared to the 6% who were somewhat or extremely likely to blame their teacher. It would seem that if nearly 30% of the participants felt their teachers gave them their grades, then it would follow that nearly the same percentage would blame their teachers when they did not receive grades they expected. The fact the percentage who would blame their teachers is lower than the percentage who felt the teachers gave them their grades is surprising.

The Participants' Confidence In Reading

Nearly the same number of participants who felt they were good writers also felt they were good readers; 71% considered themselves to be good readers. However, they were less confident in their reading abilities than in their writing abilities. Thirty-five percent reported they were "very" or "extremely" confident in their ability to read and understand complex texts (books, articles, essays, etc) without instruction and guidance (i.e., without teacher provided study guides, or without in-class discussion). The majority, 46%, reported they were "somewhat" confident. One reason for the decrease in confidence between writing and reading could be attributed to the fact that teachers at Mercy had been coached in integrating pre, post, and during reading strategies with the students; class discussion of assigned reading is common. Consequently, the participants' lack of confidence in their ability to read independently may be because they had not had much practice doing it. As I will discuss later, this affected them in college.

When it came to specific reading abilities, 35% of the participants' were "very" or "extremely" confident they could summarize an author's main argument, even if that argument

wasn't directly stated in a thesis sentence. Forty-six percent were "somewhat" confident they could do the same. Sixty-one percent were "very" or "extremely" confident they could tell when an author was writing an opinion and when an author was stating a fact.

In terms of reading strategies, forty-two percent of the cohort reported they were "very" or "extremely" likely to use the title of an article to predict what the article was going to be about. Forty-eight percent were "somewhat" likely to do so. Forty-one percent reported they were "very" or "extremely" likely to argue with a text in their heads or through annotations. Thirty-three percent were "somewhat likely" to do so. Arguing with a text is a strategy that promotes active reading, and active reading increases overall comprehension. When it comes to re-reading something if they didn't understand it the first time, 83% of the participants reported they were "very" or "extremely" likely to do so.

Participants were very confident they could manage a large volume of reading. Fifty-two percent were "very" or "extremely" confident they could complete (and understand) 100 pages of assigned reading a week. Only 14% were not confident that they could do that. Later I will discuss findings from the data that suggests the participants overestimated their ability to successfully handle this volume of reading.

The Participants' Habits Of Mind

As a whole, the participants felt they were curious about new ideas, able to see many points of view on a given topic, able to challenge their own beliefs, and able to generate a hypothesis to figure out why something occurred or to predict why something will occur. They also engaged in intellectual discussions both inside and outside of school.

The Participants' Work Habits

As far as work habits, the majority of the participants self-reported they came to class prepared, completed major assignments on time, and asked questions for clarification. Fifty-three percent of the participants reported that they "very much" or "extremely" agreed that they always came to class prepared. Twenty-nine percent reported that they "somewhat" agreed. Ninety percent reported that they "very much" or "extremely" agreed that they completed major assignments on time. Sixty-three percent reported that they "very much" or "extremely" agreed that they asked questions for clarification; 33% reported that they "somewhat" agreed that they did so.

The Participants' Perceptions Of Their Preparation For College Writing

When asked which courses and teachers at Mercy they felt had helped prepare them for college writing, the participants did not separate the courses from the teachers. Only 14% of participants who answered the open ended question mentioned a class without mentioning a specific teacher. The remaining 86% correlated the course with the teacher; this suggests that the participants associated preparation for college writing with a specific teacher rather than with a course alone. This in turn suggests that the participants were connected to specific teachers and valued their teaching and guidance. This finding becomes important later when looking at how the participants viewed their first year college teachers. With regards to specific subjects, 86% said they felt their English teachers and courses helped prepare them for college writing; 56% said they felt their social studies teachers and courses helped prepare them for college writing; 4% percent said their religion teachers and courses helped prepared them for college writing.

On the exit-survey, the participants were given the option to state what writing strategies they had used in high school to improve their writing that they planned to use in college. This

was an open ended response; had the question be written with “choose all that apply” the percentages might have been higher. Given that the responses were open ended, though, the percentages are striking. Nearly 20% said they planned to meet with their teachers in college. Nearly 20% also indicated they would use a writing center if their college had one. Seventeen percent reported they planned to continue to have their peers look over their writing. Ten percent said they would continue to create outlines before writing. Eight percent claimed they would continue to review their teacher’s written feedback on previous papers while they were writing new papers. Other strategies the participants mentioned included: drafting (7%), proofreading (7%), utilizing the writing reference guide purchased in high school (7%), using reading as a model for writing (4%), using the “hamburger” technique (4%), and not procrastinating (4%). The fact that many participants reporting using strategies like these in high school is notable; the question is whether they would continue to use them in college.

The Participants’ Perceptions Of Acceptable Grades In College

The participants were asked what grades they would be “happy with” once they were in college. They seemed to adjust their expectations of their own performance slightly when compared with how they had actually performed in high school. This suggests that while the students were confident in their abilities, they would be happy with their performance even if it did not yield the grades they had earned in high school. The participants adjusted their expectations of their own college performance in anticipation that college would be more challenging than high school. It also suggests that the participants might place less value of earning higher grades than they had in high school. Since many of the participants were motivated by grades in high school, this raises some questions about what would motivate them in college if it wasn’t grades.

Table 4

Grades Participants Would Be Satisfied Receiving in College

Grades	Percentage of participants
Alls As	8%
Mostly As	23%
Mostly Bs	73%
Mostly 6s	6%

As they prepared to leave high school, the cohort of participants reported they were confident in their reading and writing abilities, they had good work habits, excellent habits of mind, and planned to draw upon what they had learned in high school in college. While self-reports can be self-inflated, the study conducted by researchers for the CCC grant found that of the high schools they studied, the Mercy students' perceptions of themselves as writers most closely matched the Mercy faculty's perceptions of the students as writers.

As discussed in Chapter One, calls for educational reform focus on increasing curricular rigor and holding students to higher standards. In this sense, when reformers describe their ideal school -- one where students take challenging courses and where teachers have high expectations -- they could very well be describing Mercy High School. While Mercy is not the most affluent high school in a part of the country teeming with affluent high schools, most (but not all) Mercy students come from families in which one or both parents graduated from college. Most students' families speak English at home, even if English is not the students' parents' native

language. Some might wonder about the utility of conducting a study of transfer on such ideal students. Why study students from a college preparatory high school when the assumption is that they will have no problems transitioning to college? The answer is simple: if these confident and motivated participants had challenges with their transition, then how much more would less confident or less motivated students struggle? If there was a wealth of knowledge transfer, to what extent did the school's expectations and rigor contribute to that? If there was a lack of knowledge transfer, then what other factors might be affecting that?

The General Transition To College

For the participants, their adjustment to college life and to their new identities as college students contained everything a major life transition might include: excitement, anticipation, loneliness, freedom, and more. As one participant eloquently wrote

> College kind of reminds me of Echo Lake in the middle of summer. The water is always cold and the trek to get to the lake is always tiring but that never stops me from cannon balling off the boulder by the water. And when I let myself free fall into the water, my body would go in shock as I squirm for air in the glacier water. But after treading water for a while, my body gets use to it. (Bella)

Social Transition

Eight participants commented on the "weirdness" of being in college. For them, part of the strange feeling had to do with how alone they felt. They had gone from a context in which everyone and everything was familiar to one in which nothing was. They felt alone and without friends. For one participant, the transition from a welcoming high school community to a highly competitive collegiate community was a challenge.

> First off, it seems like no one tells you this when you first go to school and I really wish someone would. Well really there are many things. The first is that I wish people would have told me that college feels extremely weird. You feel weird and out of sorts at school, and then when you come home, home doesn't feel right either… And then you didn't really have friends. You eat by yourself and then you feel awkward so you eat outside so nobody knew you were eating by yourself. Or you were eating while like walking to class. It's just not a good time. (Maria)

For some participants, particularly those at large public universities, the transition from being in a high school of 500 to a classroom of 700 was overwhelming.

> The classes are pretty large. At the minimum, class sizes are about 25-30 and at the maximum, a little over 700. It's more of a transition to be used to the actual class sizes rather than the workload. (Emilie)

Participants reported that they were used to the personal attention they had received from their high school teachers and that college was impersonal by comparison.

- They're just really… Professors are just different in college. They're so impersonal. For Mercy, you could just go talk to a teacher during your lunch break. And in college, if you don't make time to go see your teacher, then they don't care. You're just another number. (Ashley)
- At Mercy, teachers/staff would ask you how you're doing or how that test in math went. Here, it's only your roommates or floor mates that care enough to remember. (Bella)

- It is definitely a transition from Mercy where the teachers are all very good at their job where they try to reach out to you when they see you struggling. (Kiera)

A number of participants reported enjoying the freedom they had as college students:

> The academic transition has been more demanding in the sense that I've never taken a midterm before nor been so conscientious of how I manage my time. I now realize the truth behind the statement, "in college you are free to fail." In order to perform well in my studies, I need to take charge of my education and apply myself. There is no mollycoddling or "homework table" if you decide to not do your work or attend class. The sense of freedom that college affords students is balanced with the new responsibilities inherited as well. (Valerie)

However, freedom was a mixed blessing for several participants, particularly as it pertained to their academic transition. This will be further explored in a later section about time-management.

Academic Transition

Perhaps surprisingly, seven participants reported being disappointed in their college experience because it closely resembled high school. They reported being surprised that college was filled with the same types of assignments they had received in high school and their classes were not as challenging as they had expected. Throughout their high school careers, they had been told frequently about "when they got to college…" and more often than not, what followed that phrase was a description of college that was somewhat hyperbolic.

- My first impressions of classes was [sic] that they weren't that different from high school after all. Everyone told me that college classes were structured so differently, but here at [College] they are pretty much the same. Probably this is

because I'm going to a very small school (only like 1800 students). … it just feels like a cross between high school and camp. (Katie)

- I am finding it hard to focus on schoolwork because the work is just like high school. I thought college was supposed to be different; not filled with daily assignments. (Sarah)
- I will admit that when I first began attending the school, I was anything, but impressed. The classes seem easier than my high school classes, and none of the students seemed to care about completing their assignments. I do not feel like I am really getting the college experience I need, and I'm certain I will struggle for quite some time to adjust when I transfer. (Priya)

These participants were unpleasantly surprised to find their college classes felt similar, were structured similarly, or were not as challenging as their high school classes. Their perception that their college courses were similarly structured to their high school courses was supported by their perception that the amount of work they had in college was equal or less than what they had had in high school. "I think it's [the amount of work] a lot less but they expect a lot more. I think that is the biggest difference" (Lupita).

While they felt like the workload was similar to high school, the participants reported that the pace of college was more accelerated than high school.

- As of now, I am not necessarily getting assigned more work then I was being assigned in high school, but in class, we definitely go through material more quickly. The only thing that has been a bit tricky to adjust to though is how fast paced the classes are. (Ellen)

- Compared to high school, research papers that are assigned…often you will only be given a week to do it, whereas in high school an essay was assigned a month before it was due. (Jane)

For the participants, it wasn't that the amount of work was more but that the pace was much faster. This led to many of the participants' most serious challenge: being self-regulated enough to prioritize their time. Due to the amount of freedom they had and the pace of their college courses, a number of participants noted how critical it would be for them to learn how to manage their time. Many of them reported having trouble with this.

- I'm still figuring out exactly what's expected of me and how to manage my time best. (Ashton)
- I am overwhelmed because I am having trouble managing my time (Sarah)
- I think the biggest problem when it comes to transferring over to college is just time management. (Talulah)
- There is a lot more work in college than in high school but I feel like I have a lot more time to get it done. It just takes discipline. In fact, there are a lot of times when I don't go to lecture because I am too lazy (and I know that's bad!). I'm trying to make myself go more, but sometimes I feel the lectures are kind of useless...Also, I have found it kind of hard to do homework over the weekend because I have been going out a lot. I am in a sorority which takes up A LOT of social time on my weekends. I think once I can figure out the perfect balance between academics and my social life my grades will go up. (Alexa)

Participants also discussed that they were accustomed to their teachers doing more to help them manage their workload. At Mercy, the teachers are required to post major tests and assignments on a school wide calendar, and if a student has more than two tests or major

assignments due on a given day, the teacher has to reschedule their own test or assignment's due date. This helps the students from being overloaded, but it also creates a problem in that students aren't prepared to have multiple tests or assignments due on the same day. Teachers at Mercy are also required to post all homework assignments online, to write them on the board, and to spend five minutes in class discussing them.

- On the first day when I got my syllabus's in my classes I was very overwhelmed with all of the stuff that was due and teachers no longer talk to see if test or papers are on the same day, but it all worked itself out and it's just time management. (Veronica)
- I feel fairly similar to a high school student, except you have to be really "on" your work and not procrastinate because the teachers give you a few reminders about when major projects are due, but smaller homework assignments are totally up to you to keep track on. (Kennedy)

The participants were accustomed to being informed and reminded about what was due on a daily basis. That they now had to do this for themselves was a challenge.

The participants' perceptions of their social and general academic transitions reveal that the social transition was initially more challenging than the academic one. They generally perceived their college classes to be as challenging, or less challenging, than they had expected. The participants were perhaps surprised at the level of loneliness they encountered during their first months of college. This either influenced or was compounded by their perception that their college professors were indifferent as compared to their more personal high school teachers.

Like millions of other first year college students, the participants reported enjoying their hard earned freedom; like other college students, these participants were forced to make

decisions about how to structure and prioritize their time on their own without guidance or enforcement from parents or teachers. Some of these threads -- their perceptions of professors and choices regarding use of time -- played a role in their perceptions of the transition from high school to college writing.

The Participants' Perceptions Of Writing in First-Year Writing

Within courses that were designated as writing or composition courses, participants reported writing essays that suggested their professors were asking them to analyze literature, analyze rhetoric, analyze historical sources, films, and subcultures, conduct research, or argue. In some of their writing courses, the participants primarily wrote literary analysis.

- Since the course mainly focuses upon the critical interpretation of poetry, all of my essay assignments have been about this subject. Past essay topics include: analyzing a Shakespearean sonnet of our choice, writing about a recurrent image or theme in John Keats' Odes, and reviewing Wordsworth's voice in his poems. (Valerie)
- We just basically read a bunch of books and then wrote reports on them. (Kayla).

In another writing course, the participant primarily analyzed texts rhetorically.

- They gave you like, say a letter. And then, write your essay … Like one of them was like… I think it was George W. Bush's letter or something, whatever…And you had to analyze if it was effective, if it was not, like stuff like that. (Stephanie)

Other first year writing courses seemed to reflect other disciplines. One participant's instructor asked her to analyze historical texts. In the second semester of that course, the participant then was asked to write an analysis of films. Another participant was asked to analyze sub-cultures.

- She wanted us to determine or define what is history? If somebody wrote a novel, is it still historical or, because it's not somebody real, does it not count? And we did movies the second semester. And we had to analyze them. (Maria)
- One of the first essays we wrote this year had to be about a sub-culture that we felt we were a part of. We had to not only describe the culture and give our affiliation with it, but we also had to say how the sub-culture went against/contradicted the mainstream culture.

Another participant's writing course asked her primarily to do research on society.

- It was research. One of my favorite ones was… Your topic was to find out… Or agree or disagree if racism still exists today. So you would have to find different events to back it up. You couldn't just pick one event and analyze the whole thing. (Kayla)

In a developmental writing course, the participant was given a hypothetical situation, "A child, at the age of 12 wants a Facebook. What would you do?" She was asked to respond to it with an argument. In the same course, the participant was also asked to write a review of a restaurant.

These findings affirm what the field of composition already knows, and that is that the subject of a first year writing course, or what the students are reading and writing about, varies from course to course, institution to institution. What students in first year composition write about is dependent on unpredictable variables like the instructor, the philosophy of the institution's writing program (if there is one), required textbooks, and so on.

Some might look at the types of writing participants were asked to do in first year writing and note that nearly all of the professors asked participants to analyze something. The something to be analyzed was what changed from course to course. This might lead some to argue that first

year writing is quite similar across different institutions and that as long as participants know how to analyze a text, they should be able to be successful. While the process of analyzing something might seem to be abstract enough to be transferable (for example, students might learn to think of analyzing as asking and answering specific types of questions or breaking a concept down into smaller parts), most students would approach these assignments in context-specific ways. Further, it is unlikely that each of the professors who required students to analyze a text would agree that there was a model, pattern, or finished product they with which they would all be happy. In fact, when professors who teach the same writing course, for example, are asked to evaluate model student essays, they find it very difficult to come to agreement. This is to say that one professor's expectations or an analysis paper are typically different from that of another's. So, while the majority of the first year writing assignments requires analysis, there is nothing to suggest that the actual writing a participant in the literary analysis course had to do would look anything like the writing the participant in the film analysis course had to do. Moreover, there is nothing to suggest that the two instructors for these courses would share the same criteria for evaluating the students' writing.

The Participants' Perceptions Of Writing In General Education Courses

For their general education courses, the participants named a wide range of different genres in which they were asked to write, including exam essays, research papers, essays, reports, reflection papers, blogs, outlines, posts on an online discussion board, speeches, a homework worksheet, and a miniature literature review. Appendix D lists the courses students reported taking, and their corresponding descriptions of the writing done for each course, broken down by genres (as the student named them) and their descriptions of the assignment.

As might be expected, what the participants were asked to do inside each genre was wide-ranging. When the participants described what they had to do for their essays, their responses suggested that their professors were asking them to do any one of four things: to connect coursework to their lives; to analyze; to argue; to explore. Participants described writing essays that asked them to connect their coursework to their own lives, and essays that asked them to analyze advertising, film, or themes in literature. The types of research participants were asked to do for research papers varied. In two of the research papers described, the professors gave the students the source material, either from specific websites or a specific book. In other research papers, the participants had to interview someone else and integrate the information they gleaned from the interviews with information they gleaned from secondary sources.

The variety of writing the participants reported being asked to do during their first year of college paints a complicated picture. One on hand, participants were writing across the curriculum. From research they had to write up for biology to restaurants they had to review for English composition, participants were demonstrating their learning through their writing. For those who have worked to increase the amount of writing students do in courses outside English, the news is good. However, just as those inside English have struggled with preparing students for writing across the curriculum, so, too, do high school teachers who face the same challenges. Depending on the college and course, a recent high school graduate could find themselves writing any of the possibilities described in Appendix D. Just as some in the university criticize composition courses for failing to prepare students to write in the disciplines, so do many criticize high school teachers for failing to prepare students to write for college. For near-transfer to occur, the high school assignment would have to look almost exactly like the college

assignment; this is impossible, not only because of the range of genres, but more because of the variations inside the genres.

The Participants Perceptions Of Their College Writing Teachers

Participants did not see the variety of writing they might be asked to do during their freshman year as an introduction to writing in different academic fields. Many interpreted the range of writing assignments as symptomatic of their professors' personal preferences, and they indicated they had difficulty predicting these preferences.

- The teachers just expect… I don't… They just expect you to know what they're thinking. (Ashley)
- But it's just like, at [University] the teachers like… It's just like their preferences, you know what I mean? Like how they wanted it, like what was… Like what sounded good to them, you know? (Kayla)
- And so I feel like it's more like a guessing game. And I feel like professors think they're like the center of the world. Whether or not they're nice or not, they kind of assume that when you're in their class, this is all you have going on, it's all you're going to talk about. You know, I feel like they are so narrowly-focused that they assume either you learned everything they want you to in high school or you don't know anything. I feel like they just need to relax a little bit and be more willing to explain what they're looking for. (Maria)

Many of the participants felt that they had known what their high school teachers had expected from their writing, and as a result, they had been able to produce writing that would meet their teachers' expectations. Essentially, they were used to knowing or being told what exactly was expected of them, and so they could respond in ways that enabled them to achieve their goals

(e.g., a good grade). Table 5 below includes several participants' descriptions of how they perceived of the differences between their high school teachers' expectations and their college professors' expectations.

Table 5

Participants' Perceptions of Differences Between Their High School Teachers' Expectations and Their College Professors' Expectations

Perceptions of high school teachers	Perceptions of college teachers
The problem with this is that in high school you learned what each teacher wanted from your writing. You learned how exactly they liked their essays and papers to be formed and…	…here it is very different. Each teacher likes to see certain things, especially stressing perfect MLA format for each turned in paper. But mostly, they like to see specific things that in general most students aren't familiar with. One example of this confusion can be seen in my history class. For our midterm we had an essay. In previous history classes they cared more about the content that was being written rather than the structure. Of course the thesis was a must but other than that freedom was given. Here she was blown away by the number of essays submitted with solely information. She wondered if we were ever told how to structure our history papers. For example, not writing half the essay on the first part of the question and then the second half on the other portion, as if two separate entities. In some ways this has been difficult because you

	take what you know only to find that this teacher does not want that. (Fraya)
I feel like, in high school, it was more, "I expect you to write this amount of paragraphs. I expect you to touch on these amount of topics or this topic specifically.	My English teacher, there was barely a topic to write on. (Maria)
Like that's what's so hard. You have to adjust to each teacher's style of writing when I'm so used to like… I feel like at Mercy, they teach you one way of writing and I got so used to it. And like, it was good. Like, it got me into college and stuff like that.	But then in college, they like… Each teacher is looking for something different. (Kayla)
That you really have to write… Like, I know like, here [in high school], you write the way you want to write. Like, you write… You write with the question and you write the way you are expected to write.	In college, if you don't write they want you to write then they totally think you're not getting the class. (Ashley)
I knew what the teacher wanted, how she wanted it, and what she looked for.	To me it seems that college writing is much more independent. It also feels like the professors almost want you to read their minds. (Kennedy)

The participants felt that their college professors were not explicit, especially as compared to their high school teachers. All interpreted this lack of explicitness as a deficiency on the part of their professors.

Two participants noted that when their professors were being clear and explicit, the participants were more able to adapt what they had learned about writing in high school to these new writing contexts.

- Most of the time, my professors are pretty specific in what they're looking for in my writing so it is easy to think back and apply the skills I learned in high school. (Jo)
- Having that list of what they do want. It allowed me to sort of visualize how I wanted my essay to look… What my main points were. And from there, I'd go and do the traditional outline that we'd been taught here. You do the outline and then formulate your paragraph. (Kiera)

Overall, the participants' descriptions of their college writing assignments and their general frustration at the perceived lack of clear expectations suggest that there were obstacles to their transfer of knowledge from high school writing to college writing. However, the problem wasn't that the transfer tasks themselves were dissimilar. Participants had enough content knowledge of writing to know that writing in both high school and college would necessitate structural elements like introductions, paragraphs, and supporting evidence; this knowledge will be discussed further in the following section. The problem was that the participants needed the specifics of the target task more clearly defined. According to activity theorists, for successful transfer to happen, the participants need to be able to perceive similarities between high school and college writing. Without a sense of what they were supposed to produce, it would be hard

for them to fully utilize what they had learned previously. Therefore, it was not that the participants learned the wrong content in high school, as some might argue, but that they needed their college professors to be more explicit so they could successfully transfer what they had learned. This is more evident in the discussions of the case study participants.

Knowledge Transfer Between High School and College

In spite of the fact the participants reported being frustrated with their professors' vague expectations, the participants did report being able to transfer many of the writing skills and strategies they had learned in high school to college. Before describing what the participants were able to use, it is important that I first describe how their high school had taught writing. In order to understand what they were able to transfer, it is essential to understand what they had previously learned.

The History of Writing Curriculum At Mercy And Its Implications For The Participants

In the late 90's, motivated by concerns that expectations of student writing varied too much from teacher to teacher, Mercy faculty agreed to use a common format when they asked students to write essays. They also agreed to use the same terminology so that students would understand what their teachers were asking for regardless of the class or subject. The format that agreed upon was the Schaffer method.

While an essay written following the Schaffer method could yield more than five-paragraphs, what remains constant is the structure of those paragraphs. At Mercy, a paragraph written following the Schaffer method would include:

- One topic sentence
- One concrete detail (called a CD)

- Two sentences of commentary (called CMs)
- Another concrete detail
- Another two sentences of commentary
- Another concrete detail
- Another two sentences of commentary
- One concluding sentence

While the Schaffer model lends itself to any number of paragraphs, it is often taught as a five-paragraph essay. The introduction to the essay and the conclusion of the essay follow the hourglass shape. The introduction is like an inverted triangle, in which the opening sentences are broad and the final sentence is the narrow thesis. The thesis names the topic and lists the main points to be discussed in the essay. The conclusion is a right side up triangle, in which the opening sentence is a restatement of the thesis, the next few sentences are summaries of each main point, and the final sentences connect back to the broad opening sentences of the first paragraph.

When the class of 2009 were seniors, some Mercy teachers shifted away from teaching the Schaffer model, with its prescribed number of sentences, and away from using the Schaffer terminology. Instead, students were taught to create "quote burgers" whenever they needed to integrate a quote, or fact, or group of related facts into their essay. In writing a quote burger, the students had to answer three questions: what is it, what does it mean, and why does it matter. The top of the burger and the meat of the burger both answered the question "what is it that I am analyzing here." In literary analysis, they had to not only provide the meat, or the quote from the text, but introduce to quote by providing context, i.e., what was happening in the text before that the reader would need to know in order to understand the quote. In social studies, the context

was whatever relevant historical information the reader would need to know in order to understand the facts being analyzed. So, the top bun of the quote burger was context, and the meat of the burger was whatever was being cited. In order to write the bottom bun, they students had to explain what whatever they were analyzing meant literally, and then why it mattered, which was sometimes also phrased as "how does it help me prove my argument." While the quote burger format was adapted from the Schaffer method (they both have the same structure of something concrete that is being analyzed which is followed by discussion of what is being analyzed), it differs from the Schaffer method in that there can be any number of sentences for any part of the burger, and that students are less focused on the formula and more focused on the function of each piece of the burger. In some ways, the burger provides a heuristic for thinking about how to analyze anything; as students are writing, they are no longer thinking that they need one CD and two CMS, but that they need to explain what something is, what it means, and why it matters.

Since the quote burger was relatively new when the participants were seniors, many of them would have learned to write essays using the Schaffer model, particularly in their English classes as the main senior level English teacher used it frequently. The participants would have been exposed to the burger in their social studies courses or in the writing center. So, when the participants discussed aspects of organization, the terminology they used hinted at which model they had internalized. Participants who mentioned CDs, CMs, concrete details, or commentary were likely utilizing the Schaffer model; participants who mentioned burgers, context, quotes, or analysis were likely utilizing the burger model.

Content Knowledge The Participants' Reported Transferring from High School to College

The participants reported being able to use a range of content knowledge (.i.e., knowledge about what general features academic essays should have) that they had learned in high school when writing for their college classes. Without looking at examples of their college writing, it is hard to prove that they successfully transferred this knowledge from high school to college. However, the fact that they are reporting that they were able to utilize this knowledge in college suggests that they at least perceived the skills as transferable.

Participants report transferring knowledge of essay components. The participants reported being able to transfer their content knowledge of components of essays, including introductions, thesis statements, evidence to support arguments, and citations.

Two participants reported using the inverted triangle introductions they had learned in high school.

- Definitely introductions and conclusions…I would just be blown away when [her classmates] didn't know how to do the triangle thing we'd always done. (Stephanie)
- First you do intro then you do something and something and then Conclusion. And so…So I know for Psych, that kind of helped me with that. (Talulah)

Two participants specifically mentioned they had learned to write strong thesis statements at Mercy, while one reported that her professor preferred more general thesis sentences. However, that participant didn't find it difficult to revise her thesis once she knew what the professor wanted.

- In my philosophy class, a graduate student spent a class talking about how to write a thesis after our first essay was due, and I was pretty much thinking, "I

know what he's talking about because I learned it!" So, I know for a fact that Mercy taught me how to write an EXCELLENT thesis! (Emilie)

- I think one of the struggles, though, for me in that class was the thesis part…. Because I was used to this kind of thesis where you list the three main things or something where hers it's like… It's just the main idea. And so I had to get used to that. But I mean, it's pretty easy to adjust but it was just very different for me. (Maria)

Three participants reported being able to use what they had learned about supporting arguments with specific details.

- Also, there was another class about supporting evidence of whatever a person says with CDs, now called citations--in her class anyway. (Kayla)
- Specific things I have learned about writing at Mercy that have been useful… how to write with supporting details to successfully analyze the topic. (Lupita)
- We were also taught to structure the essay through making "quote burgers". This really helped because we learned how to support our claims. As our writing got more complex and diverse I was able to take that same idea of having ideas followed by supports in writing other types of essays. (Sara)

Sara's response is especially revealing because it shows that she was able to take the quote burger formula and extrapolate from that how to convey more complex ideas in a diversity of contest.

Participants were also able to use commentary or analysis to explain how their details connected to their main argument or thesis.

- The commentary was another one. That's what you always had to do with your commentaries, connect your point to the thesis…my friend would go off on random tangents about some point and I feel like, "I don't understand what you're doing." (Stephanie)
- I actually felt very comfortable with the rest of the essays, though, whereas a lot of the kids in my class didn't. Like they didn't know how to do like the commentary part, really. (Ashton)

Participants knew how to embed quotes in their writing because they had learned that in high school.

- Another thing that really helped at Mercy was knowing how to embed quotes in your essay effectively, which really helped in my writing class. (Jo)
- I knew how to use quotes from here. You can never write an essay without quotes. (Maria)

That participants reported learning to embed quotes or other forms of evidence to support their arguments is notable since a frequent complaint about first year college students is that they do not know to use evidence or how to integrate it into their writing.

On a related note, the participants also reported learning how to cite their sources in high school, which they used in college.

- The APA that I learned here does help with just works cited, bibliography…So citing within my paper… When it came… That was just in all of my classes. (Talulah)
- One thing that I learned from Mercy that has helped me with my college writing is how to cite sources. although so far in college I have only had to cite references

> in MLA format (as opposed to APA format which was how we were taught at Mercy), the fact that I am so familiar with referencing (bibliographies and parenthetical citations) has helped me a lot it college. (Ellen)

The ability to cite sources is another skill that first-year college students are often perceived to lack. The study participants observed that their peers often did not know how to cite sources.

Participants report transferring knowledge of essay structure. The participants felt that high school had taught them essay structure that they could adapt for college.

- Definitely, the structure of an essay, not like the 5-paragraph, though. (Lupita)
- What I've carried over from my high school writing instruction to my college courses is the structure of composing a five-paragraph essay. (Valerie)
- Specific things I have learned about writing at Mercy that have been useful is how to effectively organize my paper. (Jo)
- A lot of writing classes at [University] …follow the structure that Mercy has told us to do. (Min Ji)
- Mercy definitely focused on the basics. And you do need that. Like without the basics, you wouldn't be able to work on formulating these, you know, 12-15 page papers. You need to understand how your paragraphs should be formed. You need to understand how they should interconnect and how you need to have a focus. You need to know where you're going. You need a destination. (Kiera)
- I think that the most helpful thing I learned about writing at Mercy is how to structure an essay. That has helped me sooo [Sic] much in all of the writing I have done here. (Sara)

The participants were able to adapt the structure they had learned to use in high school to

their college courses. Some might note that the participants were taught to write in high school in a fairly formulaic way; some might even say the students were taught to write the five-paragraph essay. Yet, they reported being able to use what they had learned in college. It is possible that what they were asked to write in college resembled the format they had learned in high school. If that were true, it would suggest that there may be many aspects of the Schaffer method, or modified Schaffer method, that are adaptable; alternately, it would suggest that some college writing assignments resemble a Schaffer five-paragraph essay, though perhaps with more paragraphs.

In Table 6 below, seven participants mentioned the five-paragraph essay explicitly. While all but two of the participants were explicitly told not to use the five-paragraph essay structure, three reported using it with great success. As Ashley noted, her professor told her not to write a five-paragraph essay and then gave a handout which essentially described the components of a five-paragraph essay. This suggests that the participants received mixed messages regarding the five-paragraph essay.

Table 6

Participant's Report Mixed Messages Regarding Five-Paragraph Essay

Told Not Use The Five-Paragraph Essay	Successfully Used The Five-Paragraph Essay
One of my teachers said, you know, "You don't have to follow this guideline to write a paper." (Talulah)	What I've carried over from my high school writing instruction to my college courses is the structure of composing a five-paragraph essay. (Valerie)
My Rhet teacher said don't do that. Like it was just very like, "Don't."(Stephanie)	But the 5-paragraph essay, I used more than once. And got perfect scores every time. They said, "Oh, you don't need an intro. You don't need a conclusion. Transitions don't need to be precise." But if you do it, they reward you for it. They say you don't need it but you are rewarded for it. (Kiera)
One thing that Mercy drills into your head all four years is writing structure and the five-paragraph essay... my teachers get mad when we use the standard five-paragraph essay. (Alexa)	My 114 teacher said that 5-paragraph essays are… Not stupid but not used because it doesn't give you enough writing. I thought I had a paper. It just pretty much said how to structure your essay without using five-paragraph essay technique. And it pretty much is the basics of a 5-paragraph essay. It has intro, body, and a conclusion but it has more analysis into it. (Ashley)

I feel that in high school, a lot of our writing assignments were very structured (with thesis statements, CDs, CMs, etc...). In my English class this year though, the basic essay structure is a lot different. In fact, my teacher encourages us not to write in the traditional five-paragraph essay format. (Ellen)

Don't even think about five-paragraphs and they're like…"You will not even get grades." "I'll just throw it out the window. You're not getting them back."

The participants' reports of receiving mixed messages regarding the utility of the five-essay is intriguing. Ashley's response, which is discussed in more detail in the case studies section, suggests that there may be more that is transferable from the five-paragraph essay structure than many realize. The fact that some reported being able to use it successfully while others were told not to use it (yet not told what else to use) suggests there may be knee-jerk reaction to the five-paragraph essay, warranted or not.

Participants report transferring knowledge of different genres. Participants pointed to the range of writing they had done in high school to explain why they felt prepared for college.

- Doing research papers, writing different types of essays (argumentative, analysis, etc.), and in class essays for tests prepared me for the different types of writing I have had to do in college. (Jo)

- But just the fact that I had written so much and what I did write while I was here ranged from History all the way to English. I think I wrote a paper once for math…So just the broad range of what I had to write and the different things that they have us write about, the different ways to write a paper, I think it definitely helped. (Talulah)

In addition to learning from the writing they had done in English and social studies courses, many participants reported that the reflection writing they had learned in their religion courses prepared them for writing reflections in college.

- I find writing my paper for history class very easy especially when I compare it to the writing Mercy assigned us. It is very similar to the reflection papers Mr. [Teacher] would assign us in religion, but we just have to expand on the topic in more detail. (Kayla)
- And something else that ended up helping me in my writing is how we did reflection papers for religion class. (Lupita)
- In another one of my classes, modern music appreciation, we have written three research/reflection papers which I have done fairly well on because they resemble papers I had to write in Mercy. (Sara)

Several participants reported that they had not had the opportunity to write an argumentative paper like they were accustomed to in high school.

> What I have not been able to do is to write an argumentative paper containing a proper thesis and resources to back it up. This was a very big focus in a lot of my classes at Mercy such as in English and history. However, my classes of right now do not assign papers of this kind. (Lupita)

This is interesting because one of the common complaints about the writing skills of college freshman is that they do not know how to write an argument and back it up with evidence.

Participants report negative transfer. In some instances, the participants learned that what they had done in high school was not what their college professors wanted. As the Table 7 below reveals, most of the feedback they received pertained to local issues like pronoun use, sentence length, and word choice.

Table 7

What They Learned In High School But Were Told Not To Do In College

Learned in high school	Told not to do in college
In high school, writers were not allowed to use nouns such as, we, they, us, and I, etc.	In college I had to have a meeting with my teacher to understand the new writing rules (or lack of) that my teacher enforced. (Sara)
So in [Teacher] class, she would just be like, "Write as though the person who's reading it has never read the book." Right? That's how we were taught to write?	But then in college, I wrote my 1st paper like that and then I got a C. And I was like, "Why did I get a C?" So I went to office hours and I was like, "What did I do wrong?" And she was like, "You were perfectly fine with the grammar, blablabla… All that was fine. But you spent too much of the paper summarizing the book." And then she was like, "I read the book so you don't need to tell me about the book." And that's like the only difference. (Kayla)
I don't use magnanimous and those big words that are learned in your second year here. (Ashley)	Oh, and another thing is using big words does not get you anywhere because if you don't understand what they are and you don't explain what those words are, your teacher will

	automatically think you're plagiarizing. (Ashley)
Yeah, here [at Mercy] they expect you to use fancy and long sentences and with a very thought-out process. (Ashley)	In college, they want you to write medium-sized sentences, not like… "And this, and he went to the park…" And stuff like… They don't want that like, little tiny sentence. But they want like, long enough sentences where it gets an idea but not so long that it goes on for like too long. (Ashley)
I guess I like writing really long sentences. But they're not run-ons. I'm positive they're not run-on sentences. But they're just a lot… They're like really long sentences separated by like, semi-colons and commas. But they're just like, 1 thought per sentence like this thought, this thought. But then here, where it's like, oh, transition words, transition sentences...	But they're just like, "No, just tell me what happens. I don't really care for like fancy transitions." And I'm like, "But then my paper just sounds really robotic." And they're like, "But just do it." I was like, "Okay. Sure." (Kayla)
Title pages	The only thing that I have found different is that our professors do not want title pages like almost all the teachers at Mercy wanted, and they also like the date written international style. (Veronica)
We do APA here.	Thwy wanted MLA. (Ashley)

The participants reported being able to transfer content knowledge about writing that they had learned in high school. The participants especially were able to transfer their knowledge of essay structure, including components like introductions, thesis statements, evidence, and citations. Even though some of the participants received mixed messages about the usefulness of the five-paragraph essay structure, the participants were able to adapt their knowledge of structure that they had generally learned through the formulaic Schaffer method to their college writing assignments. Several participants noted differences between what they had been taught to write in high school and what their professors had asked them to do in their college writing, but most of those were related to local issues like citation style or sentence style.

Procedural Knowledge The Participants' Reported Transferring from High School to College

The participants were not only able to transfer content knowledge from high school, but they were also to transfer procedural knowledge (i.e., knowing what steps to take to successfully complete a task) which positively affected their written products. They were able to continue using writing processes like outlining, drafting, and revising. They also continued to seek out their professors' feedback during office hours, as well as their friends' feedback.

The participants adapted the lengthy research writing process they had learned in high school to college. They didn't complete every step, but did create outlines for prewriting.

- I think writing research papers was most helpful though I don't use all the steps (fact card making, etc.) we learned at Mercy because it isn't as efficient for me to do that. (Lupita)

- I literally still make my CD and CM outlines before I write my prompt essays. That process makes writing the essay so much easier because my thoughts and ideas are organize and easy to change or move around. (Kayla)
- Now I always pre-write. I give each separate idea a paragraph or two and plan how I will support/explain/expand on that particular idea.(Sara)
- It's the process. And you don't need the actual outline. It's just a good habit now. (Jo)

Several participants reported that they continued to draft their writing.

> One thing that has become more apparent to me is the importance of revising. I learned through the research paper how much revising really does help. Sometimes in high school you get away with a first draft, but I feel like now I can rarely get away with a first draft if I want a good grade. I am really glad I am in the habit of revising though! (Lupita)

While many of the participants reported that they were required to do peer review in class, they often found themselves asking their friends outside of class for feedback. They also found many of their peers would come to them for feedback.

- Yeah. I think it was just switching papers and then correcting it. But I mean, at college, I did it more. Like I would just every day. Not every day but we had a day in class, clearly, but before that. Even before, I would have two of my friends edit it. But I mean, they taught me here. (Stephanie)
- But overall, I found that people will come to Mercy grads, at least in my experience, for guidance in writing. (Talulah)

Ten participants reported utilizing their professors' office hours. This is a striking

finding since college professors often bemoan the fact students don't use office hours.

- In college I had to have a meeting with my teacher to understand the new writing rules (or lack of) that my teacher enforced. (Sarah)
- I try to take advantage of office hours as much as possible when I have an upcoming essay assignment. (Kayla)
- I didn't do that a lot the first semester but then second semester, I was just, like, be on office hours right now… second semester, I started getting like 85 and 86. I was like, "I'm not doing this. I need to get my 89 or 90." So then, I just kept going. I was so motivated that I needed it. (Stephanie)
- For Psychology, Research Methods, I did go to the teacher a couple of times and asked her about different parts of the paper that we had to write of the project that we had to turn in. (Talulah)
- But eventually, I started really going office hours. 'Cause office hours helped a lot because they don't… The teacher doesn't say like, "This is what I look for in papers." They way you find out about what your teacher wants in college, you really need to go to their office hours and you can be like, "Is this…" Like maybe start off with a small paragraph and like, "Is this paragraph sufficient?" And then even from that one paragraph, you can figure out what they're looking for. (Kayla)
- I went to her office hours every day after class. I was there Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. And she was really nice about it. I've gone to every single 1 of my teachers' office hours whether it's because I didn't understand something in class or I wanted to talk about the paper we were supposed to be writing or going with

it. I just feel like, at [University], they really want you to come to their office hours. They don't just say, "I have office hours at this time to meet the university requirements." They're there. Their doors' open. And they get so excited when you walk in. They're like, ready to talk to you...So I'm starting poetry which I like to think I know what I'm talking about but I have a sinking suspicion I don't. So I was a little hesitant about that. And then I remember, "Okay, office hours. You'll be fine." Like if you could read, I'm pretty sure you'd do it. (Maria)

- It felt like we had to learn how to drive on our own. And I hate that because I really need help. And so, like I went to her office...She'd wrote nothing on them, gave me no pass, and pretty much said that I wasn't doing what she was asking us to do. So I went to her office, I was going to try to get her to explain that. But she pretty much just said that I wasn't doing what she was asking me, just kept repeating that in different forms. (Ashley)
- In one of my classes, I wrote a rough draft and brought it to her to look over the main points and read a paragraph to make sure I was on the right track. (Kennedy)

The participants' knowledge of what steps they needed to take to achieve their goals is worth noting. More than that, though, is the fact the participants acted upon their knowledge. This reveals that many of the participants also had positive dispositions; they were motivated enough to do the things they knew they needed to do.

The Participants' Perceptions of College Reading

The participants in this study were more challenged by their college reading than they were by their college writing. Compared to high school, they felt like they had more reading to do in college, and that the reading had to be completed at a more rapid pace.

- There is a lot, and when I mean a lot, I mean A LOT of reading. I'm taking a lit class which involves finishing a book within three class periods and the professor/TAs don't care how you do it just to get it done. I checked and I read about 100 pages of just literature for three of my classes each day we meet which is about 900 pages a week. (Min Ji)
- Most of my work takes long, not because it's hard, because its time consuming- a lot of reading and a lot of writing but assigned in a manageable fashion. (Fraya)
- One thing that really concerns me is my English course because we read one novel per week and at the end of every week we have a quiz on what we read. (Alexa)

When the participants had trouble with reading, it was often a problem connected to their problems with time management. Some of the participants had been able to skate by in high school without reading or by relying on Spark Notes, so they found those strategies were no longer viable. These participants will be discussed further in the case studies section.

The Participants Report Transferring Some Reading Strategies

One reading strategy that several participants were able to transfer from high school to college was annotation. Annotation is taught at Mercy and many teachers require students to annotate for homework. Annotation is often taught as "talking back to the text" though some teachers have students annotate themes or imagery.

- Definitely one of them… I mean, I don't know if we went over this a lot here but I remember it was mentioned, definitely, where you read it and then you would read it right before class. Like again, you just constantly read so it sticks to your mind. That really helped. God, annotating definitely helped. (Stephanie)

- When I first came, Ms. [Teacher] asked us to highlight our books and I bought 2 books because it was hard for me to read where I had defaced it. I took it personally that I like… It killed me to write in a book. And so when Ms. [Teacher] was like, "You either annotate or you get out of my class."…So I'd write… Mostly it was sarcastic and angry things towards the authors and such…It really did teach me to talk back and sometimes, I'd literally write in the book, "What are they talking about?" But then later, I knew to come back and read that again and figure it out. (Maria)

The participants reported transferring their procedural knowledge, or the steps they needed to take in order to be successful in their college writing assignments. They had been required to follow a lengthy writing process for research papers in high school which at the time had frustrated many. However, many participants continued to use the research paper writing process to write their college assignments, including using outlines to organize their ideas. Participants also reported drafting and revising their work, as well as seeking feedback from their friends outside of class. Lastly, when the participants were unsure of what was expected or if they were anxious about their performance, they were in the habit of speaking to their teachers. They continued to do this in college.

In order for learners to act on their procedural knowledge, they have to have the efficacious belief that by completing the steps, they will achieve their goals. Learners who practice revision and drafting also demonstrate self-regulation because they are able to think reflectively about their writing and make necessary changes. Learners also have to be motivated to enact many of the procedural steps, since the steps require what could be perceived as extra work. In this sense, evidence that the participants carried their procedural knowledge with them

from high school to college is also evidence of positive dispositions. It is arguable that these dispositions are what enabled the participants to act upon their procedural knowledge.

Case Studies: Rebecca, Theodora, Kayla, Kiera, Talulah, and Ashley

When I met with the participants who agreed to be interviewed during the summer after their first year of college, all of the participants had successfully completed their first year of college. Many would conclude that the case study participants were able to seamlessly transition from high school to college, and from high school reading and writing to college reading and writing. While the participants had successful transitions, they were not always seamless. They reported struggling with the same challenges as the participants from the email surveys: they were overwhelmed by their reading, and some were challenged by writing in unfamiliar genres. However, their behaviors, many of which they had learned and practiced in high school, helped them bridge the gap between what they did know and what they needed to know. The case study participants revealed a nuanced picture of successful transfer between high school reading and writing and college reading and writing.

The case study participants perceived their transition from high school writing to college writing as mostly positive. They left high school feeling confident as writers, and they generally carried that confidence with them to college. When they did struggle with writing, it was nearly always because they had a hard time figuring out exactly what their professors wanted. In two cases, it was because they were writing in an unfamiliar genre. The difference between the higher performing participants – those who achieved As or Bs their first year of college -- and the lower performing ones – those who received Cs and Ds their first year of college -- boiled down to how they coped with the challenges.

The difference in coping strategies profoundly affected how the participants perceived their transition from high school reading to college reading. All of the participants felt that while the level of difficulty in their texts did not increase from high school to college, the volume and the pace of the reading did increase. All but one of the participants initially reported being overwhelmed by the reading load. However, the participants with the self-efficacy and motivation to self-regulate their behaviors were the ones who were able to successfully manage their reading. The participants who were less self-efficacious about their ability to self-regulate or less motivated to self-regulate had much less success with their reading.

Each of the case study participants reported being able to transfer what they had learned about writing in high school to writing in college. They agreed that their high school had provided them with a strong foundation in writing and that they were able to adapt what many would consider fairly formulaic writing structures to meet the varied expectations of their college audiences. The participants who were most successful with college writing not only transferred knowledge, but also transferred positive behaviors that they had used in high school.

Similarly, each of the participants transferred the approach to reading that they had used in high school: the ones who had used reading strategies like annotation continued to do so in college, with success. The ones who had faked their way through reading in high school attempted to transfer that behavior to college, with less success.

In the following pages, I will introduce you to six of the case study participants. The first three, Rebecca, Theodora, and Kayla, earned high grades during their first year of college and could be considered to have had successful transitions from high school to college. Each of these three was in Honors and AP courses in high school, though Kayla was not in AP English. The remaining three, Kiera, Talulah, and Ashley, earned significantly lower grades during their

first year of college and could be considered to have had less successful transitions from high school to college.

The case studies show the extent to which psycho-social dispositions can influence the academic outcomes of students who should, based on test-based and curriculum-based concepts of rigor, successfully transition to college. The case studies also show that the transfer puzzle involves many moving pieces, and successful transfer involved many of those pieces working together.

I chose these six participants from the group of nine participants interviewed for the case studies because they most accurately represented the entire cohort of participants. Additionally, the three interview participants who were not included in this section mirrored the first three interview participants who are discussed in this section. For the sake of space, I chose not to write about those participants since doing so would repeat findings discussed extensively elsewhere.

Rebecca

Rebecca was in an extremely high achieving group of students in high school. She took the most rigorous courses, was active in leadership, and did extensive amounts of community service. She was well known and well liked by everyone; everyone knew Rebecca because Rebecca was involved in everything. It was perhaps because of this that Rebecca initially struggled with the transition to college at a highly selective, very large public university. Rebecca echoed some of the sentiments of many of the other participants when she described how, “It just felt weird not knowing people and having to establish myself with them or, like, establish who I am. ‘Cause I’m used to people just, like, seeing me and then knowing my personality just from being around me.” The sense of uncertainty did affect Rebecca’s

perception of herself as a student. She reported initially feeling much less confident about herself as a writer in college than she had as a writer in high school.

Rebecca's Perceptions Of College Courses and College Writing

During the first quarter, Rebecca took Climate Change, Interracial Dynamics which was a writing intensive course required for those who had placed out of first semester composition, and History 1-A (Ancient Western Civilization, from Mesopotamia to Charlemagne), which was a GE but one that she could use to get one step closer to declaring her history major. In the history class, one of her assignments was to read *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and to write an essay that explored the questions, "What are the characteristics of an epic hero and how that relates to the culture of that time? Or how culture was forming in ancient civilization and why the epic hero had certain traits?" Rebecca shared that she couldn't remember what she had written about but she could remember her grade, an A. This was an interesting admission on Rebecca's part because it revealed that, at that point in her college career, Rebecca valued her grades more than her own intellectual engagement with the material. This would change before she finished her freshman year.

The TA for Rebecca's History 1-A course allowed her section of students to email her their rough drafts and she would "edit" them. As long as the students fixed everything she pointed out, she would give them an A. Rebecca was "really surprised" that her college TA would offer to do that. She explained, "I thought that was, like, not going to happen in college. Like, I thought they're really… They were going to say, 'You're on your own.'" Rebecca had a different experience with the TA for her writing intensive course. That TA said that students had to come to her office hours, and that she would only look at a thesis statement. "You couldn't ask her to rate your draft," Rebecca elaborated. "She wouldn't do it." Based on the interviews from

the other participants in this study, I would have assumed that Rebecca would have preferred the history TA because that TA was very explicit with her guidance, whereas the second TA was not. However, Rebecca felt that she became a better writer through her work for the second TA. Rebecca explained that the second TA didn't want students to just ask whether their draft was good or not, but insisted that they come with specific questions. Rebecca connected that with her training as a high school peer tutor in the writing center. As a tutor, she had experienced students coming in and asking, "Can you read this? Can you fix the grammar? Won't you, just, you know, kind of mark it up and tell me what's wrong with it?" Rebecca had been the one to guide those students into asking specific questions, and so she recognized what the TA was doing. "It bugged me in the beginning 'cause I felt like she wasn't being very clear. But I realized I was the one who… I wasn't really thinking about what I wrote. I was more concerned more with the grade." As a result of that class, Rebecca changed her approach and attitude towards writing.

> I was way more focused on "Am I answering the question?" Like, "Does my whole paper fit with my thesis? Does each paragraph relate to the question, relate to what I wrote in my argument?" I don't know, before it, it's like… Before, when I wrote… I feel like I just wrote and I didn't really pay attention to, like, organization and… You know what I mean? Just… I guess I kind of got lazy in the beginning with the History class where I wasn't outlining as much. And I was just kind of writing, and I realized I really do need to outline and see that process or where your argument goes and how you're structuring your paper. 'Cause I strayed away from that, initially."

Essentially, Rebecca switched from autopilot to manual. She was able to write well enough without having to think too much about whether or not the pieces of her paper were helping her achieve her purpose as an author; this class helped her realize that she wasn't engaged in thinking about her own writing. She realized she needed to be asking herself those rhetorical questions, and that she needed to think about her organizational choices rather than just letting the paper organize itself.

Rebecca elaborated that with her history writing, she only had a week to do the reading for the assignment and to write it. Like the other participants, Rebecca noted that in high school, everyone read the text before the essay was assigned, and that this was not the case in college. Rebecca explained, "It freaked me out because I was like, I don't know if I'll have time to read, you know, 50 pages of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, then outline and then write an essay." To save time, she skipped creating an outline, even though she had assiduously completed them before each major writing assignment in high school. Since Rebecca still earned an A, there wasn't a grade motivation to do anything differently. Yet, when she realized she wanted to be more deliberate in her writing, Rebecca returned to creating outlines. It took a TA who provided less guidance in order for Rebecca to take control of her own writing and writing process. It is also possible that Rachel's previous experience as a peer tutor in the high school's writing center allowed her to perceive her TA's hands off approach to feedback as beneficial.

Rebecca's Challenges With College Writing

About halfway through her first year, Rebecca posted on my Facebook wall about how "freaked out" she was because one of her TAs told her to start her essay with her thesis, and another had told her to write "I argue that" in her essays. When I brought this up in our

interview, Rebecca ruminated on the fact she felt more confident about her writing in high school than she did in college.

> I felt like I had the formula set. You know, I started with my quote and then I analyzed my quote transition into my… The topic and then get to my thesis. And then from there, it was just easy. I would just do my topic sentences, my commentary. And like, I just felt so comfortable with that. And like… So that's why I was more confident.

Rebecca had anxiety about not knowing what was expected. "Little things where TAs would say something that I never heard before, like, "Move your thesis to the beginning of your intro," would freak me out because I thought, "Was that what I'm supposed to do for everything or for every writing assignment?" Rebecca reported doing something that no other participant reported doing, and that was to ask the TA whether that was "customary" for all college writing or only for that specific assignment. The TA explained that since it was a shorter paper, the TA wanted Rebecca to get her main idea out immediately. It made sense to Rebecca, but she reported she wouldn't do it again unless a TA specifically said to do so.

However, Rebecca heard her TA's point about not losing the reader with a lengthy introduction. She explained that even though she hadn't received any negative feedback about starting her essay with a quote (a strategy many students use at Mercy), she stopped doing that. "I feel like it takes away… It gets too, like, convoluted in the beginning and then for the writing you really need to, like, hit them with the intro and just be to the point." Instead of trading one rule (put the thesis at the end) with another (put it at the beginning), Rebecca's decision to make her introductions less "convoluted" suggests that she was learning to evaluate her writing

through the point of view of the reader. She took feedback about the placement of a thesis, saw it in a rhetorical context, and made adjustments to her introductions.

Rebecca also was able to get past her initial reaction to writing "I argue that" in her sociology paper, and was able to use that in her other classes. "I kind of like it. I felt like I had to suppress it a lot in high school because it was just a huge no-no. But yeah, I kind of enjoy using that first person. I feel like it makes it stronger in some times. Sometimes it takes away from it if you're too much, like, "Oh, I think…" Rebecca learned that different rhetorical situations call for different stances.

Rebecca and an unfamiliar genre. Rebecca did have a "freakout" about one paper she had to write for her second quarter Unsolved Mysteries of Early Modern Europe course. As she described,

> The paper was to evaluate arguments given by Robert Finley who kind of attacked Natalie Davis' portrayal of *The Return of Martin Guerre*. And she responded to it in an essay in the same journal called *On The Lane*. And my job was to first evaluate whether or not I thought her original argument in the book was valid and then pick who… Whether Finley, like, was able to discredit anything she wrote and then whether or not she responded adequately to his attack.

None of Rebecca's writing assignments in high school had been about evaluating arguments, and certainly not about evaluating the credibility of historical fiction. When she "freaked out" over the argument evaluation, she emailed me and wrote,

> HELP ME. I really am struggling with this for some reason. I feel like I'm just summarizing their points rather than analyzing their arguments. What kinds of things should a person consider when "evaluating an argument."

I sent her a brief description of what an argument evaluation had to do, and then sent her the link and a password to *The Norton Field Guide to Writing* and referred her to the chapter on "Evaluating an Argument." From that, she was able to focus on analyzing whether Davis or Finley better established credibility, ultimately earning an A. In this instance, Rebecca benefitted from more explicit guidance, especially since this was an unfamiliar genre. It is notable that once she understood the purpose of an argument evaluation, and read about different ways authors make their arguments (e.g., by establishing credibility), she was able to adapt what she knew about essay writing (e.g., establishing her own argument, analyzing her evidence) to complete her assignment. It was also notable that her survival strategy, in this instance, was to reach out to me, her high school's writing center director. Since the course was a seminar, there wasn't a TA, and so it is possible that Rebecca might have felt uncomfortable contacting her professor because she didn't know how to evaluate an argument, a skill that presumably she should have already acquired. Regardless, this example shows that Rebecca was able to adapt once she was given some explicit guidance, and that she was motivated to use available resources when she needed help.

Rebecca's Survival Strategies

When I asked Rebecca what strategies she used when she was challenged by an assignment, she laughed and said one of her strategies was to email me. She also said that she talked with her peers and that she went to office hours "a lot." In her orientation, Rebecca's counselor advised her to go to the TA's office hours because the counselor assumed many

students would be less intimidated by going to their TA's office hours. Rebecca valued her conversations with the harder TA, the one she had for her writing class, explaining, "Even though she can be critical, like, really critical, like, it helps me in the long run." Rebecca hadn't used the university's writing center because it had been shut down several years prior. She heard about a peer tutoring center in the library, but at the time of our interview, had heard it was going to be cut because of the budget. Several months after our interview, Rebecca told me she had found out that was not the case and was in the process of being interviewed to be a peer writing tutor.

Knowledge Rebecca Reported Being Able to Transfer From High School to College

Rebecca reported that overall, she felt that she was more prepared for college writing than some of her college peers because,

> There's so many things that I have been able to use that a lot of people, you know, aren't familiar with like putting your quote… Giving your quote context, like, who said it instead of just dumping it in your paper, you know, and like…And that's something I do, like, obviously leading into it, the who said it and, like, the situation and then the commentary. And that's definitely, like… Your professors expect that.

Rebecca also said that she felt very comfortable with using APA, in general, and in-text citations, specifically. Her writing course also required every student to have *A Writer's Reference*, which Mercy had also required. The students were assigned specific chapters of *A Writer's Reference* to read during the quarter, and Rebecca was relieved to discover it was review for her. However, even though they were required to read about "different

disciplines…and, like, what's expected or preferred," Rebecca still struggled with the implications of that in her sociology and history courses.

When I asked Rebecca if there was anything that Mercy didn't teach that would have been helpful, she reflected on whether or not she would have wanted to learn to write in ways other than the "five-paragraph thing." On the one hand, she had found that that structure had been the most useful to her in college. On the other hand,

> I guess, like, it would be nice if there was… To explore different ways to write something… 'Cause I'm still really stuck in that five-paragraph thing. And I think it's been okay for now. I haven't done badly in any of our writing assignments, it's just… I think at a certain point, they're going to expect more than that.

Overall, Rebecca had a successful transition from high school writing to college writing, largely due to the fact she utilized resources available to her, like her TAs. She was already a strong writer in high school, if not somewhat limited by her lack of experience writing in multiple genres. Still, by seeking out and receiving guidance, Rebecca was able to take what she did know about writing and adapt it to new writing contexts.

Rebecca's Perceptions Of College Reading

Like her fellow participants, Rebecca felt that there was "a lot more reading" in college, "but it's not more difficult." Unlike several participants, Rebecca tried to keep up with the reading even when the professor told the class that as long as they came to lectures, they should be fine. Rebecca didn't believe that. She described his lectures as "surface," and that he would use terminology but not define it. "And if you zoned out for a couple minutes, you wouldn't have… You would've missed what he said." So, Rebecca dutifully read all 15 chapters of the science textbook over the course of ten weeks, even though in high school, "You barely finished

the whole textbook within a year." Like another high-achieving case study participant, Theodora, Rebecca admitted she had a hard time keeping up with the reading, so she would "cram" six chapters "into a weekend where I knew I didn't have a lot to do." It is interesting to note that Rebecca viewed her coping strategy -- saving her reading for when she had time -- as a failure to keep up, whereas several other participants were relatively nonchalant about doing the reading at all.

Another strategy Rebecca used to cope with reading was annotation. In high school, she explained, she had had more time to take "really diligent notes" on all her reading, and in college, she didn't have as much time to do that.

> My recent final for Interracial Dynamics was… We had two huge course readers, like, with 60 articles in them. And the final was they gave us eight passages, we had to identify five, and then talk about them, like, and their connection to the course. So to study for that, I had to go back through and read… I could… 'Cause obviously, I'm not going to read 60 articles again.

Rebecca was glad she had annotated because she studied for her final by reviewing her annotations. Overall, Rebecca was able to successfully transfer her knowledge of reading strategies that had worked for her in high school to college. She was also motivated to do reading that wasn't required, and she had the ability to self-regulate her approaches to managing the volume of reading.

Theodora

In high school, Theodora was less involved in student leadership than Rebecca, but more involved in arts and sports. When she applied to college, she thought she wanted to study marketing and business. Like the other participants, Theodora felt that social transition from

high school to college was more challenging than an academic one. "A way to kind of sum up our college experience is that it didn't really change so much… not so much, academically, but it was more of a social experiment." Unlike many of her classmates, Theodora chose to attend a college several states away, and during her first month, questioned that decision. Her friends from home and many of her friends in college were able to go home on the weekends, while she was stuck in her dorm room by herself. "My fall quarter, probably the first month, I was just sad and missed my family. I missed my parents a lot. I had a really hard time with it." The fact that Theodora chose the program she did helped alleviate some of her loneliness, but it also proved to be somewhat insulating.

Theodora was a unique participant in this study because she was invited to apply, and ultimately enroll, in her liberal arts college's honors program. For two years, students in the honors program take their interdisciplinary, humanities-based core courses together. In a given semester, they will be in class with the same cohort for three of their four classes; the fourth class is an elective which students take outside the program. The courses are led, seminar style, by professors from the Philosophy, History, English, Theology, and Art History departments. Built into the program are paper conferences, in which the students meet with a small group and their professor to "plan, read, critique, and improve each other's papers."

Theodora described herself as having a "love-hate relationship" with her program. Even though she felt that academically it was "amazing," it was still challenging because she initially questioned the relevance of the core approach. She wondered "Why am I reading this Middle English when I could be taking classes that are related to my major?" She also expressed experiencing some initial frustration because each of her professors was an expert in their subject area and had expectations rooted in their discipline. "Why am I dealing with these difficult

professors that have such a vision for what they want because they're so invested in their subject?" Socially, Theodora noted her peers in the program, were "so similar to me" that they drove each other crazy.

Theodora's Perceptions Of College Courses And College Writing

Outside the honors program, Theodora reported doing little writing. She took a math course, a business course, and an accounting course. In accounting, her professors did require students to write short answer essays exams because, "in the business world, you have to be able to write as well as be able to, you know, make a journal entry."

Within the honors program, Theodora did feel more confident in writing for her literature and history courses because they were similar to writing she had done in her high school honors and AP English courses. For her first literature paper, she wrote, "A research essay comparing Athena in *Odyssey* and Beatrice in *Divine Comedy*. And I loved that paper. Lit papers are something that I could do with Ms. [Teacher], and with Ms. [Teacher]. So those, I think, are a strong point for me." For the three quarters of history, students had to choose to write about a specific region in medieval times, and Theodora chose to study London. For her first and second quarters Theodora, "Wrote three basic papers about geography of the region, myths about the region, and then an important family or group of families at that time." For the third quarter, she had to write "an original work of scholarship" which was broken down into four pieces: a prospectus, an analysis of primary sources, a historiography, and a final paper. Theodora noted that this reminded her of her high school, "With the research paper, how they kind of guide you along." Though her history professor didn't provide explicit guidelines for writing the different pieces, she did provide a description of what each one was on the syllabus. Theodora described her as very "hands on," adding, "If you go to her in her office hours, she'll be like, 'Let's spread

all these books out on the table and I'll print out all these things and order these for you from interlibrary loan.'" In this way, the small program inside a smaller liberal arts university provided an environment like that of Theodora's high school.

Theodora's Challenges With College Writing

Like many of her fellow participants, Theodora was intimidated when the professors asked the students to come up with their own essay topics. "It's very, very out in the open which is something that can become scary." When I asked her to elaborate on why it could be scary, she explained that, "I realized that I would have to read the entire *Odyssey* before we even got to it in class in order to write about it and, like, half of the *Divine Comedy*." Theodora, like her peers, was used to guided reading in high school, where papers were only assigned after the class had read and discussed the book. For her college class, she had to read it on her own in order to be able to begin her paper. It was also scary that no one else in the class was writing their paper on her topic, and so she couldn't default to talking with her peers about her reading, either.

Theodora and an unfamiliar genre. One genre Theodora did have some challenges with was the one that she perceived didn't lend itself so easily to the thesis-driven analysis essay: the philosophy paper.

> It's still kind of hard for me to kind of write about philosophy because of all these ideas and you talk about all these broad things. Then it's like, how do you get it onto paper. And most of the time, a philosophy professor is like, "Oh, no. I don't want a thesis. Just say what you're going to write." And I feel like… but like, that's kind of a thesis. It's like, I'm going to argue this.

One of the challenges for Theodora was to grasp the idea of a thesis that wasn't an argument, per se. Another was that for philosophy, she wasn't, "Really writing about one work

where you can, like, pull things from and you're not really writing about, like, an event in history that…most people agree it happened." Instead, writing for philosophy required her to write, "About one person or a couple of people's beliefs." Upon further reflection, Theodora acknowledged it was difficult for her not only because, "it was a new field and different than anything I'd experienced before," but also because she was, "having a hard time understanding the material" which "makes it hard to write about the material." It was likely that her trouble with the philosophy paper had more to do with difficulty understanding the material than difficulty in constructing a paper.

Theodora's Survival Strategies

Like the other successful participants, Theodora utilized her professors' office hours, as well as the paper conferences that were a part of the curriculum. For her paper conferences, Theodora would bring in an idea or draft and talk with her group about what she planned to do. For philosophy, she had to write about what, in Plato's opinion, made an ideal philosopher. In those paper conferences, Theodora and her classmates would describe how they were interpreting Plato's opinion, and the professor would say, "yea" or nay" to their ideas. Theodora felt that she was slowly able to piece together a draft and then would go to the professors' office hours for more specific feedback.

When I asked Theodora where she had learned that going to meet with her professors would be useful, she explained, "Generally, Mercy makes you have no fear about going and talking to a professor." Theodora elaborated that if she could pass on anything to an incoming college freshman, it would be to go to office hours. "Teachers put them on there… They're just sitting in the office, you know… They want you to come to them. Emailing them if you have a question, just being really verbal with your professor even if you don't like them or you don't

necessarily agree with their teaching style." Like Rebecca, Theodora consistently sought guidance and feedback.

Theodora also utilized her university's writing center during her fall quarter. She was especially drawn to it because it was staffed by peer tutors. "I knew I wanted to talk to someone about this paper especially for this professor, like someone who had had him." She requested to work with a tutor who was also in the honors program; the tutor she worked with remembered writing the same paper Theodora was working on, so he helped her by explaining how she could structure it.

Knowledge Theodora Reported Being Able to Transfer From High School to College

When I asked Theodora what she had learned about writing in high school that was useful to her in college, she responded "Definitely, overall paper structure. How to write a thesis, how to formulate a thesis. The research paper process, everyone commends the Mercy research paper process and I really do…" When I asked her to explain what the overall paper structure was, she added, "There's the basic, like, five-paragraph essay which is normally what I… Like, obviously not normally what I use but it's expanded upon." Like the other participants, Theodora was able to extrapolate from the five-paragraph essay structure and adapt it to write successfully in college.

Like Rebecca, Theodora felt that the way she had learned to write at Mercy had been beneficial to her, and so she was hesitant to suggest Mercy do anything different. However, Theodora added,

> I feel like, you know, in Mercy you know what you had and you know what teachers you came from and, you know, it's all kind of, like, this same network in terms of writing. You have the same foundation which is good and it makes it

> helpful. But when you get to college, you have these different people and it's just, like, you have to know that you're going to be writing different things.

Theodora elaborated that it would have been useful to learn that, "Not all essays you will be asked to write will…follow that five-paragraph hourglass-shaped introduction type of paper." She described that knowing how to write different thesis statements for different disciplines would have been useful. Generally, she wished she had learned what made a history paper different from a literature paper or a technical writing paper. Theodora recommended Mercy at least "address the different types" of writing as opposed to focusing on one.

On a more local level, Theodora felt that it would have been useful to know that there were other ways to start a paper than with a broad, attention grabbing opener. She explained that one of her history professors had written, "Take it out" or "You're boring me" or "Ugh" in the margins. It is understandable that Theodora felt it would have been useful to know that not everyone loves a "flowery introduction."

Overall, Theodora had a successful transition from high school writing to college writing. In comparison to the colleges and programs the other participants were involved in, Theodora's honors program built support for writing development into the curriculum. It was much more institutionalized within the program than the peer review or other writing support activities found in other participants' programs or courses. Theodora actively sought out additional guidance and feedback, and even though she was frustrated with her philosophy papers, she was able to work through that in conferences with her professor. Theodora was able to transfer her knowledge of writing research papers and literary analysis essays to similar genres in her college courses. She was able to transfer her knowledge of essay structure to all her courses, and with feedback from her professors, adapt those structures for her new writing contexts.

Theodora's Perceptions Of College Reading

Like the other participants, Theodora was struck by the difference between high school reading and college reading. "In high school, it was like, 'Do this homework and then read the next chapter.' But 'read' didn't actually mean read 'cause they wouldn't have a way of knowing if you haven't read." Even in her AP courses, Theodora acknowledged that many people got away with not doing their reading. However, she realized that in college, this was not an option. Theodora described being asked to read *The Odyssey* for her history course. "He'd be like, 'This is for the next class, books one through 12 of *The Odyssey*…. he was like, "I'm not having you read the whole thing but the intro, it's like a hundred pages. It's grand. You read the intro. And book one, you really should read book one. Book two also. Book three, I won't have you read book three. And then book four, you should read book four. But I'm not having you read the whole thing. And it's just kind of, like, 'Well, no, you kind of are.'"

Theodora dealt with the increased reading load by learning to prioritize what she needed to do, and figuring out where she could read and focus, like the library, and where she couldn't, like her dorm room when her roommate was watching *Top Chef* marathons. She also found out that for dense readings, like philosophy, it helped her to read and discuss it with a peer. "Even if you're not reading it out loud to each other, if you talk of, like, 'Okay, what is he talking about here?' And that makes it a little more helpful." Reflecting upon whether or not Mercy prepared her for the reading, Theodora did feel that the block schedule she had had at Mercy was helpful because she was already used to having different classes every other day. She was also used to discussing ideas with her high school friends, and she was able to do the same in college.

Kayla

Kayla was very involved in high school, and excelled in math and the sciences. When she applied to college, she planned to major in Nursing. She enrolled in a highly selective, very large public university. Like most participants, Kayla initially struggled with homesickness. It also seemed like her parents were struggling with her being gone, since at the beginning of the year they would fly her home almost every weekend. Kayla quickly realized that wasn't healthy for her or her parents. Instead, she taught them how to text message her, so they could keep in contact throughout the day. Eventually, she got used to it and got over her homesickness. In a similar way, Kayla had to learn how to let go of her dependency on the safe structure of high school writing.

Kayla's Perceptions Of College Courses and College Writing

Kayla's university is on the quarter system, and she took four classes each quarter. One aspect of the academic transition that was challenging to Kayla was the fact that in college, her grade would be based on her performance on only a few major assignments, whereas in high school her grades were based upon homework assignments, small quizzes, tests, outlines, drafts, and papers. Kayla was used to having writing assignments scaffolded, so that there were many steps to complete before turning in a final paper. "Like, you know how here we have worksheets you fill out and stuff? But there, it was like, "No, just write your essays. And then, I'll give you a grade." The worksheets she was referring to were prescriptive pre-writing handouts used by her senior English teacher. The students would write their highly structured essays on the lines given for each type of sentence (CD, CM, CM).

For Kayla's English composition course, she "basically read a bunch of books and then wrote reports on them." In her nursing class, she would write reflections. "We would read about

like ethics in nursing and then they would give us a scenario like, 'Say you're in a clinic and a patient's family comes up to you asking too many questions. How do you handle it?' It was reflection questions." For her Asian American Studies class, her assignments generally were to read books and news articles, and to watch videos. The final for the class was to write a research paper on a "specific issue that targets… that really, really affects Asian Americans in the United States today."

Kayla's Struggles With College Writing

Unlike the previous two case study participants, Kayla had not been in A.P. English classes. The "regular" English courses at Mercy are much more structured than the A.P. courses and have more frequent small stakes assignments as compared to less frequent but higher stakes essays.

Kayla learned quickly that, in college, there was "not like one standard way of writing a paper. Like for my nursing classes, my reflections, like those classes had to be structured totally different from the ones from my psych class, from my education class…" In contrast with the uni-structure Schaffer model, the prevalence of a variety of structures made Kayla feel like her professors were being arbitrary. She figured it was just a matter of the professor's or TA's personal preferences, and her job was to figure out what each specific one wanted. "Just adjusting to everyone's different styles of writing, what they like, what they're looking for, how detailed they want it to be…It's just like their preferences, you know what I mean? Like how they wanted it, like what was… Like what sounded good to them, you know?" In spite of this, Kayla felt that she was able to adapt what she had learned in high school -- she just had to figure out what was expected. "I think I could adapt because like, the way we were taught right here, it was a good way to write." When I asked Kayla to talk more about what made it a good way to

write, she answered, “It got me into college.” Kayla was understandably attached to the way she had learned to write in high school.

Kayla was also initially attached to the amount of scaffolding her high school writing assignments had included. In college, she realized that her entire English grade would be based on three essays, and that it would be up to her to go through the process of writing. In college,

> They didn’t guide you through it. Like, you know how, like, English classes here, they would be, “Oh, today I want your introduction done. Tomorrow I want all your CD’s done and then I want CMs done.” But in college, it’s just like, “Here’s the prompt, make sure you finish it by this date.” And I guess when they did that, I would kind of get… I’d forget about the paper ‘cause there was no one being like, “Oh yeah, don’t forget the blablabla is due.”

Kayla had become dependent on her teachers’ help to manage her time, and it would appear that she blamed her college professors for not reminding her to work on it. However, later on in my interview with Kayla, it turned out that she had actually started out with good time management and then she blamed herself for getting lazy. “I set my schedule but once I waited ‘til like the last two weeks, my time span of doing things got a lot shorter.” Even in her “lazy” phase, she was still writing multiple drafts and practicing revision. “I only had two days to write my rough draft…As opposed to like, in the beginning of the quarter when I’d spanned it out, then, ‘Okay, I have two weeks to write this part of my paper and then two weeks to write this part.’” The fact Kayla was still giving herself time to write rough drafts suggests she didn’t have as much of a time management problem as she thought she did. Instead, she just had to learn how to adapt her time.

Kayla received some feedback on her writing which, in her mind, contradicted what she had been told in high school. In Kayla's core courses, she wrote a literary analysis essay the way she had been taught in high school: she wrote as if the person who was reading the essay hadn't read the book. When she got a C on that essay, she went to her TA's office hours and asked what she had done wrong. Her TA told her that, "You were perfectly fine with the grammar. All that was fine. But you spent too much of the paper summarizing the book." In Kayla's mind, this comment typified the difference between high school writing and college writing -- each teacher wanted something different.

Kayla's Survival Strategies

Kayla made a point of going to her professors' office hours to get feedback on her early drafts.

> I started really going office hours. 'Cause office hours helped a lot because they don't… The teacher doesn't say like, "This is what I look for in papers." The way you find out about what your teacher wants in college, you really need to go to their office hours and you can be like, "Is this…" Like maybe start off with a small paragraph and like, "Is this paragraph sufficient?" And then even from that one paragraph, you can figure out what they're looking for.

Since her university was one in which she might be in a class of 700, she acknowledged that it was "just really hard to like, get a connection with your teacher. But once you go to office hours enough, they won't remember your name necessarily, but they'll remember your face." She learned that it was crucial for her to take the initiative to make the connections with her professors.

Even though her writing intensive course professor allowed students to do peer reviews of each other's papers in class, Kayla did not find that useful. "She'd be like, 'Who has their rough drafts in? Like who's started the paper?' And say like 10 people would raise their hand and it would be like, 'Okay, you 10 people, you need to go in the corner and just give each other your papers.'" The professor didn't teach the students how to peer review; Kayla said she told them to "Comment on each other's papers." Kayla felt weird about that because she was worried that if someone else's writing style was different than hers, they would, "Think my paper totally sucks, you know?" Kayla did think it was helpful to have a peer tell her if they didn't understand her ideas because "If she doesn't get what I'm trying to say, probably the teacher's not going to get what I'm trying to say either." In that sense, Kayla found having a practice audience helpful. However, Kayla didn't like that there was no interaction during peer review. She and her peer would trade papers, write on each others' papers, give them back, and move on to the next person. "And if you wanted to ask them about it, you'd have to go after class, outside of class. But that was really hard 'cause… I don't know. It was just hard like, I'm not going to go find someone and be like, "Wait, can you meet with me?" You know, it's like, not their job so this is why I went to office hours." When I asked Kayla if she had ever visited her campus' writing center, she said no.

Knowledge Kayla Reported Transferring From High School To College

Kayla used her procedural knowledge of the research paper writing process she had learned in high school. I asked her to walk me through the process she used.

> So I'd get my prompt and then I'd be like, "Okay, this is what I really want to say." Because they give you a really general prompt and they'd want you to narrow it down yourselves. So I'd be like, "Okay, this is what I specifically want

> to focus on." And then the first thing I'd do is I'd look online to see if there was a lot about it online. They only let us use two internet sources and then the rest have to be all books, all articles, all journals. So, I would look online and then I'd be like, "Okay, well there seems to be a lot about it online." So I'd go to the library and then I'd just pick a couple books and then I'd read the index and I'd be like, "Oh, so this is what they're going to talk about in the book." And that's where I get my ideas for each paragraph. Like, oh so more specifically… Like, it would just keep getting more specific with each research, like separate research I did which really helped. And then I'd write them all down and be like, "This is going to go in this paragraph." And I'd have like a big pile of stuff for each paragraph. And then I'd sort it out within the paragraph. And then I'd write my whole paper. Like some of my friends, they write their papers in parts. But I like writing it straight through. I can't stop. 'Cause then, I feel like if I stop, I'm going lose my train of thought and then my writing will change. It will just sound different. I feel like the teacher's going to know like, "Oh, you did this part on Monday and you did this part another day." But I do the whole thing through without transition, just like raw writing. And then I'd leave it and then I'd come back the next day and then I'd be like, "Wait, this doesn't sound right. This should go in another paragraph. This can connect to this paragraph so I should move this paragraph up." Just stuff like that, re-ordering everything.

When I asked Kayla where she had learned to do all this, she said her high school social studies teachers had taught her about taking a broad research question and working to make the research more specific.

> They always had a specificity thing so it'd be like, "Talk China and… differences versus Japan." That was like our sophomore year world history. And then it would be like, "Okay, what do you want to talk about? Do you want to talk about the economy, the women?'" And she'd be like, "Okay, you'll talk about the women? What do you want to talk about the women? Jobs? Their home life? Their role in the family, or whatever?" So it just always gets more specific.

Kayla also reported that her high school teachers in both social studies and English had taught her how to organize. Her senior English teacher, "always had these papers where it would like… It would say 'Thesis' and you write thesis and then CD number one. Then write CD number one, CM number two, and then CM number two. That really helped me. I think I made my own with those in college."

With regards to transitioning from high school writing to college writing, Kayla had a larger leap to make than the previous two participants who had been exposed to college English through their A.P. courses. Kayla hadn't had a class where her grades were based solely on essays; she also hadn't had to write an essay for English class without the support of a highly scaffolded process and an extremely structured format. However, she was able to transfer her understanding of the process to her college writing; she transferred many of the same behaviors, down to using the Schaffer model as an invention heuristic. Like Rebecca and Theodora, Kayla also used the available resources like her TAs. Even though she didn't have the rhetorical awareness to understand why writing was different in different disciplines, Kayla was on her way to figuring out how to adapt her high school formulas to the writing in different contexts.

Kayla's Perceptions Of College Reading

When it came to managing her reading, Kayla had to learn how to do less; she had to learn how to work efficiently. "At first, I read every single page, notes on everything," Kayla explained, "But then my friends were telling me if I kept doing that, I'm going to get burned out and I'm not going to have time to do anything and I'll be up all night reading." Kayla had wise friends.

Kayla took a lower division education course called, "Undergraduate Academic Success." After our interview, she emailed me the topics that were covered in the course. The class explored the "hidden curriculum" or as she described it, "All these tips that you find out from students who have already taken the classes that they're not going to tell you in college… where to park on campus, what teachers to avoid, what books you don't need to buy, how you can get an A in this class." From the class, Kayla learned that for some courses the professors only tested the students on the lecture, not the books. So, Kayla stopped buying those books, which saved her a lot of money. That information also helped Kayla know to focus her time and energy on taking good lecture notes and reviewing those, rather than doing that plus trying to take exhaustive notes on the text book, which is what she had been doing.

This was an important lesson for Kayla to learn because she had been struggling to keep up with all the reading. "I hate reading. I'm the slowest reader ever. So then I got really stressed out and I'd like, I feel like I'm wasting my time so I would be like, 'Okay, I'm going to sacrifice the reading for my education class to read for my psych class' …And it killed me that I couldn't do all of it." Kayla was overwhelmed by her inability to complete all of her reading like she was accustomed to doing, and this was a source of anxiety. But once she found out from others who had taken the class what to focus on, then it was much easier for her to manage her reading.

Another strategy that Kayla used to manage her reading she learned in high school: annotation. In high school, Kayla's English teacher made her, "Annotate like every single book we bought. Like it was homework to annotate." Kayla reported that had helped her in high school because she would be able to go back to her reading and remember what parts were about without having to reread it. In college, it helped her because the assigned "Articles were like, about a wide variety of things. And so I could be like, 'Oh, yeah this paragraph, if I wrote like a little note, I'd be like, "Oh, yeah…' Kayla was able to do what Rebecca had done, which was adapt annotation to make it a useful tool for both comprehension and review.

Kiera

Kiera was an Honors/AP student throughout high school, though not always an A or B Honors/AP student. An avid pleasure reader, Kiera was involved in the high school's student book club. In many ways, Kiera was representative of high school students who are clearly very smart but who, as cliché as it sounds, don't live up to their full potential. Kiera enrolled at a less selective state university several hours away from home.

More than any other participant, Kiera's struggle to manage the independence that came with college made her transition rough. In the beginning of our interview, she established a theme that would re-emerge throughout our conversation: college required her to be more independent and to self-motivate which, as she explained, "Is not as easy as you might think." While she initially relished "not having someone looking over your shoulder, no teachers checking in, no constant grades being forced in your face via school" she also acknowledged that she lost "track of things very quickly." Kiera explained she had a hard time remembering to complete her assignments once she got out of the habit of doing them. "It doesn't matter what the cause is, whether it's a lack of motivation or personal crisis. If you lose that focus, it is extremely

difficult to get back on track." While Kiera was honest about her issues with motivation, she also placed some of the blame on her college professors because she didn't always know what her grades were. In high school, she had relied on the fact her teachers were required to update grades every two weeks, at least, but in college that did not happen.

> They're not constantly pushing for assignments. You don't get emails if it's missing. You don't have makeup days. It is what it is. And you're required to take care of that. And if you have a problem, you have to go hunt the teacher down yourself. It is definitely a transition from Mercy where the teachers are all very good at their job where they try to reach out to you when they see you struggling.

Kiera felt she needed someone to help keep her accountable for completing her work; she did not have enough self-regulation to do it herself. Whether the high school created this dependency or whether Kiera used it as an excuse is a point for further discussion.

Kiera's Perceptions Of College Courses And College Writing

Over her first year, Kiera took courses in math, astronomy, philosophy, sociology, psychology, communications, and British literature. She was exempted from freshman composition because she received a high verbal SAT score. She didn't have to do any writing in her math courses or science courses. In her sociology course, Kiera reported there wasn't much writing but the writing that was required was harshly graded. "They would give you list of sort of minimum requirements. And people would meet them and sometimes still get a D." Kiera felt that not only were the requirements vague, but she suspected her TAs "wanted to impress the teacher" and so they had ulterior motives for their grading. Kiera had to write case studies, essays, and critical thinking journals in psychology. Kiera was surprised there wasn't more writing in her survey of British Literature course. The students were required to read before

class and then the professor would lead an in-class discussion. For the exams, students would be given a line and have to identify who wrote it and when, and then analyze it. Kiera felt that as long as she paid attention in class she would do well on the exams. For speech, Kiera wrote speeches but didn't have to turn them in, and for political science, the only writing she had to do were take home essay exams.

In Kiera's psychology class, the TAs gave out models of papers. They also gave out lists of what the students needed to cover in each paper, down to how many arguments and sources they should have, and how the sources were cited. Kiera said the same was true of her political science class; when a paper was assigned, the professor told them what he wanted. In both classes, the expectations for writing were made explicit. Kiera reported that this helped her because,

> Having the checklist…Well, not necessarily the checklist but having that list of what they do want. It allowed me to sort of visualize how I wanted my essay to look…What my main points were. And from there, I'd go and do the traditional outline that we'd been taught here. You do the outline and then formulate your paragraph.

Kiera also benefitted from the written feedback she received, even if she thought it was too harsh. While she didn't feel like she got as much feedback in college as she had in high school, she was able to use the "little something" to make changes to her later papers.

In spite of the fact that Kiera didn't have to do much writing in college, and in spite of the fact she wasn't an extremely motivated student, Kiera was the most rhetorically savvy participant. When I asked her to describe her concept of good writing, she replied that good writing was "subjective" and depended on the audience. Reflecting on her courses, she

elaborated that for her political science class, her audience expected facts and details. Good writing in that course was a matter of being precise and following the right format. In psychology, Kiera thought her audience expected good analysis and wanted "outside of the box" thinking. Additionally, in psychology, Kiera knew her audience wanted her writing to be formatted correctly. Essentially, good writing was whatever fulfilled the reader's expectations. "You always have to think about who you're writing to and really focus on that when you're writing it. And once you've written it, you have to go back and try to read it from their perspective and really think about, 'It's not just what I know; it's what I want them to know.'"

Knowledge Kiera Reported Transferring From High School To College

When I asked Kiera where she had learned to think about writing like this, she said she had definitely learned it in her two high school's AP English classes. She explained that her senior English teacher was good at getting the students to analyze the information and helping them understand it as an audience. Kiera recalled having a hard time understanding Chaucer until she put herself in the mindset of his original audience because, "At that time, these things would've made sense." Kiera's not only learned how to use rhetorical analysis to comprehend her readings, but to think about her own writing.

> It's always thinking about how you're writing, thinking about who you're writing for. Those have always been the basic questions that have been ingrained in us which is extremely useful, quite frankly, going into college because you understand what they want. Even if it's not what you want to say, you understand what they want. And you can give that to them.

Kiera's rhetorical insight is especially interesting because it shows that she grasped that she had to adjust her writing to meet her audience's expectations. She was able to use that

knowledge rhetorically and understand that part of her job as a writer was to ascertain the audience's expectations before writing. Some of the other participants didn't approach their college writing this way. In this sense, Kiera was one of the more capable participants, yet her self-regulatory and motivational challenges prevented her from having the same kinds of academic success the others had.

Generally, Kiera felt that Mercy had taught students the basics that they needed to be successful in college. She felt that by learning those basics, she could then expand to writing 12-15 page papers. When I asked her to describe what she thought the basics were, she replied, "You need to understand how your paragraphs should be formed. You need to understand how they should interconnect and how you need to have a focus. You need to know where you're going. You need a destination." Kiera understood that writing should have a purpose, which is another indicator of her rhetorical awareness.

Kiera expanded on how her specific high school writing experiences had prepared her for college. From her religion classes, she learned how to make sure her ideas were going in a direction and not just on a tangent. She cited a project in which she had to tell a story and also tell the moral of that story; she had to learn not to get so lost in telling the story that she forgot to tell the moral. From her history classes, she learned to write research papers, and through those, learned that "formatting and being precise and quoting your sources and working on the Bibliography" are crucial skills. She said those particular skills were useful in almost every class she did have to write a paper for. Even when the professors gave their formatting requirements, Kiera felt students still had to understand how to use them, and she did, "otherwise, most people will struggle with it for days."

Kiera also felt that Mercy taught students how to be independent writers. She explained that Mercy not only taught her what to do, but how to do it. The high school teachers don't "do it for you, or give you a simple cheat sheet. You learn to do it by yourself."

While Mercy may have taught her how to be an independent writer, at the end of our interview Kiera returned to the fact she had trouble becoming a self-reliant student, "learning to organize," and to "not rely on the teacher."

> They're not reminding you constantly of homework assignments…You're so used to going to school or being told the end of each class what you have…You don't always get that in college. Very rarely do they tell you at the end of each class what you need. Unless it's changed from the syllabus. And you forget that there is a syllabus.

Kiera reflects the effects that the psycho-social dispositions can have on a high school students' transition to college. On paper, it looked as if she would have had no problem transitioning to college: she had high test scores and took rigorous courses. Yet, her own inability to self-regulate and to be motivated enough to keep up with her assignments made her transition bumpier than the majority of the other participants.

Kiera's Perceptions Of College Reading

Kiera reported she had learned in high school that she could, "Get away with not reading or reading Spark Notes the night before." In college, she felt like she could, "get away with a little more than most people" because she could "read late" or "not read" or "read at the last minute" and still do well. Yet she acknowledged that this approach did not work for her in her Psychology class.

> You don't read that textbook ever just because it is extremely thick and extremely dense. And they go over the material in class. Why would you? But I feel as if I would rather stay home and read that textbook and make a Word Document of my notes (because all the quizzes and exams are online) than go to class.

When I asked Kiera if she did stay home, read the textbook, and make a Word document, she replied that she did not. In many of her other classes, Kiera had to read narrative nonfiction and, as she noted, "Spark Notes just does not cover the material they would test you on. Or, they will pick books that aren't on Spark Notes for that exact reason." She eventually figured out that "They are books that you pretty much have to read. There is no other option."

Kiera's challenges with remembering her assignments affected her ability to remember to read. Kiera blamed part of her forgetting to read on the fact she had not learned to make a good planner while she was in high school.

> I just wish that it had been stressed more at Mercy, using planners, not just, "Oh, take out your planner and do this." Because again, that's being, you know mollycoddled, but it's that stress of you have to remember to write down your stuff. You have to remember to make a schedule and be on top of it. And I definitely was not.

Talulah

Talulah took Honors and AP courses throughout her four years of high school. Talulah was also active in dance and ASL, and participated in extracurricular clubs like the anime club. Talulah's group of friends in high school were also all on the Honors and AP track. Talulah enrolled at a selective private university.

Talulah's Perceptions Of College Courses and College Writing

Talulah did not report struggling with her college writing assignments. First, she felt that there wasn't as much writing as she had expected. Second, most of the writing she had to do was short -- between one and five pages -- and she could do those assignments at the last minute and still get the grades she wanted. In that sense, her issues with time management didn't hurt her. While she couldn't always read at the last minute and be successful, she could write at the last minute and still be successful.

She described some of the writing she was asked to do. In political science, she had to write two informative essays. "One of the essays that we had to do was we had to read this little snippet on the death penalty and then write an essay talking about the two points of view that were in that little reading section. And describe how we felt about that." Talulah took an interdisciplinary core sequence that covered all her GE requirements for religion, English, first-year seminar and an upper division literature course. During her first quarter she had to write three essays for that course. The first one was persuasive; Talulah chose to write about abortion. During the interview, Talulah couldn't recall what she had written about for the other two essays.

For her Modern Chinese Literature class, Talulah wrote three essays based on books that she read. Her professor would give the students prompts like, "What parts of his character made his family important?" Or like, "What does his character provide for the story?" For her first essay, Talulah's professor commented that she was stating facts too much, and he wanted her to give more of her point of view. She listened to his feedback and was able to integrate more of her opinion for her remaining two essays.

For her introduction to Psychology class, Talulah had to write reflection papers that reminded her of her high school Religion reflections, "Because just from the last reflection paper

until the next one was due, in that section of time, choose any one topic that we talked about in class or read and then write something about that." Talulah also had to write a miniature literature review for that class. Her professor was very strict about having every part of the paper adhere to APA, which Talulah thought was useful because she was planning to major in Psychology. Talulah's professor also required students to turn in a rough draft, which was graded. Talulah attributed the required draft to her good grade.

For her interdisciplinary core course, Talulah wrote a research paper. The assignment was to research something about a disability and then interview someone that had that disability. Half of the paper was to be based on the interview while the other half was to be based on the research. Talulah was frustrated with the guidance, or lack of guidance, she received from her professor. "He said, you know, just write the paper. And just, you know, have fun. I'm like, "Great. Thanks." She seemed particularly annoyed that he had not reminded them of when it was due, and that he had not broken down the project into smaller pieces, like her high school teachers had done. "He never posted anything online. And then I'd be like, 'post it online.' But he never posted it. I'm like, 'Fine, be that way.'" Talulah was also frustrated because the professor didn't give the class a structure or model for them to use while they were writing. Still, Talulah was able to develop her own structure. She began each paragraph with one or two questions from her interview, and then gave the interviewee's responses. The rest of the paragraph would be about the research. When I asked Talulah how she decided to use that structure, she explained that she felt like her paper would be too bland to have half her paper about her interview and the other half about her research.

Talulah's Survival Strategies

The few times Talulah did choose to meet with her professors were regarding the two courses she took that were in her psychology major. However, Talulah primarily relied on email to communicate with her professors. "Most of the teachers were like that. Like, 'We're not going to come chase you down but if you have any questions, just email us.' Most teachers email within a day or two. Usually, people would be too lazy to go to office hours but teachers always respond to my email." It is notable that Talulah ascribed laziness to "people" but then finished the sentence by saying that teachers responded to her email. This suggests that Talulah was generally too unmotivated to go to office hours.

Knowledge Talulah Reported Transferring From High School To College

Talulah did not use some of the writing strategies she had in her repertoire, like drafting, because she felt that most of her writing assignments weren't long enough, or challenging enough, to necessitate it. The only paper she did multiple drafts on was the Introduction to Psychology mini-lit review, and one of those drafts was required. Her professor did allow students to turn in a second draft that would not be graded. Since Talulah didn't do well on her first draft, she took advantage of the second draft offer, and earned an A on her final paper.

Talulah felt that the amount and variety of writing she had done in high school had prepared her for high school.

> Just the fact that I had written so much and what I did write while I was here ranged from history all the way to English. I think I wrote a paper once for math. I don't know how but I think I did. So just the broad range of what I had to write and the different things that they have us write about, the different ways to write a paper, I think it definitely helped.

Talulah added that she was able to take from what she had written in high school and "match up" with what she was supposed to write for her college papers.

Talulah's Perceptions Of College Reading

Talulah was more challenged by keeping up with the reading for her courses than she was with keeping up with her writing. Talulah claimed to not like reading, stating that she had never been good at it. She also shared how she got "bored" reading for some of her classes. Yet, later in the interview, she enthused about her love of reading online fan fiction. Like many students, Talulah did not really enjoy reading for school, but when she was reading something she was interested in, she loved it.

Talulah described her challenges with reading in high school. "I never read. I read half the time. In other times, not." Talulah felt she could get away with not reading in high school because she could cram for tests. However, in college, she "could do that for some tests but not for all…" Reflecting on her first semester, Talulah felt that she could have earned higher grades if she had "actually read."

For her second semester, Talulah began to use the planner her university had supplied at orientation. She also began highlighting where she was supposed to read up to so it would remind her she needed to keep reading. However, she acknowledged it was still not enough; she still earned a low grade in her Humanities course.

After describing her efforts to keep up with her reading and her tepid results, Talulah then began to blame her schedule. She explained she had "three major reading intensive classes all in one day. And I'm like 'F my life.'" On her long day, she had Humanities, Research Methods, and Modern Chinese Literature. For Humanities, she had two big textbooks which were, "more or less boring just because it's about like ancient cultures or whatever. We went back all the way

to Mesopotamia and stuff." For Research Methods, she said she had to read a new chapter in that textbook before each class; however, "It was an easier reading because some parts of it, I'd already knew through Stats." For Modern Chinese Literature, she read novels and "nonfiction stuff about just the Chinese History that I already knew a lot of." In drawing upon her prior knowledge to make sense of her new reading, Talulah demonstrated her ability to reflect on what she knew; schema theorists would say she activated her schema. Whether she used her background knowledge as a coping mechanism to get through her new reading or a mechanism for not reading it thoroughly or at all is unclear. Talulah showed the kind of reflective thinking that is necessary for successful knowledge transfer. However, she ultimately was not motivated enough to self-regulate her behaviors.

Ashley

In high school, Ashley was a B/C student. Ashley was extremely involved in the school's hospitality program and worked in the front office during her summer vacations. Ashley loved high school and during her first year of college frequently returned to visit her former teachers. Unlike the majority of the participants, Ashley was living at home and attending the local state university. In general, Ashley didn't feel connected to her college, and she didn't know why she was there.

> I feel like it would be different if I lived on campus but it was harder to make friends, I felt, personally. I know it's a lot different for other people but that was my personal experience. And so, the other thing is I didn't get classes I wanted. I kind of picked classes towards my General Ed. And it was hard… It was just like, I'm like, "Okay, I'm just going to school for school."And so I didn't spend a lot of time on campus. And so…I just went for my classes and left. I felt like… I

> seriously felt like summer school, like I was just there for like a few hours and then I left. It just felt totally different than like, "school" school.

Ashley also had a hard time with the size of her classes. She was someone who in high school would ask a lot of questions in class, and this wasn't possible in her large lecture courses.

Ashley's Perceptions Of College Courses And College Writing

Ashley had writing assignments in her biology and history classes. In Biology, Ashley's professor would assign specific websites and then require the students to synthesize the information from those websites into a paper. Ashley reported that these were easier for her than her English papers because, "It was just, you pretty much took the information, analyzed it, took the information, analyzed it, answered the questions, and then handed the paper. It was easier for me. Because I was going off straight facts." In comparison, her English papers involved, "More analyzing your own analysis and I have always struggle with that kind of stuff." In History, Ashley wrote book reviews, and then test based essay questions. The essay questions were graded by the TAs, and since Ashley referenced class discussion in her papers, her TAs comments were that her facts were not accurate. Overall, Ashley also preferred the writing in history over the writing in English because it was based on the reporting of facts.

Ashley's Struggles With College Writing

Ashley struggled with her two composition courses (developmental and Eng.1A). She was especially frustrated with the second of her two English teachers. Her developmental writing assignments included a restaurant review and an argument about a hypothetical Facebook scenario. Ashley described the review assignment as "really weird." She elaborated that all of the students in her class missed a crucial question, "How did you feel after the meal," and because they didn't address that question, they didn't do very well on the essay. The Facebook

assignment was to write a persuasive essay answering the prompt: “A child, at the age of 12 wants a Facebook. What would you do?” Ashley’s professor had emphasized writing for an audience, but Ashley needed more guidance; Ashley wanted the professor to tell her who her audience should be. She utilized her peers as a survival strategy, and she turned to them when she needed help figuring out her audience. For her Facebook paper, Ashley decided to write “To parents because parents need to know that if their 12-year old wants a Facebook, that they need to monitor who they’re friends with, how did they know them, and why they’re on Facebook.” In that sense, Ashley did well on her assignment.

However, a second challenge for Ashley was finding book sources for the Facebook essay. She was used to using the high school library, but her university’s library was closed due to construction. Instead, “We have a classroom that’s full of shelves that you have to go online and order books first and pick them up a day later. And you can’t even browse the books because you have to be really specific about what books you want.” Predictably, Ashley had a hard time locating book sources about her topic. For a student like Ashley, this added yet another obstacle to her success. Unlike Kiera, however, Ashley did know where the library was and was motivated to attempt to use it.

Ashley felt the professor she had for her developmental English class was helpful, although according to Ashley, the professor told the class she wouldn’t be allowed to give written feedback because of the university’s budget cuts. “She said that they weren’t going to do a lot of feedback but, in class, she would just… one day after you turned in a paper, she would just have you sit down and she would tell you what she thought you were doing wrong. And that really helped.” Ashley benefited from the verbal feedback since she could ask more questions than she could with written feedback.

For her English 1A course, Ashley had a range of writing assignments. The assignment she did the best on was a personal argumentative essay. The assignment was to read Simon Weisenthal's *The Sunflower* and answer the book's fundamental question about the possibilities of forgiveness. In the paper the students were to identify their own personal lens and then explain whether or not they would forgive the S.S. soldier.

Ashley found her 1A professor to be difficult because of the lack of specific guidance and feedback. "It was just hard because we couldn't figure out how she wanted us to write or how she was grading our papers or anything like that. It's just like, she was just so not helpful 'cause she gave you no feedback. She was never in her office hours. She lost your papers." Ashley gave an example of an assignment she did poorly on. The prompt was to go to an event at the university and answer three questions: ""Did you go to the event? Did you enjoy the event? And what did you think of the event?" The day the paper was due there was a rally against the budget cuts, so the professor offered to extend the deadline for the paper if students wanted to go to that and write about it. Ashley went, and she felt like she answered all the questions, but "I guess I didn't answer them to her qualifications. She was very specific about how to write to her standards." When I asked Ashley if she could describe the standards, she replied, "She just had such a specific way that she wanted you how to write and wouldn't really specify how she wanted you to write it like that. It felt like we had to learn how to drive on our own. And I hate that because I really need help." The fact that Ashley needed more guidance but couldn't receive it was a bad combination: she barely passed the class.

Ashley's Survival Strategies

Ashley attempted to go to her professor's office hours for guidance after receiving a failing grade on an essay. "She wrote nothing on them, gave me no pass, and pretty much said

that I wasn't doing what she was asking us to do. So I went to her office, I was going to try to get her to explain that. But she pretty much just said that I wasn't doing what she was asking me, just kept repeating that in different forms. So she was not a good teacher." It is notable that Ashley attempted to get the feedback she needed by going to the professor's office hours, but from Ashley's perspective, it didn't help.

Whatever feedback Ashley received from her professors, what she took away from her English courses was possibly not what they had intended. Essentially, Ashley felt like her English teachers wanted her to write concisely.

> Don't get too detailed. Conclusions should be two to three sentences instead of a page. 'Cause the shorter your essay is, the happier your teacher is. The shorter you can get your point across, the happier they are, I found out. That's what my [developmental English] teacher said, that your teachers don't want to be sitting there for an hour and a half reading your paper that's 20 pages long. Four or five is okay. No less than three, no more than seven.

Ashley also recalled learning that "using big words does not get you anywhere because if you don't understand what they are and you don't explain what those words are, your teacher will automatically think you're plagiarizing." The fact she could not use "I" in her papers was reinforced, which Ashley found challenging since a number of her assignments were her opinion.

Ashley's English 1A teacher also told the class to never write the five-paragraph essay. Instead, she gave a handout that Ashley described as

> How to structure your essay without using five-paragraph essay technique. And it pretty much is the basics of a five-paragraph essay. It has intro, body, and a conclusion but it has more analysis into it. It shows you how to analyze things

> more. That's a big thing in college is where you don't analyze your stuff, then you pretty much are just stating facts. And your teacher really doesn't care. They will just… "C"

The fact that the professor told Ashley and her classmates to not write a five-paragraph essay and then gave a handout which had all the components of a five-paragraph essay was contradictory to Ashley. On one hand, Ashley was able to notice that there wasn't a huge difference between what she had done in high school and this new structure. On the other hand, the professor might have been more helpful to Ashley if, instead of dismissing the five-paragraph structure outright, she had helped Ashley start with what she did know and then help her adapt that structure to include more analysis.

Both of Ashley's English professors used peer review in their classes, but Ashley, like several of the other participants, did not find it helpful. Before each peer review day, Ashley would print out whatever parts of her essay she had drafted, and share copies with four to five peers. She would also give one to the professor so the professor could give her credit for doing her homework. When it was her turn, Ashley would read her paper out loud while her peers wrote their comments on her copies. When I asked Ashley to describe the kinds of comments the peer reviewers gave, she explained, "They normally catch spelling errors. And that's what that's, I think, designed to do – is to catch verb errors, spelling errors, sentence level mistakes, and stuff." Ashley reported being irritated by the feedback she often received. "They were like, 'Oh, this is really good.' And I'm like, 'Okay, are you going to give me anymore?'And they kept circling things, putting little smiley faces by it." Ashley did find one person in the class who "tell you the bloody truth about it" and they eventually became friends. From that point on, Ashley would have her friend look over all her papers.

Ashley's Perceptions Of College Reading

Unlike most of the other participants, Ashley didn't notice a difference between the volume and pace of reading in high school and college. She reported her science textbook was like a science textbook in high school. She had the option of buying an e-book for less money, but she felt it would be easier for her to have the physical book in front of her. Ashley reported really liking her Communications textbook because she was interested in the content.

Ashley used the annotation technique, "where you talk back to your book," that she had learned in high school for her reading in college. "If I didn't do that for History class or Biology class or … I wouldn't have passed. I'll write down things that I find interesting on the margin or question something and I'll go back and re-read the thing, see if it answers my question or later on in the book, it answers my question." Ashley used annotation to monitor her comprehension.

Discussion of Case Studies

Each of first three participants described in the case studies above was able to successfully transfer their content knowledge of writing and related procedural knowledge from high school to college. Their strong sense of self-efficacy, their motivation, and their ability to self-regulate their behaviors facilitated their knowledge transfer. Based upon the high grades they reported receiving in their classes, their transitions to college could be deemed successful.

The participants, especially Kayla, transferred their procedural knowledge of outlining, drafting, and revising. The contexts in which the participants had challenges with content knowledge transfer were those in which the genres were new to the participants. Rebecca and Theodora were initially challenged by writing in unfamiliar genres. Whether the other participants did not encounter unfamiliar genres or whether the other participants had less anxiety about writing in unfamiliar genres is unclear. However, when there were gaps between

what the participants knew and what they needed to know, the participants took it upon themselves to bridge those gaps by seeking guidance and feedback. When the participants' professors and TAs met them half way -- when the professors and TAs were explicit with what they wanted, or when they were at least explicit with their feedback -- the participants were all the more successful in their transfer. With regards to their reading, they were able to successfully transfer their functional behaviors and their knowledge of active reading strategies in order to manage an increased volume of reading.

The final three participants were less successful in their transition to college in the sense they earned substantially lower grades than the first three. While Kiera transferred her rhetorical knowledge from high school to college, and was able to do well on her writing assignments, her dispositions, or behaviors, impacted her ability to manage her reading. Both Kiera and Talulah negatively transferred strategies that had worked for them in high school, like skimming their reading or looking up summaries on Spark Notes, and found that those strategies did not work for them in their new college contexts. Kiera and Talulah's inability to self-regulate, to reflect on what wasn't working and make behavioral changes, raises questions about their level of motivation. In this way, both Kiera and Talulah represent students who, on paper, should have had no problems transitioning to college. They both took rigorous courses in high school and scored highly on supposedly predictive exams like the SAT. Both Kiera and Talulah did transfer useful content knowledge about writing, but ultimately, their dispositions prevented them from making adjustments once negative transfer was occurring.

Ashley represents a student who attempts to transfer knowledge, including procedural knowledge about how to get additional feedback and guidance, and who is motivated enough to make time to get that help, but for whom the instructional context adds roadblocks to successful

knowledge transfer and transition. In our interview, Ashley acknowledged she was a relationship person, meaning she learned best when she was talking or working with someone closely. Ashley was also enrolled in a large state university with very large classes and little additional TA support. For other participants, this was not such a challenge, but for a participant like Ashley, these factors contributed to her unease. She also acknowledged that she was someone who needed a lot of help. This revealed that she was less confident than some of the other participants. Some might argue that Ashley was too dependent on help. In spite of her lack of confidence, Ashley did display self-efficacy. She felt that if she was able to meet with her professors, she would be able to achieve her goals of higher grades on her assignments. She knew what she needed to do to succeed. However, professors were not always at their scheduled office hours. Ashley reported that due to budget cuts, one of her professors was unable to give written feedback on her writing. When Ashley was given a research assignment, she tried to use the library but the library was under construction and the temporary library was not user friendly. In listening to Ashley's interview, it is clear that she exhibited an external locus of control. She blamed her poor English grades on her professors; some of that is unwarranted. However, ultimately Megan may have been more successful in a college with fewer institutional roadblocks to support. Some might argue that Megan's need for support was an indicator she was not prepared for college. I would argue that she was prepared to take the steps she needed to take to be more successful, but that her large state university could not provide the best instructional context for her.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this final chapter, I will first briefly summarize the findings in order to answer each of the following research questions:

- How do first-year college students perceive the transition from high school reading and writing to college level reading and writing?
- To what extent do first-year college students report they are able to transfer, positively or negatively, what they learned about reading and writing in high school to college?
- How do psycho-social factors, like a student's self-efficacy, locus of control, motivation, and self-regulation affect a student's transition and/or ability to transfer knowledge from high school reading and writing to college reading and writing?

To a large extent, the participants in this study were able to transfer what they had learned in about writing, and to a lesser extent reading, from high school to college. Therefore, in the second part of this chapter, I will use McKeough, Lupart, and Marini's (1995) description of the elements of knowledge transfer to break down findings, implications, and recommendations by element. From there, I will pose questions for further study, and lastly, I will return to the question that began this journey: should we be worried because today's high school students are not prepared?

Research Questions: Answered

1) How do first-year college students perceive the transition from high school reading and writing to college level reading and writing?

The participants in this study came from a high school that offered them many opportunities to write, and to learn to apply the processes of writing to their own work. In high school, the participants had opportunities to read both expository textbooks as well as literary fiction; their reading comprehension was enhanced by teacher-led in-class discussions. Most of the participants did not perceive writing or reading in college to be more challenging than what they had done in high school.

With regards to writing, the majority of the participants perceived college writing tasks as similar to their high school writing tasks. Several participants displayed anxiety when they perceived that the genre in which they were being asked to write, or the new rules they were being asked to apply, differed substantially from what they had known in high school. When the professor's expectations of the writing tasks were vague, the participants had a harder time perceiving similarities. Participants reported being frustrated with their perceptions that college writing was a matter of figuring out what their individual professors wanted; the phrase "read their minds" was mentioned numerous times. However, once the participants received clarification, they were able to perceive more similarities. Sometimes those similarities were related to content knowledge, like when the participants recognized that college reflection papers shared genre features with their high school reflection papers. Other times the similarities were more related to procedural knowledge; participants recognized they could apply the same procedures or steps to writing, even if they perceived the genres to be different.

With regard to reading, the majority of the participants reported that the pace of their reading increased, the volume of their reading increased, and their need to be more self-sufficient in using comprehension strategies increased. Some of the participants perceived

that they would need to continue or adjust strategies they had used to read in high school in order to meet the increased reading demands in college. Other participants initially perceived that they would be able to continue using the same strategies they had used in high school, but when those strategies were weak strategies (e.g., relying on Spark Notes), they found those perceptions to be incorrect.

2) To what extent do first-year college students report they are able to transfer, positively or negatively, what they learned about reading and writing in high school to college?

The participants in this study were able to positively transfer their content knowledge about essay structure and essay components, as well as procedural knowledge about outlining, organizing, drafting, and revising. In high school, the participants had also learned that in order to achieve their goals in writing, it was beneficial for them to meet with their teachers to discuss their ideas, request feedback, or receive individualized instruction. In this way, knowing to meet with professors outside of class was a piece of procedural knowledge the participants transferred from high school to college. It was a step that the participants knew they should take if they wanted to increase their chances of success. The many factors that enabled or limited the participants' successful knowledge transfer will be discussed extensively later in this chapter.

The participants reported transferring procedural knowledge which had helped them be successful in reading in high school. Positively, the participants were able to transfer their procedural knowledge of the specific reading strategy of annotation. They had learned to annotate in high school, and many continued to do so in college. The participants reported using annotation to monitor their comprehension and to efficiently take notes while reading which subsequently helped them review for exams. Negatively, the participants who had developed weak reading strategies in high school (e.g., over-relying on their teachers to point out

symbolism, skipping reading, using Spark Notes or the internet instead of reading) initially attempted to transfer those strategies to college.

3) How do psycho-social factors, like a student's self-efficacy, locus of control, motivation, and self-regulation affect a student's transition and/or ability to transfer knowledge from high school reading and writing to college reading and writing?

The participants' psycho-social dispositions, including their self-efficacy, locus of control, motivation and self-regulation affected their transition to college. The participants' dispositions affected their ability to not only transfer content and procedural knowledge from high school reading and writing to college reading and writing, but also to act upon their knowledge in ways that either facilitated or inhibited their successful transfer. In many ways, the participants' dispositions acted as conduits for the completion of successful transfer: their dispositions were like canals upon which the participants' transported their content and procedural knowledge from high school literacy tasks to college literacy tasks. When those canals were established, transfer occurred. When those canals were not well built, transfer was often obstructed or diverted before it could reach its target destination.

The Elements Of Transfer And Their Impact On The Participants' Knowledge Transfer

To discuss the findings on knowledge transfer, I refer back to McKeough, Lupart, and Marini's (1995) description of the elements involved in any transfer situation:

- the learner
- the instructional tasks (including learning materials and practice problems)
- the instructional context (the physical and social setting, including the instruction and support provided by the teacher, the behavior of other students, and the norms and expectations inherent in the setting)

- the transfer task
- the transfer context

I have classified the findings according to their corresponding element which reveal how multifaceted the issue of transfer is. For each element, I briefly synthesize findings described in Chapter Four, describe the implications of my study, and then give specific recommendations.

The Role Of The Participants

The role that the participants themselves played in their own success cannot be overstated. Their beliefs and attitudes impacted whether or not they took up the transfer opportunities when they were presented to them. McKeough, Lupart, and Marini (1995) argued that "To succeed on a targeted transfer task, the learner must possess the knowledge, strategies, dispositions, and processing capacity required for that particular task" (p. 3). This study of the participants' individual perceptions and actions reveals that the participants' actions affected their success. While all participants reported transferring content knowledge – e.g., knowledge of what a topic sentence is – the participants who were more successful also transferred positive procedural knowledge. Most successful were those participants who transferred procedural knowledge and displayed psycho-social dispositions that helped them successfully navigate from known contexts to unknown contexts.

Participants who transferred positive procedural knowledge knew the steps they needed to take in order to complete their new assignments. The processes participants reported learning in high school that they continued to use in college included researching, outlining to brainstorm, outlining to organize research, outlining to organize papers, drafting, giving and receiving feedback, and revising. With regard to reading strategies, participants were able to use their knowledge of annotation in college.

In order to enact their procedural knowledge, the participants had to make deliberate choices to do so. Their dispositions affected the extent to which they chose to transfer their content and procedural knowledge. Those who were motivated and had the ability to self-regulate their behaviors were able to fully utilize all the processes they knew. Those who were motivated were also able to make the decision to meet with their professors and TAs outside of class. That the majority of participants had benefitted from meeting with their teachers in high school and continued to do so in college suggests that they were motivated to continue patterns of behavior that had proven to be useful in their past. In this way, participants who had established positive dispositions in high school were able to take actions that helped them fill in any gaps between their content and procedural knowledge and what their assignments called for. This is not to say that their content knowledge and procedural knowledge did not play a part in their successful knowledge transfer; without having knowledge of what to transfer and how to begin to transfer it, the positive effects of the participants' motivation would have been limited. However, without motivation to transfer, the participants limited the transfer of their content knowledge and more importantly, their procedural knowledge.

Participants who had established less effective patterns of procedural knowledge in high school, like skipping reading assignments, transferred those strategies to college. However, they were confronted with the fact that those strategies would no longer work and then struggled to self-regulate, or change, their behavior. Their lack of motivation or perseverance affected their ability to overcome their previously established behavioral patterns. In contrast, even when the more successful students negatively transferred content knowledge, or knowledge that didn't fit the new context, they were motivated enough to reflect and adapt what they knew. Transfer

occurred, but it was the participants who were able to act on their procedural knowledge who were able to use that transfer to positively affect their academic success.

One implication of this for Mercy high school students, and for students across the country, is that it is not enough to acquire content knowledge. Students need to learn procedural knowledge, and then develop the dispositions to be able to act in ways that enable, rather than limit, their success. This reality contradicts the culture of many high schools. The current push for increased testing and the common core curriculum proclaims to students that what matters most is content knowledge; overlooked or undervalued is how a student arrives at that knowledge, whether they know procedures to enact that knowledge, and if they have disposition to act on their knowledge. Students, teachers, and parents need to know that even though these are not easily assessed, these are what will increase the likelihood of their post-secondary success.

While it is challenging to recommend changes for millions of individual high school students, there are some changes that institutions can make to help the students develop the types of knowledge and dispositions that will benefit them. These will be discussed further in the instructional context section. However, I can recommend some courses of action for current and future students of the participants' high school.

First, some activities Mercy students complain about in high school, like creating 200 note cards of facts for a research paper, or making and revising an outline, or annotating their books, are probably teaching them valuable procedural knowledge that they will draw upon to successfully complete new tasks in college. Even the participants who reported hating to annotate in high school were glad they had that strategy once they got to college and encountered

more reading than they had imagined. In this case, procedural knowledge proved to be just as valuable, if not more valuable, than content knowledge.

Second, behaviors Mercy students establish for themselves in high school will follow them to college. If they create a pattern of good behaviors, like meeting with their teachers or completing their reading or using a planner to keep track of their assignments, then they will likely continue to do these things in college. While many college professors bemoan the fact that college students do not make good use of their office hours, Mercy graduates do. Almost all of the study participants stated they went to their TA's or professor's office hours. Once a habit is formed, it is easy to continue.

Consequently, if students create negative patterns of behaviors, like feeling too insecure to ask for help or faking their way through their reading or relying on their teachers to remind them of when assignments are due, then they will likely do these same things in college. Participants who knew they had poor habits reported thinking that going to college itself would cure them. They thought they would turn over a new leaf once they started college, but the fact was that old habits were hard to break, especially once their support system was gone. If Mercy students can learn to value their actions and behaviors as much as their outcomes, then they will be in a much better position to succeed in college.

The Role Of The Instructional Tasks: High School

The instructional tasks, or the learning materials, played a critical role in helping the participants transfer their knowledge. The instructional tasks that the students received in high school enabled them to acquire content knowledge that they were able to use in college. Participants reported being able to transfer their knowledge of structure, especially of literary analysis and research papers, as well as their knowledge of the components of a reflective essay.

Perhaps surprisingly, many participants were able to adapt what many would consider a very formulaic writing structure – the hourglass shaped Schaffer model – to their college writing assignments. Even though some college professors told the students to never write a five-paragraph essay, those participants were praised by their professors for skills they had developed through writing Shaffer essays, namely their ability to write strong thesis statements and topic sentences, choose supporting evidence, embed quotes, cite sources, and analyze their evidence to support their arguments. The learning materials students received for these assignments in high school were generally very structured. When writing Schaffer essays in regular English classes, participants recalled using handouts with line spaces for their introductions, topic sentences, concrete details, commentary, and conclusions. For research papers, participants remembered receiving a specific note-card format, specific outline structures, and specific rubrics which explicitly stated what they needed to do in their rough drafts and final drafts. For religion, participants had received a four step guideline for their reflection papers. Even though this amount of given structure could have caused the participants to think of writing in formulaic ways, the participants were able to learn the functions behind the forms, so that they knew that the purpose of organizing paragraphs around a central idea was to make their essay easier to follow for their reader. Royer (1979) coined the phrase figurative transfer to explain how learners could use metaphors or similes to help the brain note conceptual similarities between two seemingly different tasks. Many participants were able to use the Schaffer model to note conceptual similarities between high school writing and college writing.

From this study, it seems there is room for teaching students to follow a structure, as long as they are learning both form and function. When the participants expressed that they knew they shouldn't dump a quote into a paper without providing context for their reader, they were

expressing knowledge that there should be a top burger in their quote burger (form) but also that it was there to do something for their reader (function). Those who understand functions are able to be flexible with their structures. This is a striking implication for professors who prohibit students from utilizing their knowledge of form and function. Rather than telling students if they write a five-paragraph essay the professor, "won't even look at it" and will "throw it out the window," professors should consider inviting students to use what they do know and guide them in adapting that knowledge to fit their new contexts.

While it is difficult to suggest curriculum for every secondary school teacher who is interested in helping their students become writers who can succeed in college, the fact is that the instructional tasks that these participants received did benefit them. This study shows that students who, through explicit instruction, learn to write analysis essays, research papers, and reflection essays are able to use the content and procedural knowledge they gain from writing those genres in high school when they go to college. One potentially significant factor, however, is the extent to which the participants were individually supported through their writing process by the availability of their teachers, peers, and the high school writing center. It may be that these one-to-one conversations included discussions of function in ways that explicit instruction in structure alone might not. In this sense, it may be the instructional tasks combined with the instructional context that facilitates more successful transfer. This is a question for further study.

Based upon the participants – particularly AP English seniors -- who reported wishing they had learned more about other genres of writing, there may be ways for high school faculty to integrate a wider range of genres in the English curricula, even curricula determined by the College Board.

First, faculty should discuss teaching and assigning additional genres outside literary analysis, research and reflection. This is especially important for students in AP English Literature whose primary focus is, and should be, writing literary analysis. Faculty should discuss whether or not the English department should be held responsible for teaching all genres of writing, of if it might more accurately resemble the college environment if students learned to write in different genres in different departments. For example, in religion, students could not only learn to write reflective essays, but also philosophical essays grounded in ethics, theology, or concepts of social justice. In science and social studies, students could learn to evaluate arguments for credibility.

Beyond learning the conventions of specific genres, students could learn how to determine the rhetorical context for their writing. By learning to identify the purpose, audience, genre conventions, stance, and design elements of any writing assignment, students would have a more flexible heuristic for helping them solve the puzzle of unfamiliar writing assignments.

In senior classes, high school faculty could also begin to discuss what college writing might look like in the faculty member's own discipline. As this study shows, it is impossible to predict what kinds of writing a class of 30 high school seniors will encounter at 30 different colleges, but faculty could alert students to the fact there will be differences. Texts like Keith Hjortoj's *The Transition to College Writing* could be used as a springboard for discussing what to do when the students encounter unfamiliar genres or unanticipated expectations.

The Role Of The Instructional Tasks: College

In this study, the participants consistently reported that they were having a very hard time figuring out what their professors and TAs wanted. When I asked if they had received guidelines, models, or other forms of explicit instruction in-class, the majority of the participants said they

had not. However, the participants who reported receiving explicit instruction explained that once they knew what their professors wanted, even if it was different than what they had written in high school, they were able to adapt what they knew to fit the new expectations.

A subset of the above finding is the fact that not only did the participants feel the assignments were arbitrary because explicit instruction wasn't given, but also that their assignments were arbitrary because there was rarely an explicit connection made between a writing assignment and a specific discourse community or academic field. Unmooring writing from its rhetorical context separates the writer from understanding why the assigned genre is appropriate, from identifying their purpose and their audience, and from making informed decisions about stance and formatting or design.

Some participants reported that they perceived their college writing assignments to be less challenging than their high school writing assignments. The major difference was that they had much less time to write their assignments in college than they did in high school. When students did not feel like the assignment was very challenging, which included shorter assignments of two to three pages, then many did not feel it was necessary to transfer their procedural knowledge. Even though they knew that meeting with a professor or writing multiple drafts were strategies that had helped them in the past, they did not feel they needed to do those things in order to do well on the assignments. The assignments that the participant, Megan, reported receiving in developmental writing were possibly high interest, but low challenge. She didn't do well on her restaurant review because she didn't read the guidelines very closely; she knew how to write a review so she didn't feel she needed to use the procedural knowledge she did possess to complete the assignment. This finding supports the work of Wardle (2007) who noted that her participants were unlikely to transfer what they had learned in first year

composition to their other courses because they could be successful in those courses' writing assignments without planning, researching, drafting, etc. The implication is that in order for students to transfer their content knowledge or procedural knowledge, they have to perceive the need to do so. Assignments that are more challenging may prompt students to transfer their knowledge.

In their 1990 study, Walvoord and McCarthy found that to facilitate transfer, professors needed to be very explicit with their expectations, and provide models for their students. The recommendation based upon the implications of this study is the same. Even more than being explicit, college faculty should not only explain what they want to see, but why it is important for students to be able to complete such a task successfully. Writing assignments should be returned to the dock of their rhetorical context. For example, if a professor's major field is in a social science, students would benefit from seeing a model of an outstanding social science paper, and then annotate that model to explain why social scientists may value statements like, "I will argue that…" in social science writing. For the participants in this study who had been taught to never use "I" in an academic paper, when their TAs and professors told them to use "I," they were skeptical. The participants perceived that specific instruction to be based on the whim of the specific teacher, which contributed to their perception that college writing was about figuring out what their individual teachers wanted. Students writing would improve if some of the mystery surrounding their assignments were removed. If professors could explain their expectations for assignments more explicitly, the amount of positive knowledge transfer would increase. Faculty who can connect their assignments to the expectations of a specific discourse community can help students gain content knowledge about those discourse communities.

A pedagogy that will help students gain knowledge about discourse communities is rhetorical genre studies. The theory of rhetorical genre studies, or RGS (Barwashi, 2010), holds promise for teaching writing in ways that can facilitate transfer. Rhetorical genre studies differs from more traditional genre studies in that "The goal is not so much for the students to master a particular genre, but to develop transferable genre-learning skills" (p. 195). This approach teaches students to both identify how genres are used in a range of rhetorical situations, as well as how to define rhetorical situations in order to choose appropriate genre responses. Genres move from being taught as fixed objects to being rhetorically constructed.

Bazerman (1987) asserts that rhetorical genre studies require teachers to acknowledge that students bring their own understandings of genres with them. The much maligned five paragraph essay is, for some high school students if not compositionists, a legitimate genre, one that many students have learned quite well in one form or another (i.e., Schaffer, hourglass essay). Depending on the genre of writing privileged by state tests, some students may have had more experience writing personal narratives, or arguments to vague prompts (e.g., SAT writing). Regardless of what a composition teacher might think about those genres and the ways in which they do or don't fit into that instructor's specific class, the fact is that students do bring with them experience with genre. A fixed genre mentality would suggest there is nothing to be done but start over and remove the old genre to replace it with the new, teacher approved one(s). An RGS pedagogy might instead invite students to reflect on the rhetorical situations that they wrote in, and those discussions could open the students up to the ideas that writing in new situations require them to decipher the rhetorical situation first and then respond accordingly. In short, an RGS approach might allow students who might otherwise experience negative transfer (trying to

use a familiar genre in the wrong context) to draw from their genre history in order to positively transfer ways of deciphering rhetorical situations.

RGS pedagogy also enables the teacher to see their own discourse communities through the view of their students by seeing that "places that are familiar and important to use may not appear intelligible or hospitable to students we try to bring into our worlds" (Bazerman, 1992, p. 19). This encourages the teacher to make the contexts and conventions of the discourse community not only explicit, but also to explain why and how genres fit into that community's beliefs about what constitutes knowledge. This might go a long way in helping students see what they are being asked to write as situated versus as something Professor X has assigned.

Overall, "Genres identify a problem space for the developing writer to work in as well as provide the form of the solution the writer seeks and particular tools useful in the solution" (Bazerman, 2009, p. 291). From the perspective of knowledge transfer, rhetorical genre studies might give learners greater ability to analyze unfamiliar writing situations by abstracting what they know about how genres function within discourse communities and applying that to problem solving new writing puzzles.

The Role Of Instructional Contexts: The Differing Norms And Expectations Between High School and College Contexts

Some might argue that there is no difference between the learning context of a high school and the learning context of a college, particularly the learning context of a college preparatory high school and a college. On the surface, both contexts seem to share similarities: students are supposed to show up on time, turn in their assignments by the given due date, and in exchange, receive grades for their work. However, as this study reveals, there are differences between the learning context of this college preparatory high school and the learning contexts of

the college the participants attended. In order to understand why the participants did some of the things they did, and expected some of the things they expected, it is essential to understand the ways in which the high school has to fulfill other purposes beyond, or before, preparing students to succeed in college. As I mentioned in chapter 1, Keith Hjortshoj argues that much of what is done in the name of preparing students for college is done actually to prepare students to get *into* college. While Mercy High School provided participants with both content and procedural knowledge that was transferable to college, Mercy provided students with the educational experiences that were primarily designed to help them get into college, some of which are discussed below. This had both positive and negative effects.

On the positive side, the participants frequently reported that their high school experience had been "personal." They felt personally connected to their classmates, and to their teachers. In high school, the participants learned to advocate for themselves; to feel comfortable approaching their teachers for guidance or support; to work with their peers; to accept feedback; and to offer feedback to others. If the participant was struggling, they could reasonably expect their high school teachers to reach out to them. The participants were also used to teachers breaking down major assignments into smaller pieces, to teachers guiding them through their reading, and to teachers presenting information according to Howard Gardner's now contested theory of multiple intelligences (Waterhouse, 2006). All of these are hallmarks of good pedagogy; these are the actions teachers take to enable their students to be successful. And, the participants were successful: they earned grades high enough to be in the top half of their class, and high enough to get into colleges of their choice.

On the flipside, Mercy High School policies, though created with good intentions, enabled some participants to develop negative behaviors which correlated with reduced college

success. Some participants acknowledged that they felt they had been "mollycoddled" in high school. For many participants, this wasn't detrimental except that it exacerbated the sense of dislocation they initially felt upon transitioning to college. However, several participants reported being unable to adapt to not having their homework assignments posted online, not having their professors remind them of what was due, not having professors reschedule exams or major assignment due dates because other professors had also scheduled exams or major assignment due dates at the same time, and not having professors accept late homework. It is possible the participants were used to this level of accommodation and really couldn't succeed without it. It is also possible the participants were using this as an excuse for their own choices.

Regardless, one implication of this study is that some of the things college preparatory high schools do to ensure their students get through high school are the same things that can create dependent behaviors or unrealistic expectations that negatively impact those students when they go to college. This is an especially pressing issue that faces all private college preparatory high schools who rely on tuition dollars: what is the balance between doing what is necessary to keep students and parents happy, including getting the students in the colleges of their choice, and doing what is necessary to develop the behaviors students will need to be successful *in* college. It is unrealistic for colleges to tell the high schools that their sole job is to prepare them for college. The culture of college preparatory secondary education is tied to the frenzied, competitive culture of college admissions. Therefore, even though the learning contexts may appear similar, there are purpose-oriented differences beneath the surface. These differences affect everything from school policies to teachers' pedagogies. In this sense, the context of a college preparatory high school is unlike that of a college itself.

While some might argue that a recommendation should be for the high schools to stop worrying about getting students into college and start focusing on preparing them for college, that recommendation is unrealistic given the current state of anxiety about college admissions. Given that more students are applying to college every year, and that colleges are in competition with each other to attract the large applicant pools so they can have the small acceptance rates, the focus of college preparatory high schools is unlikely to shift anytime soon. What is slightly more realistic is the recommendation that high schools like Mercy adapt an instructional strategy like the gradual release of responsibility (Pearson and Gallagher, 1993) and integrate it into school policies that dictate homework communication.

One recommendation for college faculty, especially faculty who teach freshmen, is to help the students bridge the gap between their more scaffolded high school instruction to their less scaffolded college instruction by taking cues from the education course Kayla took at her university. The course talked about the "hidden curriculum" and taught students about theories of motivation, locus of control, and persistence. It gave students the language to be more reflective about their own behaviors, but it also gave students information about strategies for success in specific courses. Faculty could begin collecting tips from previous students who were successful in their course to share with the new students. While some faculty may resist the idea they need to do anything to help students build bridges between high school and college, both high school faculty and college faculty could benefit their students by building parts of those bridges.

The Role of Instructional Contexts: The Physical And Fiduciary State Of The College Campus

One aspect of the instructional context that did affect some of the participants was the budget cuts that the state universities were struggling with. Several participants at state universities reported being unable to choose classes in their major or even register for classes they preferred, so instead they ended up taking whatever they could get. This affected their motivation, as well as their confidence that they would be able to graduate in four years. Some of these participants were ones I would deem at risk, not because they didn't have the knowledge or general dispositions for success, but because their levels of confidence were lower than the other participants. Therefore, they were more sensitive to the challenges posed by the campus environment. Participants reported being taught by lecturers who had been forced to take furlough days; one instructor told the participant she was not allowed to give the students written feedback because of the budget cuts. Whether or not this was actually the case, it is troubling the participant perceived it that way. This particular participant was struggling and needed to be confident in her teacher's guidance and support. Though the teacher was able to give verbal feedback, which the participant valued, the fact is that the participant knew she was getting less instruction than she reasonably expected.

The same participant was also at a state university whose library was closed due to construction. Instead of having a library where she could research by browsing and looking at books, the participant had to order books and hope they were what she needed. While other participants whose campuses had functional libraries chose not to use them, this participant demonstrated an ideal disposition because she tried to use the temporary library system.

The implication is that the physical and financial environment of the campus can affect a student's ability to succeed, particularly their ability to successfully transfer positive procedural knowledge and helpful dispositions. According to the IPEDS database, the university with the closed library has a six year graduation rate of 48%; there are many reasons for this low rate, but the institutional context contributes. When the institution creates roadblocks, by closing a library or by creating anxiety about instructional quality because of budget cuts, those students who are more susceptible to environmental factors may suffer. Though transfer is facilitated by a host of factors, my recommendation is that influence of the institution's local context not be dismissed. There isn't much the participants can do to change their institutions, but high school college counselors should educate parents and students that some state universities are facing challenges that can affect the student's educational experience.

The Role Of The Instructional Context: Classroom Context

In-class support. While many participants reported that their professors had them do peer reviews in class, none of them reported that they felt like it was valuable. From their descriptions, it seemed that professors would put them in groups and tell them to edit each others' papers. Only one participant reported getting any guidance on how to do peer reviews, and that was in the form of a handout. As a result, the comments the participants reported receiving were glib and most often directed at sentence level errors like spelling errors and typos.

In order for peer review to be effective, professors should explicitly teach students how to be peer reviewers, or peer readers, rather than peer editors. Teaching students to be peer readers takes more time than giving students a handout or putting them in groups without direction. A peer reader functions as a practice audience; their job is to identify what they are thinking as a reader, and give that information to their peer. Their job is not to correct or fix.

Outside class support. While this study did not specifically explore writing centers and students' transition from high school to college, some of the findings could have implications for writing centers. The first is that participants benefited from receiving writing guidance outside of the classroom; in this study, nearly all of the participants sought it out. Even though many of the participants had utilized their high school's writing center, only one participant reported visiting their college's writing center. Some participants went to colleges without writing centers, while others went to colleges with writing centers but didn't seek out the centers. Only one participant reported a representative from the writing center visited their class; that was the participant who went to the writing center. That participant was also drawn to the center because it was staffed by peer tutors, including tutors who had been through her honors program. This suggests that if writing centers want to draw in freshmen, they need to continue to find students where they are rather than waiting for students to come to them. The participants in this study responded positively to the help they did received from their TAs or professors, so it suggests that if first-year college students saw the writing center as valuable as their TA or professor, they might be more inclined to seek it out. However, writing centers should consider that if first-year students are bewildered by their professors' expectations, if first-year students' perceive college writing as writing for an individual professor, then the students could feel the writing center is not a credible source of information.

It is recommended that writing centers purposefully reach out to first-year students during the first month when they may be feeling the most disconnected. If the writing center seeks to be a community on campus, then holding social events in the writing center (Scrabble tournaments, or "What The Hell Does My Professor Want" workshops) or sending writing center staff into

dorms to hold the events there might help students feel more connected. Connected students might be more likely to see the center as a valuable resource.

Writing center tutors and staff should work with professors, if possible, to find out more specifically what each one wants to see in freshman writing. Professors could fill out a survey which lets the writing center tutors know if they have any specific predilections. While writing center tutors can always be a practice audience, if the real audience has personal preferences (as this study suggests some do) then it could help the center tutors to know those. Writing centers can help students access the hidden curriculum of writing intensive courses. The fact that one participant went to the center because the writing center tutor had previously taken the participant's class is an argument for peer tutors.

The Role Of The Instructional Context: The Norms And Expectations Of First-Year Writing Courses

Few participants had a first-year writing course that was called composition, and no participants had first-year writing course in which the subject was writing itself. The majority of the participants had first-year English courses, which resembled their high school English courses in that they read and analyzed literature, or they had writing intensive core courses, in which several general education courses were bundled together with a thematic ribbon. What the participants were asked to write in their first-year writing courses ranged widely; the genres in their first-year writing courses ranged from literary analysis to rhetorical analysis to cultural/film/historical critique to social science oriented research. There was nothing to suggest that there was a consensus, even among professors at the same college, about which genres first-year writing students should learn to write, let alone what genres they should read. This, in turn, suggests that for many colleges, it doesn't matter what students write or what they read in first-

year writing; what matters it hey fulfill the requirement of a writing course. This should be an urgent reminder to the field of composition that the field is small, but the farm of first-year writing is incomprehensibly large. Whatever composition does, it has yet to impact the many, many different types of people with different types of training who teach first-year writing. Or, at least it doesn't impact them in the way compositionists' hope it does. Of course, even within the field of composition there are disagreements about what freshman composition is, or should be, or should do. It is not surprising there is no cohesiveness among first-year writing courses.

Due to this lack of cohesiveness, those who teach first-year writing should understand that there is no way for high schools to prepare every student to succeed in every possible iteration of a first-year writing course, let alone every course in which a first-year college student will be asked to write. Even when it would seem like most participants had to analyze something in first-year writing, there was no agreement on what an analysis essay should look like, or what rules it should or should not follow. Even if everyone could agree on what an analysis essay should look like, it is unlikely professors would all agree on what made one worthy of an A and another, a B. It is impossible to for a high school teacher to anticipate the notions that one million teachers of first-year writing have about writing and writing assignments. It is unfair to hold the high school teachers accountable for not doing so.

While this study did not look at whether or not students were able to transfer the knowledge they learned in first-year writing to their other courses, it does offer the field of composition a view of how first-year writing courses enable students to transfer their knowledge in. Applying Smit's critique to high school writing instruction, he might argue that because the context of high school writing was so different from the context of college writing, the writing skills learned in the former would not be generalizable to the latter. This turned out not to be

true: the participants were able to generalize in spite of the contextual differences. However, first-year writing courses could have done more to act as a conduit between high school writing and college writing.

First, first-year writing courses should acknowledge the students are bringing literacy knowledge with them from high school. Neither writing classes situated in composition nor writing classes situated in a hodgepodge of other disciplines invited the participants to reflect on what they had learned in high school. Russell, Smit, and Beaufort's critiques of first-year writing seem to tacitly assume that everything students will need to know about college writing they will learn in first-year writing. This tabula rasa, or blank slate, view of transfer is problematic since it is clear from this study that students were constantly transferring knowledge from high school to college. Wardle (2007) found college sophomores were not transferring what they had learned in first-year writing to other courses, but they were continuing to transfer what they had learned in high school. Wardle argued this was a deficiency on the part of the other college courses' writing assignments because they were not sufficiently challenging. The findings of my study suggest an alternate interpretation: the high school courses gave the students enough content and procedural knowledge that they didn't need to use what they had learned in composition to succeed in their other courses. Rather than seeing this as a reason for the "end" of composition studies, I recommend that composition studies see this as an opportunity for new theory and pedagogy within compositions studies. Instead of viewing first-year writing as a mechanism for students to learn to transfer writing to other courses, first-year writing could be re-imagined to help students transfer in what they already know, evaluate that knowledge in light of new contexts, and then help them transfer out what they have learned.

Downs and Wardle (2007) recommended the field of composition re-imagine itself as an Introduction to Writing Studies. This could change the instructional contexts of first-year writing courses, and change composition from a starting point to a conduit for transfer. An Introduction to Writing Studies course would situate college writing inside an academic field, which would make it harder for other fields to subsume or co-opt into their English literature or core courses. The participants in this study who viewed college writing as learning to find out what the professor wanted would then have the opportunity to learn about discourse communities and rhetorical situations from the perspective of a writer. There would be room in the course for discussing what they had learned in high school, therefore making the potential for knowledge transfer more transparent. While Downs and Wardle felt that the "writing about writing" pedagogy would facilitate transfer from first-year writing to other courses, I argue it would also help strengthen the transfer from high school that is already occurring.

The Transfer Task

Participants in this study viewed writing in college as generally similar to writing in high school. In this way, the participants in this study were performing what Perkins and Salomon called near transfer. The participants didn't perceive most of the writing tasks to be different than the ones in high school. The same applies to the participants' perceptions of college reading: the reading tasks weren't different than reading tasks in high school. In the few cases where the reading or writing tasks were perceived as different, obstacles to transfer were overcome by the other elements in the transfer puzzle, namely the learner's own dispositions.

The implication of this is that even though many consider college writing to be a mythical Other, it perhaps has more in common, at least on the task level, with high school

writing. The recommendation, therefore, is for both high school and college teachers to consider some of the other elements involved in successful transfer more carefully.

The Transfer Context

The participants generally reported there was a good degree of difference between the contexts in which they learned to write in high school, and the contexts in which they were supposed to transfer that knowledge. Though the participants generally perceived the tasks themselves as similar, they perceived the transfer contexts, which were influenced by the institutional contexts, as different. However, the participants were able to overcome the contextual differences by drawing upon their own procedural knowledge and their own dispositions. In this way, this study provides a counterargument to activity theorists' claims that perceived contextual differences are roadblocks to successful transfer. Smit acknowledged that transfer depends on the learners' background and experience, yet he dismissed the relevance of those influences on college writing because the professors could not control them. Perhaps he should reconsider.

Questions For Further Study

In chapter three, I discussed the limitations of this study, including the fact the participants were from an affluent high school that many would consider to be rigorous. I also discussed that this study did not collect sample of the participants work from high school and from college to look for empirical evidence transfer had occurred. Instead, I relied on the participants' perceptions and reports.

Therefore, the first questions for further study would be those that would address some of the limitations of this study. One question is whether students from a less affluent comprehensive high school would be able to transfer the content knowledge and procedural

knowledge they had learned in their high schools to college. Would there be a difference in content knowledge? Would there be a difference in procedural knowledge? If there were differences, could those differences be attributed to their high school's curricula, or their high school teachers' pedagogies? Since the participants in this study had written multi-draft papers in high school and had been able to discuss their writing with their peers, teachers, and tutors at the high school's writing center, would there be a difference in other students' writing processes? Would they have as much metacognitive knowledge of their own writing and writing processes?

A second question for further study would require the researchers to collect writing samples from the participants' high school and college writing. The researcher would want to look for evidence that transfer occurred. One research method might involve the participants annotating their college writing to show where they believed they had transferred knowledge from their high school writing. I have used this method in another study of transfer I am working on with success.

Other studies of transfer in first-year students (Driscoll, 2010) have included classroom observations, collections of learning materials and assignments, and interviews with professors. Since this study relied on the participants' perceptions, a more complete picture of transfer could be attained if the methodology included artifacts and perceptions of others involved in the transfer context. This methodology would enable the researcher to answer questions like: how did the learning materials facilitate or inhibit transfer; what are the professors' perceptions of the assignments; what are the professors' perceptions of the knowledge students bring with them from high school?

This study raises questions about pedagogies used in high school and in college. Along these lines, questions for further study might include: what would an RGS approach look like in

a high school literature classroom; would an RGS approach increase the students' rhetorical flexibility? As a result of this study, I began teaching an Introduction to Writing Studies course to high school juniors and seniors. I am planning to replicate this study with that group of students as they transition through their first year of college. I hope to find out if the Writing Studies curriculum and pedagogy affects their approach to unfamiliar genres and potentially vague assignments. Will the experience of the Writing Studies class enable that second group of participants to be more independent in achieving successful transfer? College level Writing Studies courses (also known as Writing About Writing courses) are thought to facilitate knowledge transfer from first year writing to writing across the curriculum. Studies of these courses might also be able to find out if these courses can strengthen the knowledge students are transferring in.

Types of Knowledge, The Transfer of Knowledge, and The Myth of Preparation

For those who say that American high schools are failing to prepare students for college and that the solution is to increase the rigor of standardized tests and curriculum, the implications of this study are profound. If test scores and course selection were consistent predictors of college success, then participants like Kiera and Talulah should have had more successful transitions to college. However, the fact that their varying levels of motivation, their ability to self-regulate their behavior, and their superficially external locus of control affected their academic success to the extent it did should encourage the public to reconsider the idea that students who take these exams and rigorous courses magically acquire the behaviors needed for academic success. The successful students were successful not only because they had acquired content and procedural knowledge, but because they were able to do the things they needed to do in order to achieve their goals. While all students were able to transfer content knowledge and

procedural knowledge that they had learned in high school, it was those who were motivated enough to build bridges across the gaps who fared the best.

My dinner party companions asked if we should be scared because today's high school students aren't prepared. My answer is this: if we continue to think of preparation as the depositing of the right content knowledge into students' heads and the measuring of their ability to regurgitate that content on standardized exams, then yes, we should be scared. We should be scared not because those students won't ultimately find their way or be successful in college, but because learning has been reduced to the acquisition content knowledge only. If we can think of preparation as not only the teaching of content knowledge but also the development of procedural knowledge and the facilitation of positive dispositions, then no, we would not need to be scared. However, to get from where we are to where we need to be will require a paradigm shift. It will require a widespread reconsideration of the single emphasis on content knowledge; it will require a widespread reconsideration of the important of procedural knowledge; it will require a widespread reconsideration of the role of positive dispositions.

It will require a widespread consideration of the essentialism of knowledge transfer.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A:

Senior Exit Survey

Mercy Senior Exit Survey

Thank you for taking this survey!

There are 4 sections: Writing, Reading, Habits of Mind, Open Ended, and General Information. There is also an optional part at the end about the MRWC for those of you who have had appointments there.

In total, there are 42 questions, and all but the open ended questions ask you to rate yourself on a scale of 1-7 or select an answer from multiple choice.

The survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

ALL of your responses will be kept confidential!!!

Survey Page 1

Mercy Senior Exit Survey

Writing

1 * How **confident** are you that you can write a “good”

persuasive essay in which you try to convince your reader of your point of view?

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* How **confident** are you that you can write a "good" research paper in which you synthesize (bring together) multiple outside sources of facts and information?

2

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* How **confident** are you that you can write a "good" literary analysis essay in which you analyze a piece of literature by looking at a theme (i.e. good vs. evil), at stylistic devices (i.e. imagery, tone, etc.), or through a lens (i.e. Freudian, Marxist)?

3

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* How **confident** are you that you can write a "good" reflective essay in which you discuss ideas and their impact on you?

4

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* How **confident** are you that you can write a "good" lab report in which you have to state a hypothesis, describe lab procedures, and explain the results?

5

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* When you are faced with a new writing assignment in one class, how **likely** are you to think about what you learned about writing in another class?

6

Extremely Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Unsure	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* When you are faced with a difficult writing assignment, how **likely** are you to feel anxiety?

7

Extremely Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Unsure	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* When you faced with a difficult writing assignment, how **likely** are you to persevere until you are satisfied with the quality of the finished product?

8

Extremely Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Unsure	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

9 * In general, are you **more likely** to feel you have earned the grade you get on a writing

assignment, or are you **more likely** to feel the teacher gives the grade to you?

Extremely Likely to Feel I Earned the Grade	Very Likely to Feel I Earned the Grade	Somewhat Likely to Feel I Earned the Grade	Unsure	Somewhat Likely to Feel the Teacher Has Given the Grade	Very Likely to Feel the Teacher Has Given the Grade	Extremely Likely To Feel Teacher Has Given the Grade
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* If you have not received the grade you expected on a writing assignment, are you **more likely** to blame yourself, or **more likely** to blame the teacher?

10

Extremely Likely to Blame Myself	Very Likely to Blame Myself	Somewhat Likely to Blame Myself	Unsure	Somewhat Likely to Blame the Teacher	Very Likely to Blame the Teacher	Extremely Likely to Blame the Teacher
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SUBMIT

Mercy Senior Exit Survey

Reading

11

* How **confident** are you that you can read and understand complex texts (books, articles, essays, etc) *without* instruction and guidance (i.e. without teacher provided study guides, or without in-class discussion)?

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* How **confident** are you that you can summarize an author's main argument, even if that argument isn't directly stated in a thesis sentence?

12

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* How **confident** are you that you can tell when an author is writing their opinion and when an author is stating a fact?

13

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* How **confident** are you that you can complete (and understand) 100 pages of assigned reading a week?

14

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident

1	2	3	4	5	6	7

15 * How **confident** are you that you can identify when an author is trying to win their argument through logos (logic), pathos (emotion), or ethos (the author's own credentials as an expert)?

Extremely Unconfident	Very Unconfident	Somewhat Unconfident	Unsure	Somewhat Confident	Very Confident	Extremely Confident
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

16 * How **likely** are you to use the title of an article to predict what the article is actually going to be about?

Extremely Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Unsure	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

17 * How **likely** are you to argue with a text (i.e. argue in your head, write down arguments as annotations, critique the author, etc.)?

Extremely Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Unsure	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

18 * How **likely** are you to re-read something if you don't understand it the first time?

Extremely Unlikely	Very Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Unsure	Somewhat Likely	Very Likely	Extremely Likely
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SUBMIT

Survey Page 3

Mercy Senior Exit Survey

Habits of Mind

19 * I am curious about ideas that are new to me.

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

20 * I am able to see many points of view on any given topic.
.

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* I am able challenge my own beliefs.

21

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* I engage in intellectual discussions both inside and outside of school.

22

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* I ask provocative questions.

23

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* I am able to generate a hypothesis to figure out why something occurred or to predict why something will occur.

24

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* I always come to class prepared.

25

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* I complete major assignments on time.

26

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* I ask questions for clarification.

27

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* Getting the grade I want is more important to me than thoroughly understanding the material.

28

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* Appearing smart to my peers is more important to me than knowing I am smart just for myself.

29

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* Having my peers listen to my point of view is more important to me than listening to my peers' point of view.

30

Extremely	Very Much	Somewhat	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree

Disagree	Disagree	Diasgree				
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

* Going to college so I can get a good paying job is more important to me than going to college so I can expand my intellectual horizons.

31

Extremely Disagree	Very Much Disagree	Somewhat Diasgree	Unsure	Somewhat Agree	Very Much Agree	Extremely Agree
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

SUBMIT

Mercy Senior Exit Survey

Open Ended

32 Which courses and/or teachers at Mercy do you feel have helped prepare you for college writing, and why?

What strategies and/or resources have you used to improve your writing skills at Mercy? What strategies do you plan on using at college?

33

Overall, do you consider yourself a good writer? Why or why not?

34

35 Which courses and/or teachers at Mercy do you feel have helped prepare you for college reading, and why?

What strategies have you used to improve your reading skills at Mercy? What strategies do you plan on using at college?

36

Overall, do you consider yourself a good reader? Why or why not?

37

SUBMIT

Mercy Senior Exit Survey

General Information

ALL your information is private and confidential.

38 * My weighted Mercy GPA is:

- Above a 4.5
- 4.0-4.5
- 3.5-4.0
- 3.0-3.5
- 2.5-3.0
- 2.0-2.5
- 1.5-2.0
- 1.0-1.5

39 * In my English courses at Mercy I earned:

All As
Mostly As
Mostly Bs
Mostly Cs
Mostly Ds

* In my Social Studies courses I earned:

40

All As
Mostly As
Mostly Bs
Mostly Cs
Mostly Ds

* On major writing assignments in all courses I earned:

41

All As
Mostly As
Mostly Bs
Mostly Cs
Mostly Ds

* In my first year of college I will be satisfied if I earn a minimum of:

42

All As
Mostly As
Mostly Bs
Mostly Cs
Mostly Ds

SUBMIT

Survey Page 6

Mercy Senior Exit Survey

(Optional) Writing Center

Please answer the following question only if you have had an appointment with Ms. Wells in the MRWC at any time during your years at Mercy.

The Mercy Reading and Writing Center helped me...(Please select all that apply).

43

- Increase my confidence as a writer.
- Get a better grade on a writing assignment.
- Revise my writing more than I would have on my own.
- Further develop my own "voice" as a writer.
- Reflect more on my own writing process.
- Connect what I learned about writing from one class to another.
- Connect what I learned about writing from one year to another.
- Become more motivated as a writer.
- Write something I was truly proud of.
- Learn new strategies for writing.
- Learn new strategies for editing/revising/proofreading.
- Learn new strategies for reading.
- Other, please specify

SUBMIT

Mercy Senior Exit Survey

If you would like to be contacted about participating in Miss Wells' study next year, please fill out the following information. Miss Wells will be getting in touch with you later this summer and the study would officially begin toward the end of your first month at college. By giving your contact information here, you are not obligated to participate.

44

Your name

Best email address to

reach you

Mailing address for release form(s)

If you think you might participate in the study, would you prefer to have interview questions emailed, Facebooked, snail mailed, or ????

SUBMIT

Appendix B:

Email Interview Questions

Round 1: September/October

1) Tell me about your first month of transitioning from a high school student to a college student.

To help you answer the question, you can think about (but don't have to specifically answer) these guiding sub-questions.

What were your first impressions of your classes/class syllabi?

How you are feeling about your classes this semester/quarter?

How are you feeling about yourself as a college student at this point?

How has the transition from HS to college gone overall?

Round 2: November/December

1) Tell me about (or more about) your transition from high school writing to college writing.

This might include:

* descriptions of the kinds of writing you are asked to do in ALL your classes, not just English

* any challenges/successes you have had with college writing

* your confidence as a writer now compared to the end of high school

* specific things you learned about writing at Mercy that you have been able to use in college writing

*specific things you learned at about writing at Mercy that you have not been able to use/were told not to use in college writing

Appendix C:

In-Person Interview Questions

1) Tell me about your transition from high school to college, overall.
2) Tell me about your college classes, in general.
3) Tell me about the writing you have had to do for college classes.
4) Tell me about the reading you have had to do for your college classes.
5) Can you describe your college writing assignments?
6) Can you describe your college reading assignments?
7) How did you feel about your college reading and writing?
8) What did you learn about writing in high school that helped you in college?
9) What do you wish you had learned /not learned about writing in high school that would have helped you in college?
10) What did you learn about reading in high school that helped you in college?
11) What do you wish you had learned/not learned about reading in high school that would have helped you in college?
12) When something was challenging, what did you do?

Appendix D:

Participants' Description of First-year Writing

Course	Genre	Description
Ancient History	In-class essay for midterm	After identifying the historical context and meaning of key course terms, I then needed to address the main prompt: Why is this significant/ what does this mean?
Asian American Studies	Final exam paper…basically a research paper	You had to research a specific issue that targets… That really, really affects Asian Americans in the United States today and just…
Biology	Papers	They were research papers. She gave you websites, you went to the websites. You got the information off the websites. And you put it in your paper… It was just, you pretty much took the

		information, analyzed it, took the information, analyzed it, answered the questions, and then handed the paper.
Biology	Papers	The teacher gave us all of the information, we simply had to word it and describe different processes in the human body like Mitosis.
Communications	Regurgitating things on the test	What we'd learned and why it was important. He did make us analyze "whether or not media is kind of controlling us"…
Core	Prompts	Answering them.
	Precis	Even though it is sort of a summary, it is still difficult because the reading was dense and understanding then explaining the point of the

		author took a lot of work.
Critical Thinking	Written exercise	I'm going to call that an outline.
Critical Thinking and Writing: Historical Fiction	Analysis	She wanted us to determine or define what is history? If somebody wrote a novel, is it still historical or, because it's not somebody real, does it not count? And we did movies the second semester. And we had to analyze them.
English	We have written a narration essay, description essay, illustration essay, example essay, definition essay, process analysis essay, and a comparison and contrast essay.	For each essay, my professor has given us three to four prompts to choose from.
English 106 (developmental writing)	Restaurant review	And no one did well on it because we weren't using the proper material. We didn't follow the guidelines which I thought I did but apparently,

		all of us missed a crucial guideline that we didn't… It was like, "How did you feel after the meal?"
	Essay	It was: "A child, at the age of 12 wants a Facebook. What would you do?"
English 1A (Composition)	Essay	One of the first essays we wrote this year had to be about a sub-culture that we felt we were a part of. We had to not only describe the culture and give our affiliation with it, but we also had to say how the sub-culture went against/contradicted the mainstream culture.
English Composition 3. Each English Comp class at XXXX, like depending on which one	Reports	We just basically read a bunch of books and then wrote reports on them. And then, so

you pick, like say you pick section A, that one could be about like Family Dynamics while another one is about Inter-Racial Dynamics. You're just assigned like, by whatever fits in your schedule. Mine was Family Dynamics.		it'd be like, "In this situation, the father handled it this way. How do you think this affected how the child reacted to a situation later on in life?" Stuff like that. I think that was our prompt for *Kite Runner*. Something like that.
Environmental Science	Homework worksheet	She more just wanted to know what we thought about something and was just a homework assignment or was like ten points for a worksheet that involved all the math and stuff we'd learned. So it was really short and just more like, "Tell me why."
	Lab report	My teacher gave us a heading – as in her name, the class, where our names go, and where the title of the Lab goes – and that was it. I was just

		like, “Okay, then what? Like, that’s great. I’m really glad I know how the 1st page looks. But I don’t know what to do after this.” So I went in and she’s like, “Well, I’ll give you questions in the Lab.” And I’m like, “Okay, how do I format those questions.” And she’s like, “I want this,” pointing to the cover page, “And the questions.” I probably wrote her a novel on every question that probably could’ve been answered in 3 sentences. And she definitely wrote that on there. “You could’ve written this in 3 sentences.”
English	Assignments	The first is a description of a piece of art of our choice. The second is a description of a picture of something of ours.

Freshman Seminar in Journalism	Blogs	Each week we have blogs of 400-600 words that are focused on different aspects of news
	Research papers	800-1,000 word research papers, one on a famous journalist and one on deconstructing a news story to evaluate it for credibility.
History	Paper	More like a personal reflection than a formal paper.
History	Book review	
	Essay questions	
History	Research paper [with less research than high school research paper]	We were to read a book and take all of our information from that to write a 10 page paper.
Intro to Ethnic Studies	Midterm exam	Essay with three prompts, and

		one of those prompts will be given. We basically need to pre-write three essays
Introduction to Psychology	Reflection papers	
	Mini lit review	She was like, you know, "Make sure you follow APA very thoroughly. The strict guidelines on what the Title should contain, what the abstract should contain, methods, participants, yadayadayada…
Justice and Poverty	Essay	2-page essay, first talking about how the topic we've been reading about relates to the work we've been doing [in community outreach programs].
Latin American and Caribbean Studies	Papers	Responses to some of our readings.
Media and Communications	Analysis	Whatever topic we've been studying. So if it was like

		Advertising in Movies or something, we have to analyze something in that… we'd have to find, like something that we would consider biased media and explain why it's biased. ..Who owned the company? We talked a lot about Viacomm, Disney…
Military Science	Essay	About US Army values.
Modern Chinese Literature	Essays based on books that we read	He would give us a prompt and then, like the first one was on this one book and then… I think it was called "Family" and we had to write about "what parts of his character made his family important?" Or like, "What does his character provide for the story?" He would give us the different prompts on what we should be writing about.
Modern Music Appreciation	Research/reflection papers	

Nursing	Essays that we had to write for those, they were basically reflections on the readings.	We would read about like Ethics in Nursing and then they would give us a scenario like, “Say you’re in a clinic and a patient’s family comes up to you asking too many questions. How do you handle it?”
Philosophy	Memorization of concepts	Remembering their arguments
	Exams	We would be given a line. We’d have to identify what year, who wrote it… All of that. And then analyze it. But we’d already done that verbally in class. So it was a matter of paying attention.
Political Science	Essays that were informative	One of the essays that we had to do was we had to read this little snippet on the death penalty and then write an essay talking about the two points of view that were in

		that little reading section. And describe how we felt about that.
Political Science	Midterm and final take home essays	
Psychology	A paper	Reflecting on psychology
Public Speaking	Keyword Outline	A keyword… I think that was you can only have a certain amount of words. On a piece of paper.
	Full sentence outline	And then we got a full sentence outline.
Religion	Analyzing the text	Trying to come up with some genius thing like Plato
Research Methods	Study	We'd gone into groups and formed our own study, basically.
SAAJ (It covered Religion 301, English 101, Upper Division Literature, as well as your first-year seminar requirement).	Essays	3; The first one was persuasive. We had to choose a topic. I chose…What did I choose? I think it was abortion. And then pro or con,

	why… The second one was… The 2nd one led up to the 3rd one. But I can't remember what they were.
Research paper	We had it on a disability. So we had to interview someone that had a disability. And then half of the paper had to be on the interview. The other half had to be about the disability.
More of a reflection	We had to read something and then answer five questions about it. 'Cause SAAJ, 2nd semesters, was split up into 2 modules. The 1st module was about Utopias. So then we had to read something and then one question was, "How is this Utopia? How could it be better? How would it be like Utopia now?"

Sociology	Paper	Ties in the theories of socialization we have learned and my future goals in life.
Sociology	More of a research paper	The assignment was to compare your life to another person's life that we had to interview and who was not planning on going to college. Then we had to use data, research, and course readings to analyze why and how us and our interviewee's lives are so different.
Spanish	Story Paper	5 page, on a Spanish film.
Speech	Speeches	I was writing what I was going to say.
Teaching and Learning	Discussion Board	Questions like… What was one of them? Usually, "What would you do if you didn't have a blog?" What-if questions or they would give

		you a problem and you have to be like… How you solve it.
Theology Seminar	Papers	Two, three-page papers
	Reflection	One or two
Women and Gender Studies	It was more personal experience and then with a little bit of research.	She was more interested in, "Don't quote me books you think I'll be impressed with. Tell me what you really think."
Writ 125/ENG 120 (Critical Interpretations)	Papers	Three so far. Since the course mainly focuses upon the critical interpretation of poetry, all of my essay assignments have been about this subject. Past essay topics include: analyzing a Shakespearean sonnet of our choice, writing about a recurrent image or theme in John Keats' Odes, and reviewing Wordsworth's voice in his poems.

Written Communication I	Essay	They gave you like, say a letter. And then, [write your essay]… Like one of them was like… I think it was George W. Bush's letter or something, whatever… And you had to analyze if it was effective, if it was not, like stuff like that.
Written Communication II	Essay	It was research. One of my favorite ones was… Your topic was to find out… Or agree or disagree if racism still exists today. So you would have to find different events to back it up. You couldn't just pick one event and analyze the whole thing.