The Tacit Values of Sourced Writing: A Study of Source "Engagement" and the FYW Program as Community of Practice

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Abstract

A writing program with high faculty autonomy adopted a new learning outcome emphasizing integration of sources and a related synthesis assignment with broad guidelines. In dynamic criteria mapping preceding assessment, program faculty in small group interviews valued "engagement" in student's sourced writing but could not reach consensus on what they meant. This study makes explicit these otherwise tacit values associated with students' sourced writing in FYW. In an attempt to operationalize "engagement," we compared the results of two processes: a program assessment conducted in 2012-13 of a simple random sample of students' sourced essays and collaborative coding of the same sample. Statistically significant correlations were found between high assessment scores and specific discursive moves such as summary, as well as frequency and variation in type of source use. These findings bring the professional judgement of writing teachers into relief and suggest that, despite its high autonomy and lack of a common assignment, this FYW program is functioning as an intermediary community of practice between individual classrooms and disciplinary contexts. There are significant implications for strengthening programmatic research and authority.

In many writing programs across the country, faculty share learning outcomes while enjoying a large degree of autonomy with respect to pedagogy and course design. Faculty autonomy is understandably cherished, but it can be perceived as posing challenges for programs' sense of coherence and consistency in focus. This perception is especially problematic to the extent that faculty would seem to lack a common understanding and enactment of student learning outcomes and the values that inform them, posing potential risks for fairness and consistency in assessment of student work. After all, articulating a student learning outcome rarely creates faculty consensus on its own terms, no matter the process of its formulation or the clarity of its statement. Thus, at the same time that faculty enjoy high levels of autonomy within a writing program, their authority may be undermined unless the coherence of what they know and value as a community—their

professional expertise with respect to learning outcomes—can be brought into relief.

Demonstrating a writing program's coherence with respect to outcomes is also critical to program assessment, curricular revision, and programmatic authority. This is especially true when a program is weak along the lines of what Finer and White-Farnham (2017) called architecture, "the institutional structures that, alongside its people, anchor a program to the ground and keep it standing" (p. 4). Such architecturally weak programs often rely on the person of the WPA to accomplish assessment and program revision, enabling institutional flexibility. Authority concerning hiring, scheduling, budgeting, and evaluating full-time teaching faculty is frequently lodged with a third-party, such as a department chair. Consistent with Gladstein and Regaignon's (2012) research on small liberal arts colleges, however, a WPA may have considerable influence on these and other decisions (if not the authority to sign off on them) as well as with the chair and faculty in other disciplines. An important part of this influence is leadership on assessment. Program assessment has the potential to especially heighten a WPA's influence within an architecturally weak writing program so long as that WPA can demonstrate programmatic coherence and consistency and lift up the collective professional expertise of writing faculty, which is potentially challenging when a writing program also invites high levels of faculty autonomy.

Such were the salient circumstances and challenges in fall 2012, as we worked within a writing program at High Point University, a small private comprehensive university with a liberal arts mission. Holly serves as WPA; she is a tenured faculty member who at the time received a course release during the academic year and a stipend to conduct assessment and program revision over the summer. Donna is also a teured faculty member who periodically teaches within the program, but was not doing so at the time of this study. As a potential further challenge to program coherence and consistency, instructors collectively adopted a new learning outcome earlier in the spring, emphasizing students' integration of others' ideas and information. By fall, a new required synthesis assignment was introduced with very general guidelines regarding word and source counts. There was not yet a shared understanding of the synthesis assignment's purpose or methods for teaching and grading it given high instructor autonomy, combined with the new integration outcome. Under these circumstances—high faculty autonomy, a relatively new learning outcome, very general shared assignment requirements—we wondered: could this writing program be understood as operating with a sense of shared values, particularly with respect to a new outcome?

This overarching question motivated us to explore faculty's understanding of how students effectively integrated others' ideas and information in their writing. Furthermore, we wanted to know the extent to which faculty judgments could be described as coherent and consistent with respect to this outcome. We investigated what program faculty valued in students' integration of sources through a small-group professional development activity known as dynamic criteria mapping (DCM) and program assessment (both conducted by Holly). During DCM, a process that identifies the values in play in the teaching and assessment of student writing (Broad, 2009), faculty frequently invoked "engagement" during discussion, but the term was so fluid it could not be defined for use in assessment of source integration. Assessment nevertheless proceeded with the criteria and vocabulary that could be derived from DCM, with a committee of eight writing instructors scoring 51 essays, a random sample of source essays taken from fall 2012 first-year writing (FYW) courses. This led us to the research question we explore here: what do faculty mean by "engagement" with respect to student writing that integrates sources?

To answer this question, and to investigate whether faculty assessments of students' integration of sources could be captured consistently through different means, we employed a second process. In this second process, using over half of the same random sample of student essays, we collaboratively coded students' discursive moves and compared our results with the scores assigned to those essays during assessment. We found statistically significant correlations between high assessment scores and specific moves such as summary as well as variation and frequency in type of source use. These findings made explicit, for us, what Geisler (1994) has termed the "tacit rhetorical dimension" and what Lancaster (2016) has termed the "discursive consciousness" of academic writing. By describing discursive moves specific to high-scoring essays, we also affirm that our FYW program is functioning as a community of practice, which specifically emphasizes "practices and values that hold communities together" while acknowledging the importance of texts, genres, and language of significance to discourse communities (Johns, 1997, p. 52).

While FYW programs are often described as communities, the more precise phrase "community of practice" is often reserved for courses in the disciplines and majors. If a FYW program were functioning as a community of practice, we would expect to see its values evident in the ways that student writing is read by faculty, particularly during recurring communal practices like program assessment. Our findings suggest that our FYW program is functioning as a community of practice, and our methods offer a map for how other programs might uncover their own tacit values and

strengthen their programs. For us, this study foregrounded tacit knowledge that we can teach as explicit practice: a sense of what Lancaster (2016) called the "formation of an academic stance" and Brent (2013) called "a shift . . . to what the writer *does*" in relation to individual sources. In the language of thresholds, we uncovered "the assumptions of a community of practice" (Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2015) associated with sourced writing in FYW.[1] By emphasizing variation in source use, we are also in conversation with Harris's *Rewriting* (2017) and Bizup's (2008) work on rhetorical use ("BEAM"). We took a term that described the most valuable aspect of faculty's reading experience of sourced essays—"engagement"—and worked to identify its textual features.

Through these two processes—assessing and coding the same sample of student writing—our work offers a way to integrate WPA work on teaching, learning, and assessment as a research agenda. While writing assessment has only grown as a field of inquiry over the past two decades, it is often subject to the same local pressure described by Anson and Brown (1999): "much programmatic research is conducted by professional staff members . . . whose own credibility and job status are determined largely by how well they support the operation of the institution," rather than student learning or the scholarship required for tenure and promotion (p. 144).

This kind of research also can institutionally strengthen programs by bringing writing teachers' expertise into relief. As Gallagher (2011) argued in "Being There," "only we—faculty and students—are in a position to improve teaching and learning in meaningful ways" (p. 468), and conducting meaningful assessment develops and makes visible the expertise of those who teach in the program. In programs with weak architectures like ours, controlling assessment can therefore strengthen not only teaching and learning but also the structure of the program itself. That our program functions as a community of practice is also important for this reason. It anticipates and responds to the criticism that writing grades are subjective by demonstrating the consistency and coherence of professional judgement.

Below we first articulate our framework, then outline our methods, design, and findings. We conclude with research, pedagogical, and programmatic implications.

A Community of Practice Framework: Values, Discourses, and Practices

Because the community of practice model is not an operating framework, we found inconsistent attention in the literature to communal contexts, in particular to how faculty read and value the discourses of FY students'

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sourced writing as part of routine program practice. What academic writers at different levels value (or understand or think) about working with sources differs, and these values in turn shape the practices (or strategies) with which they compose. More experienced writers tend to value sourced writing as inquiry or "knowledge-transforming" (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987) and as "open-ended and interpretive" (Schwegler & Shamoon, 1982, p. 820). In contrast, less experienced writers typically understand sourced writing as "a close-ended, informative, skills-oriented exercise" (p. 820), adopting practices consistent with a model of composing that has been termed "knowledge-telling" according to which writers largely replicate or report on what they know or learn (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987).

Our understanding of students' work with sources is informed by rich discourse analyses of stance, or how a writer orients to their materials or sources. Professional writers often employ "evidentials of citation" by using verbs such as "*say, report, show*, and *demonstrate*" to signal the work of sources (Barton, 1993, p. 751), thereby exercising "a means of appropriating the literature rather than simply citing it" (p. 752). In their analysis of 4,032 first-year directed self-placement essays and 615 upper-division and graduate student A-graded essays at two institutions, Aull and Lancaster (2014) found clear developmental trajectories in the metadiscursive construction of stance. The cohorts at both institutions shared distinctive patterns, with first-year writers especially struggling to construct a "sufficiently honed and cautious stance in a community of many views (cited or not)" (p. 173). A later study by Lancaster (2016) reiterated the importance of cautious stance-taking in academic writing, discovering that a corpus of philosophy essays included frequent discursive devices associated with "confident uncertainty," especially "hedging" (p. 131). Knowledge of these discursive attributes proved tacit, however, to both an undergraduate major and a professor in philosophy who described their writing not as cautious but direct and assertive.

The studies discussed above have much to offer as points of departure for our own work. In general, though, their evaluation of the discursive attributes of student writing underappreciates how the values they reflect are typically embedded in practice—for our purposes, acts of reading undertaken by faculty operating within programmatic contexts, reading and valuing student texts with certain learning outcomes and other programmatic purposes (like assessment) in mind. For example, studies commonly draw on non-naturalistic prompts, often in timed settings geared toward placement or proficiency testing (e.g., Aull & Lancaster, 2014; Barton, 1993), or favor one or two aspects of a community over others. (For example, Flower [1990b] prioritized studying students' metacognitive

awareness and practices over their discourses). With certain recent exceptions (e.g., Lancaster, 2016), linguistically oriented studies largely have emphasized students' written discourses and seem to assume that other aspects (values, practices) can be understood directly by the researchers' analyses of these discourses.

These studies nevertheless contributed productively to longstanding debates about the genre of the "research paper" in FYW (Davis & Shadle, 2000; Larson, 1982; Melzer & Zemlianksy, 2003), challenging the idea that a particular genre of writing regularly falls short of meaningful or academically valued work with sources (see, e.g., Flower, 1990a on "critical literacy"). With regard to the genres of FYW in particular, some have taken this point so far as to argue that genres like the research paper are without value altogether unless embedded in disciplinary contexts (Beaufort, 2007; Wardle, 2009). Yet this perspective warrants reconsideration given a growing body of research describing with nuance how students work discursively with sources as well as the meaningful research and writing experiences that students can have in FYW (Eodice, Geller, & Lerner, 2016).

We therefore sought to discover how the discourses, practices, and values associated with sourced writing relate by highlighting the contexts and communities in which sourced writing takes place. Describing the research paper as a "fundamentally important genre," Brent (2013) asserted that this genre of sourced writing is defined by "what a community—in this case, the community of people who teach writing and of students who learn to write—perceive as a commonly recurring exigence that is responded to in certain commonly recurring ways" (p. 36). Brent helpfully shifted here from a genre of sourced writing to those academic communities in which this genre might serve as a meaningful discursive practice. Informed by this shift, we believe that an intermediary community—the FYW program—deserves greater attention, existing as it does between individual classrooms and disciplinary contexts.

Method

Campus Context

A private comprehensive university located in the southeastern United States, High Point University offers a broad range of undergraduate degrees, including those in the traditional liberal arts, business, furniture and interior design, exercise science, and education; graduate degrees are offered in business, communication, education, and the health professions. For the academic year 2012–13, the university enrolled 3,926 undergraduate students, 1,257 of which were FY students. While the percentage has

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increased every year since, in 2012 only 13% of total enrolled students belonged to a self-identified minority group (HPU Office of Research and Planning, 2018, p. 19). For the 2018–19 academic year, passing rates and average grades between "all ENG 1103 students" and ENG 1103 students belonging to a self-identified minority group indicate no significant differences; in any given semester, almost all students pass the FYW requirement.

Most students satisfy the university-mandated writing requirement by enrolling in ENG 1103: College Writing and Public Life, a one-semester FYW course housed in an English department with specializations in rhetoric and composition, literature, and creative writing. At the beginning of the fall 2012 semester, 562 students were enrolled across twenty-five sections of FYW. Of these students, 408 consented to participate in this study, which is part of a larger collaborative research project investigating undergraduate research and writing approved by the university's Institutional Review Board (Upward Project, 2018).[2]

Formative Outcomes Assessment Process

In April 2012, FYW instructors condensed a long list of CWPA learning outcomes to be more responsive to institutional general education requirements. One result was a stronger emphasis on integration of sources as a shared outcome: "Conduct research as inquiry, in the sense of . . . integrating others' ideas and information with one's own." The writing program subsequently conducted formative assessment of integration but did not yet share an assignment that required students to integrate sources in writing. The following guidelines were therefore introduced in fall 2012 for a new required synthesis assignment: (1) it must be an essay of 1200–1400 words and (2) it must integrate at least three sources.

Instructors in the writing program experience a large degree of autonomy with respect to pedagogy and course design. The writing program is staffed by an array of English department faculty: long-time adjunct instructors (on semester contracts), full-time instructors (on one-year contracts), and tenured/tenure-track faculty who rotate into teaching FYW. All faculty have advanced degrees in English and have knowledge of and experience with best practices in teaching rhetorical approaches to writing. High instructor autonomy, combined with the new integration outcome, meant there was not yet a shared understanding of the synthesis assignment's purpose or methods for teaching and grading it. To generate such an understanding, instructors designed and shared their assignments for sourced writing.

Formative outcomes assessment was therefore undertaken in order to generate a shared working vocabulary for program values and to inform curricular revision. In fall 2012, the WPA (Holly) identified a simple random sample of 60 students enrolled in ENG 1103 who had agreed to participate in the study. A work study student collected 51 of their synthesis essays and replaced identifying information with a code. The essays were divided among four packets, each of which was assigned two faculty readers on the outcomes assessment committee.

Early in 2013, Holly conducted dynamic criteria mapping (DCM), a process that identifies the values in play in the teaching and assessment of student writing (Broad, 2009). Holly first led small-group interviews with all English department faculty. In groups of five, participants were presented with the same two student essays and asked to identify what they did and did not value in each student's work with sources. Based on minutes compiled from these meetings, Holly developed a criteria map. Over several meetings in April and May, the eight members of the assessment committee revised this map into the glossary eventually used as the assessment rubric. (For the rubric, please see Upward Project [2018].)

Along with Holly, three tenured/tenure-track faculty, two full-time instructors, and two adjunct instructors across all specializations comprised the assessment committee. (Donna was not involved with assessment.) For the assessment procedure, paired members of the assessment committee scored the same packet using the finalized worksheet and glossary. Readers were asked to assign each essay an integration score using a 1–6 scale, where 1–3 signified degrees of failure to meet expectations for the outcome and 4–6 signified degrees of meeting expectations. The 1–6 scale was selected to yield more meaningful data and to compel debate about what constitutes the distinction between a 3 (not proficient) and 4 (proficient) performance. The paired readers' 1–6 integration scores were combined into what we call a total integration score of 2–12. No scores were thrown out and no third readers were brought in to adjudicate. For each 1–6 score, readers selected the value-neutral criterion from the glossary that most informed their judgement. The glossary thus served as the central assessment instrument.

During the faculty small group interviews about student writing, engagement emerged as an important value. But because it could not be specifically defined—it could variously mean engagement with sources, with the subject, with the reader, or simply involvement—the term was not added to the glossary. This assessment context gave rise to our interest in engagement as something writing faculty read for, a valued quality of the reading experience but one with slippery textual referents. As we discussed what was for us an interesting problem our research questions took shape:

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what do we mean by engagement with sources in student writing? What moves do FYW students make when they engage with a source?

Study Design

We pursued these questions at the August 2013 Dartmouth Summer Seminar for Composition Research where we attempted to operational-ize "engagement" by developing a coding scheme for the essays collected for assessment in fall 2012. However, in order to ensure that each essay was in fact responding to a writing prompt calling for a synthesis essay, we devised the following two rules: (1) the assignment had to require three or more sources and (2) the primary learning goal of the assignment had to be synthesis.

Of the original 51 essays procured from the sample, 35 essay assign-ments (69%) conformed to the rules; of these, 33 were coded. Rhetorical moves occur at the level of the t-unit (Geisler, 2018, p. 224), so each essay was then segmented by t-unit onto an Excel spreadsheet by row.

To generate preliminary codes, we collaboratively coded three essays chosen at random from the sample. After reading through the data indi-vidually performing what Saldaña (2009) described as "initial coding" (p. 81)—making notes about patterns and themes that might offer "analytic leads for further exploration" (p. 81)—we discussed results. Work with the initial three essays helped us identify when students engaged with sources as "source referentiality." We therefore coded as a "reference" any t-unit in which the writer made explicit reference to a source, usually through cita-tion practice, attribution, or acknowledgment of authorship (see Jamieson, 2017, on difficulties of determining how to code for sources in student texts). We came to define a "source" as any alphabetic text, in digital or print format, that is either included in the bibliography of a student essay, or that a reader would expect to see so included.

In order to capture both the reference to a source and the type of engage-ment with that source, we created what Geisler (2004) calls a "nested" cod-ing scheme (p. 90) that required two rounds. In the first round, we coded the writer's reference to a source (source referentiality, what we referred to as dimension 1) and in the second round coded each of these instances a second time for source engagement, whether or not the attempt was con-sidered successful (dimension 2). Codes for source engagement captured what students did with sources—their discursive moves—rather than their metadiscourse through which they might signal their academic stance or orientation to their sources (e.g., through hedging or using certain verbs). We generated five categories of source engagement based on work with the

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initial three essays: Inform, Explain, React, Develop, and Connect. We then further refined the definitions and boundaries of these categories by applying the codes to two new essays. A preliminary test of reliability with a third coder not involved with the study produced very high agreement (98% simple agreement) on source referentiality, giving us confidence that our description of source referentiality (dimension 1) was well defined. This coder, however, produced more moderate agreement (68% simple agreement) on source engagement. Granted, a "correct" coding requires two levels of accuracy with respect to source referentiality (dimension 1) as well as source engagement (dimension 2). Conversely, any errors in coding for referentiality will necessarily carry over as errors for engagement, reducing the rate of agreement for this second dimension. Even so, this coder's robust rate of agreement for referentiality meant that agreement in codes with respect to source engagement was little affected; the relatively low level of agreement for engagement signaled a need to further refine the codes for dimension 2.

In the revised coding scheme, the types of dimension 2 source engagement were defined as follows:

- **Inform:** the writer refers to discrete or specific information, facts, definitions, etc.
- **Explain:** the writer summarizes, paraphrases, or integrates or refers to a quote that demonstrates awareness of a source or its author beyond mere facts: as having something significant to say, as doing at least minimal argumentative or rhetorical work, or as having a means or method of saying something.
- **React:** the writer reacts to or takes a position in relation to a source, regardless of accuracy. React is primarily reactive rather than generative.
- **Develop:** the writer builds upon or analyzes ideas from the source.
- **Connect:** the writer makes connections between two (or more) texts or two (or more) authors.

For the coding schemes, please see Upward Project (2018).

Another independent coder not directly involved with the study was asked to code the three essays. This coder produced more moderate agreement with respect to source referentiality (82% simple agreement) and similarly moderate agreement with respect to source engagement (76% simple agreement). When the automatic dimension 2 error (described above) was removed, however, agreement as to source engagement proved stronger (86% simple agreement) and within the 85–90% minimal benchmark range Saldaña (2009, p. 28) and Geisler (2004, p. 84) recommended

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for interrater reliability. Based on these reliability results, we moved forward with coding 33 of the remaining essays, with each researcher coding roughly half. Questions and issues were discussed as they arose in order to reach consensus and enhance "intercoder agreement" (Saldaña, 2009, pp. 27–28; Smagorinsky, 2008, p. 401).

Despite being composition-rhetoric faculty members in the same English department teaching the same course to the same student body, we revised our coding scheme several times over many months to arrive at one reliable enough to proceed. As such, our code development was the sort of process that Serviss (2017) suggested invites reflection. Because we could not agree on how to code—how to simply describe what the writer was doing—the scope of what we initially thought we might capture had to be continually narrowed. We understand the multiplicity of meanings cued by these student texts as attesting to not only the elusiveness of language but also the composing practices of individual readers and the resulting specificity that coding requires. Nevertheless, the final scheme demonstrates an engagement similar to the rhetorical functions Bizup outlined in his BEAM taxonomy (2008) and evokes Toulmin's argumentative framework, especially as adapted to investigations of students' textual source use (Beaufort, 2007; Haller, 2010).

Discussion of Results

We found several statistically significant correlations between essays assigned high scores via assessment and certain coding patterns. For example, faculty value specific ways in which students engage with sources. When students Explain a source, they summarize, paraphrase, or integrate that source, or they refer to a quote in a way that demonstrates an awareness of the source as authored. The more students Explain sources in their essays, the more faculty value their essays (p =.002, a highly statistically significant correlation).[3] This was also true of Develop—building upon or analyzing ideas from sources (p =.062, a statistically significant correlation at .10 level)[4]—and Connect—making connections between two or more texts or authors (p =.030, a statistically significant correlation).[5] No statistically significant relationship was shown, however, between the number of times a student Informs or Reacts to sources in an essay and how faculty scored the essay. In particular, Informing is frequently used by students as a group, but without a statistically significant relationship to faculty assessment scores (p =.682).[6] The more a student engages with sources in any of these three specific ways—Explain, Develop, or Connect—the more highly a student's essay was scored during assessment.

There is also a highly statistically significant relationship between the number of different ways a student engages in an essay and the faculty assessment score that essay receives ($p =$.010).[7] In other words, an essay that Informs and Explains and Reacts and Develops and Connects is more likely to be valued by faculty than an essay that engages sources in just two or three of these ways. We use the term "variation" for this finding, to denote a demonstration of engaging sources in multiple ways.

Finally, our analysis demonstrates a highly statistically significant correlation between the number of times students engaged with sources in ways other than Inform—i.e., Explain, React, Develop, and Connect—and faculty's valuation of the essay ($p =$.003).[8] When we removed Inform and reanalyzed our data, we discovered a statistically significant correlation between frequency of source use and faculty assessment. We use the term "frequency" for this finding, to denote the rate at which sources are engaged, with the caveat that a high rate of source use is only valued when sources are used in ways more sophisticated than Inform. In other words, it is important to note that type of source use and frequency are connected here. There is a weak positive linear correlation between the total number of sources referenced in an essay and the essay's assessment score, but this relationship is not statistically significant ($p =$.131).[9] As described above, Inform created noise for purposes of frequency analysis because students often Inform, but Inform alone does not significantly correlate with assessment scores.

These findings clarify the features of sourced writing that FYW faculty value and the discursive contours of what is meant by the otherwise ill-defined term "engagement." Consistent with the existing literature, we found that faculty value certain discursive moves over others: e.g., when a student summarizes, paraphrases, or otherwise integrates a source in a way that demonstrates an awareness of an author or source (Explain). This finding is consistent with research demonstrating more experienced writers at the very least "appropriate the literature rather than simply citing it" (Barton, 1993, p. 8). To Explain a source at minimum preserves some sense of the rhetorical dimensions of a source as authored (Geisler, 1994). It is an alternative, however basic, to looking through the source and deploying it as information.

Faculty also value when a FYW student builds upon or analyzes ideas from sources (Develops) or makes connections between two or more texts or authors (Connects). This finding accords with corpus analysis research that found experienced writers more frequently elaborate or exemplify (with code glosses) and distinguish between opposing perspectives (with connectors) (Aull & Lancaster, 2014). The writer thus situates themselves with

respect to other authors, informed by the rhetorical knowledge that agreement (and disagreement) is fluid among them (Geisler, 1994). As discursive moves, Develop and Connect also would appear to demonstrate what Flower (1990b) and Aull and Lancaster (2014) described as "complexity."

Similar to others, we found that faculty value the overall variety ("rhetorical source use" [Haller, 2010]) and frequency (e.g., Barton, 1993) with which students employ certain kinds of discursive moves. Students who work with sources in diverse ways and multiple times in an essay (in any way other than Inform) are considered to be engaging with sources. We suspect that Inform and React are valued when a part of variation (but not individually) because they are read as discursive moves that need to be made sense of or earned in relation to other types of engagement. That is, it is not enough for a student to Inform or React without a sense of why information is being provided or the basis for the writer's reaction, purposes advanced by Explaining, Connecting, and/or Developing. Altogether, these findings are suggestive of the discursive attributes of FY students' sourced writing associated with knowledge-transforming (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1987) and inquiry (American Library Association, 2015; Schwegler & Shamoon, 1982) in FYW.

Our results provide some empirical support defining the contours of a notoriously nebulous term of art in the field of composition. This description and operationalization of source engagement is, of course, somewhat limited to the context of this study, shaped by the understanding and values of writing faculty involved in a particular program and teaching a minimally defined "synthesis" essay. However, our contribution is in developing a concrete scheme for FYW students' source engagement and demonstrating how we did so.

By clarifying faculty's tacit values about students' engagement with sources, we enrich conversations about the teaching of sourced writing. This study confirms findings from an earlier one in which we found that an important step toward inquiry was a FY writer's conscious choice to read and understand their sources (Scheidt et al., 2017). Our findings also contribute to other studies (e.g., Jamieson, 2017) heightening FYW faculty's awareness regarding the importance of academic literacies they might otherwise dismiss as "basic," like students' summary or even acknowledgment of a source or author (Jamieson, 2013). Faculty may therefore find tools like the vocabulary and findings of this study helpful to understanding both their students and themselves. Such tools can delineate the "tacit rhetorical dimension" (Geisler, 1994) or their own "discursive consciousness" (Lancaster, 2016) regarding reasonable academic expectations for FY sourced writing. While other, similar options exist (e.g., BEAM [Bizup, 2008]), the

pedagogical implications of this study derive from research conducted with faculty reading and evaluating students' sourced writing as part of a community of practice.

As Adler-Kassner and Wardle (2015) reminded us, "Learning threshold concepts amounts to learning some of the assumptions of a community of practice" (p. 8), including those concepts meaningful for FYW (see Downs & Robertson, 2015). The FYW program here did not adopt the kind of curriculum typically associated with writing as a discipline or teaching for transfer; it was in a state of flux later given direction by instructors, assessment results, and research on writing assignments in required general education courses. Even so, it functioned with remarkable coherence among the values, practices, and discourses of source engagement, suggesting that FYW programs can be important sites for student writers in their development across the curriculum. As researchers studying attributes of writing sometimes assume that aspects of program context must be uniform—e.g., a standard syllabus, a shared assignment, etc.—our findings encourage expanding the possibilities for research in FYW.

Geisler (1994) noted the distinction between novices and experts is not simply cognitive but also social and cultural (p. 207). So understood, academic literacy includes a tacit rhetorical dimension that, while potentially informed by specific disciplinary and professional discourses, also can be explained in more general terms: this kind of academic literacy is slow, emerging fully only at advanced levels of professional training (p. 95), so that learning in the first year is likely to be modest. In this study, we give shape and definition to some of these modest aims toward cultivating academic literacy in the first year.

Conclusion

Our findings should encourage other researchers interested in studying writing phenomena within the complicated, everyday contexts of writing programs. At the same time, the study also raises an interesting conceptual question for this kind of research: how flexible is this notion of community of practice? How far does it stretch before findings are no longer meaningful, complicated to too great a degree by too many confounding factors? Despite the complexities of its naturalistic setting, our study provides a means of systematically pursuing this line of inquiry.

We bring attention to the role of faculty perspective in sourced writing instruction by identifying the features of source engagement that they value: Explaining, Developing, or Connecting, as well as when sources are engaged with more variety and frequency (other than to Inform). So doing,

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we develop a concrete scheme for identifying when students engage sources in writing and how. Yet we suspect that it may not be the codes themselves that are useful in other contexts so much as the story of how they came to be, a point of departure we hope others might not so much reproduce as refine and make their own (Serviss, 2017, p. 5).

In subsequent years, Holly continued to conduct DCM to define the values at play in other learning outcomes and to embed assessment into the routine work of all faculty teaching FYW. All faculty participate in selecting the outcome to assess, while some serve on the committee designing the assessment, and a group of 4–8 finalize the design and conduct assessment each summer. As of this writing, a committee is conducting assessment of the outcome "find and evaluate sources," which serves the purpose of the main writing project: to conduct an inquiry that demonstrates variation in both source type (genre) and rhetorical use, a purpose defined by this study.

In conjunction with program assessment, our research clarified the underlying values of the program and helped strengthen them. Assessment thus also served as meaningful faculty development, enhancing faculty's understanding of themselves and their practices. For example, faculty valued summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting with an awareness of author and source (Explain) more highly than they thought; our findings reframe a distaste for summary as a perceived overreliance on Inform or lack of variation. Perhaps most important, faculty gained confidence in their understanding of and judgments with respect to source engagement and the program gained a more precise shared vocabulary. This study maps one way to ensure that faculty are central to meaningfully improving teaching and learning (Gallagher, 2011), and to make faculty expertise visible to stakeholders as coherent professional judgment.

We bear in mind Lunsford's (2017) insight that these methods and codes are only "stabilized for now" (p. xviii), adding that, paradoxically, by using these results to inform curricular change we may have destabilized them. We began to explicitly teach different rhetorical uses for sources (Bizup, 2008; Wolfe, Olson, & Wilder, 2014) and made variation in source use a core requirement of the final research project. To create the conditions for meaningful research and writing experiences, that final project is now a semester-long inquiry based on an initial analysis of the student's choosing, often incorporating primary sources and research methods. These revisions mean that the same study could now yield different codes. Engagement may be an enduring and bedrock value for readers, but its meanings are not to be taken for granted.

We see FYW as an important and generative site for academic literacy. FYW programs can function as communities of practice where first-year

students embark on the developmental trajectory of engaging sources with more depth, variety, and frequency. On this point, Aull and Lancaster (2014) have found, first-year students at different institutions may be more similar to each other than to the advanced students at their own. Crafting a "sufficiently honed and cautious stance in a community of many views" is their greatest shared difficulty in writing (p. 173) and a way of being in the world they will not master in one semester. Designing experiences where our students practice shaping and situating their own perspectives in relation to a variety of others is foundational work in the first year.

Notes

1. We adopt the phrases "writing from sources" and "sourced writing" somewhat interchangeably as a means of distinguishing our focus from the kind of academic writing commonly referred to as "research writing." Here, we do not assume that a FY writer has conducted independent research in the sense of finding sources.

2. Approved by High Point University's IRB under protocol number 201207-115.

3. Results of a simple linear regression with a dependent variable of total integration score and an independent variable of total number of references that Explain. With $n = 33$, the line of best fit showed the variables to be highly correlated (with correlation coefficient of .519), highly statistically significant at significance level of .05. The significance level is the same for all analyses unless otherwise stated.

4. Results of same analysis, correlation .329, statistically significant at level of significance .10.

5. Correlation .379.

6. Negative correlation (–.074), not statistically significant (p =.682).

7. Results of same analysis but with an independent variable of number of different types of engagement. Correlation .442.

8. Results of same analysis but with an independent variable of total number of references used not including Inform. Correlation .502. For scatter plot, see Upward Project (2018).

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9. Result of same analysis but with an independent variable of total number of references used. Variables weakly correlated (with correlation coefficient of .268). For scatter plot, see Upward Project (2018).

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