Anchoring the First-Year Research Paper: A Pilot Study of FYW Student Citation Practices

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Abstract:
Writing Studies scholars have raised concerns about framing student struggles to integrate secondary sources as an ethical problem of plagiarism. They propose, instead, framing student citation practices as transitional markers of development in which students use patchwriting to learn the discursive norms and values of academia. Patchwriting as a literacy tool for transfer of knowledge raised questions for me about whether students develop other scaffolds to aid in learning transfer. In this pilot study, I investigate student use of anchor sources, the "perfect source" that frames a student's central argument, rhetorical structure, and/or purpose. Based on a random sample of a nationwide corpus of First-Year Writing research papers from 16 US institutions, findings show that 21 of 30 research papers (70%) revealed evidence of an anchor source. Six of the 9 papers without anchor sources show evidence of significant rhetorical problems. Results suggest evidence of knowledge transfer, as well as pedagogical implications for supporting this transitional stage in student development.

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INTRODUCTION

In the United States, first-year writing (FYW) college courses in English and writing departments have long been the primary location where the traditional research paper has been taught. Since the early 1900s, this flagship assignment was believed to propagate "good habits of thinking" and allow students to "apply knowledge of the course," without noting epistemological differences of inquiry across the disciplines (qtd. in RUSSELL, 1991). Moreover, the research paper assignment provided a means to teach students how to use the library and review and summarize multiple print sources. Most often, a research paper assignment requires 5-10 secondary sources in first-year writing courses and no more than 30 sources for advanced-level students (LOCKETT, 2017). Subsequently, in the digital information age, the research paper has become a tool to teach students skills in digital literacy, information literacy, and media literacy. Witte (2017) argues that research instruction in first-year writing should challenge students to develop genuine inquiry, cultivate discovery of new ideas, and engage with source ideas to respond to societal problems. In a 2016 report by the Association of College and Research Librarians (ACRL), the authors "consider research as open-ended exploration and engagement with information" and students formulate questions "based on information gaps or on reexamination of existing, possibly conflicting, information" (ACRL, 2016, p. 7). Although the ACRL and frame research writing instruction as a mode of inquiry, discovery, and problem solving, in practice, first-year college students locate information to confirm pre-existing beliefs and produce decontextualized compilations of facts.

Many writing scholars and researchers have challenged the transferability of the traditional research paper assignment to disciplinary contexts and active sites of inquiry (LARSON, 1982; RUSSELL, 1991; GEISLER, 1994; NORGAARD, 2004; DEVITT, 2007; HOOD, 2010; DIRK, 2012). Critics argued that this classroom genre served no rhetorical purpose outside the classroom (RUSSELL, 1991). In recent years, the traditional research paper has been replaced with more discipline specific genres such as the research proposal, annotated bibliography, and literature review (HOOD, 2010). A shift away from decontextualized genres like the traditional research paper steers FYW into the right direction; however, US colleges and universities nationwide continue to overemphasize a skills-and-rules-based approach to teaching research writing in FYW courses (JAMIESON, 2016). By teaching disciplinary genres, instructors cannot simply repackage a basic skills approach to information literacy. When the primary pedagogical focus centers on access to credible texts and proper citation conventions, research writing is less about a social rhetorical practice of inquiry and engagement and too often about policing of possible plagiarism.

Valentine (2006) explains how discussions of plagiarism are tangled in a discourse of ethics. From this lens, Valentine states that we have created a binary that labels students as honest or dishonest. Plagiarism as an ethics violation is most prevalent in the media where stories are commonly published about essay mills and the use of social media and smartphones to facilitate cheating. This type of discourse impacts the student-teacher relationship in which students are perceived as guilty until proven innocent. For instance, proprietary software such as *Turnitin* is commonly used by professors in higher

education courses. Such software, which privileges essay length and "pretentious language" over content (PERELMAN, 2014), serves as a gatekeeping tool to flag the guilty and wave through the "innocent." Unintended plagiarism, a common problem for emergent writers, does require pedagogical intervention rather than judicial action (HOWARD, 1993; PECORARI, 2003).

Writing studies researchers like Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010) have been examining plagiarism, *patchwriting*, and student citation practices in FYW courses as part of a large-scale study called the Citation Project (CITATIONPROJECT.NET). Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010) find that patchwriting, a form of plagiarism in US colleges and universities, is used by students as a way to "perform" within their new discourse community. For instance, students may copy a majority of a text and replace particular words with synonyms, delete a small percentage of the original passage, and/or invert some sentences. Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010) perceive this type of writing as a transitional stage that students pass through due to the lack of disciplinary expertise. As a developmental stage, if students are engaging in patchwriting as a literacy practice to appropriate the discursive norms and values of their discipline or the academy, is there textual evidence of students engaging in "adaptive transfer," the conscious or intuitive process of reshaping prior knowledge and developing adaptive strategies to facilitate new learning (DEPALMA, RINGER, 2011)? In writing studies, Depalma e Ringer (2011, p. 44) argue that researchers have predominantly focused on "*reuse of past learning"* and have not paid attention to the adaptive strategies that students develop to meet their learning goals. Rather than making disciplinary conventions the primary learning objective, they argue that instructors should inquire into "students' diverse rhetorical and linguistic resources" (DEPALMA, RINGER, 2011, p. 61).

Use of prior knowledge and adaptive strategies to frame the information literacy practices of students is evident in several studies. In one study of college student research practices at 7 college campuses, Head and Eisenberg (2009) found that students would search for "background information," which is a familiar antecedent genre in search databases, to facilitate their understanding of a new research topic. Head and Eisenberg also found that students would search for the "perfect source" in online search, essentially, the one source that answers a student's research question or structures a student's argument. A similar finding was found in a 2011 dissertation, a semester-long case-study of three research writing undergraduate students who used "the perfect source" that anchored their online search behaviors and writing process (SILVA, 2011). Students reported that once they located an anchor source (i.e., perfect source), they would proceed to locate additional sources to find sentences to "stretch out" what they described as their perfect source. Student searches for sentences rather than holistic use of source arguments is also reported by Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010). For instance, in 18 sample papers, Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010, p. 181) found no evidence of summary writing, "restating and compressing the main points of a paragraph or more of text in fresh language and reducing the summarized passage by at least 50%". Rather, the researchers found evidence of copying, patchwriting, and paraphrasing, which suggests that students do not fully comprehend the meaning and rhetorical purpose of the whole text and rely on snippets to pad their papers. One possible explanation for why students search for sentences is that assignment guidelines may call for a certain number of quotes, or instructor feedback may request additional facts and counterclaims; however, when students attempt to meet these assignment goals and write from source sentences, some students integrate sentences out of context, which derive from arguments that contradict the students' central argument. Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010) state that when students write from sentences, it is probable that students did not read the entire source or did not understand what they were reading.

If Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010) are correct in that students use patchwriting as a transitional stage to adopt the discursive norms of a particular genre or academic arguments, could

students be using anchor sources similarly? The use of an anchor source as an adaptive strategy to structure a paper may be an example of what Perkins and Salomon (1988) describe as low-road transfer. A FYW student may replicate the rhetorical objectives, argument structure, and/or discursive moves of an anchor source to organize their research paper. High-road transfer, on the other hand, would be "mindful abstraction" of the key concepts or ideas from an anchor source to serve the purpose and objectives of the student writer. Engaging in mindful abstraction is paramount in what Gogan (2013) describes as a post-liminal stage of transfer where students may ask rhetorical questions about a secondary source's audience, purpose, organization, evidence, bias, etc. Mindful abstraction and the transfer of rhetorical knowledge are what Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010) argue is *not* happening in first-year research writing. Both patchwriting and anchoring could be a type of transfer that is not "always visible to instructors" (NOWACEK, 2011, p. 114). Schieber (2016) advises instructors to be mindful of the strategies and knowledge that may not be visible to students as well.

In the past decade, the issue of transfer of writing skills and knowledge and the methodological challenges to defining and measuring transfer have been studied broadly by writing scholars (DEPALMA, RINGER, 2011; MOORE, 2012; ROBERTSON; TACZAK; YANCEY, 2012; TACZAK, 2012; WARDLE, 2012; DRISCOLL *et al.*, 2017). For instance, is transfer the reuse or transplant of a specific skill or strategy learned prior and applied to a new context? What if the student applies this skill or strategy without mindful abstraction of key concepts, or perhaps the student does not apply the skill or strategy well but articulates fully an understanding of the key concepts? Yancey, Robertson, and Tackzak (2014) state that the word itself suggest a mechanical linear movement of knowledge and skills to a new location. To problematize further the concept of transfer, Wardle (2007) asks whether transfer is to be investigated in the individual *applying* prior knowledge to new task and context, *transforming* prior knowledge, or applying prior knowledge *while concurrently* transforming it. To add to this inquiry, how do social embodied interactions, genres, texts, technologies, and physical location impact the transfer of learning and how do researchers operationalize and record transfer in these cases? To measure transfer, most writing researchers rely on student accounts via interviews, focus group interviews, case studies, surveys, think-aloud protocols, classroom observations, and discourse analysis of student reflections (MOORE, 2012). Student projects and assignment prompts are analyzed as well, but almost always triangulated with student self-reports. The primary assumption here is that to study transfer, we need to ask students directly *what* they learned and *how* they learned it, presuming students are cognizant of their rhetorical strategies, which Schieber (2016, p. 482) notes, "some students may be transferring rhetorical knowledge from their other courses, but doing so in a way that is invisible to both themselves and their writing instructors". One problem with self-reports of learning transfer is that learners construct coherent narratives of rhetorical processes, which do not capture tacit learning, liminal learning, and/or cognitive dissonance in real time. In disciplines like linguistics, for decades, researchers have been studying transfer of L1, L2, and L3 discursive practices, applying methodological approaches, such as text analysis, content analysis, and contrastive rhetorical analysis (ODLIN, 1989). In fact, the primary researchers of The Citation Project relied solely on anonymous student research papers to report evidence of patchwriting. Qualitative text analysis of large corpus like The Citation Project allows researchers to identify predominant rhetorical patterns in student writing. Although findings of a text analysis do not represent a complete narrative of rhetorical activity, findings can teach us *something* of relevance about repeated rhetorical strategies and patterns in student writing. Head and Eisenberg (2010) found that students often reuse the same search strategies and secondary sources, regardless of rhetorical purpose or the writing task. What researchers have not examined is the role that these secondary sources play in framing student arguments and whether "copying" the rhetorical structure and argument of a secondary

source (i.e., anchor source) constitutes plagiarism or functions much like patchwriting, a gateway to disciplinary thinking and academic literacy.

Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010) model of patchwriting reframes undeliberate instances of plagiarism as a developmental stage where students rehearse their academic ethos and develop academic literacy skills. Results of the Citation Project suggest that students are leaving FYW courses without a clear understanding of how to quote, paraphrase, and summarize sources into their arguments in rhetorically meaningful ways (JAMIESON, 2013). What the data does not reveal is *how* these citation practices frame the student's central argument. In this exploratory mixed method study, I expand Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues's (2010) model of patchwriting and investigate how "copied" arguments and rhetorical structures from secondary sources may serve a similar developmental role. The present study investigates the rhetorical function of anchor sources in student research papers and later discusses whether anchor sources are evidence of plagiarism that merit scrutiny or could function as heuristics to facilitate the transfer of post-liminal rhetorical activities, such as the repurposing of source arguments to create new knowledge and solve meaningful problems within disciplinary communities of practice.

Methodology

The Citation Project is a collaborative effort by writing researchers, such as Howard, Serviss, and Rodrigue (2010), who systematically study issues related to plagiarism, patchwriting, information literacy, writing from sources, and the teaching of academic source-based writing. Between Spring 2008 and Spring 2010, the Citation Project aggregated First-Year Writing (FYW) student research papers from 16 institutions across the U.S. distributed by region from 12 states. The research papers were assigned at the end of the term, requiring 7-10 pages and at least 5 secondary sources. In total, 174 papers and works cited lists were analyzed, in addition to the 1,911 citations referenced in the papers and the 930 sources cited. A total of 800 pages were coded. Each citation was coded for paraphrasing, summarizing, patch writing, and quoting with or without quotation marks. Publications on the findings of this research can be found at http://www.citationproject.net/.

In late 2016, I contacted Citation Project researchers, Dr. Rebecca Moore Howard of Syracuse University and Dr. Sandra Jamieson of Drew University, asking for a random sample of FYW research papers that had already been coded for paraphrasing, summarizing, patch writing, and quoting with or without quotation marks. After I obtained IRB clearance for the pilot study, Dr. Howard and Dr. Jamieson provided me with 30 randomly selected anonymous student papers, which included all secondary source material. I first read each of the 30 student papers, read all the sources in the works cited page, and read the Excel coding sheets produced by the Citation Project for each student. I later reread each student paper to assess whether any particular secondary source structured the student's central argument, in other words, the anchor source. Using a grounded theory approach (CHARMAZ, 2006), the analysis of the dataset was iterative and progressive. Criteria of anchor sources used in the present study first emerged from criteria developed during a semester-long case study of three FYW students in a research writing course (SILVA, 2011). Triangulation of data included data from student interviews, think-aloud protocols during online search of secondary sources, and multiple drafts of research writing (SILVA, 2011). An anchor source was found to have at least two of three defining factors:

1. The central argument of the anchor source is nearly identical to the student's thesis.

2. The primary rhetorical purpose of the anchor source parallels the primary rhetorical purpose of the student paper.

3. The primary rhetorical organization and types of evidence used in the anchor source parallels the rhetorical organization and evidence of the student paper.

Charmaz writes that researchers should follow emergent leads while analyzing the data. If anchor sources were evident in student writing based on semester-long interviews with students, would they be evident in student writing without student accounts of their research and writing processes? In other words, is there tangible evidence of students relying on anchor sources to construct their arguments, akin to the tangible evidence of copying, paraphrasing, summarizing, and patchwriting in student research papers?

In the dataset of 30 randomly selected anonymous student papers, one example of an anchor source is an article about the safety of bottled water and tap water. Not only does the student make similar rhetorical moves in their paper by discussing the cost, EPA regulations, and environmental impact of bottled water, but the title of the article is the thesis of the student paper. In a few cases, students had two or three anchor sources, which were web-based informational texts. For instance, a student who wrote about signs of child abuse had three sources that shared the same information about the topic. In these few instances, the anchor source was recorded once. Within an Excel spreadsheet, I recorded the anchor source; the number of times the anchor source was referenced in the paper, either in-text or end-text; the number of sources used per paper; the number of citations per paper; and notes and analysis about the student's central argument and use of sources.

Constructing arguments "more or less original" supported by sources is a standard learning objective for FYW courses (BRENT, 2013). FYW students are expected to engage in "position taking and arguing with sources" (FISHMAN; REIFF, 2011, p. 128). Downs and Wardle (2007) argue that a significant threshold concept for FYW classes is the adaption and integration of source ideas into rhetorically meaningful arguments that contribute to an ongoing academic conversation (DOWNS; WARDLE, 2007). In my analysis of student arguments, I assessed whether the argument was "original," an argument with a thesis distinct from any of the sources in the student's works cited page. In other words, students with an original argument adapted and/or recontextualized source information to meet their rhetorical objectives. For instance, an anchor source that rhetorically analyzes Franklin D. Roosevelt's inaugural address functions as a model for a student paper about George W. Bush's State of the Union Address. If no source in the works cited page constructs the same argument, then it was coded as "original," even if the argument itself may not be original to most audiences. A paper can have an anchor source and a thesis statement distinct from the anchor source, as explained with the Bush paper, if it is apparent that the student argument was modeled on the rhetorical structure and purpose of the anchor source. Papers coded as "not original" had arguments nearly identical to the anchor source. If a paper did not have an anchor source nor an original argument, the student paper itself lacked direction and purpose. In other words, the student paper itself did not have an argument.

RESULTS

Anchoring

In the randomized sample of 30 student papers, 21 papers had an anchor source, which means one source in the works cited page (at times 2 or 3 sources) has at least 2 of the 3 rhetorical features in the student paper: a nearly identical thesis statement, organizational structure, and/or rhetorical purpose. Prior to my close reading of the student papers, I assumed that the anchor source would be summarized, paraphrased, or quoted the most throughout the paper, but in fact, the anchor source was actually

referenced only 21.5% of the time, on average. One common feature of the anchor source was that it was often both short and relatively easy to read. Common anchor sources were web articles (e.g., website about health benefits of marijuana), magazine articles (e.g., *Time* magazine), editorials, or web-based news articles. Of the 21 papers with an anchor source, 3 papers used scholarly academic journal articles as anchor sources and one paper used a book chapter.

In the few cases that two or three anchor sources were identified within a single paper, students had a generic thesis, such as, "legalize marijuana" or "identify the signs of child abuse." In the student paper about child abuse, the student referenced three web sources that repeated the same types of evidence and rhetorical structure in which definitions of abuse are listed, solutions provided, and steps toward prevention explained. The web articles, however, were non-scholarly informational texts, the types of web articles one would find in a typical Google search about child abuse. In their paper, the student mainly summarized the definitions, solutions, and methods of prevention. One problem with generic thesis statements, such as the one about legalizing pot for medical purposes, is that multiple sources could function as the anchor source, which suggests that students predominantly hear a singular perspective on the topic, even if they have several sources in their works cited page. This is not necessarily a problem. A common rhetorical pattern in scholarly journal articles is for scholars to demonstrate consensus amongst experts about a particular issue; however, writers make evident that they are trying to demonstrate this consensus, whereas undergraduate student writers most often do not make these rhetorical moves transparent in their writing.

Nine of the 30 papers did not have an anchor source listed in the works cited page. Six of the 9 papers without anchor sources show evidence of significant rhetorical problems. In five of these papers, students lacked a clear thesis statement. One student attempted to do a literary analysis of "Brokeback Mountain" but predominantly summarized the analysis conducted by the sources without establishing a clear argument in the paper. In a second paper about the architectural design of the Seattle Space Needle, the student shared his personal experience visiting the building and included secondary sources about its innovative design; however, the paper lacked direction and purpose. In other words, it was not clear as to why the audience should care about this first-hand visit to a building. A third paper about substance abuse in children only referenced scholarly journal articles and mainly summarized the sources without constructing an actual argument. Evident in these papers are common rhetorical problems found in FYW courses: literary analysis may be a novel genre for students; students struggle to situate personal experience within a larger academic conversation (DOWNS; WARDLE, 2007); and students struggle to comprehend and repurpose scholarly articles (JAMIESON, 2013).

Scholarly journal articles or book chapters appear to create the most problems for students. First, in 29 of the 30 student papers, students did not contextualize or frame a source's argument, study, or results, regardless if it was scholarly or not. Rather, students would glean information from the first few pages of the source. In Jamieson and Howard's (2013) study of 174 college research papers, the researchers found that 83% of student citations were taken from the first four pages of a source, regardless of the source's length. A case study of two first-year students' research writing strategies revealed similar findings (LI; CASANAVE, 2012). In a scholarly journal article, the first few pages typically include the literature review, which is actually a synthesis of other researchers' arguments. However, first-year writing (FYW) students struggle to distinguish between the arguments of the literature review and the author's individual contribution to the conversation. For example, one student wrote about polygamy as a cultural practice in Africa to support his own argument about allowing religious communities to practice polygamy. The student referenced one article that noted how polygamy was "a status marker for the men, and it was a sign of power, strength, and wealth." The student failed to mention that the source

actually argued *against* polygamy, which was misleading, to say the least. In another student paper about the aftermath of colonization and neo-colonization of Native Americans and the psychological impact on Native American youth, the student failed to mention that the anchor source, a scholarly journal article, focused on a case study of a specific Native American tribe in Alaska. As a result, the student made generalizations about all Native Americans without adequate evidential support. In a third student paper about the pitfalls of parents pressuring children of family businesses to inherit the business, the student referenced a source about heirs of multi-million dollar corporations, another source about the psychological effects of entitled children engaging in risky behavior, a source about job satisfaction, and a final source about establishing life goals. None of the arguments from these sources was contextualized. Rather, the student cherry-picked information to describe the job dissatisfaction and bitterness of children whose parents maintain a tight grip on the family business. The types of problems that may arise when children are forced to inherit a successful family business, such as a local shoe shop or bakery, are quite distinct from the problems that heirs of multi-million dollar corporations must face. Also, the student assumed that heirs or children of a family business must be entitled and privileged and referenced a source about discontent kids engaging in risky behavior; however, none of the sources talked about heirs or children of family businesses engaging in risky behaviors.

In sum, the majority of the students (70%) in the sample used anchor sources and developed arguments with fewer rhetorical problems, such as lack of purpose or central argument, fallacious claims, weak assumptions, misrepresentation of sources, and lack of evidential support. Most anchor sources were informational texts or popular sources easily retrieved through a Google search, which students would find less difficult to read and comprehend. It would be easier for students to model their arguments after arguments written for general audiences, in comparison to the complex academic arguments in scholarly sources. These findings suggest that student use of anchor sources written for general audiences may result in higher quality student writing, which makes intuitive sense. The *anchoring argument* is a published argument that has already been reviewed and validated by an editor or editorial group. For students learning to enter an academic discourse community, recycling a published argument could be one way that students learn to participate in the discursive norms and intellectual activities of the larger disciplinary community. However, the findings also show that papers with or without anchor had some writing issues, whether it be sourcing errors (e.g., plagiarizing, misquoting, inserting incorrect statistics or dates, referencing incorrect page numbers, missing citations, etc.) or macro or micro-level rhetorical problems.

Original Arguments

In the present study, an original argument is operationalized as an argument with a thesis distinct from any of the sources in the student's works cited page. Students who had an original argument adapted and/or recontextualized source information to meet their rhetorical objectives. For example, one student analyzed John Lennon's song "Imagine" in the context of anti-war movements comparing and contrasting social unrest in the 60s to social unrest in the 90s during the Iraq War. The student argued that songs like "Imagine" challenge readers to look at their own actions. This does not suggest that the student's argument is original, in the literal sense of that word, nor does it suggest that the student could not have read this very argument in a source *not* referenced. My findings only focus on arguments distinct from arguments made by cited authors. Of the 30 student papers, 8 papers had original arguments.

Of the 8 student papers with an original argument, five papers had serious rhetorical problems with hasty generalizations, fallacious claims, false assumptions, and inadequate evidence. For instance, in

one paper the student attempted to create an argument that sanctions polygamous marriages for cultural religious reasons. The student referenced the 2008 raid of a polygamous compound in El Dorado, Texas in which a teenage girl called authorities regarding forced marriages and abuse of teenage girls. The student attempted to construct an argument distinct from his sources by writing, "While this may have been a legitimate call for help, the authorities have overstepped their boundaries." The student sidestepped the child abuse issue and began to make the argument of religious autonomy and respect for all religious beliefs. As mentioned before, the student referenced studies about polygamy in African cultures without contextualizing the nature of polygamy in those social, cultural, and political contexts. One source described polygamy as an interventionist method for distressed marriages, which views polygamy entirely different than a lifestyle choice for adolescent girls and adult men in El Dorado, Texas. Citing another source, the student did acknowledge that children of polygamous families "tend to suffer more from emotional, behavioral, and physical problems, as well as a more negative self-concept, lower school achievement, and greater difficulties in social adjustment than do children from monogamous marriages…."; however, the student's primary critique of the researcher was that he didn't include studies about other countries. In other words, the student argued that critics of polygamy can't argue that it's outright harmful to children of polygamous families because we haven't heard about polygamous families from more countries. Of course, the student could have done more research to explore this matter, but did not. The paper was riddled with fallacies, false assumptions, and misleading information, although it was one of the few papers in the sample that provided a distinct argument from all the sources cited.

In another student paper with an original argument, the student argued how the Canadian healthcare system was better than the US healthcare system in preventing diseases and reducing the mortality rate, an argument not made by any of the sources. However, the paper also had multiple problems with false assumptions, fallacious claims, and 7 counts of sourcing errors. For instance, the student provided a hypothetical example of an American patient and Canadian patient with symptoms of the common cold. In Canada, the patient would have been seen by a doctor and discover the next day that he had HIV, whereas the American patient would have been in and out of a clinic (not a hospital) and receive cold medication without realizing that he had HIV. For symptoms of the common cold, it is not standard protocol for Canadian doctors to administer an HIV test.

Of the 8 papers with original arguments, only 3 papers did not have significant rhetorical problems with fallacious claims, generalizations, and false assumptions. In the first paper, as described above, the student analyzed the song "Imagine" by John Lennon in the context of anti-war movements, comparing and contrasting the movements of the 60s and the 90s. The John Lennon paper did not have an anchor source. The second paper, which had an anchor source, analyzed the significance of collective memory and shifting attitudes about national monuments such as the Vietnam Memorial. Although the student predominantly summarized factual information about the Vietnam Memorial Wall and the Vietnam War, the student attempted to make a claim about the relationship between memorials and collective memory, albeit further evidence and analysis would have strengthened this argument further. This is an example in which an anchor source could scaffold for the student the kinds of evidence writers aggregate to frame a problem and the types of rhetorical moves they use to persuade an audience. A student transforming this source information to meet their rhetorical goals would be an ideal objective for a FYW course. The last of the three papers without significant problems, which also had an anchor source, made a similar attempt to construct an original argument, albeit not fully developed. The student applied Baudrillard's theory of semiotics and the concept of "successive phases of the image" to argue how images in the media mask the reality of Native American history and culture. Jean Baudrillard's *Simulacra and Simulation* would be a challenging text for any graduate student, let alone a FYW student; it

is no surprise that the student did not fully develop this theory of semiotics into their argument about media representations of Native Americans.

In a first reading of student papers, several original arguments seemed rational (e.g., heirs to successful businesses being entitled), but upon close readings of secondary sources, it was evident that several students misunderstood the original source argument and struggled to write source-based arguments that followed conventional citing practices. Writing instructors are trained to identify weak arguments; however, misrepresentation or misunderstanding of source ideas can go undetected if instructors are unfamiliar with the subject knowledge and academic conversations within those disciplines. However, robust partnerships between campus librarians and writing programs that go beyond the one-shot library workshop can build students' information literacy skills, close reading of texts, and research writing skills (BIRMINGHAM, *et al.*, 2008; BOWLES-TERRY; DAVIS; HOLLIDAY, 2010; ANDERS, HEMSTROM, 2016).

DISCUSSION

In writing studies, Howard (1993) has reframed the discussion about student source use from an ethical problem of academic integrity and dishonesty to a pedagogical opportunity for educators to support students in their transition to academia. Howard, Serviss e Rodrigues (2010) find that patchwriting is one tool that learners have used to facilitate this transition. Pecorari (2003, p. 338) writes of patchwriting, "Today's patchwriter is tomorrow's competent academic writer, given the necessary support to develop". Research in citation practices shows that frequency of copying and near copying decreases with experience, which suggests that there is a developmental dimension to writing source-based academic papers (HIRVELA, DU, 2013; KECK, 2014; PECORARI, 2003). In the same vein, in the present study, research papers with anchor sources had fewer rhetorical problems, possibly because students used non-scholarly sources, which are easier to comprehend and readily accessible. Most likely, the copying of published sources (i.e., anchoring) go undetected because only 21.5% of citations, on average, reference the anchor source. Moreover, FYW instructors are not aware of anchor sources because they do not typically read the sources in the references page, or some assign generic writing tasks that prompt the all-too-common argument about abortion or the legalization of marijuana. In the present study, 21 of 30 papers had an anchor source, which may alarm some instructors and prompt them to take punitive action. From a developmental approach, however, instructors could frame "copying" of rhetorical structures or central arguments as student-generated strategies adapted to meet the discursive norms and values of a particular discipline or discourse community.

One could argue that expert writers have long used seminal texts or studies as anchor sources to enter, expand, and/or complicate the conversation in their field. The difference, however, is that experts deliberately contextualize a key source to construct an original argument. FYW students, on the other hand, may not be fully aware of their rhetorical strategies. Composition textbooks, for instance, do not teach students how to patchwrite, yet students have deliberately and tacitly developed this rhetorical strategy to meet the expectation of their academic discourse community. As part of students' learning process, writing instructors should expect a degree of copying and citation errors (the present study found an average of 3 sourcing errors per paper), similar to our current understanding of grammatical errors representing student effort to work with more complex ideas (SHAUGHNESSY, 1979). Within an adaptive transfer model, it is not a sign of failure for a student to model their argument on an anchor source. Rather, it is evidence of students scaffolding their learning.

In the present study, even though papers with anchor sources had fewer rhetorical problems, 17 of the 21 anchor papers had no original argument, which suggests that students need additional instructional support to transition to the next developmental stage of research writing. If students are using anchor sources tacitly or deliberately, using an adaptive transfer pedagogical model, instructors could design curricular practices that allow students to make the transition from knowledge telling to knowledge transforming. According to Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987), knowledge telling is a demonstration of the writer's ability to comprehend the source and the topic at hand; and knowledge transforming is when writers use sources more substantively to develop their ideas or argument. The process of transforming and integrating a source into an "original" argument begins with the cognitive process of summarizing while reading and writing, a liminal stage of development. Meyer and Land (2006) apply the metaphor of "stages" to describe a recursive process in which learners move from a pre-liminal stage of development when concepts interrupt prior knowledge to a liminal stage where learners work with the new knowledge. In the post-liminal stage, learners participate as knowledge workers within a particular community of practice where they think and act as members of that community. Students circulate between pre-liminal and liminal stages of development as they search for an anchor source, background information, and source sentences to substantiate claims.

Most students in the present study engaged in knowledge telling by using an anchor source to frame their argument and did not deviate from the source's central argument in any substantial way. However, students still had to reconstruct the anchor source's argument using multiple sources, because most assignment prompts require a minimum number of sources. The process of knowledge telling, in other words, is still cognitively demanding for students working with several source texts. Scardamalia and Bereiter's (1987) binary model may suggest that knowledge telling is less cognitive work. This is not the case if students require genre knowledge and rhetorical knowledge to summarize a text effectively. Furthermore, for some students, knowledge telling is a liminal stage of transformation. Students may hold strong opinions about topics such as legalization of marijuana, gun control, or birth control. Students may not realize that their argument is not original and has been recycled many times over in the classroom. Identifying the information gap in the literature would be difficult for FYW students if the average research paper prompt only asks for 10 or fewer sources, which merely scratches the surface of any given topic. For first-year writing, a tired argument about legalizing marijuana may appear "original" and provocative to students, thus presenting little need to repurpose or transform an argument.

If we expect students to transfer new knowledge, research practices, and skills, instructors need to move beyond teaching research as a set of decontextualized skills and practices. Library researcher Kuhlthau (2004) proposes intervention zones, which are levels of instructor involvement based on the student's particular research needs. Instructors could intervene early in the search process before students invest all their cognitive efforts into integrating the rhetorical structure and/or central argument of the anchor source into their paper. Once students have completed a full draft, they are less likely to make significant global changes and "tailor revisions to fit what is already there" (HOLCOMB; BUELL, 2018, p. 61). Also, students are less inclined to modify their writing strategies in college if those strategies have been effective in high school (WARDLE, 2007). However, by sequencing the research project or paper into smaller writing tasks over a longer period of time, writing instructors can intervene early to teach rhetorical reading strategies, which help students to contextualize source ideas and repurpose information to construct rhetorically meaningful source-based writing (BRENT, 2013).

To teach for transfer, Perkins and Salomon (1988) recommend *hugging* (e.g., simulations) and *bridging* (e.g., strategizing) activities that facilitate the development of skills, and various cognitive processes, such as abstract thinking, analytical thinking, reflexive thinking, and metacognitive thinking.

Perkins and Salomon state that "bridging" allows learners to build conceptual bridges between one context and another context. The shift from hugging (e.g., summarizing) to bridging (e.g., repurposing source material) activities can be disorienting for students anxious about grades or peer judgment; it should be no surprise that students would default to prior literacy practices, such as cherry-picking quotes and writing from sentences. Robertson, Taczak e Yancey (2012) state that student reading of non-fiction texts, hence argument structures, is limited mostly to literary nonfiction. To students, writing is primarily a "vehicle for authorial expression, not as a vehicle for dialogue with a reader or an opportunity to make knowledge, both of which are common conceptions in college writing environments" (ROBERTSON; TACZAK; YANCEY, 2012). Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) point out that students may interpret a college research assignment as similar to a high school assignment, which, Reiff and Bawarshi note, is evidence of *low-road transfer*; however, this would be a situation in which an instructor would want students to apply new skills and knowledge and generalize from prior knowledge what worked, how, and why.

Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) apply Perkins and Salomon's (1988) concepts of high and low-road transfer to the idea of boundary crossing or guarding when it comes to applying and transforming prior knowledge of academic genres. Students are boundary crossers, engaged in high-road transfer, if they repurpose and reimagine prior genre knowledge in new writing contexts. These students express more confidence and identify more strategies to address various writing tasks. Students are boundary guarders, engaged in low-road transfer, if they guard "more tightly" prior genre knowledge and writing practices in new writing contexts. For instance, students may write an argument using an anchor source in an early draft because of their familiarity and confidence with this source. Without instructor intervention, there is little reason for students to learn new strategies if prior strategies have earned students A's and B's (WARDLE, 2007). For students to transition from boundary guarders to boundary crossers, Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) contend that students need to be aware of the discursive resources available and develop cognitive flexibility in their use of strategies to meet the new writing demands of academic contexts. With instructional support and participation in disciplinary activities, students could repurpose anchor sources in rhetorically meaningful ways. Furthermore, as we conceive of curricular and pedagogical models to facilitate transfer, we must also observe what students have developed and adapted themselves to cross the boundary from source reporting to source repurposing.

Conclusion

The present study was designed to be exploratory and generative, a preliminary stage to better understand the citation practices of first-year writers and to develop a coding scheme to operationalize anchoring in student writing. The finding that students struggle in their reading and integration of secondary sources is nothing new and speaks to a larger body of work that explores the connections between student citation practices and first-year writing (JAMIESON, 2013). This random sample of a large corpus provides some insight into a textual phenomenon occurring in student writing. Although the results of the present study are not generalizable of all first-year writers, undergraduate research papers in the corpus of The Citation Project provide a fairly accurate snapshot of the types of rhetorical issues and citation problems that we are all too familiar with in our classes. Continued research of undergraduate student research writing is needed to better understand the research writing strategies students adopt and adapt to participate in academic communities of practice.

The results of the present study raise several questions for me regarding the role of anchor sources in undergraduate student research practices. Do anchor sources reduce the cognitive load of writing source-based arguments? To students, source-based academic writing represents a cognitive

overload (MAYER; MORENO, 2003) that inevitably impacts the quality of their work. Moreover, similar to the Keck (2014) study in which dependence of the original source material reduces with experience and confidence, does the need for an anchor source diminish with time as students progress as writers in the academy? Last, would systematically teaching students to use anchor sources as a research writing strategy discourage students from developing their own arguments or ethos as curious thinkers?

In a semester-long case study of three students in a research writing course, students deliberately selected anchor sources to structure their argument and organize their online search activities for additional sources (SILVA, 2011). Although students perceived their anchor source as the "perfect source" to organize their online search and writing, they did not perceive anchoring as a form of copying. Some instructors may perceive "copying" a source as mental laziness or plagiarism. When I presented my results at the 2017 Conference on College Composition and Communication in Portland, Oregon and the 2017 Writing Research Across Borders conference in Bogotá, Colombia, writing instructors raised concerns about student use of anchor sources. Some colleges and universities would consider research papers with anchor sources as evidence of plagiarism, depending on the amount copied or the discipline and their citation practices. From a developmental perspective, anchor sources in student writing is evidence of the cognitive work that students are completing to figure out the discursive norms and rhetorical practices of academic discourse. Students often spend hours searching for relevant sources, hours locating sentences and quotes to support their argument (yes, this is patchwriting, but hard work nonetheless), and hours revising their research papers to meet their professor's expectations. At the same time, some FYW instructors would not mind students copying published arguments and their rhetorical structure to offload that cognitive work to focus on other learning objectives, such as information search, summary writing, quote integration, and other related citation practices.

The idea of an anchor source begs the question whether other text types (e.g., documentaries, movies, classroom lectures) function as anchor sources for students. For instance, it is common for a class discussion about a particular topic to prime half a class to write about that very same topic with similar claims and evidence. Is this indicative of students lacking motivation, rhetorical knowledge, or creativity to develop their own area of interest, or is it a developmental marker of a student's use of prior knowledge to engage in adaptive transfer? For instructors, this could be valuable information to scaffold the research writing process and/or introduce new strategies, as opposed to pressuring students to change their topic or argument. Furthermore, conversations with students about their research practices could also provide insight into students' language preferences and prior learning experiences within particular communities of practice (ANSON, 2016). What may appear to be a problem of patchwriting or near copying, for instance, could be a common literacy practice in another social context (e.g., constructing memes in social media or creating social satire). In an information economy in which content is inexpensive, fairly easy to access, remix, and publish, notions of authorship and ownership in academia can confuse students. For example, the idea of self-plagiarism bewilders students and most students do not feel they need to cite previous unpublished works, whereas faculty would consider this to be academic dishonesty (HALUPA, 2014). By shifting our attention away from policing student writing activities toward understanding what students do and why, we stand to join them in their liminal spaces where they are negotiating old and new knowledge, skills, and strategies.

In a first-year writing class, not only do students have to worry about allegations of cheating or plagiarism, they have to worry about writing more complex arguments for different disciplinary audiences; locating rhetorically effective sources to support those arguments; reading abstruse scholarly articles and books; accessing relevant prior knowledge while learning flexible strategies, skills, and tools; and carving an authorial space for themselves within a larger disciplinary context. We expect from a single source-

based assignment what takes at least 5 years of graduate school to learn. According to the 2010 report from Project Literacy, 84% of respondents reported difficulties starting a research project; 66% found it difficult to define a topic; 62% struggled to narrow their topic; and 61% found it challenging to sort through search results to locate relevant sources (HEAD; EISENBERG, 2010). Stinnett and Rapchak (2018) conclude that it is not possible to teach all of the writing threshold concepts outlined by Downs and Robertson (2015), nor is it possible to teach the 6 frames of the Association of College Research Library's *Framework for Information Literacy in Higher Education* during the little time allocated for a research project. Li and Casanave (2012, p. 177) emphasize: "Learning to write from sources requires years, not weeks or months, of practice". In sum, research is hard. And most dread the work. As instructors, we need to adjust our expectations of student research writing as well as accept the messiness, clumsiness, and errors of research as a liminal stage of learning, a necessary prerequisite to becoming a good writer and researcher.

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