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Identifying Components of Meta-Awareness about Composition: Toward a Theory and Methodology for Writing Studies

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Abstract: Recent research in writing studies has highlighted meta-awareness as valuable for student learning in courses such as first-year writing (FYW); however, meta-awareness needs to be further theorized and its components identified. In this article, I draw on a case study of six students in two FYW courses that is informed by Gregory Schraw's model of metacognition and Anthony Giddens's theory of practical and discursive consciousness to outline four writing/rhetorical concepts within which meta-awareness about composition is observable. These concepts include 1) process, 2) techniques, 3) rhetoric, and 4) intercomparativity, and they provide a preliminary framework for meta-awareness about composition that others might expand upon as we continue to build knowledge of how writers learn.

First-year writing (FYW) is often considered to be at the heart of writing studies. Thousands of instructors teach FYW each semester in colleges and universities across the nation, seeking to prepare students for writing they will do across the curriculum. Assessing what skills and habits students actually take and use from FYW, however, is complex. Recently, writing researchers have suggested that developing meta-awareness is one important goal for students in FYW because meta-awareness can be useful beyond the course as students write in a variety of contexts. Elizabeth Wardle, for example, argues that "*meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies* in FYC [first-year composition] may be the most important ability our courses can cultivate" (82, emphasis in original). Likewise, Rebecca Nowacek demonstrates that meta-awareness is important for integration, where students recontexualize elements within new writing situations (34). Anne Beaufort uses the closely related terminology *metacognition* when discussing the design of first-year writing curricula (*College Writing* 152; College Writing: Five Years Later); Kathleen Blake Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak integrate attention to metacognition into their Teaching for Transfer FYW curriculum (*Writing across Contexts* 137); and administrative documents such as the Council of Writing Program Administrators' Framework for Success in Postsecondary Writing include attention to knowledge of thinking strategies (1). Meta-awareness has thus generated a buzz in relation to FYW curricula: it's an important aspect of student learning, it's related to processes for writing that might become generalizable beyond one assignment or one course, and it's part of the *how* and the *why* (to go with the *what*) of composition.

Meta-awareness, however, needs to be further theorized for writing studies. One reason this is so is that the definitions we do have are broad—too "fuzzy," to use Brianna M. Scott and Matthew Levy's word—to be as useful as they might be in research or teaching. Often, meta-awareness is discussed as a general ability to reflect on one's own thinking, and rarely do we indicate specific components that might constitute a more (or less) robust meta-awareness. Rafaella Negretti, for example, defines metacognitive awareness as "learners' awareness of their thinking/learning strategies" (145), a general definition referring to all cognition and learning. Wardle gets more specific for writers in particular, describing meta-awareness about writing as students' ability to "analyze assignments, see similarities and differences across assignments, discern what was being required of them, and determine what they needed to do in response" (76-77). Even so, Wardle's definition remains within the mind of the writer, where writerly actions such as discerning and determining aren't easily observed or distinguished. Our definitions thus remain fuzzy because the field lacks a framework for identifying specific components of meta-awareness relating to writing in particular, and the writing-related metacognitive moves we do attempt to describe aren't easily seen or heard in classrooms or research sites. The inability to fully describe and observe meta-

awareness is a problem that reaches beyond FYW, affecting our ability to study and assess the transfer of writing knowledge, as well. Several writing researchers have pointed out a likely connection between meta-awareness and transfer (see DePalma; Elon Statement; Gorzelsky et al.; Nowacek; Wardle; Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak), but looking for evidence of transfer becomes even more difficult without empirical concepts to observe meta-awareness.

In this article, I begin to build a more specific theory of meta-awareness about composition using qualitative methods. Drawing on a case study of six students in two FYW courses that is informed by educational psychologist Gregory Schraw's two-part model of metacognitive awareness and sociologist Anthony Giddens's theory of practical and discursive consciousness, I map out four writing/rhetorical concepts through which specific metacognitive moves can be observed. These concepts include 1) process, 2) techniques, 3) rhetoric, and 4) intercomparativity. As students in the case study began to discursively express developing knowledge related to these four concepts, metacognitive moves for composition became observable. The four concepts thus provide a preliminary framework for meta-awareness about composition that others might use and expand upon as we continue to build knowledge of how first-year writers learn.

Identifying Components of Meta-Awareness about Composition

Writing activity is complex and involves a multitude of interrelated cognitive, social, and contextual factors. Studying such activity in itself can be challenging, and observing and describing a writer's awareness of writing activity and how that activity works can be an even greater challenge. Drawing from educational psychology and the learning sciences, some have approached the study of writing awareness with a focus on *metacognition*, a term used to refer, generally, to "thinking about thinking" (Gorzelsky et al.; Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey; Scott and Levy; Sternglass). Others, notably those who research ESL writing, seek to track *metacognitive awareness*, or "the ability to know when and how knowledge and strategies should be applied" (Negretti 144; see also Negretti and Kuteeva; Ruan). Still others look for evidence of *conscious awareness* (Beaufort, *College Writing*), *genre awareness* (Reiff and Bawarshi), *meta-awareness* (Donahue; Moore; Nowacek; Wardle), *metacommunicative awareness* (Shipka), *rhetorical awareness* (Bergmann and Zepernick; Negretti), and *writing awareness* (Kutney), with variations of and movement among these phrasings. Such an array of terminologies indicates the complexity of all that is involved in a writing situation: tacit and conscious thought, genres, modes of communication, and rhetoric, for example, just to name some factors mentioned above. This list makes clear that the field needs empirically specific concepts to help researchers, teachers, and students identify and track the many and various intertwined aspects of meta-awareness.

To address this need, I map out four components of what I call *meta-awareness about composition*. All terminologies direct and deflect attention in a direction, functioning, as Kenneth Burke describes, as terministic screens. Building on Wardle's concept of "meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies," *meta-awareness about composition* directs attention to the kind of meta-awareness most descriptive of the work of 21st-century writing classrooms. While some scholars argue that writing is expanding to include symbol systems beyond the linguistic (Wysocki 2), others call these new forms of writing *composition*, where "print and digital overlap, intersect, become *intertextual*" (Yancey, "Looking" 89). *Composition* used in this way involves various modes, tools, and technologies (including print), and does not suggest words-only communication. *Meta-awareness about composition* clearly extends beyond the linguistic to the multimodal, involving choices made through writing, language, and multiple modes of expression such as visuals, sounds, movements, and combinations of these modes. I define meta-awareness about composition, then, as an ability to move consistently between enacting compositional choices and articulating how and why those choices are or might be effective or ineffective within a rhetorical context.

Two questions then remain with regard to theorizing meta-awareness about composition: 1) what discrete components might constitute such an ability? and 2) where might meta-awareness about composition be evidenced within classrooms and research sites? To work toward answers, I look first to educational psychologist Gregory Schraw's two-part theory of "general metacognitive awareness." Other psychologists have forwarded alternative models of metacognition that specify more than two components: John H. Flavell argued for a four-category model in 1979, for example, and Scott and Levy tested their own five-part model in 2013. Drawing on twenty years of psychological research, though, Schraw posits that there are only two main components of metacognition: knowledge of cognition, or what individuals know about their own cognition; and regulation of cognition, or a set of activities useful for controlling learning (114). Of course, these two components have various sub-components: knowledge of cognition includes declarative knowledge (knowing about things), procedural knowledge (knowing how to do things), and conditional knowledge (knowing why and when to use declarative and procedural knowledge) (Schraw 114). Regulation of cognition includes the skills of planning (selecting appropriate

strategies), monitoring (self-testing for comprehension), and evaluating (appraising products and learning) (Schraw 115). This two-part model with subcomponents fits better with Scott and Levy's metacognitive questionnaire data than other models do (126-7), and thus I use Schraw's model to inform the findings of the case study below.

Social theorist Anthony Giddens sheds light on how Schraw's knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition can become observable through actions and discourse. Giddens offers a three-part model of the human psyche: unconscious motives/cognition, practical consciousness, and discursive consciousness (*Constitution* 7). The practical consciousness includes "tacit knowledge that is skillfully applied in the enactment of courses of conduct, but which the actor is not able to formulate discursively" (Giddens, *Central Problems* 57). Other knowledge—that in the discursive consciousness—can be described. Through prompting, instruction, or experiences, Giddens notes that agents can learn to cross the line between the practical and the discursive, articulating knowledge anew that they previously could only demonstrate (*Constitution* 7). In the case study, as students' knowledge of cognition moved from the practical to the discursive through reflection, metacognitive moves for writing became visible and audible, and various writing/rhetorical concepts began to emerge within which students were demonstrating these metacognitive moves. As Laura Gonzales illustrates through her study of translingual writers composing in multimodal spaces, we can start to map out student learning through examining students' own verbal descriptions and embodied gestures. In the case study here, movement toward meta-awareness about composition was evidenced through similar kinds of discursive actions, and robust meta-awareness about composition was evidenced through moving consistently between enacting compositional choices related to the four writing/rhetorical concepts and articulating how and why those choices were effective or ineffective.

Writing researchers Gwen Gorzelsky, Dana Driscoll, Carol Hayes, and Ed Jones acknowledge what I have been arguing here—that meta-awareness needs to be further theorized for writing studies. Drawing on educational psychology, they use the term *metacognition*, and they borrow metacognitive terms from Scott and Levy to offer a taxonomy for investigating metacognition in the writing process, including the categories of knowledge of cognition, planning, monitoring, regulation/control, and evaluation, as well as their own concept of constructive metacognition. Constructive metacognition involves "reflection across writing tasks and contexts, using writing and rhetorical concepts to explain choices and evaluations and to construct a writerly identity" (Gorzelsky et al.). Gorzelsky et al.'s concept of constructive metacognition is useful in that it points to the importance of reflection and the use of writing/rhetorical concepts—specifically genre, rhetorical situation, and writing process—within metacognitive moves, and the researchers give examples from student-authored written reflections that exhibit constructive metacognition. My work continues Gorzelsky et al.'s efforts, further identifying precise writing/rhetorical concepts that are part of meta-awareness and looking for evidence of metacognitive moves within students' own verbal articulations and embodied movements, their compositional actions, and their final products and reflections.

I thus offer four writing/rhetorical concepts within which meta-awareness about composition became observable through discursive actions within the case study. These four categories further specify what Gorzelsky et al.'s constructive metacognition might involve and which concepts in particular may be more useful for identifying metacognitive moves related to writing:

1. **Process.** The student enacts composition as a process and talks about the significance of composition as a process. Composition as a process involves planning, giving and receiving feedback, and revision.
2. **Techniques.** The student uses specific compositional techniques and talks about the value of those techniques. Techniques are linguistic (for example, using transitional wording) and audio-visual (for example, juxtaposing an image and a song).
3. **Rhetoric.** The student articulates an understanding of rhetorical situation and talks about using this understanding when making compositional choices. Rhetorical situation involves considering author(s), audience(s), text(s), and medium(a) and the relationship among them.
4. **Intercomparativity.** The student articulates an understanding of similarities and differences related to process, techniques, and rhetoric that spans genres *and* modes of expression and talks about using this understanding when making compositional choices. Genres include written and audio-visual genres such as a literacy narrative or an informational video, and modes include linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, gestural, and multimodal forms of expression.

Below, I describe how I designed the case study, analyzed the data, and arrived at this emergent framework for meta-awareness about composition. Using excerpts from interviews with students, I show how various metacognitive moves became evident to different degrees across the student experiences.

Research Methods

In order to begin to build a theory of meta-awareness about composition for writing studies that specifies components and provides observable evidence of development, I designed a qualitative case study to inquire into what meta-awareness about composition is and how it develops for students in a FYW course. As researchers Kathleen M. Eisenhardt and Melissa E. Graebner demonstrate, because inductive case research uses rich empirical data, it is "likely to produce theory that is accurate, interesting, and testable" (26), especially when carefully justified and clearly presented (30). The case I present here uses data collected in fall 2012 in two sections of FYW at a large university in the midwestern United States. The goal of the study was to examine the relationship (if any) between the development of meta-awareness and new media composition in FYW courses. Research questions centered on if and how meta-awareness might be identified within the scope of a FYW course and what the role of new media composition (specifically, of video composition) might be in its development. Using interviews, observations, and document analysis, I looked and listened for observable evidence of meta-awareness about composition within students' enactments of particular assignments and across the FYW courses. In particular, I sought evidence within class interactions, verbal responses to interview questions, video products, and written reflections. The study was exempted by the Institutional Review Board at the university where I conducted the research.

Research Site and Participants

The case study focuses on six students in two FYW courses at the same university, all of whom completed several essays and a digital video assignment as part of FYW. While the experiences of these students cannot offer a comprehensive view of what meta-awareness about composition looks and sounds like for all students, what they can do is allow us to begin to observe and categorize discrete discursive actions that contributed to the development of meta-awareness about composition for these six learners, discursive actions that might constitute a preliminary theory of meta-awareness about composition that could then function as a foundation for further research with a larger amount of participants or using alternative methods.

The university where I conducted the research is a large, selective public research university located in the midwestern United States.{1} In 2012, 69% of undergraduates identified as white; 25% identified as Asian, Black, Hawaiian, Hispanic, or Native American; and 12% of incoming undergraduates identified as first-generation college students. The FYW curriculum at the university seeks to prepare these students to produce argumentative, academic texts, and writing instructors have freedom to design courses in various ways while utilizing common goals for FYW: producing analytic arguments, reading texts to support writing, analyzing genres and rhetorical strategies, and developing strategies for writing, self-assessment, goal-setting, and reflection. Some instructors thus design theme-based FYW courses; others design courses centered on writing itself.

The study began when I recruited two instructors who agreed to include a ready-made unit of video composition into their FYW courses. Using theoretical frameworks from John Dewey, Stuart Selber, and Kathleen Yancey, I designed the unit that the instructor participants implemented, and the content was based on lessons I developed, revised, and taught in my own writing classroom over a period of several years (see Appendix 1 for a complete summary of the content of the lessons in the video unit). The video composition assignment at the heart of the unit asked students to compose a short, open-topic video that used multiple media such as visuals, written text, and sounds in combination. In-class lessons focused on developing what Selber labels *functional*, *critical*, and *rhetorical literacies*, and these were approached using a Deweyan "learn-by-doing" philosophy: students experimented, drafted, offered feedback to one another, analyzed models, and met with the instructor. Various audio-visual and rhetorical techniques such as *completion*, *juxtaposition*, *metaphor*, and *musical rhetoric* were introduced, and students were encouraged to use these techniques in their compositions. Finally, Yancey's model of reflection in-action, constructive reflection, and reflection in-presentation (*Reflection* 13-14) informed the design of reflective activities: students were to write goal statements for the video compositions, return to and revise the goal statements, and complete a reflection essay. Because the intent of the study was to look for indicators of meta-awareness about composition and not to evaluate particular lessons, I gave the instructors freedom to tailor any aspects of the unit to their needs. The instructor for course A, for example, chose to meet with students for conferences in groups instead of one-on-one; the instructor for course B shortened the unit, omitting the reflection essay and several in-class activities.

Along with the video, the students composed various prose essays in each course. Written assignments varied, but they included, for example, a literacy narrative (course A), an *ekphrasis* essay (course A), a "summarize and compare" essay (course B), and a "problem and solution" essay (course B). Both instructors chose to place the video unit as the last assignment in their courses. One effect of utilizing ready-made lessons and placing them at the end of the curriculum was that in each course, the video unit was slightly disconnected from other assignments. The video necessitated very different functional skills, it required a shifted goal-setting process, and it asked students to analyze and compose texts that were very different from those they experienced in previous

assignments. All of these differences affected students' uptake of the video composition in various ways: many were excited for a new challenge, others were intimidated or confused, a few were indifferent.

From courses A and B, I recruited six focal students for interviews: Lauren, Logan, and Travon from course A, and Marlee, Shannon, and Vivian from course B.{2} I selected these students because they were available for and willing to participate in interviews. Course A was offered through the comprehensive studies program at the university, a program designed to support students from diverse populations, and 12 of the 18 students in course A were Asian, Black, or Hispanic, compared with course B, in which 4 of the 18 students were Asian or Black. Additionally, participants from course A had all completed the university's summer bridge program the summer before FYW, during which they took several preparatory courses, including a 100-level writing course. I did not know the student participants before the study began, but as I selected them from each course, I tried as much as possible to recruit students with a range of backgrounds, interests, and identities.{3} Table 1 provides additional information about the students, their majors, and a brief description of their chosen topics for the video composition.

Table 1. The Six Focal Student Participants.

Name	General Description	Description of Student's Video Composition
Lauren	First-year student in course A, female, White, undecided but considering pre-med	Lauren's video Saving the Arts was an argument meant to persuade non-artists that arts classes in schools are valuable and should continue to be funded.
Logan	First-year student in course A, female, Black, neuroscience major	Logan's video examined how men and women approach romantic relationships differently yet still end up together.
Marlee	First-year student in course B, female, White, undecided	Marlee's video Camp Davis gave details about an off-campus educational program.
Shannon	First-year student in course B, female, White, undecided but considering social sciences	Shannon's video detailed what a young person can gain from attending an overnight summer camp.
Travon	First-year student in course A, male, Black, hoping to major in business or accounting	Travon's video informed incoming freshmen about aspects of student life and the university's summer bridge program.
Vivian	First-year student in course B, female, Asian, undecided but considering business	Vivian's video "How Do You Judge Something You Don't Know? " focused on disproving stereotypes about children with no siblings.

Data Collection: Interviews, Observations, and Documents

I collected data through interviews, classroom observations, and documents, focusing on sites where observable evidence of meta-awareness might be seen or heard via actions, body movements, conversations, or products. I interviewed the participants three times each, once at the start of the course, once after the video unit concluded, and once after the course was finished.{4} The goal of the interviews was to listen for spoken evidence of the development of meta-awareness about composition through comparing student narratives of learning at different points within the course. The first interview solicited background information about the students and how they approached writing prior to completing the major course assignments, the second interview solicited narratives about the students' videos and their perceptions of their learning through the video unit, and the third interview sought information about student learning through the course as a whole (see Appendix 2 for specific interview protocols). After videos of interviews were transcribed verbatim, they were checked for accuracy, and notes about participants' body movements and facial expressions were added to the transcripts when significant.

I collected additional data through classroom observations and documents, observing and video recording four to five lessons in each class that contained heavy amounts of discussion and interaction. The goal of recording in-class interactions was to look and listen for additional ways students might reveal indicators of meta-awareness

about composition, whether they be verbal or shown through movements or actions. After the observational data was collected, I viewed it and made an outline for each class session of what occurred, and I transcribed portions that I considered most relevant as I began to code and analyze the interview data. The final data source was written and digital documents: I collected final copies of written goal statements and final drafts of video compositions.{5} From the students in course A, I collected the reflection essays they turned in with final drafts of videos (the students in course B did not write a reflection essay). The goal of collecting documents was to provide additional sites (in written work and digital products) where discursive and/or enacted evidence of meta-awareness about composition might be observed.

Analysis

After data collection was complete, I used a grounded theory approach to code and analyze the data from the student interviews (Corbin and Strauss; Merriam). As Sharan B. Merriam explains, in a grounded theory approach to qualitative research, “the investigator as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis assumes an inductive stance and strives to derive meaning from the data. The end result of this type of qualitative study is a theory that emerges from, or is ‘grounded’ in, the data” (29). To begin such an inductive process, I read and re-read interview transcripts and applied initial codes to passages of data, using wording from participants when possible and looking in particular for *observable* indicators of meta-awareness—evidence that could be seen through movements and actions or heard through what participants recounted. I supplemented information from interviews with data from classroom observations and documents when relevant. For example, when a student referred to an in-class discussion, I compared the student’s account of the interaction with footage I obtained in the classroom. When students referred to a particular sequence in a video or to what they wrote in a reflection essay, I compared their accounts to what was visible and audible in the documents themselves, triangulating the data.

After open coding the entire data set, I made a list of top codes based on frequency across all interviews. The list included codes such as *makes links between writing and video* (112 occurrences), *articulates an understanding of audience/purpose* (92 occurrences), *articulates an understanding of process* (87 occurrences), *uses metalanguage* (52 occurrences), and *uses feedback to revise* (50 occurrences). Because I sought observable indicators of meta-awareness, I was careful to employ verbs such as *articulates* and *uses* in my codes that represented evidence that could be seen and/or heard. I grouped these top codes into categories based on how often they appeared across all of the interviews, working toward what Corbin and Strauss label *integration*, where research threads are pulled together “to construct a plausible explanatory framework” about participant experience (264). Using a network visualization tool, I grouped codes by similarity and renamed categories, the tool assisting in the discovery of conceptual overlaps that did not become evident through frequency counts. Through physically arranging the codes, I explored visually how concepts might be related to one another, helping me decide which codes were indeed over-arching categories and which were sub-categories (codes with many other codes surrounding or below them became candidates for over-arching categories). At the end, I arrived at four over-arching writing/rhetorical concepts within which meta-awareness about composition became observable. I then used the four concepts as a framework as I wrote up the findings, which I present below.

Concept 1: Process (The student enacts composition as a process and talks about the significance of composition as a process)

The first writing/rhetorical concept within which meta-awareness about composition became evident was enacting and/or talking about composition as a process. Here, I define process as planning for composition, giving or receiving feedback on compositions or choices, and revising. Vivian, for example, first began to develop procedural aspects of meta-awareness about composition related to process through actions, taking her video about stereotyping children with no siblings (“only children,” in her words) through an in-depth revision process. She initially intended her project to communicate its message through satire: in a first draft, various only children acted selfish, lonely, and socially awkward in exaggerated, silly situations. The satire in the first draft was confusing according to classmates, however, and so Vivian revised, expanding the focus of the video to include other stereotypes relating to race and hair color. After talking with her instructor, Vivian again revised, focusing back to only children and using the exaggerated footage from the first draft, but also including several “serious” sequences. Through revision, Vivian *enacted* composition as a process, demonstrating Schraw’s procedural knowledge of cognition: she knew how to revise.

Very little in the classroom or the curriculum, however, asked Vivian to move her procedural knowledge about process into discursive consciousness or to make other kinds of metacognitive moves. She revealed little evidence

during interviews of having declarative or conditional knowledge of process or regulation of process, as shown when she described her writing process for a literary analysis essay. She stated, “I just write it. I don’t know. This is hard to talk about.” When I asked why detailing her process was difficult, she responded, “Because I don’t think that, this is what I’m doing right now. After I write this intro, I’m going to write my—I don’t know, you don’t really think about the steps of writing.” Even though Vivian demonstrated an ability to draft, receive feedback, and globally revise her work through her written essays and her video in the FYW course, she still lacked an articulated, discursive awareness of writing process.

When I asked Vivian to talk specifically about what she learned through revising her video so extensively, she appeared uncomfortable, turned her face away from me and the camera, and began to pick her fingernails, stating “I don’t know if I learned anything that I think of, but I feel like I probably learned something from the process. I don’t—yeah, I don’t really know.” When I subsequently prompted her to think ahead to the future, though, she then responded, “probably the next time I make a video, I’ll make sure I know what I’m trying to convey, and try, have a good ending point. Because I didn’t really have a conclusion, I guess, for my video.” This was a start—the beginnings of monitoring and evaluating her process and planning for the future (part of Schraw’s regulation of cognition). Vivian’s case illustrates that even students engaged in global revision may not make metacognitive moves in areas such as declarative and conditional knowledge of cognition or regulation of cognition. It was only through prompting and the progress of conversations in interviews that Vivian began to move knowledge into discursive consciousness and to start extending her meta-awareness about composition beyond the procedural.

Another student, Logan, moved toward a robust meta-awareness about process—one that included metacognitive moves from several of Schraw’s sub-categories—through recursive actions and articulations. Like Vivian, Logan took her video about romantic relationships through a rigorous revision process. She assembled a first draft quickly by shooting and compiling interviews, and as she workshopped the draft in class, her purpose was not yet clear: “the draft was due. And I was just like, ok, well not much is expected. So let me just put these together. And I put them together, and I looked at it, and I’m like, this is depressing. What am I doing?” Even with classmates’ positive feedback on her draft, Logan was still searching for a clear purpose for her work, and she described having an epiphany about writing process in general:

> I realized, this is my problem: I just go off in my head, and I just write. And whatever comes out is what I turn in. And I also don’t double check papers. That’s another problem. I do not. And that’s the thing I had to do with the video. I couldn’t just do the video and stop. I had to keep looking at the video. I had to keep cutting and pasting, cutting and pasting.

Logan recounts that she explored problems with her usual composition process, monitoring and evaluating her actions and thoughts regarding lack of planning or double checking work. Video, she claimed, encouraged her to make different process moves beyond those in her usual writing routine as she edited and re-edited interview clips, and her comments in the interviews enabled her to work toward a discursive consciousness of how she was changing her process.

At the same time, Logan was asked to further articulate in the form of written goal statements as part of the video unit. Focusing her thoughts and putting them into words was foreign for Logan, who, like Vivian, was accustomed to keeping her knowledge in the practical, procedural realm. She described,

> I really hate planning things. I really just like going out and doing them. So when [my instructor] made me write down goals, it bothered me. But once I did my draft and I realized it wasn’t going the way I wanted it to go, I realized that I needed the goals to guide me to get where I wanted to go. So once I realized, ok, this is what I want to do. I want to do perspectives, ok. That helped me compile a better set of questions.

The requirement to write down goals forced Logan to regulate her cognition: she had to think about her purpose, state it in words, and then continue composing, which she did through revamping her interview questions, completely re-shooting all of her footage to get answers from interviewees that were relevant to her purpose, and reassembling a new, more focused draft which she revised multiple times before submission.

Regulation of cognition continued for Logan as she articulated what happened in detail and further explored problems that arose, concluding that “one of the things that doing the video made me realize is that when I write papers, I need to have goals. Because if I don’t, I never get to the point of the paper.” Thus Logan looked to the future and speculated about how she might shift her actions to improve her work in other contexts beyond video, demonstrating conditional knowledge of cognition: she knew *why* and *when* to use process moves like goal-setting. Thus, recursive movement between actions and articulations through classroom work and interviews was more helpful for Logan’s development of meta-awareness about process than actions in isolation, and her

articulated knowledge included looking ahead to an immediate task (planning), setting goals (planning), providing specific descriptions of actions (declarative knowledge), problem-exploring (monitoring and evaluating), and looking to potential future actions (conditional knowledge).

Concept 2: Techniques (The student uses specific compositional techniques and talks about the function and value of those techniques)

A second writing/rhetorical concept within which development of meta-awareness about composition became observable again involved both actions and articulations, but here in relation to using specific compositional techniques and talking about their function. The data in this section includes not only accounts of students using techniques that were visible in end products (practical, procedural knowledge), but also of students beginning to move this knowledge into discursive consciousness as they discussed techniques, used metalanguage to refer to techniques, and described rationales for their own use of techniques (declarative and conditional knowledge, as well as regulation of cognition).

Travon was starting to work toward declarative and procedural knowledge in relation to techniques: he was learning what audio-visual techniques were, and he used some in his video such as *musical rhetoric*, choosing music for different sequences quite purposefully and aligning the changing pace of songs with his message. Moving his practical knowledge of techniques to the discursive, however, was hard work, which was particularly evident through the ways he resisted picking up metalanguage. Travon stated,

> I didn't center my movie around, ok, I need to make my movie fit *juxtaposition*. I have to make my movie fit *musical rhetoric*. I have to—no. I was just, I'm going to make this movie how I want this movie to be made.

The audio-visual techniques, he continued, "didn't really affect my actual thought process in the video. It was just like, they're there." Because techniques such as *musical rhetoric* were indeed evident in his product, I asked him if his use might have been accidental or subconscious, and he explained, "I wasn't aware [laughs]. I was, but I wasn't fully aware. I wasn't like, ooh, this is *juxtaposition*." Travon's narrative indicates that he was just beginning to develop declarative and procedural knowledge of the audio-visual techniques from the unit; he was learning to identify and name the techniques and was starting to use them. As he stated, though, he was not yet "fully aware": he had not moved this knowledge to discursive consciousness, and he did not yet articulate when and why to use techniques (conditional knowledge) or regulate his own use of techniques through planning, monitoring, or evaluating.

Marlee used compositional techniques in her video, as well, and she talked about the significance of those techniques, indicating movement toward a robust meta-awareness about composition in this area as she named techniques, discussed why she used them, and evaluated whether or not they might be useful in the future. Marlee described herself as a student who liked her work to be unique. Using compositional techniques, she said, was one way to have her writing stand out: "If I write a boring first draft, I'm like, all right, what can I use in this? Should I use *parallelism*? Or what devices can I use?" Marlee indicated regulation of her actions and cognition through planning and monitoring, activities she was already practicing before the video composition. She continued and extended this conscious approach to composition in the video unit through using and discussing the technique of *completion*.

Marlee used *completion* in her video two times, including the first part of a sentence to introduce a section and completing the concept with images and the end of the sentence several seconds later. She stated, "I used it [*completion*] a couple times, and it was really helpful, I think, in conveying the message." Marlee learned about *completion* in class, developing declarative knowledge, and then she planned for its use, regulating her cognition: "I wrote out a couple ideas about how I could put it in. So when I put in the *completion* and *repetition*, I had a plan for how I was going to do it." Then she put the technique to work in her video about Camp Davis, the off-campus summer program: "I said, can you put a price, dot dot dot, on this much fun? And there were two pictures of a kid picking a buffalo's nose and another kid stuffing Oreos in his mouth. It was a fun outlet." In addition to being a fun, entertaining way to express ideas, Marlee explained that *completion* helped to add variety: "I leaned towards the more simplistic devices. But it was nice to have them, because otherwise I feel like my project would of just been a really straight running project. But it was broken up by using the devices." Thus Marlee revealed evidence of conditional knowledge: *when* and *why* she might use *completion* (for fun and for variety), even though this knowledge seemed to be limited to what could be considered fairly basic notions of the technique's rhetorical functions.

Even so, Marlee did demonstrate that she moved between articulations and actions as she put *completion* to work in her video, and she recounted taking part in several of Schraw's metacognitive moves: she learned about the technique (declarative knowledge), planned for its use (regulation of cognition), used it (procedural knowledge), and explained a rationale for her use of the technique (regulation through evaluating). And these various metacognitive moves set a foundation for transfer across modes: later, Marlee reported thinking about how she might adapt and use *completion* in a written paper for another course. She recounted,

> I started thinking about that [*completion*] while I was working on my final. […] Because I feel like that would make it more interesting. Sort of like it breaks up the video, it would break up this big chunk of argument or analysis in your paper.

Thus Marlee's meta-awareness about techniques, developed through a variety of metacognitive actions and articulations, allowed her to consider how and why she might apply *completion* in a different rhetorical context.

Concept 3: Rhetoric (The student articulates an understanding of rhetorical situation and uses this understanding when making compositional choices)

The third concept within which students revealed movement toward meta-awareness about composition was rhetoric, where students articulated and/or enacted an understanding of rhetorical situation—the interactions among reader(s), writer(s), text(s), and medium(a). In particular, the students talked a lot about how considerations of audience shaped their actions. In fact, of all the writing/rhetorical concepts within which meta-awareness about composition became observable in this study, this concept was the most prevalent across all students: all six talked about audiences for their work and made compositional choices that they linked to audience. This may have been due in part to being prompted in multiple ways—through written goal statements, class discussions, reflection essays, and interviews—to consider and articulate the make-up and needs of audiences. Video as a medium also lends itself to the consideration of multiple audiences inside and outside of classrooms.

Marlee talked about how invoking an audience of college-aged kids for her Camp Davis video helped her to decide how to select and organize images. She narrated that she "started thinking through how one would make an advertisement that would appeal to kids. So basically nobody knows what goes on. So I was like, ok, how can I use these pictures to show the daily life, what it's like, and just make it seem fun?" Considering her audience helped Marlee ask questions about her purpose and make compositional choices about the images used to reach that purpose for the specific audience of college kids, who she knew lacked general information about the program and would be interested in fun. Thus Marlee revealed meta-awareness about audience that was observable through what she said as she identified an audience and talked about their needs (declarative knowledge, along with planning), what she reported doing in her video composition as a result (procedural knowledge), and what was actually visible and audible in the end product. Marlee included informative pictures of the camp living quarters, mountain scenery, and wildlife, and fun pictures of the campers laughing and participating in hiking, swimming, and volleyball, all combined with a voice-over and a soundtrack of popular, recognizable, and lyrically-relevant songs.

While Marlee identified one fairly general audience for her video composition, Travon had a complex, multifaceted conception of audience for his "welcome to the university" video, a conception that indicated a robust declarative knowledge of rhetoric. At times, Travon invoked an audience of incoming students similar to himself, stating, "the first thought was, make this video. It's a very good video because you didn't have anything about the summer bridge program when you were coming, and it'll really help other students." Travon mentioned this same audience of incoming summer bridge students in his reflection essay in response to the prompt that asked him to identify an audience, and his comments in the interviews revealed how he was not only picturing this audience, but also thinking about and making compositional decisions based on their needs, moving his declarative knowledge into the procedural and regulating his cognition through planning. One authorial decision that demonstrated these metacognitive moves was Travon's choice to include himself in the first draft of the video as "tour guide" and narrator for those new to campus, indicating a knowledge that new students might want and need someone to show them around.

At the same time that he invoked this audience of prospective students, Travon was considering the needs of another very specific addressed audience: friends who had already gone through the summer bridge program. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford state that simultaneous conceptions of invoked and addressed audiences like Travon's need not be "necessarily dichotomous or contradictory" (89), and that writers "contemplate a multiplicity of

audiences" (91) when composing. Travon illustrates how such a multi-part conception of audience might inform compositional decisions such as how to combine image, music, and written text. He stated,

> My favorite part of the video would be the very beginning when the music plays and the title comes up, and then it's the big screen shot of [a dormitory on campus], and then the title "Summer" pops up because it appeals to *pathos*. […] The music, it just relaxes them, and then it's just like the big bang, [the dorm]! And they're like, awwww! […] Once you look at [the dorm], you're going to associate that with the summer bridge program if you're a summer bridge student.

Travon selected an image of the dorm and combined it with particular music and a title (procedural knowledge), and here he articulated a rationale for those choices linked to audience awareness, moving his practical knowledge to the realm of the discursive through his explanations and indicating conditional knowledge. His use of the image, music, and title together was based in a simultaneous awareness of an invoked and an addressed audience: he knew that the sequence would introduce the summer accommodations to prospective students at the same time it appealed to *pathos* and brought back fond memories of living there for current summer bridge students, friends who would watch the video. This multi-part view of audience was further complicated by still other addressed audiences with various roles that Travon talked about attending to: his instructor and classmates. Travon demonstrated robust meta-awareness about rhetorical situation through describing these multiple audiences in interviews and on paper; talking about their specific needs; and enacting multimodal, complex compositional choices as a result.

Concept 4: Intercomparativity (The student articulates an understanding of differences and similarities that spans genres and modes of expression and talks about using this understanding when making compositional choices)

Fourth, students revealed movement toward meta-awareness about composition through articulating that they had an understanding of intercomparativity: the differences and similarities that spanned genres and modes of expression related to the previous three writing/rhetorical concepts of process, compositional techniques, and rhetoric. Students with robust meta-awareness related to intercomparativity combined articulations with actions by making compositional choices using their understanding, showing knowledge in both the practical and the discursive realms, and revealing evidence of various metacognitive moves from Schraw's model. Shannon, for example, demonstrated the very beginnings of developing discursive knowledge of cognition about intercomparativity. She did not talk much about making connections between her work in the video unit and her other writing but instead described video composition as a separate, distinct activity from other types of composition, useful for learning about audio-visual production in itself but lacking qualities that might transfer to other spaces.

After completing the video project, Shannon related, "I did see it as kind of weird that my final project in an English class, which you obviously associate with reading and writing, was a visual arts production piece." Shannon enjoyed the video assignment as a way to "mix it up" after a semester filled with writing prose essays, but she felt a lack of continuity when thinking about how it connected with the rest of the course content, stating that moving to video "seemed like a weird transition because it wasn't a direct reflection of everything I'd been working on." Shannon viewed her writing skills as distinct from the skills and processes she used in video composition, in part because she wrote three major papers in the course prior to the video unit, products that indeed looked and felt very different. Written reflection was not an assigned part of her writing course, and there were few other opportunities where she might articulate what the differences and similarities from one assignment to the next might have been or why these might have been important to notice or think through. Thus Shannon struggled to figure out how to connect knowledge built through prior assignments to what she experienced as a completely different composing environment.

When I asked her specifically if anything from working on papers was applicable to the video, Shannon did point to structure, argument, and thesis: "I guess there were some concepts that transitioned. And also the idea of structure and supporting your argument in an overarching thesis." Shannon began to draw these initial connections and build declarative knowledge due to the prompting provided by my question. Because reflection across media was not built explicitly into her writing course in other ways, though, the interviews were most likely the first time that Shannon had tried explicitly to articulate any crossover or to point out differences, and she only had a few moments to do so. As a result, her articulations were short and emergent, and she repeatedly stated that papers and video were very different. Of course, composing a written essay and a digital video *are* different activities. In

order to further develop meta-awareness related to intercomparativity, though, Shannon might have been prompted to explore discursively what those differences might be, what they might mean for her as a composer across media, and how the similarities she did briefly mention might or might not inform her future writing actions. Without further prompting, Shannon clung to a relativistic view of composition across media, holding fast to the belief that composing situations in different media platforms would be most characterized by differences.

Where Shannon emphasized differences, Lauren pointed out similarities, and she talked about several connections between the processes and techniques involved with video and prose, exploring what she noticed as she talked, monitoring and evaluating her new knowledge, and planning for future application. These articulations, however, were not accidental or automatic. Lauren noted, “I wasn’t really thinking how the video and writing were connected in a way. I was like, oh yeah, this was such a cool project!” However, the reflection essay that her instructor assigned at the end of the video unit, combined with answering my questions in the interviews, pushed Lauren beyond the “this was such a cool project” stage of thinking and into a discursive consciousness of the intercomparativity of video and prose writing. Lauren stated that “the similarities definitely stuck out to me in the reflection essay,” and in the paper, she wrote about revision as a skill that is applicable across media:

> Even though I had to spend hours editing, it was probably the most rewarding part because it is such an essential part to creating a good video. Editing is revision; if there is one thing I have learned through English, it is that revision is as important as actually writing the paper.

As I talked with her one-on-one after the course ended, Lauren continued to make additional connections beyond revision.

In particular, Lauren talked about the importance of creating contrast, or using a “shift,” as she called it. She recounted an especially memorable contrast that she composed in her video: “my favorite part, I swear, is the part where there’s music and it fades away. I like the seriousness of the moment, and I think I found a new appreciation for a shift in a paper. Because they’re big, but people just don’t realize, I think. Or *I* don’t realize.” Thinking about the musical shift in her video composition led to thinking about the way that shifts might work in other contexts such as in a paper. She continued, “for any upper-level writing courses I take, that’ll be helpful to just think back to, ok, I need to have a shift in the paper.” While Lauren did not yet enact the transfer she talks about, the interview questions prompted her to regulate her cognition, planning for the future and speculating about what might carry over. By articulating how current learning might apply in the future, Lauren laid groundwork for transfer through developing meta-awareness about composition that crossed media. This enacted and articulated awareness was again evidenced in our last interview when she stated, “usually when I write I just—I feel like I just kind of write, but now I’m aware, oh, certain techniques work better.”

Using the Four Concepts to Move Forward in Teaching and Research

Meta-awareness is a useful concept for writing studies and for those who research and teach FYW courses: it is the *how* and the *why* of composition that takes place as a mind interacts with the social world, and as many in the field (along with this case study) have suggested, it may be important for the transfer of writing knowledge from one context to the next. As I have illustrated, however, meta-awareness needs to be more specifically theorized for writing studies and its components specified if we are to look for it in our research and teach for it in our classrooms—we need to pay attention to discrete elements of meta-awareness and to observable evidence of its development. To this end, Schraw and Giddens indicate that meta-awareness about composition can be observed as students learn to move compositional knowledge from the practical to the discursive, and it is observable across several discrete metacognitive moves. In other words, various aspects of meta-awareness about composition can be seen and heard through discursive actions as students act and articulate in a consistent, recursive compositional process.

Looking across the discursive actions of the six students within the case study here allows me to forward a preliminary framework for meta-awareness about composition that involves process, techniques, rhetoric, and intercomparativity. These four concepts may be related to what Gorzelsky et al. call constructive metacognition; they are four areas in which it was useful for these six first-year writers to build both practical and discursive knowledge as they composed videos and essays. This study, of course, is one case, and meta-awareness about composition is complex. More research is thus needed into these four writing/rhetorical concepts and their relationship to specific metacognitive moves like those that Schraw discusses.

That some students in the study initially began to move knowledge from the practical to the discursive, moved

between actions and articulations more often or more consistently, or displayed different kinds of metacognitive moves when prompted by lessons, reflection essays, or interview questions suggests that we might use a better understanding of meta-awareness about composition and its components to strategically develop classroom instruction and to design new research studies. As Bransford et al. argue in *How People Learn*, incorporating metacognitive activities *into specific subject matter* is a key instructional move: metacognitive strategies, the researchers state, "are not generic across subjects" (19). The four writing/rhetorical concepts I offer here might then be used as a starting place for the design of instruction that focuses explicitly on prompting metacognitive moves *for writing* through articulations along with actions. Writing researchers interested in meta-awareness and its relationship to transfer (and to new media composition) might also use the four concepts as they design new studies to inquire into what meta-awareness about composition looks and sounds like, and if and how it may be linked to the transfer of writing knowledge to new contexts. A more robust theorization of meta-awareness about composition and a more specific mapping of its components, the beginnings of which I provide here, have the potential to benefit not only our work as teachers, scholars, and researchers, but the work of our students as they learn to communicate and to compose in a rapidly changing world.

Appendices

1. Appendix 1: Summary of the Lessons in the Video Unit
2. Appendix 2: Interview Protocols

Appendix 1: Summary of the Lessons in the Video Unit

Lesson Number and Title	**Lesson Objectives** Students will…
Lesson 1 ~ Making a Video: Ethics, Copyright, and Finding Materials	• become familiar with copyright law, fair use of materials under copyright, the public domain, and creative commons licensing • learn how to find materials and media assets that they can reuse in their video compositions according to the uses they intend • find one image, one piece of music, and one video on the Web for which they have express permission to reuse • trouble-shoot problems with locating materials as they arise
Lesson 2 ~ Video Editing Hardware and Software	• familiarize themselves with the interface of the video editing software • learn how to import and manipulate still images, video clips, and music • learn how to rip and insert video from the Web • learn how to use video cameras, webcams, or other recording devices to capture video or audio, import and manipulate it • learn to add and manipulate written text • learn to produce a video file • learn how to use one another, the instructor, and the Web as resources
Lesson 3 ~ Analysis of Video Models and Building Metalanguage	• discuss and analyze several video models • evaluate the use of the audio-visual composing techniques they see at work in the models • begin to develop metalanguage for audio-visual composing
Lesson 4 ~ Techniques for Video Composing, Building Metalanguage, and Goal Setting	• define and recognize video composing techniques • become more aware of the layers of media in video composing • critically analyze and evaluate the use of composing techniques • develop metalanguage for audio-visual composing • set goals for developing functional and rhetorical literacies
Lesson 5 ~ Multimedia Box	• compose a "multimedia box" using images, sounds, written words, and video • use and recognize video composition techniques • interact with, evaluate, and discuss their own work and the work of

	their peers using metalanguage • consider ways to apply the video composition techniques to their video assignment
Lesson 6 ~ Small Group Workshop and Goal Revisiting	• view and interact with their own and each other's video composition drafts • critically analyze their own and each other's drafts and participate in discussion about the drafts, giving and receiving critical feedback on each other's drafts using metalanguage • reflect on goals and progress, revising and adding to goals
Lesson 7 ~ Conference with the Instructor	• critically analyze their video draft, ask questions about the draft, and reflect over choices and the rationale for those choices • participate in discussion about the draft • listen to and respond to feedback from the instructor • reflect on next steps in composing the draft and ways to improve it
Lesson 8 ~ Submission of Final Draft and Reflection	• reflect on goals and progress, explaining a rationale for the goals • reflect on composition process, chosen purpose and audience, use of audio-visual strategies, and use of rhetorical and technical features • articulate rationales for choices • consider ways to connect the learning they experienced in this assignment to future assignments or writing contexts

(Return to text.)

Appendix 2: Interview Protocols

Interview Protocol, beginning of course

1. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself?
2. How would you describe yourself as a writer and your writing abilities?
3. Can you tell me about a piece of writing that you've done in the past that you consider successful?
4. Could you describe what kinds of writing or composition you have used before this class in school?
5. Could you describe what kinds of writing or composition you have used before this class outside of school, either in the workplace or on your own?

Interview Protocol, after the video unit

1. Could you tell me about the video you composed?
2. Can you tell me about the resources and tools you used to compose the video?
3. Could you tell me about the video reflection essay you composed?
4. Are there any concepts or terms from the video unit that you think will stick with you over time?
5. How would you describe your overall experience with video composition in this assignment?
6. Some people would say that new media composition does not belong in an academic writing course like [first-year writing]. What would your response be to them?

Interview Protocol, after the course

1. Not counting the video composition, could you tell me about another assignment from [first-year writing] that mattered to you?
2. What connections do you see between the major assignments in your [first-year writing] course?
3. How would you describe yourself as a writer and your writing abilities now at the end of [first-year writing]?
4. Can you describe for me your general approach to writing now?
5. What might be a writing challenge that you would encounter this/next semester, and how might you approach it?
6. Can you describe what you believe the purpose of a college writing class like [first-year writing] is? In your view, did your class fulfill this purpose? Why or why not?

(Return to text.)

Notes

1. The university accepts about 33% of applicants. (Return to text.)
2. In order to maintain continuity with work published elsewhere, I have chosen to use the real names of students when they have given me permission to do so. Logan and Shannon indicated a desire to remain anonymous, and their names are pseudonyms. (Return to text.)
3. Of the six focal participants, five are female and one is male. While I tried to recruit additional male participants, none were available for or willing to participate in interviews. (Return to text.)
4. One student participant had to drop out of the study after the first interview, and thus I recruited Lauren mid-way through the video unit after initial interviews were already completed. I interviewed Lauren only two times, once after the video unit and once after the course. (Return to text.)
5. I did not collect draft versions of goal statements or video products due to the large amount of data I collected and the time required to code and analyze it. In retrospect, collecting drafts would have allowed me to compare drafts, final products, and statements made during interviews. (Return to text.)

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