

# WAC/WID and Transfer: Towards a Transdisciplinary View of Academic Writing

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**Abstract:** In moves to fortify the discipline and articulate its value, does writing studies risk perpetuating narrow views of disciplinarity and academic writing? Drawing from an analysis of the intersections between WAC/WID and transfer scholarship in popular rhetoric and composition journals, I call for more direct engagement between these two areas of specialization. I argue that bringing transfer and WAC/WID together can craft models of academic writing that embrace—as opposed to erase—the complexities of students’ lived experiences. I conclude by suggesting avenues for engagement between WAC/WID and transfer that can promote richer understandings of the relationship between writing and learning across transdisciplinary spaces.

Since its inception in the 1970s, the Writing Across the Curriculum and Writing in the Disciplines (WAC/WID)<sup>1</sup> movement has promoted ethical, inclusive, and arguably transdisciplinary understandings of students’ writing processes. In its goal to “break down the silos that can divide disciplines” and “transcend disciplinary boundaries,” WAC/WID acknowledges the complexity and dexterity of academic writing practices (International Network of WAC Programs, 2014, p. 1). WAC/WID scholars recursively ask themselves and the field at large: how can we avoid reinforcing narrow views of disciplinarity and academic writing?

This essay analyzes intersections between transfer and WAC/WID scholarship to demonstrate how these two areas can merge to offer transdisciplinary views of academic writing. This transdisciplinarity can mitigate the flattening of disciplines into conventions, and the prescriptive packaging of academic writing based on generalizations about the moves students make from first-year composition (FYC) to writing in the disciplines. WAC/WID scholarship, even in its earliest articulations, offers insight into a transdisciplinary approach to academic writing that can also promote nuanced understandings of transfer. I begin by explicating the definition of transdisciplinarity I will be working from in this essay, and elaborating on the transdisciplinarity of WAC/WID. I then analyze the limited engagement between WAC/WID and transfer scholarship and suggest the potential consequences of this failure to cross disciplinary silos. Drawing from this analysis, I argue that both transfer studies and WAC/WID can benefit from more direct engagement with one another. Overall, this essay highlights how studying WAC/WID and transfer together can 1) illuminate the transdisciplinarity of WAC/WID, and 2) afford a more transdisciplinary view of academic writing.

## Defining Transdisciplinarity

Given the breadth with which transdisciplinarity is defined and practiced, it is important to first specify how I am using this term. Drawing from scholarship both in and outside of writing studies, my definition of transdisciplinarity points to an understanding of writing and knowledge formation not bound to disciplinary epistemologies alone: an intellectual openness to new perspectives and methods from outside

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of one's discipline that does not preclude disciplinary difference or expertise. Within the context of writing and transfer, this openness can promote methodologies that better attend to the transdisciplinary realities with which students regularly contend as they move through academic and non-academic spaces.

My definition of transdisciplinarity is informed by the work of humanities scholar Julie T. Klein (2006) and scientist Jürgen Mittelstrass (2011), key figures in what many called the “transdisciplinary moment”<sup>22</sup> within the social sciences. Mittelstrass (2011) defines transdisciplinarity as “overcom[ing] the narrow areas of subjects and disciplines which have been constituted historically, but which have lost their historical memory and their problem-solving capacities due to an excessive specialisation” (p. 332). Transdisciplinary methods require a transcendence of disciplinarity, as the research goal takes precedence (Mittelstrass, 2011). This transdisciplinary transformation must take place in both theory and practice, Mittelstrass (2011) argues, as disciplinary theoretical frameworks are expanded upon or abandoned in the creation of something entirely new. This innovation does not result in the formation of new disciplines, however, but in the resistance to myopic methodologies that can result from territorial academic specialization.

Resisting an absolute definition of transdisciplinarity, Klein (2006) distinguishes between interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary methods. Interdisciplinary inquiry is a primary “component” of transdisciplinary work, according to Klein (2006). Yet, transdisciplinary research is more contextual and responsive to paradigm shifts that depart from disciplinary ideologies. Transdisciplinary work, then, is a “fluid” process, involving “the mobility of participants and interaction and communication patterns [that] furnish a heuristic for identifying differences in social domains or contexts for knowledge production” (Klein, 2006, p. 78). As such, transdisciplinarity involves both a reflective inventory of dominant disciplinary epistemologies and attention to the influence of local and institutional contexts. Stressing the highly contextual nature of this work, Klein (2006) presents transdisciplinary efforts as recursively shifting to meet the interdisciplinary exigencies of all stakeholders.

Arguments for transdisciplinary work have been made by rhetoric and composition scholars as well. In his discussions of the differences between disciplinarity and disciplines, Paul Prior (1998) “reconceptualize[s] disciplines and disciplinary enculturation as open and heterogeneous processes rather than closed and homogeneous structures” (p. 26). Similarly, Kevin Roozen and Joe Erickson (2017) describe the complex making of knowledge across one's life in and out of the university. They present a transdisciplinary perspective that can mitigate limited representations of disciplinarity: “disciplinary persons and practices are understood as extending far beyond the assumed borders of a particular disciplinary world and into the expansive and ever-expanding lifeworlds people navigate” (Roozen & Erickson, 2017). Anne Gere, et al. (2015) also recognize the transdisciplinary processes by which students naturally navigate disciplinarity within and across academic writing spaces. They call for a more dynamic and dexterous view of disciplinarity with their concept “new disciplinarity” (Gere, et al., 2015, p. 258-59). This essay draws from these notions of transdisciplinarity to argue for more explicit intersections between WAC/WID and transfer scholarship in writing studies.

## WAC/WID and Transdisciplinarity: Why Now?

WAC/WID has a rich history of attending to the relationship between writing and learning in ways that transcend disciplinary ways of knowing. It is this transdisciplinary history from which contemporary transfer studies can benefit. A key component of the transdisciplinary view of academic writing evident in WAC/WID is the relationship between WAC and WID. Throughout this essay, I use the term WAC/WID to present the blended and evolving relationship between these two concepts as further evidence of WAC/WID's transdisciplinary potential. While many of the scholars mentioned in this essay also use the terms interchangeably, others have maintained their distinction. For example, Jonathan Monroe (2003) maintains that WAC and WID “have very different implications for the role of writing,” as “WAC

emphasizes the commonality, portability, and communicability of writing practices,” and “WID emphasizes disciplinary differences, diversity, and heterogeneity.”<sup>3</sup> Yet, these two charges are not, and should not be, mutually exclusive. Acknowledging the adaptability of writing as a tool for learning involves a recognition of the difference in disciplinary conventions, and vice versa. This recognition is integral to an understanding of academic writing as transdisciplinary, as it informs the processes of adhering to—and departing from—such conventions.

WAC/WID scholarship presents disciplinarity and disciplinary conventions as contingent and emergent. As such, WID serves as a vehicle for navigating these shifting conventions and for recognizing similarities and differences between WID and WAC, as well as writing outside of the academy. Academic writing, then, becomes a means by which students both conform to and transcend these conventions, as they exercise a rhetorical dexterity privileged in WAC/WID principles and practices. While they might have different foci, WAC and WID constellate around the same notion of academic writing as a tool for traversing disciplinary and professional boundaries.

WAC/WID’s transdisciplinarity is also evident in its early calls for expanding notions of what academic writing is and can be. For instance, Mike Rose (1979) engages in interdisciplinary reflection on how institutional and disciplinary cultures inform perceptions of academic writing in “When Faculty Talk About Writing,” a landmark essay in WAC/WID scholarship. Rose (1979) states:

Specialization in the modern American university is also responsible for an unprecedented territorializing of inquiry. Myopia ensues, and what suffers is the vitality of our disciplines and our students. If, however, we can get faculty to talk about writing—the shared medium—they could begin to connect parts of the curriculum and place writing at its core. (p. 279)

Like much of WAC/WID scholarship from the 1970s, Rose (1979) associates WAC/WID’s transdisciplinary approach to academic writing with a recognition that writing instructors and administrators must look outside the discipline to truly understand how students use writing to move across academic and non-academic contexts. This recognition is similar to Klein’s (2006) approach of “harvesting expertise” from multiple disciplines to forge new understandings that transcend disciplinary conventions. The relationship between writing and learning within WAC/WID, then, is characterized by the broadening of fixed conceptions of learning and writing often perpetuated by disciplinary boundaries.

Examining the disciplines as shifting rhetorical ecologies, WAC/WID scholarship has long analyzed the individual and social processes of disciplinary (and transdisciplinary) writing and learning. In “A Stranger in Strange Lands,” Lucille McCarthy (1987) asserts that “learning to write should be seen not only as a developmental process occurring within an individual student, but also as a social process occurring in response to particular situations” (p. 236). Similarly, Mary Minock (1996) recognizes both the advantages and disadvantages inherent in the field’s participation in transdisciplinary work in “A(n) (Un)Certain Synergy: Rhetoric, Hermeneutics, and Transdisciplinary Conversations about Writing.” Early WAC/WID scholars also call for a reciprocal exchange between composition and other disciplines, often positioning finite disciplinary boundaries as impediments to writing’s potential as a tool for learning. Furthermore, WAC/WID has a transdisciplinary history of preparing student writers for situations outside of the classroom, evident in both its attention to professional writing and in the development of the more recent subfields of Communication Across the Curriculum<sup>4</sup> and Writing Across the Communities.<sup>5</sup>

This transdisciplinary focus is also palpable in contemporary WAC/WID literature, as scholars identify new, transdisciplinary areas of study with which WAC/WID should intersect. For example, Michelle Cox (2011) argues for the diversification of WAC/WID practices to include considerations of ELL writing pedagogies. Cox (2011) asks her fellow WAC/WID practitioners, “In what ways does writing improve learning for bilingual students?” and “In what ways and at what levels of proficiency does writing frustrate or interfere with students’ learning?” Likewise, Jonathan Hall and Nela Navarro (2011) ask, “What does

the discipline of second language acquisition (SLA) have to offer WAC/WID professionals and classroom faculty?” Resistance to rigid models and metrics of academic writing is most evident in contemporary scholars’ consideration of how WAC/WID can better serve diverse populations of student writers. This attention to the global and transnational appears in WAC/WID scholarship beginning in the 1990s and early 2000s.<sup>6</sup>

More recently, in “Is WAC/WID Ready for the Transdisciplinary Research University?,” Justin Rademaekers (2015) directly acknowledges the exigency of WAC/WID’s engagement with transdisciplinary methodologies. Rademaekers (2015) argues that WAC/WID has not been transdisciplinary enough in its narrow focus on disciplinarity. Yet, WAC/WID is far more transdisciplinary than many realize, most apparent in its long-standing commitment to writing to learn. While WAC/WID is integral to the development of writing studies as a discipline, its foundation rests on an understanding of academic writing as a transdisciplinary tool for learning across contexts.

## WAC/WID and Transfer: Breaking the Silos

While there are clear overlaps between transfer studies and WAC/WID, these connections are often not explicitly named. This was confirmed by my initial search of six popular journals in the field.<sup>7</sup> In fact, out of approximately one thousand articles initially generated from my search, only eighty-five named both “WAC” and “transfer” in their titles and/or abstracts. Considering the number of alternatives to the term “transfer,” I varied my search terms, including concepts traditionally associated with transfer studies, such as “metacognition,” “prior knowledge,” and “repurposing.” I chose these terms because they are frequently used in contemporary transfer scholarship, according to Kathleen Yancey, Liane Robertson, and Kara Taczak (2014). In addition, these terms for transfer also represent points of intersection with WAC/WID scholarship, as concepts of metacognition and prior knowledge are integral to WAC/WID’s emphasis on student reflection and portfolio pedagogies. After a brief survey of the preliminary results, I chose to focus more specifically on intersections of WAC/WID and transfer within *College Composition and Communication* (CCC) and *Across the Disciplines* (ATD).<sup>8</sup>

Using a peer-reviewed database, I searched CCC and ATD from 2004 to 2016, using the following phrases: “WAC and transfer;” “WAC and repurposing;” “WAC and metacognition;” and “WAC and prior knowledge.” After the initial search, I eliminated reviews, news announcements, calls for papers, and other general information, including only published articles in my final search results. Duplicates between the different search terms were also eliminated. Of the remaining results generated, I identified common themes and analyzed specific articles’ engagement with academic writing, as informed by either or both WAC/WID and transfer scholarship.

Table 1 (below) represents my preliminary search results within CCC and ATD, organized by the different search terms used. Also included are the common themes identified in each result list. These themes represent the general topics or foci that recurred across the results for that particular search.

The themes identified within these results work to illustrate commonalities between WAC/WID and transfer, even when the two are not explicitly discussed together. As indicated by the table below, there were many recurring themes and foci across the results generated in my search of both publications. The most prevalent were program/faculty development, genre knowledge, reflection, assessment, multimodality, and WID.

**Table 1. WAC and Transfer in CCC and ATD, 2004-2016 (preliminary results)**

	“WAC and transfer”	“WAC and repurposing”	“WAC and metacognition”	“WAC and prior knowledge”
<b>CCC (2004-2016)</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Common Themes</b>	program/faculty development genre knowledge multimodality WID assessment reflection	program/faculty development genre knowledge multimodality WID assessment reflection	WID portfolios assessment genre knowledge reflection	WID community writing program/faculty development academic literacies
<b>Total Results (excluding duplicates)</b>	53			
<b>ATD (2004-2016)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Common Themes</b>	WID program/faculty development voice terminology		expressive writing WID	
<b>Total Results (excluding duplicates)</b>	5			

Upon deeper analysis of these two areas, key differences in how they present and locate academic writing emerge. Generally, WAC/WID addresses writing as more expansive and transdisciplinary than that of some transfer studies. For instance, the responsibility of transfer is distributed and not solely that of the composition instructor or student. This can be seen in WAC/WID studies’ engagement in and promotion of interdisciplinary collaboration. For instance, in “From Concept to Application: Student Narratives of Problem-Solving as a Basis for Writing Assignments in Science Classes,” Jennifer Rich, Daisy Miller, and Lisa Detora (2011) offer a discipline-specific study of transfer in a STEM course. The authors look outside of the field to investigate learning conditions that correlate with transfer, as students internalize academic literacies into more dexterous problem-solving strategies. Focusing on students’ impromptu application of prior knowledge towards problem solving in math, they argue that:

If the patterns of behavior that informed largely successful attempts at problem solving can be used as potential rubrics for student learning, then WAC and WID approaches could be used to adapt and incorporate these rubrics for classroom practice and writing assignments. (Rich, Miller, & Detora, 2011, p. 8)

In this model, WAC/WID scholars draw from expertise and heuristics outside of the discipline of writing studies to craft reflexive pedagogies. As opposed to measuring how transfer might occur from FYC to WID courses, WAC/WID expands academic writing to include modes of learning that transcend discipline-specific literacies, such as problem solving in this example.

Conversely, much of the transfer scholarship surveyed in this study views writing exclusively through the disciplinary lenses and conventions of writing studies. For example, Doug Downs and Elizabeth Wardle’s

(2007) heavily debated article “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions: (Re)Envisioning ‘First Year Composition’ as ‘Introduction to Writing Studies’” and responses to it (e.g., Kutney, 2007) focus on transfer as occurring from FYC to other disciplinary and professional contexts. This can also be seen in Dana Lynn Driscoll’s (2011) discussion of the “institutional assumption[s] that knowledge, skills, and techniques gained in FYC are able to transfer to other contexts—disciplinary, civic, personal, and professional.” Pegeen Reichert Powell (2009) takes this a step further, tying effective FYC instruction not only to transfer, but to student retention more broadly. This focus on the field of writing studies in these examples makes sense, given the expertise of the authors and the publications in which they appear. Yet, while these studies promote students’ metacognition of how transfer may operate in FYC, they also risk reinforcing a model of transfer that might then be used to narrowly assess pedagogical proficiency and students’ learning practices. I identify these differences between WAC/WID and transfer scholarship not as a critique, but to highlight how the challenges inherent in any study of learning transfer can inadvertently undermine the transdisciplinary potential of WAC/WID. Additionally, further research beyond the scope of this article-length inquiry is needed, as these generalizations are based on my limited results. These differences do gesture towards the value in drawing from both WAC/WID and transfer scholarship to move outside of writing studies to theorize transfer across disciplinary and professional contexts. These inter- and multidisciplinary theorizations can then translate into pedagogical practices and heuristics for academic writing that are more transdisciplinary.

## Can transfer ever truly be measured?

Scholars from across the disciplines have criticized transfer theory as failing to account for the complex learning processes by which students navigate and apply prior knowledge and expertise across different contexts (e.g., Broudy, 1977; Detterman, 1993; Bransford & Schwartz, 1999; Haskell, 2001). Developed alongside the professionalization of rhetoric and composition, transfer studies have been present in the field since the 1980s.<sup>9</sup> This scholarship has received increased attention in recent years (e.g., Nowacek, 2011; Brent, 2012; DePalma, 2015),<sup>10</sup> also prompting critiques of transfer studies. In his foreword to Roozen and Erickson’s (2017) *Expanding Literate Landscapes*, Prior (2017) criticizes the study of transfer as a “category-mistake” (citing Ryle, 1949), in that transfer is ubiquitous, and, as a result, too nebulously complex to ever be concisely measured or qualified. While exploring the applicability of transfer studies in community literacy pedagogies, Nora Bacon (1999) contends that:

while the question of whether skills and knowledge taught in writing classes transfer to community settings seems, on the face of it, critically important, it is not in fact an adequate way to conceptualize students’ transitions from school to community contexts or writing. (p.53)

Similarly, many transfer scholars in writing studies recognize the methodological challenges and consequences—as well as the potentially restrictive representations of student learning and writing—that can result from the study of transfer (e.g., Russell, 1991; Carter, Miller, & Penrose, 1998; Smit, 2004; Wardle, 2007, 2012; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). In fact, scholars continue to re-define and offer alternatives for the term in an effort to mitigate essentialist representations of transfer.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the common focus on negative transfer—or the absence of transfer—can perpetuate narrow and even unrealistic goals for academic writing instruction. Doug Brent (2012) acknowledges the pervasiveness and inherent risks of the deficit model common in the study of transfer:

While [transfer studies] acknowledge that some very broad types of knowledge such as the general ideological and epistemological stance of a discipline may transfer from school to the workplace, these studies concentrate more on what does *not* transfer—the day-to-day knowledge of how things work, rhetorically and otherwise. (p. 564)

As Brent (2012) recognizes, this focus on “what does not transfer” can fail to account for the nuanced complexity with which students navigate unfamiliar writing situations. This deficit model of transfer can also perpetuate unrealistic expectations of what a composition instructor and student can accomplish in a one-semester course. Brent (2012) ultimately calls for more direct engagement between writing studies and transfer scholarship in order to avoid narrow representations of transfer.

This call for more interdisciplinary collaboration in the service of transdisciplinary approaches to writing pedagogy parallels my own argument for intersections between WAC/WID and transfer. In addition to presenting a more transdisciplinary approach to transfer and academic writing, these intersections can help to break silos of specialization within the field of writing studies. It is without question that transfer studies have and will continue to contribute worthwhile reflections about our pedagogical and curricular practices. Yet, if learning is as complex as Brent (2012), Roozen and Erickson (2017), and Prior (2017) argue, can transfer ever be measured? What is risked by attempting to do so? And, how do narrow studies of transfer hinder transdisciplinary understandings of academic writing?

Reflecting on the risks involved in any study of transfer also helps to illustrate the transdisciplinary potential of WAC/WID, palpable in its foundational practices of distributed expertise, interdisciplinary collaboration, and reflexive assessment. This reflection can also illustrate WAC/WID’s more fluid and dexterous conception of academic writing, as it is valued most for its ability to serve as a tool for transdisciplinary learning. With this view of academic writing, a lack of predictable transfer commonly found in transfer studies becomes generative as opposed to negative. These moments of non-transfer, then, serve as the impetus for critical explorations into the unpredictable interplay between writing, learning, and disciplinarity.

## Transfer and WAC/WID: A Transdisciplinary Approach to Academic Writing

Throughout this essay, I have argued for more engagement between transfer and WAC/WID scholarship. To demonstrate the potential value in this, I will identify studies—both old and new—that are working towards transdisciplinary definitions of academic writing. I begin by discussing articles located in my study that refer to both “WAC” and “transfer.” While I am identifying these studies as studying transfer through a WAC/WID lens, I am ever mindful that no study of writing (or learning) can ever be comprehensive. I point to them as examples that can potentially contribute to transdisciplinary definitions of academic writing. In addition, these examples illustrate how both transfer and WAC/WID scholars can benefit from the adoption of more transdisciplinary perspectives that attend to the improvisational nature of writing to learn.

I will first turn to an often-cited study within transfer scholarship, Nancy Sommers and Laura Saltz’s (2004) longitudinal study “The Novice as Expert: Writing the Freshman Year,” which examines the influence of their subjects’ prior knowledge on transfer. They conducted regular interviews and surveys with, and analyzed the texts of, approximately four hundred Harvard students. And while the authors do not cite WAC/WID or transfer directly in their study, Sommers and Saltz’s (2004) observations about student confidence and prior knowledge in relation to first-year writing draw attention to the vastly different pedagogical practices students will encounter over the course of one semester or academic year. Studies such as theirs help to demonstrate how disciplinary ideologies can and should be situated within larger writing ecologies and cultures.

Attunement to the unexpected and immeasurable ways in which writing occurs across transdisciplinary spaces can also be seen in works that explore how environmental contexts impact students’ writing processes. In “Emplacing Mobile Composing Habits: A Study of Academic Writing in Networked Social Spaces,” Stacey Pigg (2014) works to expand notions of transfer and the methods for studying it by

moving outside of the academic classroom. Pigg (2014) shifts the goal of transfer from the translation of a particular skill, or the awareness of that translation, to a greater self-consciousness in which students explore the complex materiality and transdisciplinary nature of writing to learn. As such, this approach to transfer can then be harnessed to craft frameworks that position writing and transfer as the complex, nebulous, and contextually dependent phenomena that they are.

Pigg (2014) integrates a focus on experiential learning also seen in WAC/WID approaches to disciplinary discourse, arguing that “the embodied, material memory associated with repeated composing habits can lend stability to distributed processes such as learning” (p. 252). Transfer then becomes something achieved through the adoption of an open disposition to writing, as opposed to the acquisition of skills or adherence to genre conventions. Pigg (2014) broadens ideas of transfer to include considerations of digital and non-academic spaces, presenting transfer in a nuanced, impromptu—and arguably more epistemic—manner.

Within the examples discussed so far, there is a general move towards student-centered transfer models. Like Pigg’s (2014) integration of social spaces, Michael-John DePalma (2015) shifts questions of transfer to attend to different modes of learning not traditionally considered in transfer studies. In “Tracing Transfer across Media: Implications for Research and Teaching,” DePalma (2015) posits students’ storytelling as a valuable method for integrating reflection regularly throughout the transfer process. Calling for an explicit consideration of student perspectives on their own transfer, he asks students “to reflect on the ways their experiences might be brought to bear on wider academic, professional, communal, and civic discussions” (DePalma, 2015, p. 620). He argues for a consideration of multimodality in transfer research that will help students hone a “meta-awareness” of their learning processes. This awareness, then, can lead to students’ intentional employment of writing skills that transfer across modes and contexts. In this way, students (not faculty or administrators) author the parameters used to assess successful or meaningful transfer (DePalma, 2015). As a result, student awareness of transfer is paramount in its success. Transfer is not presented as a random or unconscious occurrence to be measured, but a literate activity that is unique to students’ idiosyncratic learning and writing processes. Metacognition of transfer is not the goal or solution here, as it is in many other studies, but is the lens through which transfer is theorized and then assessed. As a result, students’ investment in the value of transfer is elevated, as they are encouraged to look beyond how others might see their transfer occurring or not occurring. In both Pigg (2014) and DePalma’s (2015) articles, intersections of WAC/WID and transfer coalesce around considerations of non-academic literacies influenced by contexts and discursive practices outside of the composition classroom. Taken together, these texts work to capture what Prior (2015) refers to as the “chronotopically laminated trajectories” of academic writing, in which theories of transfer are more amendable to the complexities of learning across transdisciplinary spaces.

Intersections between WAC/WID and transfer are also evident in scholarship from outside the limited scope of my analysis. For example, Michael-John DePalma and Jeffrey Ringer (2014) place WAC/WID and transfer in direct conversation with one another in “Adaptive Transfer, Writing Across the Curriculum, and Second Language Writing: Implications for Research and Teaching.” In this piece, transfer—as tied to disciplinary identity and language acquisition—is presented through a WAC/WID lens. DePalma and Ringer (2014) implore “WAC researchers and faculty across the disciplines” to consider “adaptive transfer” as a tool to “value students’ multilingual, idiosyncratic ways of writing and knowing” (p. 50). The authors draw from WAC/WID to expand considerations of transfer to address multilingual and non-traditional student literacies. DePalma and Ringer’s (2014) convergences of WAC/WID and transfer center around prior knowledge, student voice, and reflection. By doing so, they contribute a definition of transfer that is amendable to the complexities of the writing process, and as a result, is arguably more transdisciplinary. This rare crossover surrounds questions of language and access, further demonstrating the potential in bringing WAC/WID and transfer together to resist essentialist practices that neglect (and even oppress) student difference. Similarly, WAC/WID and transfer can

coalesce to offer a transparent model of transfer that is collaboratively defined by stakeholders from a variety of disciplines.

Engagement with questions of transfer by drawing on WAC/WID principles can also be seen in Pietro Boscolo and Mason Lucia's (2001) "Writing to Learn, Writing to Transfer." They identify WAC/WID as the pedagogy most valuable for encouraging transfer in their investigation of writing to learn in middle- and high-school science and history courses (Boscolo & Lucia, 2001). Boscolo and Lucia (2001), like DePalma and Ringer (2014), utilize WAC/WID theory to expand conceptions of transfer from the "transfer of writing" to the "transfer of disposition." In this piece, transfer is associated with "transforming" and "re-structuring" (Boscolo & Lucia, 2001, p. 85). Boscolo and Lucia (2001) claim that transfer pedagogy should be grounded within reflection, a common WAC/WID principle, which "should be a frequent activity to be carried out by those who are interested in creating increasingly better contexts to build knowledge in the classroom" (p. 102). Through a focus on transfer, both texts investigate the significance and impact of WAC/WID theory on pedagogies and students, also highlighting the value of reflection and student agency within transfer studies.

There have also been several recent book-length projects that work to bring WAC/WID and transfer together towards more transdisciplinary understandings of academic writing. For example, Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014) offer an ecological approach to transfer in *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing* that is arguably aligned with WAC/WID's foundational principles of reflection and writing to learn. While WAC/WID did not invent the concept of reflection within writing instruction, it did work to operationalize a reflective awareness of pedagogical practices across the disciplines. This awareness, as related to transfer, can serve as a point of convergence between transfer and WAC/WID scholarship. Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014) advocate for a "teaching for transfer approach" that promotes "self-sponsored" transfer through the articulation of a reflective theory of writing. They operationalize WAC/WID's emphasis on reflection and an expanded view of learning by allowing students to self-author theories of writing that then become their own benchmarks for metacognitive transfer.<sup>12</sup> As a result, transfer is not measured by a progressive metric already established by the researcher, but by one grounded in students' reflections. This same attention to the relationship between learning, writing, and disciplinarity is also evident in Rebecca Nowacek's (2011) study, which draws from a variety of fields, including philosophy, cognitive psychology, and linguistic theory.<sup>13</sup>

In all of these examples, transfer is presented as transdisciplinary in that it expands beyond the purview of writing studies expertise while also attending to the complex influences of context and student experience on the writing process. This view of academic writing is more attuned to the "dynamic processes of appropriation, externalization, and alignment in and through which persons, artifacts, practices, institutions, and communities are being produced, reproduced, and transformed in complexly laminated social and material worlds" (Prior, 1998, p. 287). As such, writing is presented as a fluid, messy, and complex process that looks beyond the translation of skills or achievement of an assignment or course goal. Truly transdisciplinary academic writing instruction, then, resists myopic views of disciplinary expertise and narrow frameworks of learning. Attention to writing as a mode of learning in WAC/WID and the convertibility of writing in transfer studies, together, can position academic writing as a rhetorically dexterous process rather than a product-based practice. Academic writing becomes simultaneously situated within its particular discipline or context without being bound to the disciplinary and ideological boundaries of the academy.

This intersection between WAC/WID and transfer can be mutually beneficial to scholars in both areas. Transfer's integration of WAC/WID's approach to learning and academic writing can complicate narrow interpretations of how students' writing processes work across contexts. WAC/WID's expanded notions of disciplinarity and WID can mitigate generalizations about transfer based on individual and highly contextualized case studies. Such an intersection can also prompt further discussions on the implications of arguments about transfer on academic writing within and outside writing studies. In addition to

serving as legitimization of the discipline to outsiders, transfer studies can contribute to more critical explorations into the transdisciplinary and improvisational writing processes in which students regularly engage. A transdisciplinary view of academic writing can also contribute to more dexterous theories of transfer that are amenable to changing individual and institutional contexts and disciplinary paradigm shifts.

WAC/WID scholars can benefit from more attention to transfer studies in that they promote critical reflection on its foundational principles and practices. For example, transfer studies can aid WAC/WID scholars' consideration of how the concepts of writing to learn and to communicate (Emig, 1977; Young, 2006) operate across disciplinary—and even non-academic—contexts. In addition, transfer scholars offer methodologies that WAC/WID can use for assessing students' engagement with disciplinary difference, potentially providing rationales for curricular and pedagogical innovations. And, while legitimization should not be the primary goal for the study of transfer, WAC/WID scholars can potentially draw from this data to combat what Martha Townsend (2008) refers to as “WAC program vulnerability.”<sup>14</sup> In other words, transfer studies may assist WAC/WID practitioners in their arguments for more funding or institutional support, in their recruitment of interdisciplinary writing faculty, and in their creation of pedagogical and curricular practices applicable to many disciplines. Transdisciplinary approaches to academic writing can also aid WAC/WID scholars in presenting writing instruction as not the sole responsibility of composition instructors.

## Conclusion

While this study is limited in scope, analyzing intersections between WAC/WID and transfer offers a glimpse into how these two areas can be enriched by greater attention to the transdisciplinary value of writing. For instance, the similarities and differences between how both areas theorize and support the writing processes of L2 students can be gleaned from such an analysis (e.g., DePalma and Ringer, 2014; Cox, 2011; Hall and Navarro, 2011). Furthermore, this analysis can contribute to theories of transfer that are more inclusive, in which students actively reflect on both their ability to transfer and on the transdisciplinary nature of transfer itself (e.g., Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014).

This study also illuminates the value in conducting longitudinal transfer studies that engage transdisciplinary methods, perspectives, and spaces. I am ever cognizant of the lofty enterprise that I am suggesting here in adopting a transdisciplinary approach to academic writing, particularly in light of the material realities of academia. This approach would involve renegotiating not only approaches to academic writing, but disciplinarity and expertise as well. Many WAC/WID and writing studies scholars might resist my designation of WAC/WID as transdisciplinary, given its significant role in the origin and professionalization of composition and writing studies. For instance, many may see this transdisciplinary approach as exacerbating critiques of WAC/WID concepts as too nebulous or ambiguous for practical application, such as writing to learn (e.g., Ackerman, 1993; Ochsner and Fowler, 2004). Others may even see this move towards transdisciplinarity as potentially threatening to the disciplinary expertise of WAC/WID scholars. Yet, an adaptability to diverse types of knowledges from outside of the field is already an integral part of the WAC/WID expertise. This can be seen in its foundational principle of “recogniz[ing] the expertise that already exists on campus and build[ing] on it” (International Network of WAC Programs, 2014, p. 3). Their ability to promote and sustain interdisciplinary collaboration enables WAC/WID scholars to avoid narrow interpretations of disciplinarity and expertise itself.

This shift from multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary to transdisciplinary perspectives of academic writing would require great flexibility and much hard work. This shift would move beyond the sharing of one's own disciplinary heuristics to the invention of new approaches. As a result, the broader field of writing studies might become, as Prior (2017) describes, “more alert to our profound potentials to forge new connections and make new worlds.” Moreover, without the adoption of at least transdisciplinary-like

approaches to academic writing, do FYC courses, in effect, become WID courses, in which students are taught about writing only through the narrow disciplinary frameworks of writing studies? While there are significant challenges to this type of work, it is imperative to resist silos of specialization—and especially those within the discipline—that can perpetuate narrow, formulaic views of academic writing.

In addition to adopting some of the methodologies and practices highlighted in the articles referenced in this essay, intersections between WAC/WID and transfer could manifest in transfer studies co-authored by faculty from across the disciplines, or even individuals outside of the academy. Writing faculty from outside of the discipline could also be included in the review and approval processes of composition course objectives. In this transdisciplinary approach, interdisciplinary faculty would be granted proactive input into curricular design. Transfer studies conducted in the field could address the implications of their work for other disciplines as well as writing studies. As such, these studies would not simply substantiate that what is taught in first-year composition does or does not transfer, but would contribute a more nuanced model of academic writing as transdisciplinary. Furthermore, more transdisciplinary conversations about the meaning of transfer itself may prove valuable in decentering the responsibility of writing transfer from that of composition studies alone. As demanding as these methods may seem, a transdisciplinary approach to academic writing is essential in developing notions of transfer as constant, recursive, and student-authored. Finally, transdisciplinary views of academic writing can inform more heterogeneous interpretations of the improvisational processes by which students adopt disciplinary identities. Bringing transfer and WAC/WID together can result in models of academic writing that embrace—as opposed to erase—the complexities of students' lived experiences without sacrificing the disciplinary capital transfer studies often afford. As students' lives become more and more transdisciplinary as a result of globalization and evolving information technologies, so must understandings of academic writing.

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## Notes

1. I will be using WAC and WID interchangeably in an effort to further demonstrate the transdisciplinarity of WAC/WID, as it positions academic writing—and writing instruction—as beyond the purview of composition studies. For more on the potential transdisciplinarity of the relationship between WAC and WID, see the “WAC/WID and Transdisciplinarity: Why Now?” section.
2. For instance, see Lawrence and Després (2004).
3. Also see Ochsner and Fowler’s (2004) distinction between WAC and WID.
4. See Anson, Dannels, & St. Clair (2005).
5. See Kells (2010) and Guerra (2008). For an example of the transdisciplinary move in WAC/WID to examine students’ learning experiences outside of traditional academic boundaries, see Heather Lettner-Rust et al.’s (2007) “Writing Beyond the Curriculum: Transition, Transfer, and Transformation.”
6. See Zamel (1995); Matsuda and Jablonski (2000).
7. *College Composition and Communication* (CCC), *Across the Disciplines* (ATD), *College English* (CE), *Research in the Teaching of English* (RTE), *Written Communication* (WC), and *Writing Program Administration* (WPA).
8. I selected these two publications because of their prominence in the field and their variety in focus as ATD publishes more WAC/WID-specific scholarship, and CCC provides a broader overview of the disciplinary conversations in rhetoric and composition.
9. Older well-known transfer studies include Faigley, Cherry, Joliffe, & Skinner (1985); McCarthy (1987); Perkins and Solomon (1992); Beaufort (1999); and Beach (2003).

10. Transfer scholarship can be divided into four non-chronological stages, or “layers,” as Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014) succinctly describe them. These layers chronicle common foci across transfer studies, including the articulation and definition of “transfer;” transfer within composition studies; the study of disciplinary and public writing in relation to transfer; and issues relating to access, inclusion, and implementation in the study of transfer (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014, p. 6).
11. Alternative terms include recontextualization (Nowacek 2011), and transformation (Brent 2011). For more on the debate surrounding the term “transfer” and its alternatives, see pages 7-12 of Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak’s (2014) *Writing Across Contexts: Transfer, Composition, and Sites of Writing*; and Wardle (2007). For the sake of clarity and cohesion, I will be using the term “transfer” throughout this essay.
12. To see Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak’s (2014) theory in practice at the community-college level, see Tinberg (2017).
13. For more recent examples of transdisciplinary engagement with questions of transfer, see Chris Anson and Jessie Moore’s (2017) edited collection, *Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer*, and Jessie Moore and Randall Bass’s (2017) collection, *Understanding Writing Transfer: Implications for Transformative Student Learning in Higher Education*. Also see Driscoll (2014) and Goldschmidt (2014).
14. For more on WAC/WID’s vulnerability, see Young and Fulwiler (1990); and McLeod and Soven (1992).

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