Cultivating Capacity for Collaborative Research, Understanding Change:
Preliminary Findings from Longitudinal Case Studies of Undergraduates as Writer-Researchers

Cara Kozma, Holly Middleton, Donna Scheidt, Kathy Shields
CCCC, March 16, 2017, Portland, OR

Large- and small-scale projects

Methods, etc.

52 *freshmen* from earlier study **>>>**

3 *seniors* for longitudinal study

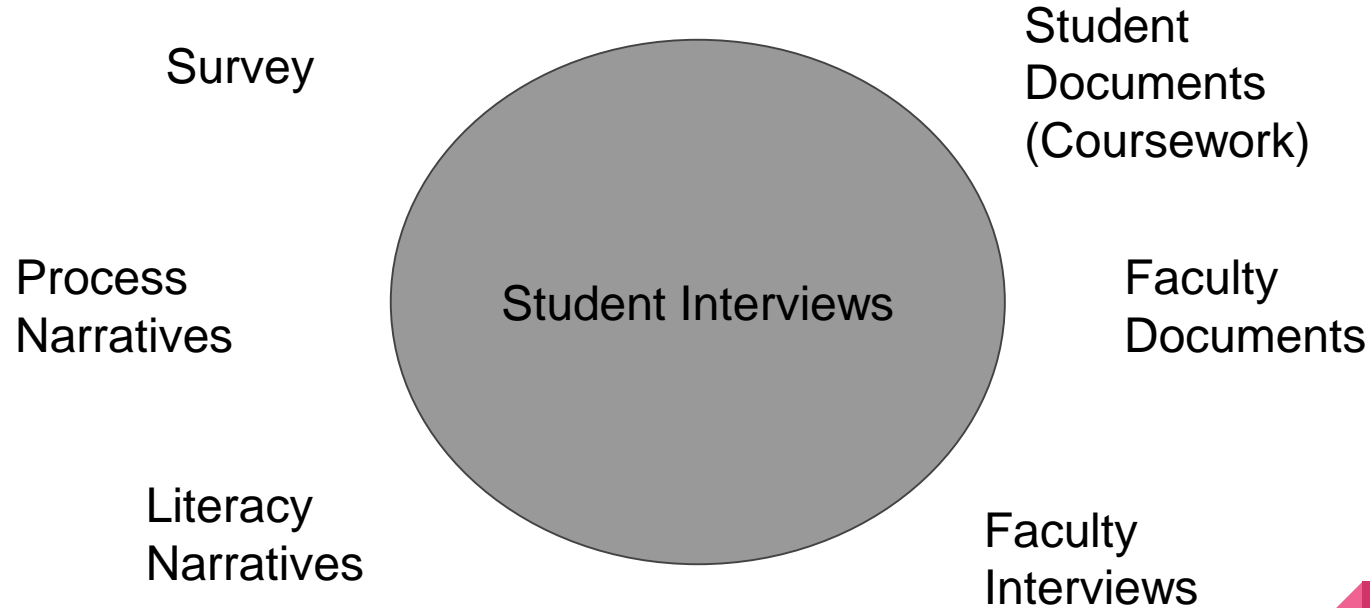Alyssa   Emma   John

Research Questions

- How do students understand research and writing? As connected?

- How have their understandings changed?

- To what do they attribute influence?

"Collective Case Studies" (Creswell)

Survey

Student Documents (Coursework)

Process Narratives

Student Interviews

Faculty Documents

Literacy Narratives

Faculty Interviews

Research Questions

- How do students understand research and writing? As connected?

- How have their understandings changed?

- To what do they attribute influence?

Structural Codes

understand research
understand writing

change

influence

change\capacity for growth\ "more developed rese

00:00:00/00:00:00

Document System

		#
▼ 📁 **Documents**		**343**
→ 📄 **NilanDocumentInterviewTranscriptDescriptive160819KathyCara**		343
📁 **Sets**		**0**

NilanDocumentInterviewTranscriptDescriptive160819KathyCara

.. "more developed
change
understand research

change
.."didn't have all th

45 *Alissa Nilan:* I was a much more developed researcher than I was when I wrote this one. Um, this one I think was from my – it was the summer I was going into my sophomore year, so that was two years ago now.

46 *Bill Carpenter:* Sure.

47 *Alissa Nilan:* And just from this time I didn't – not that I didn't know how to research, but I guess I didn't have all the tools I needed, and I wasn't really as invested in my research then as I was when last semester I wrote this one.

Code System

		#
▼ 📁 **Code System**		**343**
▶ 📁 influence		53
▼ 📁 change		14
▼ 📁 capacity for growth		2
📁 learned that there's more to learn about research		1
📁 now want to continue research after graduation		1
→ 📁 "didn't have all the tools" "I wasn't really as invested"		2
📁 "more developed researcher" than sophomore		1
▶ 📁 research method		7
▶ 📁 confidence		4
📁 interest in research		1

Retrieved Segments

0

I didn't have all the tools I needed, and I wasn't really as invested in my research

📁 NilanDocumentInterview...
  └ [47 - 47
📁 change
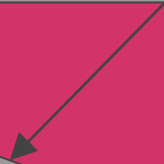 └ 📁 capacity for growth
      └ 📁 "didn't have all the to...

1   1   2   0

Simple Coding Query (OR combination of codes)

Findings: Understanding Research & Writing

Finding #1: Students attribute their understanding of research to meaningful research experiences.

Finding #2: There is a complicated relationship among how students describe their reading and research practices in relation to their understanding of research.
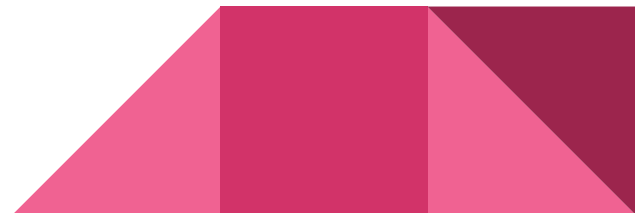
Alyssa

"So I used that article a lot, and I remember reading that front to back probably ten times. So I just remember that I knew that like the back of my hand, so I really used that one a lot."

Emma

"I'm horrible at that. I never do that. I probably will read, like, two or three pages of the source."

Finding #3: How students understand research confirms a correlation between openness and conceptions of source authority.

Authority Is Constructed and Contextual
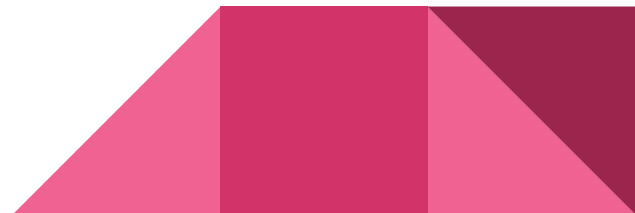(ACRL Framework)

"Learners . . . develop and maintain an open mind when encountering varied and sometimes conflicting perspectives"

Habits of Mind
(WPA Framework)

"Openness--the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world."

Alyssa

"[W]hen you read articles about this field in particular you should have to be careful with what you're reading and be conscious of the methods that they use to collect the information and the data."

John and Emma

"there wasn't a whole lot...to analyze" . . . "it wasn't like writing on Catcher in the Rye." --John

"[I]t was all sources. So none of this that was written was any opinions. It had to be all very, very, very factual."   --Emma

Alyssa

Um, sometimes you just don't think of something or, you know, something just doesn't come to mind. But by reading other people's opinions or what other people have to say about the subject, you can kinda broaden your horizons and be open to what they have to say. And it makes you better educated.

Emma

[M]y biggest issue with research is I'm very biased with my opinions. So any topic that I'm given, I'll, like, look at both sides, I'll see what I agree with or disagree with, and then I'll kind of just go with what I agree with and, like, write about that. And I know that you have to be very much unbiased.

Finding #4: Meaningful Primary Research Experiences Shape How Students Understand Research and Authority

Finding #5: Students with more complex understandings of research have more complex understandings of writing and their relation.

Alyssa

I know when I did my big project last semester, I found myself feeling like I was going forward and then getting to a point and realizing, "Oh, no. I need to backtrack and go fix this or go edit this." So I think as – you might think it [research] might be linear, but you always find yourself going back.
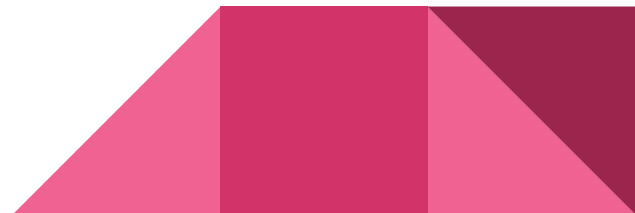
Emma

A lot of the times I don't think . . . when I just, like, write and then my write – my research writing, I think they're two completely different [activities].

John

"[I]t was tough to write….like, writing the part was not the difficult part, it was--...using the software and interpreting, like, this right here" [points to text]
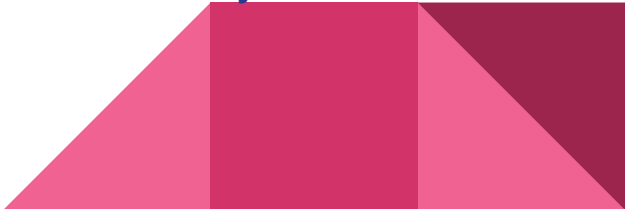
Findings: Change

Finding #1: Students articulate a change in their disposition towards research.

Alyssa

"I know since coming here as a freshman, I think that I've grown a lot as a researcher. Um, like I said, when I first came here, I was just used to Googling and whatever, the first thing that came up, I just took that to be true and kinda ran with that. But now I know that you should look around at different sources and even look at maybe necessarily not a topic you're focused on, but something that could supplement your paper or supplement what you're researching."
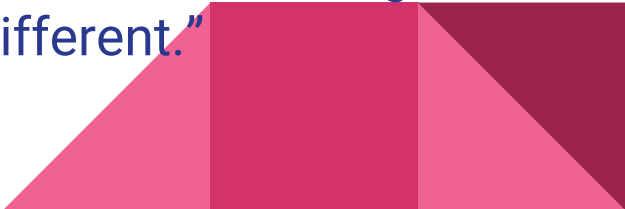
"I think now I'm a lot more confident and it I would feel comfortable going out and doing any sort of research now, because I know even though this [research methods] course was focused on criminal justice, it also focuses on just the basics of any sort of research."

Emma

"I think freshman year I was just more – much more lazy and I didn't really care as much as I do now. And I wasn't doing anything that interested me as much as I am doing now. So I'm not, like – I'm much more passionate about my work now than I was freshman year. And I think that definitely changed the way I look at my sources and the way I allow myself to be frustrated by them or not."

"I just think as you grow as a person, as you, like, learn more, you – like, you – just, like, your research method changed, like, how it was in high school and how it is now, it's, like, definitely much different."

Finding #2: Students display a willingness to learn and see the purposes of research beyond the immediate project.

Alyssa

"[I]f you would have asked me before I wrote this paper or before I took this class, I probably would have told you oh yeah, like I'm a good researcher. I know what I'm doing. But then after taking this I realized I'm not a good researcher and now I've learned from this class and I've learned a lot on – so I'm sure that there is more out there that I can learn."

Alyssa

"I don't really think it solidified for me until I took this course, and it was all about research that it finally meant something to me, so it's just...I guess just understanding the why behind it, like the why were we researching and we are we – why is it important to look at a credible source versus Wikipedia or something? That there is a difference between them and that you have to look and make sure it's a credible source before you just take it as true kind of thing..."

Emma

"But I want to always be engaged in my sources because I just see that as a learning mechanism. And I've definitely -- that's something I've developed and I've grown these past four years. Like, I never really saw sources as something that I could learn and improve my knowledge from. I think now my mind has just changed. And now I see it as something that even if I don't necessarily need it, if it's something that interests me, if it's something that I can just continue reading, I normally will just to have that knowledge in the back of my mind for one day if it ever comes back."

Emma

"I think that there could have been maybe not a class, but I don't know. Like, my freshman year of English they took us into the Smith Library, and the librarian, like, showed us all those places to find research and all that. And I just was not interested in that, like, not – nobody's, like, really interested in it. But I also think that's such a crucial part of college is being able to research."

"I enjoy going to a librarian because it's taught me how to go to any library and look through books. And now I know how they're organized and I know what I could – I know different online databases that I could put in my – what I'm looking for into, but I also know how to make my topic much more specific, how to focus on one thing that might be in a book. And then how to look through the results to find the perfect match."

Finding #3: Students associate change with increased depth - in their reading practices, search techniques, and evaluation criteria.

Alyssa

"I guess like one thing I learned is just to have the patience to sit down and read those long articles and I think something that I still need to work on is learning when to read a full article and when to more summarize something. That's something I could definitely stand to learn. Because a lot of times I was like oh yeah, I have to read every word in here, and then at the end I'm like, no I didn't. I could have probably – so I guess learning the difference between when to summarize and when to – or when to like skim a journal versus when to read it is something I could improve on and something I could still learn."

Alyssa

"I guess I'm just more informed with, like, all of the resources that are out there that you can use. Um, coming in, I was just kinda used to Googling something and using the information that popped up right away. But now I'm more familiar with using periodicals, journals, scholarly articles and such and really going more in depth and getting credible sources versus just the first thing you find."
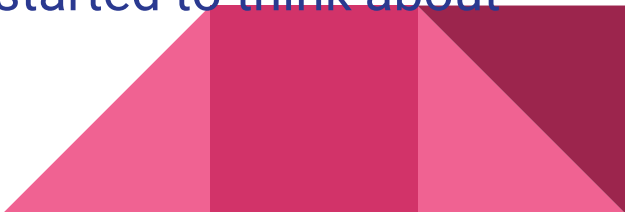
"So I think it's important to again, research and understand fully what you're working with and you just have to understand that it's sensitive material and how to work with that material. So I think it's not something that you can just jump right into. That in itself is something you have to have a background on and have a knowledge on how to use it."

Emma

"My first year I would just find a source and just find something within that I could use in my paper, in my research, and now I don't just find a source. I definitely take time looking for it. I take time with my research."

"So freshman year I'd, like, write my paper and find my sources as I went along. And then, like, it worked freshman year, but now I'm much more – like, I outline. I'm very much more detailed. I find my sources way before I write my paper or even begin…And now because I really notice it's actually important and impacts my future, I've just started to think about it more and to be more prepare[d]."

John

"[I] didn't realize that, you know, the depth of research that was required to be successful, um, or to be as successful as I wanted to be....it takes quite a bit more than just a little bit of research to be able to produce something that's, you know, worthy of, you know, the better grades in the class."

"Yeah, uh, so, [sighs] I guess I – Well, when, and now, looking back at this, um – Looking back at this [pen tapping], I'm-m-m not sure that I cited that right 'cause that's the one I listed first. And so, like, this "Crime and Poverty" relates to the one in The Economist, if you look
in the back."

Findings: Influence

Finding #1: Students are influenced by meaningful research experiences [often disciplinary], and they demonstrate an instrumentalist respect for those research approaches.

John

"I guess you could also think about it in terms of, like, taking on leverage, like, you know, borrowing money to do something else: you'd like to acquire, like, a new house or, you know, buy another business or do something like that, you'd be, you know, borrowing something else from, from – and hopefully, kind of, like, working it into your own, you know."

Finding #2: Students discuss personal interest and passion (or lack of) in topics/projects as influential to how they engage with research.

Alyssa

"I actually didn't think I was going to like this course, when I – oh I guess I saved it for my senior year. I was like I don't – I don't want to do that. I don't want to sit in research all day, but then after doing it I realized oh wow, this is something I love. This is something I'm interested in, and it takes my two passions. It's criminal justice and football. And I kind of get to work with it altogether, so I mean it is something that's definitely crossed my mind, and now that I'm graduating in May I have a lot more free time to pursue it if that's something I decide."

Emma

So – and I've seen this in my papers, especially, like, in some of my really in-depth research ones. I would all – if it's a topic I truly believe in and I have enough information to cover it, then **I'm not gonna put in any of the negative** simply because I think that's just, like, **my personality** and I was just like, "Okay. Coca-Cola does not recycle in every country, but it recycles in six." (emphasis added)

Finding #3 Students' interpersonal relationships, particularly with professors, influence their approaches to research, positively and negatively.

Emma

"So, I was writing my paper. And I didn't have Google. I didn't have any books, just writing. And, like, my teacher said, 'Trust – like, just say they're a source. Don't doubt them. Just say it as if they're like CNN or something like super important and it put it on.'"

Alyssa

"He always told us at the beginning of the course, you know, 'You can take your research as far as you want.' So if I decided okay, this is something I really want to pursue, even after the course is over, um, that's something you could do. That's something you could look into."

Finding #4 Students are influenced by their grades and how easy or difficult they think it will be to find sources related to their topics.

John

"Uh, but, you know, like I said, there wasn't a whole lot of academia on this, um, and, you know, on this book in particular, so, um, I, I just kinda used what I could."
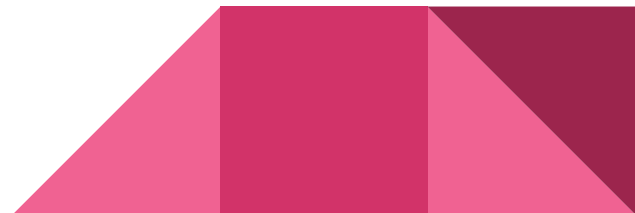
Alyssa

"So for this type of assignment and the fact that it was a graded assignment, that probably hurt me a little bit in the long run. Um, had I chose a topic that there is a lot of research on, it would have been a lot easier for me and I would have had a lot more sources...Um, but pulling from the limited data that I had and the limited resources that I had, that kind of hurt me a little bit. So I think maybe a broader topic would have helped me more."

Implications for Instruction + Interdisciplinary Collaboration

- Instruction: Understanding how faculty in other disciplines understand and teach research has the potential to change that way FYW instructors develop and implement writing and research activities with their students. Ex. data literacy

- Collaboration: The information we are learning from faculty through the interviews can create opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration

Implications for Library Instruction + Collaboration

- Importance of conversation with disciplinary faculty re: values
- Seek ways to address shared values beyond the "one shot"
- Shared/consistent vocabulary
  - Example: Language used in evaluation - "Position" instead of "Bias"

"Collective Case Studies" (Creswell)

Survey

Student Documents (Coursework)

Process Narratives

Student Interviews

Faculty Documents

Literacy Narratives

Faculty Interviews