

HOW EMOTION WORKS FOR BOTH  
INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS IN  
FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION

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A Thesis  
Presented  
to the Faculty of  
California State University, Chico

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
English

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by  
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Spring 2019

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mom,

Denise Wallace.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deepest and most sincere gratitude to Dr. Kendall Leon for her continued support during the entire process of composing this thesis. Dr. Leon's passion for working with current and future educators will always remain with me. Furthermore, without her knowledge of research methods and her insight into working with larger ideas, this thesis would not have been possible.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Publication Rights .....	iii
Dedication .....	iv
Acknowledgments.....	v
List of Figures .....	viii
Abstract .....	ix
CHAPTER	
I. Introduction to How Emotion Works .....	1
Background .....	1
Defining How Emotion Works .....	4
Statement of the Problem and Basis for Research Study .....	5
Purpose of the Study .....	7
Methodology: How Emotion Works in FYC Study .....	8
Participants.....	9
Instruments.....	11
Limitations: How Emotion Works in FYC Study .....	16
II. Review of the Literature .....	18
Introduction.....	18
Emotional Space of First Year Composition .....	20
Emotion as Pedagogical Work: Focus on Instructors .....	22
Emotions Produced in the Collective and as Relational .....	26
Emotion is Embodied.....	28
Emotion as Productive .....	29
Conclusions.....	33

CHAPTER	PAGE
III. Discussion of Findings and Results .....	35
Introduction.....	35
Findings: How Emotion Works .....	37
Discussion .....	48
IV. Conclusions and Recommendations .....	50
Conclusions.....	50
Recommendations.....	63
References Cited .....	65
Appendices	
A. Questionnaire 1 .....	67
B. Questionnaire 2 .....	68
C. Questionnaire 3 .....	69
D. Working with Lesson Plans Activity .....	70

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Map drawn by Brooke of her FYC classroom .....	47

## ABSTRACT

### HOW EMOTION WORKS FOR BOTH INSTRUCTORS AND STUDENTS IN FIRST YEAR COMPOSITION

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Master of Arts in English

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Traditionally, emotion was viewed as something occurring only within individuals with those emotions being expressed outwards. Emotion is now being recognized as having relational and embodied components outside of the individual. Emotion as multifaceted contributes to meaning making in first year composition because students bring with them all of the emotions they feel concerning the class as well the emotions they feel about their other classes and their lives outside of school. This results in emotion being very present in the first year composition classroom. When the instructor acknowledges and has students use emotion in a productive way, rather than ignoring or suppressing it, students' academic writing will improve because they will know how to correctly use emotion.

The purpose of this research study was to examine the use of emotion on a teaching level in first year composition (FYC) by working with instructors. The importance of how instructors understand emotion in the composition classroom space was focused on by having the participating instructors complete open-ended questionnaires and participate in focus group

interviews. Results suggest instructors are aware of the many ways in which emotion is present in the FYC classroom. The participating instructors viewed emotion as a way for them to make connections with students in order for them to create an environment where students are comfortable enough to learn, experiment, and engage. Moreover, emotion was seen as a way to ensure student engagement and interest in their writing and, therefore, help improve their overall writing skills.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION TO HOW EMOTION WORKS

#### Background

My own experiences at the two-year institution where I took first year composition (FYC) I found did not help me to write successfully when I transferred to a four-year state university in order to complete both my undergraduate and graduate studies in English. This first year writing class consisted only of us reading short stories—many of which the majority of the students had already read in high school or junior high—and then writing short papers that were rarely peer reviewed or revised. We were not permitted to use “I” or include any type of personal writing in our papers because it was presented as apart from reason and, therefore, distinct from academic writing. What I learned in my courses at the four-year university I transferred to and through the experiences I had there as a mentor, tutor, and later instructor showed me, in contrast to what I did as a FYC student, academic writing is best learned and practiced most successfully through student connection and engagement. Because of this, I have always wanted to somehow incorporate the ideas of students’ personal writing helping them with the writing they do in FYC into my Master’s Thesis research. While doing preliminary research the summer before starting my actual thesis research I came across a book by Deborah M. Alvarez titled *Writing to Survive: How Teachers and Teens Negotiate the Effects of Abuse, Violence, and Disaster*. While the case studies in the book focused on teenagers in high school, I found a lot of the information useful in terms of engaging students through the emotion that is already present in their lives both inside and outside of the FYC classroom and how using the writing they do regarding their personal stories can improve their academic writing skills. As I began to research more about emotion in

composition courses I noted the interconnectedness between emotion and personal writing and, therefore, chose how emotion is working in FYC as my topic for research.

There is a lot of emotional work being done in the teaching of writing. This thesis aims to explore and examine emotion in relation to both students and instructors in the FYC classroom space. Emotion in composition is seen as both a rhetorical tool for the writer to use in order to connect with their reader and also as a tool for the writer to use to work through their feelings while writing (Micciche, Sedgwick). What is considered to actually be emotion likewise has a large scope, especially in reference to the teaching of writing. It is apparent why certain feelings such as anger or sadness are considered emotion. These feelings are connected to the writing students are being asked to do in FYC because such feelings and emotions come up during the composing process, whether or not students are consciously aware of them or not. Interestingly enough though, I have further found emotion to be closely associated with personal writing and, consequently, contrasted with academic writing. I have established through my research as well as my experiences teaching a first year composition course at a small state university in Northern California that, contrary to what some may believe, reason and emotion, or personal and academic writing, are appropriate and even agreeable together in the writing classroom. There is an abundance of research and discussion regarding how to appeal to an audience's emotions through pathos in composition. While I do find emotional discourse to be an important concept in various types of rhetoric, I am additionally interested in finding the actual teaching applications for theories related to the research on how emotion works in order to further connect it to the use of emotion in FYC as a way for students to improve their writing.

A discussion of how emotion works in composition would be incomplete without including the ideas of Expressivism and Critical Expressivism. "Expressivism" is a term given to

describe scholars, most notably Peter Elbow, in the 1970's and 1980's whose theories regarding composition and the teaching of writing other scholars (inaccurately) defined as being concerned only with self-involved personal writing (Elbow, 2015). Elbow explains how the past misrepresentation of what others have termed "Expressivism" is hurtful to the entire field of composition because it gives only a distorted and incomplete picture of his ideas (29). Rather than Elbow's ideas about the teaching of writing being only about personal writing, he examines the importance of process and freewriting as a way to help in the thinking and invention processes and, therefore the writing process itself because students are able to "produce richer and more interesting ideas this way than by trying to conform to disciplined thinking untainted by personal biases and emotions" (28). In other words, Elbow is suggesting students will write better when given the freedom to think because, as I will be arguing at length, emotions are innately a part of student thinking. "Critical Expressivism", a more modern school of thought that Roeder and Gatto describe as celebrating the complex ideas behind the so-called "Expressivism" scholarship of the 1970's and 1980's, further relates to emotion because it involves the "dismantling of the "'public'/'private' binary that still seems to too often haunt our conversations about writing and pedagogy" (8). The "public/private" binary Roeder and Gatto discuss additionally connects to the ideas of reason and emotion as being compatible with one another in the teaching and learning of writing in the FYC classroom. It will be further illustrated that the many ways in which emotion works in FYC is, much like Expressivism and Critical Expressivism, complex and involves many different aspects of the FYC course itself. It is, therefore, important to examine all of the aspects of how emotion works in the composition classroom as a whole.

### Defining How Emotion Works

When I say how emotion works I am tapping into several meanings: 1). emotional discourse—the intangible language used when talking about emotion in FYC, 2). emotion as relational—the intangible social connections made in the FYC classroom using emotion, and 3). emotion as topic—the more tangible use of emotion as the actual subject matter of student writing in FYC. As I see it, emotion is externally experienced and collective and, therefore, emotion is very complex with varying components. It must also be redefined as a complexity that does not only occur naturally within individuals and is not at odds with both reasoning and academic analysis. Emotion as used in the writing classroom is likewise termed “emotioned” because it is a rhetorical device used “to designate the active role that writers in the field take in crafting pedagogical practices and theories” (Micciche 3). In addition, emotion can have powerful impacts on both individuals and groups so it is, therefore, recognized as “a primary site of social control” (Boler xi). I argue how important it is these components of emotion are both acknowledged and avoided, rather than being exploited, by the composition instructor. I also use the term “affect” when discussing emotion because it is similar to the ways in which emotions impact individuals, groups, and spaces. Emotional discourse is likewise important to define in terms of how I am using it. Discourse is the communication between students and between students and the instructor in the FYC classroom that takes various forms, including but not limited to, email correspondence, class discussions, group activities, feedback on assignments, and one-on-one conversations in office hours and during class. By using the term “emotional discourse” I am indicating how all of the above forms of communication are shaped by emotion in the FYC classroom. In contrast, it is important for instructors to consider what happens when

they do not give or even actively prevent emotion as having “a place in our classrooms” (Micciche, 2007).

I will be working with the idea that composition instructors are tasked with ensuring students are comfortable enough within the classroom environment to discuss and write about what they are really feeling as well as thinking. Students’ writing will improve because they will not be concerned with being judged or, worse, dismissed. In addition, students’ writing will also improve because, when given the arena to write about their emotions, they will then be less likely to express these ideas, thoughts, and feelings in assignments where it is uncalled for. Using my completed research, I aim to connect the theories that are most integral in implementing emotional discourse in FYC to the practical teaching applications that can be accomplished in order to improve student writing. As a result, the final chapter of this thesis includes lesson plans to help instructors of FYC implement the purposeful use of emotion in their own classrooms.

### Statement of the Problem and Basis for Research Study

Emotion in the writing classroom is most associated with what Aristotle terms “*pathos*” in regards to rhetoric as being merely one way to communicate messages to evoke a certain response in audiences. This is a limiting view because emotion is present in many different ways in the FYC classroom. Furthermore, emotion has traditionally been viewed as something that only occurs within a sort of vacuum in which individuals feel emotion inside of themselves and express it outwards. Rather than being something that only occurs within individuals, Laura Micciche defines emotion as taking “form *between* bodies rather than residing *in* them” (13). As mentioned, emotion is complex and constantly creating changes in space. Emotion likewise has a physical, embodied component that is important to acknowledge when discussing how emotion

works in the FYC classroom space. Importantly, the work of Micciche is very influential on my research and, therefore, with this thesis I aim to test out her ideas and theories regarding emotion.

It is critical here to describe what the FYC classroom actually looks like: the students are mostly college freshmen and sophomores who are being asked to both complete and share with others their work that is many times completely new for them. These students bring with them to the FYC classroom the many emotions they feel concerning their other classes and their lives outside of school as well, including the changes happening as a result of becoming adults and living away from home. All of these factors greatly affect not only the students themselves but, importantly, the overall FYC classroom itself. I argue emotion, very much like education, is social because it is actually produced and shaped through association with others. In fact, the use of emotion in FYC can improve students' academic writing and with my research I aim to examine how the everyday practices of both the writing instructor and their students can achieve this.

As mentioned, there has been very little data collected concerning the instructor's role and engagement with emotion in rhetoric and composition other than in relation to feedback given to students (Chandler, Micciche, and Forsythe and Johnson). Furthermore, as part of a Human Subjects Approved Study I focused on the instructor's use of emotion on a teaching level as well as, to a lesser degree, how their students use emotion in FYC. In order to apply the social and interrelational aspects of emotion, I interviewed the Teaching Associates (T.A.'s) in focus group interviews. They were given questionnaires (see Appendices A, B, and C) ahead of time with questions that asked about the affective relationships of teaching as well as how their own experiences being that of an educator and a student impact the work they do as an instructor in

FYC. I chose to work with T.A.'s specifically because their role involves even more emotion than other instructors of FYC. T.A.'s are both students and instructors at the same time and this can cause them to feel many emotions such as excitement and anxiety when teaching their FYC courses. Additionally, having graduate courses and participating in meetings with fellow T.A.'s makes teaching FYC more social than teaching other courses may be because they are given the opportunity on a regular basis to talk about their experiences, both positive and negative, bounce ideas off of each other, and adjust their own assignments and activities based on other T.A.'s experiences and ideas.

As discussed, I aim to explore the functional teaching applications of the theories regarding emotional discourse, emotion as topic, how it is embodied, and emotion as relational in the FYC classroom. By focusing on the teaching practices as well as the actual activities and assignments in FYC, I will highlight how the use of emotion in this classroom environment is done by both instructors and students. Because of the classical ideas of emotion as exclusively related to pathos, one of the responsibilities I argue the instructor will be tasked with doing in general is redefining emotion in the FYC classroom. Furthermore, in the final chapter I have included my own lesson plans for assignments and class activities which will help advance the use of emotion in FYC; the rationales and learning goals for students contributing to the creation of these lesson plans are included as well.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research study is to examine the use of emotion in FYC through the study of Teaching Associates at a small California State University. The following questions I aimed to explore included:

1. How do instructors perceive and understand emotion in the first year composition space?
2. In what ways can the purposeful use of emotion in the first year composition classroom help generate improved student writing?
3. What effect does past educational experience, for both instructors and students, have on the learning and teaching in first year composition?

Framed and, therefore reframed, use of emotion has the ability to accomplish many important objectives of the FYC course when the instructor purposefully implements it. In other words, emotion can be used as an invention tool on the part of the instructor as well as for students. In order to reframe emotion it must first be recognized as already playing a large part in all writing and composing. In fact, if composition instructors do not recognize the role emotion plays in writing then students will be including it in their writing in inappropriate ways (Chandler 66). This study's main purposes are to examine and describe the everyday practices of how emotion works in FYC and to then investigate how those practices can lead to improved student writing. These practices include class activities, small group and whole class discussions, and both informal and more formal writing assignments working with emotion that are completed along with the other class work. Another purpose of this thesis is to show FYC instructors the value of using emotion in their own courses.

#### Methodology: How Emotion Works In FYC Human Subjects Study

This case study examines how emotion works in first year composition and whether the purposeful use of emotion can improve student writing. A case study using qualitative research, as explained by Adrijana Biba Starman, is “characterized by an interpretative paradigm, which emphasizes subjective experiences and the meanings they have for an individual” (30). This is

the most appropriate method for this research project because it allows the specific analysis of data gathered from several individual participants to then be interpreted and analyzed by myself, the researcher. The project involves participants answering open-ended questionnaires through Qualtrics Research Core, participating in follow-up focus group interviews, and doing additional activities during the interviews at three distinct times during the fall 2018 school semester: at the beginning, during mid-semester, and towards the end of the semester.

### Participants

The subjects of the research study conducted were seven Teaching Associates of a FYC course at a small state university in Northern California. For five of the participating T.A.'s it was their first semester teaching FYC and for two of the participants it was their third semester teaching the course at this university. A number of the subjects had previous teaching experiences, including teaching English to K-12 students in other countries and as an instructor of creative writing courses also at the same university.

This research project began with the T.A.'s responding to Questionnaire #1, which was first sent out to each individual on September 7, 2018. Data collection was completed for the majority of the participants on December 7, 2018 with the third and final focus group interview where the T.A.'s did an activity with the lesson plans I created. Two of the T.A.'s participation was completed on February 5, 2019 when we did the final group interview. During the participating time period, the T.A.'s all responded to eleven questions total in the three questionnaires. In addition, the three group interviews amounted to two hours of doing additional writing, activities, and answering all of my follow-up questions based on their questionnaire responses.

### The Study: How Emotion Works

I attended the first T.A. meeting held during the first week of classes for the fall 2018 semester. This allowed me to explain what I will be doing as far as the open-ended questionnaires, group interviews, the mapping activity, and the other writings I would be asking them to complete. I also explained how it is a voluntary study. As mentioned, emotion has many facets and uses in FYC, however, it is not always seen as something connected to the academic. I explained to the T.A.'s the first time I met with them how I define "emotion" and "emotional discourse" as improving student writing through making meaning by it being both a social and embodied practice. During the three separate group interviews there were three different, yet very similar sets of questions for each distinct time period during the semester.

I met with the T.A.'s to do group interviews three times during the fall 2018 semester: in the beginning of the semester, during mid-semester, and before finals week. The questionnaires were sent through Qualtrics one week before each group interview. I did it this way so participants could fill out the surveys and I could use Qualtrics to track the response data. In addition, participants were also aware of what I was going to be connecting the ideas to in the group interviews and had time to think about what they wanted to say and write during the group interview. I sent each individual participant in the study direct emails rather than sending group emails because I wanted to give them the opportunity to also set up individual meetings with me if there was anything they wanted to discuss in-person but were not comfortable doing so with the other participants.

## Instruments

### Open-Ended Questionnaires

This research project used the Qualtrics Research Core to send participants each of the three questionnaires. The questions in each of the three questionnaires were open-ended, reflective questions. Asking open-ended questions allowed the participating T.A.'s to write as much as they needed to answer the reflective questions. All seven participants were sent personal links through Qualtrics to ensure their responses would not be read by the other participants because I felt having their responses be public could change what they chose to discuss. The questions in Questionnaire #1 were asking about emotion in FYC in a more general manner because it was very early in the semester and for the majority of the participants it was their first time teaching this course. The questions in Questionnaires #2 and #3 were more specific to the participants' experiences and perceptions of emotion in their FYC classes.

### Focus Group Interviews

Each of the three group interviews was held in the conference room of the English Department office at the California State University. The group interview for the beginning of the semester was done during week three. I had the participants begin with some writing because when I had first introduced my research project I discussed at length the idea I am arguing throughout this project that emotion is already present in the composition classroom. On later thought, however, I realized that I had not asked the (future) participants if this idea resonates with them so I wanted to begin the group interview by having them write about it and explain why or why not the idea of emotion being present in the FYC classroom resonates with their own experiences. In other words, I did not want my ideas about emotion to be a given but, rather, wanted the participating instructors to have the opportunity to share their thoughts as well. I

additionally thought it could be interesting to have the participants use pen and paper when answering these questions, as opposed to how they typed out their answers on computers for their actual Questionnaire #1 responses. After a few of the participants shared what they wrote in response to my prompt I also asked some follow-up questions to the Questionnaire #1 responses. I only had a couple of these prepared because the four participants who had completed Questionnaire #1 prior to the interview were very thorough with their responses and explanations. I began by making it clear that if I reference any of the participants' responses during our group interviews I will do so while keeping the participant themselves anonymous.

#### Activities: Focus Group Interviews

At the mid-semester group interview during Week 8 I had the participants complete the mapping activity because for the majority of the T.A.'s it was their first semester teaching FYC and I wanted them to be as comfortable as possible in this particular classroom space before actually mapping it out. I printed out the instructions for each participant to have because I was asking them to do several things during this activity. First, I asked the participants to create an actual map of their classroom including their desk, projector screens, student desks, etc. on the piece of plain printer paper I provided. I also asked them to indicate on the map how and where they move around. I explained it may be helpful to have in mind a specific class activity students are doing when they are moving around. Then, I requested the participants use the lined piece of paper I provided to explain why they move around in the way they illustrated on the map. I included questions for them to answer that also directly connected to Questionnaire #2: Do you see any connection between emotion or the perception of certain emotions in your FYC classroom as to why and how you move around in this way? Why or why not? Is there any connection between emotion as social/relational or emotion as embodied and the way you

mapped out your movements? This particular interview ended up having less time allotted than the first interview so one person had to leave before she could share out what she had mapped out and written. The other participants and myself needed to go to another space because after only ten minutes of them working on the activity there was another meeting starting in the conference room we were occupying. Two of the participants shared what they did for the activity while the other three participants finished up the activity and listened to what they were sharing as well. I was also asking questions while they were sharing to make sure I was getting the full description of their classroom spaces, how and when they move around, and why they think they move around in these ways. After these two participants had to leave the remaining four of us had a very interesting conversation that began with each of them sharing their maps and writings from the activities. We additionally discussed our own experiences in FYC, specific students we each have/had, assignments and projects in their current classes, and many other topics I found to be very much linked to emotion. While these discussions were much more informal than the previous examinations of their map activities, I was still asking follow-up questions because I found what they were saying to be relevant to my research project and, frankly, also quite interesting. One of the participants, Brooke, was unable to attend the second group interview. Therefore, I met with her individually in her office on Friday, November 30th and had her complete the map activity in the exact same manner as the other participants had done during the group interview.

At the final focus group interview during week 15 I had the participating T.A.'s do an activity with the lesson plans I created. First, I asked follow-up questions based on their responses to Questionnaire #3. I had not planned on having as many follow-up questions,

however, six out of the seven T.A.'s discussed the impact of the Camp Fire<sup>1</sup> on their FYC classes in their responses. I had designed the lesson plans with the aim of having instructors purposefully use emotion in their classrooms and this also directly relates to the changing of their teaching practices that many of the participants discussed in their Questionnaire #3 responses as a result of the Camp Fire. For the lesson plans activity I printed out all of the lesson plans and rationales I created and gave them to each participant to keep. For the activity the T.A.'s read through the lesson plans and the first paragraph of the rationales because it was an introduction to the lesson and there was not enough time for them to read through all of the information. In pairs, they then completed a worksheet answering questions related to the lesson plan they chose to focus on (see Appendix D). I asked each pair to work with a different lesson plan. The worksheet questions were focused on having the T.A.'s think about if and how the activities and assignments in the lesson plans that are working purposefully with emotion would fit in with their FYC classes. After the T.A.'s completed the worksheets the pairs shared what they had written with the group. Two of the participants, Samantha and Tanya, needed to meet to do the final focus group interview on February, 5th. I asked them the same follow-up questions about the impacts of the Camp Fire on their FYC classes and then they completed the lesson plan activity.

In addition, as mentioned, I also took notes and recordings during the group interviews. These were used to keep track of the information gathered that was not included in either the questionnaires or the additional writing and activities participants completed during the actual

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<sup>1</sup> The devastating wildfire broke out on November, 8th, 2018 and ripped through actual towns causing panic and destruction. The Camp Fire resulted in over 18,000 structures being destroyed, the majority of which were people's homes, and 86 deaths. It impacted the university community where the participating instructors teach FYC in various ways.

interviews. This information was then analyzed alongside the questionnaire responses from each participant.

### Coding the Data

I worked with the data collected through the three questionnaires and the group interviews in various ways. In order to color code and write comments related to my own ideas, I copy and pasted the default report created by Qualtrics of all the participants' responses to each questionnaire into a Google Document. Initially, I went through and marked with one color the portions of the responses I found particularly interesting while also using a different color to indicate those things I found surprising and unexpected. After reading through the data several times I created categories based on how the participants were discussing emotion. For Questionnaire #1 the categories included: emotion as topic, emotion as relational, and emotion as affective response to writing. The categories for Questionnaire #2 included the same three categories along with the added category of emotion as part of reflective practice. Questionnaire #3 was the same categories as Questionnaire #2: emotion as topic, emotion as relational, emotion as affective response to writing, and emotion as part of reflective practice. In addition, I created a code glossary including the definition, when to use and when not to use it, and an example from the participants' responses for each of the categories.

After color coding the data using a different color for each category, as well as paying attention to the data I had already color coded based on my initial reactions in order to include that data in the categories, if needed, I copy and pasted all of the colored portions for each category into a separate section to have it all together. I then transcribed the writing collected from the participants in the group interview and color-coded it in the same way. I also copy and pasted this data with the color-coded portions for each of the categories. I listened to and

transcribed the recordings and notes I took during the group interviews to include those in the copy and pasted information for each category as well. I then went back through all of this collective data to highlight word and language use I found important and used the Google Document comment function to compare and contrast some of the more notable responses. I additionally printed out all of the data and went through it several times. I first used a highlighter to take note of interesting ideas and language choice. I then went back through the printed out data and took written notes about why something was interesting, important, or otherwise noteworthy in connection to the previously established categories. In addition, I printed out all of the data again in colored ink. I took notes on a separate sheet of paper for the data I had marked as interesting or surprising/unexpected that was not included in the categories themselves. Using scissors, I cut the information I had copy and pasted into separate sections for each category in order to analyze all the data from each of the three questionnaires together. I then cut each of the individual responses in the categories in order to have each response on its own piece of paper so I could organize each individual response within the category into a subcategory. To indicate this and keep it organized I wrote the subcategory on a sticky note and wrapped it around the cut pieces of paper. I then made a document with the responses in each subcategory and then took notes about the similarities and differences, interesting information, and anything else I found for each category and subcategory across the questionnaires. I then color-coded this in relation to the three guiding questions I had for my research.

#### Limitations: How Emotion Works in FYC Study

Many of the limitations to this study were also affordances. For instance, because I knew all of the participants on an individual basis I felt that they were more comfortable sharing with

me. This also meant, however, some things they may have shared if their responses were completely anonymous they may not have been as inclined to share. There were time constraints to the focus group interviews because I did them directly following the T.A. meetings in order to have them at a convenient time for everyone. Having the participants be so comfortable with me many times meant that the discussions from the meetings spilled over into the interviews and, because of the time constraints, I had to focus the group on my questions and activities. Another limitation to the study is the fact that the participants all had limited experience teaching FYC. As previously discussed, I also thought of this as an affordance because being a T.A. can be a very emotional experience.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The purpose of this thesis was to examine the role of emotion in FYC courses and to explore if the purposeful use of emotion in these courses can improve student writing and, if so, how it is accomplished. Three main characteristics of emotion were investigated: emotion as social and relational—it is created by association between individuals, between groups, and between individuals and groups—emotion as embodied—it is best comprehended and worked with most effectively through performance and play—and emotion as topos or affective response to writing—it is often the actual topic or subject matter of discourse as a product of the composing process itself. While it may seem that being social and embodied would be characteristics opposed to one another because social is more associated with others and embodied is more associated with the individual person, I argue they actually complement one another in regards to emotion. Emotions, as earlier discussed, have traditionally been seen as something individuals possess within themselves. In contrast, emotions should be defined as social and embodied and, therefore, physically outside of the individual.

The student population of FYC courses is, by a large majority, freshman and sophomores. Meaning students at this stage in their college educations are dealing with a lot of emotional experiences that are happening both inside and outside of the academic sphere. These include life changes such as moving out on their own into the dormitories or apartments and being away from their families, friends, and hometowns for quite possibly the first time in their lives. In addition to having more freedom, these students are also tasked with the challenges of their

coursework at the university. Instructors of FYC have observed that if students are not allowed the capacity to write about all the emotions and feelings they are experiencing then it will manifest when it is not relevant or appropriate for the given writing assignment (Chandler, Micciche). Purposeful and interactive reflection will allow students to successfully compose all of their writing assignments in a way that their “unconscious discursive needs do not sabotage their efforts” (Chandler 66). The responsibility FYC instructors are tasked with begins, as discussed in the introduction chapter, with teaching students how emotion is multifaceted: emotion in composition is not only in regards to pathos but, rather, emotion is constantly present and plays a significant role in the everyday discourses of both students and instructors in FYC courses. Very few research studies have been conducted concerning how emotion works in FYC courses. My research project differs from the few previously done because, rather than focusing on students, it focuses on the instructor’s role as a facilitator of the purposeful use of emotion. While in comparison, the studies previously conducted have focused on how students are employing emotion in composition courses that are inappropriate for the given assignments. However, it is also encouraging how such studies have shown the always present role of emotion in FYC and writing in general (Chandler, Kurtyka).

Similarly, the environment of the writing classroom is explained in various ways as being uncertain, challenging, and confusing for many FYC students. Alexander Reid explains the idea that participating in rhetoric requires risk and, as a result “much of writing instruction focuses on risk management” (191). Students’ focus on rubrics and how they can earn that A grade in order for them to reduce the risk and the emotional stake of not doing well on an assignment are hindering their ability to think of the larger audience they are writing for (Reid 192). This idea is taken one step further when Baecker discusses how students feel “resentment” concerning the

new composing processes they are required to participate in for first year writing because it “demands so much emotional investment and risks so much of themselves.” It will additionally be discussed how the emotions involved with such risks and new experiences should be acknowledged as well as utilized by instructors in order to be used in a productive rather than a destructive manner in the FYC classroom.

This thesis examined how the use of emotion in FYC can improve the learning environment as well as the work itself that students produce. The “emotional space of FYC” section is the first of several sections in which the information of the scholars I have consulted is examined. In this section I likewise discuss how emotion is always present in the writing classroom but until recently was not recognized as such. The next section, “study of emotion focused on instructors,” discusses the benefits of having the FYC instructor purposefully use the emotion already present in the classroom environment to connect with students. This is followed by a focus on instructor authority. The section following, “emotion approached as collective,” further addresses the social aspects of emotion while also explaining the important role that student engagement plays in improving writing. In the section, “emotion is embodied,” it is discussed how the use of emotion is best facilitated in the FYC classroom through the use of play and performance in order to create a movement in thinking that may, in turn, affect physical movement. The final section focuses on how emotion can be productive through the practice of student invention and language use as well as the function of instructor feedback.

### Emotional Space of First Year Composition

Students take FYC as freshman and sophomores, therefore, some of the literature also discusses how it is a time of emotional uncertainty for these students both inside and outside of

the classroom. In addition, there is also an emotional connection students form between who they are as individuals and who they are as writers instructors must be aware of in FYC. One important component to this idea is the role instructor feedback plays because the emotional impact it can have on students is not always recognized by instructors of FYC. Instructors are additionally tasked with paying close attention to the power dynamics readily present in the FYC classroom. Due to FYC students just beginning their college careers, having their identities intricately tied to their writing, their past experiences with feedback, and many other factors that will be discussed at length, the use of emotion as being both social and embodied is important for the instructor to be aware of. They should actually take advantage of it in the form of emotional discourse, using emotion as a topic, and working with the idea that emotion is relational in order to ensure students' writing is improving in FYC.

Until very recently, there has been a lack of discussion and research concerning emotion and its presence in the composition classroom. The use of emotion in composition, as Micciche explains it, was delegated to discussions and teachings concerning Aristotle's pathos, an appeal that evokes certain emotions from an audience. In addition, when the use of emotion did begin in writing courses it was, and still is, treated as supplementary and not to be used in conjunction with serious analysis and discourse ("Staying With Emotion"). Emotion in regards to students' writing is often times designated as suitable only for personal compositions and, therefore, at odds with the reasoned, more analytical academic writing students should be taught in composition, most notably FYC, courses (Jacobs). Many scholars, who are or have previously been composition instructors as well, have recently been acknowledging emotion as integral to the teaching of writing because it is and will always be present when individuals are in association with others and tasked with working through various composing processes

(Micciche, Reid, Sedgwick). In fact, Sally Chandler argues for an increase in the study of emotion in the composition classroom when she notes the need for more “detailed explorations of how emotional discourses shape written products and processes” (67). Scholars explain the environment of the writing classroom in various ways, however, the overall consensus is how instructors of FYC are asking students to participate in processes, activities, and compositions that are new for them. Regardless of the actual circumstances, the institution, the class make up, or the instructor, partaking in discourse in FYC courses often involves great uncertainty.

#### Emotion as Pedagogical Work: Focus on Instructors

The role the instructor plays in having students successfully and productively use emotion and, therefore, improve their reading and writing skills in FYC is important to examine. I found Sara Ahmed’s discussions of this particularly imperative to my research. In the first four chapters of *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Ahmed analyzes the collectivity of pain, hate, fear, and disgust, all of which she defines as emotions. These four emotions play a role in educational trauma and can be experienced in various ways when discussing it in FYC. Ahmed discusses how empathy is a different emotion all together than pain because the person who feels empathy for the other does not actually feel pain. As Ahmed states, “Our question becomes not so much what *is* pain, but what *does* pain do” (27). The use of empathy is useful to examine in terms of the instructor’s role with my research project. I contend that teachers themselves can improve their pedagogy by giving themselves the space to work through their own negative experiences and educational traumas as well as giving their students this same space by questioning what emotion does and can do in the FYC classroom.

I argue that in order to successfully use emotion in FYC the instructor needs to be aware of their own position as both facilitator and model. One of the most important ways to teach students emotional discourse through modeling is by connecting and engaging with students. Fulkerson is also using a type of empathy and love, referred to as “eros,” when discussing what the instructor can do in the writing classroom as he uses terms such as “supports,” “encouraged students,” “pay more attention,” and “acknowledge.” When the instructor empathizes and connects with students through eros, they are given the space to work with their emotions rather than working against or past their emotions with the discourse they produce. In a similar manner, Kurtyka uses her study of conversion narratives conducted on new members of a social sorority to discuss emotion in FYC. It is shown that joining a sorority and being a student in FYC are comparable because in each they are entering into a new community. She notes how emotion must be actively recognized by writing instructors in order for it to be successfully used. Kurtyka began her research as an ethnographic study into social sororities when she realized while reviewing the data that most of the interviewees were describing their experiences in the form of conversion narratives. She argues the effective use of emotional discourse in FYC must be taught, as she states, “Asking students to trace their past histories of affective accumulation with writing may make a space in the classroom for their emotions involving writing” (115). My project takes a distinctly different approach because, rather than focusing on students, I focus on instructors and their use and understanding of how emotion works in FYC. Furthermore, with my research I aim to have instructors purposefully think of emotion on various levels in order for them to adopt the practices of how emotion best works in their FYC classrooms in order to improve both student engagement and the actual writing they produce.

In relation to student engagement, my research is also influenced by the idea of students having a fear of identity and self-loss when writing in FYC because they feel as though academic writing and the evaluation of it requires them to lose their personal voice. Chandler attributes the evaluating and grading writing instructors do as playing a large part in why students lose confidence as writers because “writing is bound to conceptions of self” (60). She is highlighting an idea I have uncovered in much of my research as well as observed in my own experience: students in FYC courses are unable to draw boundaries between who they are as a person and who they are as an academic writer. Micciche additionally argues both a sense of self and others is, indeed, enhanced through the use of emotion in writing instruction. She is discussing the intersection of identity and emotion in composition, for both instructors and students alike. In “Staying with Emotion” in particular, Micciche probes the idea of various “self-other” relationships and how they can be strengthened through the use of emotional discourse. Micciche suggests going beyond self-identity and engaging with the self-other exchange in order for students to understand others on an emotional level by using varying frameworks for teaching emotion in context and having students examine it in relation to several different cultural structures. This is additionally important to consider when focusing on the instructor in FYC because it further connects to Chandler’s argument that if composition instructors do not recognize the role emotion plays in writing then students will be including it in their writing in inappropriate ways.

The question then becomes what can the instructor do with the emotion that is already so present in FYC? My research into this question draws on the emotion of wonder Ahmed and Micciche, citing and extending the ideas of Ahmed, examine. Micciche uses Ahmed’s idea of wonder as useful in the classroom space due to the fact that it is an environment where emotional

discourse and the other uses of emotion as well do not have a certain, foreseeable result. As will be further discussed at length, Micciche's value of the use of play and performance as ways for students to learn most successfully is important to my research as she notes that "cultivating wonder" is one way in which to help students learn for themselves how to become critical thinkers and writers in FYC (46). Sedgwick also discusses creating a sort of wonder, however, she focuses on the instructor as changing the affect of the composition classroom by the instructor first changing their pedagogy to be, as the title of her chapter indicates, a "Pedagogy of Buddhism" (153). One of the most meaningful differences between Western thought and Buddhist thought in regards to education Sedgwick discusses is the Western idea that "once you've *learned* it you *know* it" and will, therefore, continually know it (167). She argues this concept does not leave room for the emotional and the fact, as Sedgwick sees it, that the Buddhist ideas of rebirth show the importance of a greater, intricately connected use of both educating and being educated. This further connects to the ideas I aim to insert in the FYC classroom because students must be taught through repeated practice how a piece of writing can be continually worked on in order to allow the space for emotion, improvement, and development.

Peter Elbow answers the question of what the composition instructor can do with the previously existing emotion in the FYC classroom using two larger principles that have been integral to my research and experience: workshopping and using yourself, the instructor, as an example or "guinea pig" (393). Using formal workshops as a way to have students share, peer review, and ultimately revise their writing was of particular interest to me because it is not something I've done, as both the instructor or as a student, in my own FYC courses. In the chapter "Part V: Teaching" in Elbow's book *Everyone Can Write: Essays Toward a Helpful*

*Theory of Writing and Teaching*, he explains how workshopping upsets the power dynamics between students and instructors precisely because of the balance between “teacher authority and student empowerment” that is perceived to be needed in the FYC classroom in particular (320). He explains students being empowered and having freedom does not necessarily have to mean the instructor has then lost authority in the classroom space. This idea is important for my research project because it shows how instructors can give students the freedom they need in FYC to become better writers through the use of emotion while at the same time having students see instructors as capable and valuable resources for them to learn from. In other words, the most effective instructor authority—meaning the most beneficial for students—in FYC does not equate to power and control over students.

#### Emotions Produced in the Collective and as Relational

Ahmed discusses the significant function invention plays for the instructor in facilitating the collective learning that will ensure students are learning to become better writers. As discussed, Ahmed explains empathy as being apart from the actual emotions the subject is feeling and it is, therefore, important for the instructor to frame their interactions with students as perceptive. Developing likeness with students who have some sort of past educational trauma or who think they are “bad writers” will be difficult to do as it will require inventiveness on the part of the instructor. However, the benefits are also important in creating an environment of collective learning and likeness with students in order to have them feel more comfortable in FYC and, as a result, be receptive and actually learn to become better writers.

My research also draws on emotion as used in the composition classroom and emotion itself as being fundamentally a social construct, as Cain pointedly notes as oftentimes not being

understood as such. In direct contrast to the ideas she discusses about emotion as culturally and socially created, Cain asserts that emotion is regularly accepted “as uncontested ‘reality’” (53). In the context of the FYC classroom this could translate into students taking emotion and, therefore, the use and outcomes of emotional discourse, as having only one correct interpretation or analysis. As mentioned, Micciche similarly explains how emotion is tied to culture and the importance of “engaging” with emotion in the composition classroom (“Staying with Emotion”). Engagement indicates students are using emotion for their own interpretations rather than writing about what they think is the correct answer or what the instructor wants to hear. It will be later discussed how engagement is something that several of the T.A.’s mentioned throughout their responses in relation to emotion, which shows it is something instructors consider to be very important when promoting student learning.

In relation to writing instruction specifically, Reid discusses the need for collective communication. Reid emphasizes such discourse as he describes how he facilitates communication between his composition students through the required use of online networks. He points out that by using these networks, which are actually outside of the composition classroom, he is able to cultivate affinity as well as emotional discourse between students. Having students communicate using online networks, Reid explains, is a way to “create a different relationship to learning than the one developed in traditional schooling” (199). He contends students are more comfortable discussing their “passions,” including how they are feeling about the writing they are doing in the course, with one another (199). This shared communication results in collective learning, which, as discussed, then results in improved learning for each individual student. As part of my research study the participating FYC

instructors purposely and actively considered collective learning and, therefore, the outcomes of this type of learning in FYC and how it can promote improved writing.

### Emotion is Embodied

When examining how emotion works in the teaching of writing one understudied, yet important, component to note is the embodied nature of emotion that can be seen presented by the ideas of movement many scholars discuss. It will be further explained how all discourse is meant to generate movement; actions in both thinking and actual physical movement are affected by discourse. Ahmed explains because emotion is social and embodied the movement in thinking that occurs is very much based on others as well as the individuals themselves (10). As Ahmed states, “The circulation of objects of emotion involves the transformation of others into objects of feeling” (11). “Objects of emotion” are important to consider because they represent the movement of inward emotions outwards towards both objects and other individuals.

My research draws on Micciche’s strong emphasis on the use of play as being crucial when students are making meaning with emotion. She explains that tapping into the embodied characteristics of emotion is the best way to have instructors facilitate emotional discourse in FYC through exercises that require students to embody emotion while also creating meaning because it is collective as well as complex. Micciche explains how the writing teacher’s goal in using emotion in the classroom should not be to generate specific emotions in students. Rather, the goal is to give students the space to perform and play in order for them to learn for themselves how emotion is social as well as produced. With my research I aim to outline the specific responsibility of the instructor and how they can help facilitate the productive use of emotion in the writing classroom in order to improve their teaching practices and, therefore, for

students' writing to improve as a result. Framed use of emotion in FYC can be used to direct students away from thinking emotions are set apart from the academic and, instead, illustrate for students that emotion can, in fact, lead to analytical thinking as well as writing.

As with emotional discourse, the goal of all discourse is to create some sort of movement in thinking and this can sometimes lead to actual physical movement. In the Introduction to the book *A Way to Move: Rhetorics of Emotion and Composition Studies*, edited by Dale Jacobs and Laura Micciche, it explains how any rhetoric or discourse should be “dynamic rather than static” in order to be successful (3). The idea of working with emotion in FYC courses is meant to generate an internal movement of knowledge in students that can, in turn, also create a change in their physical actions. Cain refers to this as “emotional freedom” (51). It is “freedom” because students are given both the capacity and space for the expression of emotion. Part of my research will be focusing on how there are no ramifications or punishments students encounter for expressing their true emotions and, therefore, the movement that occurs happens naturally and can take varying forms.

#### Emotion as Productive

My research additionally draws on both Micciche's and Ahmed's previously examined ideas concerning the importance of invention. In comparison to Ahmed, however, Micciche focuses on how students need to practice invention. Micciche explains the activities she facilitated in past composition courses (many of which she is reflecting upon how they could have been more successful) as a way for students to invent. Invention is important, as Micciche sees it, because it encourages and improves students' skills for critical thinking and analysis. Furthermore, it is important to note that how emotion works in my research can also be used as a

way to provoke actions from others. In Micciche's article "Emotion, Ethics, and Rhetorical Action," she discusses the role that ethics play in the use of emotional rhetoric to bring about "definitive" action in others (173). Micciche notes how emotion and ethics should not be seen as rhetorical components in opposition to analytical reason. She argues that the "Students' Right to Their Own Language" is professional, logical discourse that also has an emotional component in order to make it even more compelling. "Students' Right to Their Own Language" is a document adopted by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) in 1974 in which it is argued how writing teachers should not only allow students to write using their own dialects and language but, most importantly, writing teachers should be trained to support and encourage students to do so. This document is an example of discourse with an emotional component that can unite an entire community through movement. Writing teachers change their actions in order to support students. This is an important component I saw when working with the FYC T.A.'s. Students' actions, in turn, will also change because they are given the space and support necessary to write using language they are the most comfortable employing. I additionally contend, as a result of having the emotional freedom and encouragement to use their own language in an academic setting, students' writing will then become more and more improved.

As my research has shown, the interconnected relationship between language and emotion is integral to successfully using emotion in FYC. Ellen Quandahl notes emotion and how specific emotions are understood is linked to language through "particular situations and their demands" (21). The context dependent nature and situatedness of emotion in connection to relationality is important to consider when using emotion in FYC. With every assignment related to emotion and using emotional discourse, these elements of emotion will need to be considered.

For example, the instructor needs to pay attention to the fact that emotion is situated beginning with the design of each assignment. While instructors should not necessarily tell their FYC students how they want them to feel, instructors should still tell students that they do want them to address their feelings along with their thinking in each writing assignment where it is applicable. The instructor needs to similarly reflect this context and socially experienced component to emotion in the assignment sheets they create for students, including telling them how each assignment will be evaluated and what role they, the instructor, will be taking as the audience when reading students' writing. Such ideas are important to employ because it should be very clear to students that when engaging in emotional discourse and using emotion they are not being evaluated on if the emotions they are feeling are the "correct ones." Alternatively, from the assignment sheet, students should understand they are being evaluated on how they write about and thoroughly explain what and, most importantly, why they are feeling the emotions they discuss in their writing. I will illustrate this further in the actual lesson plans and rationales included in the final chapter.

Furthermore, I found the discussions concerning the role feedback plays in relation to student identity as well as past educational trauma for students quite significant to my research regarding the productive characteristics emotion can have in FYC. Like many aspects of emotion, the function of feedback in FYC is very much related to the perception of individual students. Robinson, Pope, and Holyoak discuss a research study in which the feelings towards and experiences with feedback of first year university students in all of their first year courses was examined. One of the most important takeaways from the study concerning first year students and feedback my research likewise ties into is the rather shocking finding that over half of the participating students recorded "doing little other than reading the feedback on

assignments” (265). Robinson, Pope, and Holyoak noted the two main reasons for students not using the feedback received on their assignments to improve either those assignments or future assignments was because of their past experiences with feedback and also because the importance of the emotional influence feedback has on students is not well recognized. In relation to this, my research additionally draws on Forsythe and Johnson’s assertion that the instructor is also tasked with teaching and supporting students so they are better able to use feedback. By learning reflection and self-awareness, students are instructed in how to change their behaviors so they can then recognize their emotions in regards to instructor feedback on their work. This also works along with the previously discussed idea that students must be taught how emotion can aid in analytical thinking. When students are given the instruction and support to work with their perceived emotions of the received feedback, they are then capable of using such feedback to be more successful at academic writing.

One of the main concepts I am focusing on is on how the power dynamics between students and instructors can have an overarching, sometimes counterintuitive, influence in FYC courses. My research draws on both Ahmed’s and Boler’s concepts of emotional power as how they see it as being intricately connected to feminism. As Boler states, “The work of feminist theorists is particularly useful to demonstrate how hegemony and emotion overlap” (7). She notes earlier in her work how education and those institutions where higher education is facilitated are very much intertwined with “the social control of emotion” (5). In other words, feminist theory is purposeful in demonstrating how emotion is not only social but, also very importantly, how emotion can be used as an assertion of power and control. As discussed, one of the challenges in FYC that working with emotion can help eradicate is how students have an irrational fear of being judged by the instructor or even those peers they view as being better

writers than they themselves are. This is additionally significant when considering the aforementioned idea of emotion as not just an internal reaction but, rather, something that is both embodied and influenced by others (Boler 13). Ahmed extends these ideas further by asserting that not only is emotion embodied but knowledge and education itself are embodied as well because they are interconnected with “the bodily world of feeling and sensation” (171).

Therefore, emotion has a pertinent place in the FYC classroom where education and emotion are already connected with one another through the shared facets of being both social and embodied.

Similarly, Ellen Quandahl describes education of all types as a way to “shape what is said to be deeply ‘within,’ offering not only knowledge, perspective, and strategies of reason, but the very forms of emotion” (11). Quandahl notes how education comes in many forms, including being educated as part of life and culture, along with formal education. In addition, this also connects to the crucial idea that emotion is situated and created because emotion is both inseparable from and situated within other discourses. Similarly, Chandler argues writing and composing are “a complex intersection of discourses—including emotional discourses—that orchestrate what and how we will compose within a given context” rather than writing being about one process or outcome (67). Moreover, my project emphasizes how it is important to remember that FYC students must be taught those discourses instructors expect them to participate in because they will be new and often times intimidating for students.

### Conclusions

Education and emotion are both social and embodied; therefore, reason and emotion are complementary to one another rather than in opposition in the FYC classroom space. The use of emotion in composition is growing in popularity because of the fact that emotion already has an

imminent presence in the composition classroom. According to the literature reviewed, it is best for the instructor to somehow acknowledge and work with this emotion rather than through or against it. In working with instructors, the purpose of my research project is to examine how instructors can best facilitate the use of emotion in FYC. Students, especially in FYC, are being asked to enter into composing processes that are new for them and, as a result, the FYC classroom environment is described in the literature reviewed as a place of uncertainty, risk, and vulnerability, among other things. The use of emotion in this uncertain environment is important because it is a site where students create meaning. Accordingly, when students are able to create further meaning by purposefully working with their emotions they are better able to learn and become more successful critical thinkers and writers.

There were very few studies discussed in the literature review and those cited focused on how students use emotion inappropriately in their writing (Chandler). Although there has been an increase in both the use and discussion regarding the use of emotion in FYC, there has been very little research done on the instructors themselves and how they can guarantee emotion is ensuring students are thinking critically, writing most effectively, and participating in purposeful reflection. Further research is needed to examine the role the instructor plays and what the most effective assignments and activities are to best support students in becoming better writers through the purposeful use of emotion.

## CHAPTER III

### DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND RESULTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate how emotion works in the first year composition classroom and if and, to what extent, recognizing and purposefully using emotion in this classroom space can improve students' learning and writing skills. Investigating the ways in which emotion is seen and understood by the instructor in FYC is integral to examining these ideas. The instruments used were open-ended questionnaires as well as focus group interviews with the participating instructors. The group interviews were designed to have the participating T.A.'s do activities and further writing related to emotion and FYC in a social setting as opposed to the questionnaires that were completed on an individual basis. The following is an examination of the data collected. Through my research and experiences I have concluded that, rather than being in conflict, reason and emotion are both appropriate and compatible together in the composition classroom. The role of emotion throughout the writing process in various contexts was discussed in the participants' responses repeatedly as being important. The writing process itself is very new for some students and this can cause frustration, confusion, and many other emotions for students when they are tasked with entering into this new process.

Furthermore, it makes it less of a negative experience when instructors are aware of the emotions students may experience during each stage of the writing process. This, similarly, also relates to how the participating instructors used language throughout their responses that showed they feel a sense of responsibility for creating the environment of the FYC classroom while also finding a balance between having authority in this classroom space but not taking away students' own

power. In the following discussions of my findings the names of the participating instructors have been changed to pseudonyms.

The entire process of conducting this research study with FYC instructors was quite interesting as well as fulfilling. After the seven participants began responding to the questionnaires and participating in the interviews I actually found myself feeling guilty. As someone who was very recently teaching FYC while doing my own graduate coursework I was feeling guilty my study was taking up the participating instructors' valuable time. However, after I expressed this to a few of the participants in passing and they explained that they did not find my questionnaire questions or the focus group interviews to take up much time at all, I felt less guilty. I likewise appreciated how one participant told me at the same time how interesting she found my ideas about emotion in FYC. In a similar manner, I really enjoyed reading their questionnaire responses and group interview compositions. The honesty, insight, and even humor the participating instructors included in their writings and our conversations was much more than I had expected when I first designed and began this research study.

As discussed, I previously knew all of the instructors before doing the research study. Moreover, I felt that knowing all of the instructors and them knowing each other as well made it so that the focus group interviews were a comfortable space for everyone to share and not feel like they were being judged. It was also important to me that I kept all of their questionnaire responses anonymous while we talked in the group interviews. This became difficult to do right from the start because when I was reading the responses from Questionnaire #1 before the first focus group interview I was intrigued, surprised, and captivated by all of their responses. I decided to read all of the responses question-by-question rather than by participant so that I would not be able to see yet which participant had written each of the question responses. Then

when I wrote their ideas and responses in my follow-up question notes for the actual interview I would be keeping their personal responses anonymous to both myself and the group. For the second group interview three of the seven participants stayed afterwards and we had much more informal conversations than the interviews had been with all seven of the participating instructors. One interesting aspect to these conversations I noticed when I listened to the recording is the ways in which we all talked about our own FYC experiences as students. These discussions were followed by us talking about feeling actual guilt and reflecting on how we all felt how we could in some way be better FYC instructors. Once we talked about our own experiences we all realized that we are attempting to address the problems we noticed in our own FYC courses and, therefore, actually caring about how, what, and why we teach our students the ways in which we do means we have no reason to feel guilty. These conversations, once again, demonstrate to me the importance of instructor reflection on and acknowledgement of emotion.

### Findings: How Emotion Works For Both Instructors and Students in FYC

#### Emotion as Invention

Students' invention processes as related to emotion were identified by the participants as important. This highlights the purposeful use of emotion as working best in the FYC classroom when it is done in a more subtle manner and not forced upon students. The importance of student invention was discussed by the participating T.A.'s beginning with the first stages of the writing process through invention and lower stakes writing assignments, such as quick writes and discussion posts. Zach used emotion as related to the invention process when students are deciding on topics for their higher stakes assignments because "students will connect to topics and research emotionally." The idea of researching "emotionally" denotes how students will be

more interested in what they are learning about on their own and eventually composing projects and papers about. Similarly, many of the participating instructors discussed how they encourage students to pick topics for the larger stakes assignments that they have a personal connection to. Zach also explained how he gives his FYC students the freedom to choose both the topic and the genre of their culminating inquiry projects. The examples of genres he gives his students very early on in the invention process include those connected to emotion and those genres less explicitly connected to emotion; however, the idea their chosen inquiry questions that guide their research students should relate to on a personal level is very much stressed. For this instructor having students connect to their project topics and genres should always be done on a personal level and for some, but not all students, this means the personal connection is tapping into students' emotions or what they connect to emotionally.

Another aspect to the writing process the T.A.'s mentioned is the component of revision as a learning experience for students in FYC and how invention as related to emotion is very much a part of this as well. Revision using feedback from both their peers and their instructor is another experience many FYC students find intimidating to do at first. The role of the emotional influence instructor feedback can have on students is not always well recognized in FYC (Robinson, Pope, and Holyoak). Sarah explained, "I think writing is accompanied by a wide range of emotions and students, whether unconsciously or not, are learning to navigate those emotions as they write and revise." When doing the lesson plan activity, Tanya specifically noted how she agreed with what I wrote in the "Writing Back to Draft Comments" assignment about how students will oftentimes not look at the feedback from their instructor until they are revising the assignment right before the next draft is due or sometimes not at all.

The timing of when the participating T.A.'s responded to Questionnaire #3 had an interesting influence on and change in their responses when compared to the responses of the first two questionnaires. I thought this was due to a combination of it being the end of the semester and the final questionnaire and also, perhaps even more importantly, due to the impact of the Camp Fire. All university classes and class work was suspended for weeks because of the devastating wildfire that began on November, 8th, 2018 and students did not return to campus until after Thanksgiving Break. While all the questions I asked were reflective, the final responses were much more connected to emotion as part of reflective practice. As previously explained, six out of the seven participants talked about the impact of the Camp Fire on their FYC courses in varying contexts and in response to different questions in Questionnaire #3. The ways in which the participating instructors talked and wrote about their students in relation to the fire showed to me that they feel a genuine concern for their well-being and that the use of emotion in the FYC classroom is useful as an invention practice as part of instructors' teaching practices. Alexa discussed how these impacts led to important conversations with her students about their final projects and "feelings of urgency" as well as doing "work that matters." This once again connects to engagement and passion as a way to get students more invested in their writing and, therefore, improve the work they produce. It is also showing another component to the idea of emotion as relational and embodied given the impact the fire had on their FYC class.

As a result of these types of responses, I began the final group interview by asking how the participating instructors talked to their students about the Camp Fire. Brooke actually held her FYC class on the day the fire had begun before classes were cancelled. She explained how she changed what was planned for the day and began class by showing satellite pictures of how close the impacted areas are to the university campus and giving students the opportunity to

process and discuss it. The discussions of community and physical relation to the tragic events of the Camp Fire the participants reflected upon and discussed with their students correlate to the idea of emotion as having an explicitly important place in the FYC classroom because emotion is already and always present there to begin with. As another follow-up in the final focus group interview, I asked the participating instructors how their teaching practices changed because of the emotions, schedule changes, and various other impacts the fire had on their FYC classes. The T.A.'s all talked about how when students returned to campus they made nothing "serious" due and Zach explained he held a workday the first day back in order to "restore normality" for his students in their FYC classroom environment. All of the participants said that they had been less strict with their grading since the Camp Fire. Alexa even described how she looked at assignments she had graded before the event and thought her grading before then had perhaps been too strict.

### Emotion as Relational

Being that the participants are T.A.'s and, therefore also graduate students while teaching FYC, I found it significant how many of the experiences they talked about were happening in the present. Several of the participants explained that being a student with their own course and thesis work made them more sympathetic with their FYC students. While on the other hand, many of these same instructors also expressed feeling emotionally frustrated when students were not as dedicated of students as they themselves currently are or when students would take advantage of the instructor's sympathetic demeanor. One of the most interesting (and, frankly, humorous) responses where a participating instructor discussed this was Alexa's when she said it will take her years to learn how to create a balance between the two by first stating, "Teaching is its own unique torture (not sure that's the right word)--I'm learning to create compassionate

spaces where students cannot take advantage to create ease/loopholes.” This additionally highlights another unique aspect to teaching FYC that was touched on about how the instructor is always themselves learning along with their students. As previously discussed, there are constant advances in the field of teaching composition resulting in pedagogy changes for instructors. Denver explained he will “always be a student of teaching” and this, once again, makes him feel more connected to his students which results in his FYC classroom environment having more “fluid roles” between himself and his students.

The importance of empathy and concern for FYC students is something we talked about in various contexts. The ways in which the T.A.’s talked about this directly connects to Fulkerson’s ideas of eros. Eros, as previously discussed, is a special type of love and empathy instructors show towards their students that Fulkerson argues allows them to feel safe in the classroom space and work with their emotions (“Call me Horatio”). While the participating instructors did not discuss their students’ past educational experiences much, I found it interesting how many of them did express a concern for their current experiences both with their other classes and their lives outside of the academic arena. For example, Alexa explained how she held a workday in-class before a large writing assignment was due because her students had requested it. She explained how her students were expressing to her their stress regarding exams in their other classes and their jobs outside of school. Two of the participating instructors, Alexa and Sarah, explained during our conversations their routines for beginning class each day I found really connected to emotion because it showed to their students that they really do care about them. Sarah described how she would begin class casually by simply asking her students how they were doing and that many students would engage with her. Alexa explained how one day to begin class she included a picture of her dog with the day’s agenda and after this day her students

began emailing her “unsolicited” pictures of their own pets. She then included a picture of a student’s pet with each day’s agenda and additionally explained how after she talked about the agenda she would lead into the actual class by encouraging her students and telling them “we can do this.”

The participants related how their experiences as a student have a direct influence on how they teach. I had expected the instructors would mostly discuss negative educational experiences that made them adopt teaching practices different from those they themselves had experienced. I was, however, taken by surprise by the amount of positive experiences the T.A.’s related. As Samantha noted, “I always liked talking with my teachers and knowing more about them beyond the classroom. While friendships with students are discouraged, I think it’s good to create an environment of acceptance and interest for all students.” This participating instructor is showing the importance of the actual space in FYC in allowing students to do their best work because this is how she learned best as a student.

#### Emotion as Affective Response to Writing

When responding to the question of what they view the role of working with emotion is in FYC, Tanya said, “Yes, I’ve given a lot of thought to student engagement, which involves challenging them to write about things that are meaningful on a personal or professional level. This then allows them to write an academic type paper and then realize that they don’t need to be intimidated by writing in an academic sense.” This response is once again an example of how emotion in FYC is seen by instructors as noticeably connected to student engagement, passion, and personal connection. Tanya then took it one step further by explicitly bringing in the idea of such engagement and investment in FYC helping students be better academic writers. Samantha likewise remarked that “writers do their best work” when they are writing about those topics they

care about when answering the same question about what she views the role of emotion to be in FYC. Therefore, this instructor directly linked using emotion as leading to engagement as a way to generate an improvement in student writing.

In the responses for Questionnaires #2 and #3 the T.A.'s began using several actual examples from their FYC classes to show how they noticed the quality of student writing improving from the start of the semester. Some of the examples were very detailed and others were more generalized. In several responses the instructors were discussing how they ask their students to write about things they have strong emotions concerning and often times how they also want their students to present these emotional discussions in a professional, academic manner. Most of these comparisons between the quality of work from the start of the semester and from mid-semester on revolved around the fact that their FYC students were now working on projects they are emotionally invested in. One instance is when Alexa was discussing the passion her students felt for their projects as improving their writing and then comparing this improved writing to the first writing assignment her FYC students completed she found to be "generic and not at all that expressive of individual thought."

#### Emotion as Part of the Learning Environment

The majority of the participating instructors related across their responses how the presence of emotion was very much felt in their FYC classes. As discussed, it was immediately apparent these instructors made a connection between emotion and student engagement, passion, and personal connection. The participating T.A.'s explained how they perceive emotion in their FYC classes as very present but implicitly so rather than being something they explicitly and regularly talk about with their students. Tanya noted, "If they care deeply about a topic, they have much more to say." She then used a discussion from her FYC class regarding food as an

example of this because she noticed her students had a lot to say about it. In contrast to emotion being more implicit and less explicitly talked about, Tanya connects food to emotional ties in students' lives during this class discussion and the engagement of her students in the discussion showed their interest as well.

One of the most unique aspects of FYC is that all students in the university are required to take the course and, therefore, the vast majority of the students in FYC classes are not English majors. As discussed, Baecker takes it one step further by explaining how students even feel “resentment” because of the new composing processes FYC instructors are requiring them to participate in (“Can You Hear Me Now, Ms. Monster?”). Brooke saw in using “emotion type work” in her composition class with this wide variety of students, students are better able to see themselves as writers. I likewise argue students being able to identify themselves as writers is another important step in allowing them to enter into and participate in the writing process more smoothly. Another facet to FYC courses that came up across all three questionnaires, during the focus group interviews, and while the participants were completing the activities as part of the interviews is how FYC involves students doing a lot of group work during class time. The student participation in group work in the FYC classroom is very much connected to what I’ve been discussing about emotion as relational and as having a physical component as well. When asked about if they’ve seen the emotions, affect, or disposition of one student changing how other students were behaving, Samantha and Sarah specifically talked about group work and students affecting the behavior of others physically near them. Interestingly, Samantha described how a student was being disruptive during a group activity and his group told him to stop complaining and participate before she herself had to say anything to the student.

The emotions of the participating instructors themselves came up quite prominently. When discussing their own emotions in FYC, the T.A.'s were most often either talking about feeling a sense of pride for their students' work or, on the opposite side of the spectrum, feeling upset because of the quality or lack of student work. There were, in fact, several instances where a participating instructor used language that showed to me they felt responsible for the creation of a certain type of space in the FYC classroom. Four of the seven participants specifically used the word "environment" when describing the ways in which they try to make the classroom a friendly and accepting space for students. Samantha explained, "This semester I noticed the impact of MY emotions on the class when I corrected them for not completing the reading assigned for that day." It was related how she tried to make things more positive and not have her students feel like she was punishing them after she simply told them how disappointed she was. This shows that Samantha understands the strong affect her own emotions can have on the entire FYC classroom environment.

### Emotion as Embodied

As mentioned, I had the T.A.'s actually map out their classrooms and show how, when, why, and where they move around in order for me to analyze what it could mean for how they are working with and understanding emotion in FYC. When mapping out their classrooms, many of the participants were very matter-of-fact about how they move around the room; for example, Denver noted there is no emotional connection as to why he moves around the way he does he just simply begins by checking on the students who are physically closest to his desk. However, when the participants then responded to my questions in writing about their movements they had quite a lot to say that I see as unmistakably connected to emotion. Three of the seven participants, Samantha, Tanya, and Sarah, mentioned making eye contact with students and

reading their body language either while they are checking on how they are doing on in-class assignments or when lecturing in front of the class. They all three explained the reason they do this is to engage with and make a connection with individual students. I found this particularly important when thinking of how these same instructors were very much concerned with their students being engaged and having a connection with the topics of their writing and composing in their FYC classes because, as it has been discussed at length, this then leads to students learning more effectively. I incorporated the embodied, physical nature of emotion into a map activity because while reading the introduction to Sedgwick's *Touching Feeling* I found it particularly interesting when she discusses Esther Newton's "spatially precise analysis" of mapping drag clubs in the 1970's (9). The most interesting map and explanations was from Brooke, who teaches in a very unusual classroom; it is additionally interesting because this participating instructor has taught FYC two other semesters in a very different classroom space and during this same semester (fall 2018) was teaching a creative writing class in a different, less unusual classroom. In fact, Brooke's FYC classroom she was mapping out was so surprising that I actually asked her about it while she was still drawing it. The classroom was in a gym space with massage tables in the back and the crowded rows of desks made it so that this instructor had to "squeeze through chairs in order to check on their progress" during group work. See figure 1 below of the participant's FYC classroom map.

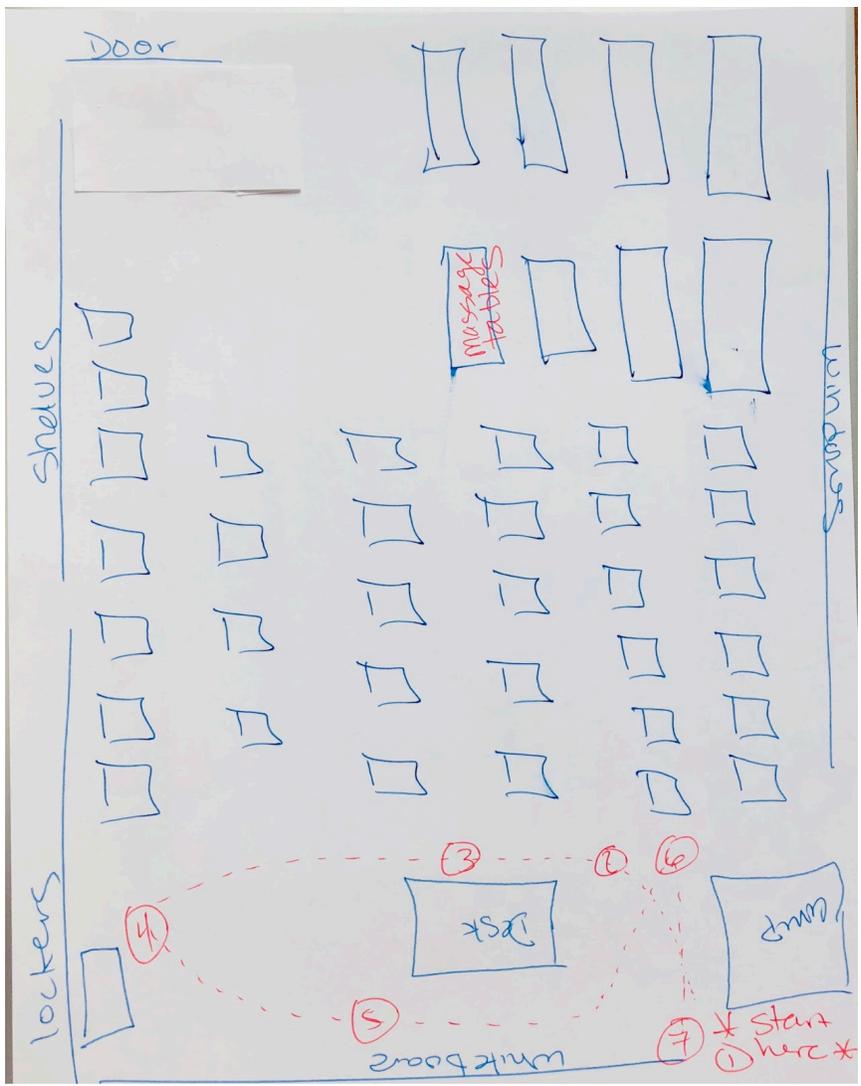


Figure 1. Map drawn by Brooke of her FYC classroom

When describing the map to me, Brooke explained how this physical classroom space made it so she had less of a personal connection with her students and that she really did not like that. She related to me how many different emotions she felt about the physical space of her class and the emotions she felt while actually teaching her FYC course in that classroom space. Brooke would feel like she was “in bizarro land in a way” as she had to adopt a completely different mindset due to the physical environment itself.

As discussed at length, instructor empathy and affinity for students was frequently talked about in relation to the instructors' own experiences as a student. One of the most interesting aspects of the T.A.'s discussions was when they talked about the physical and embodied nature of the emotional connection they have with students. I argued early on how emotion is embodied because it is in fact outside of individuals and the perspectives of these instructors likewise indicate this as well. The discussions of the participating instructor's show that, contrary to what they explained in regards to their FYC classroom maps, the embodied aspects to emotion are present and do have an influence on their classes. Interestingly, two of the participating instructors both used the phrase "in the desks" to describe how they remember what it actually feels like emotionally to be a student. As Brooke noted, "I think about what it's like to be a student in the desks because it's important. I don't want to be the teacher who forgets to think of them regarding time and assignments." Tanya also discussed being "in the desks" as a student and how remembering these experiences helps her gauge whether or not she is successfully connecting with and engaging students.

### Discussion

As can be seen from the data collected, instructors readily recognize the various ways in which emotion affects the FYC classroom space: emotion as inventional work, as relational, as affective response to writing, as part of the learning environment, and emotion as embodied. Emotion is used as an inventive tool by students throughout the composing process. While instructors likewise use emotion as invention when implementing teaching practices that are most effective in engaging students in the FYC class. Similarly, emotion is relational and, therefore, an important component to providing instructors ways to connect with their students.

Emotion is an affective response to writing because when students care about the topics they are writing about there is a noticeable improvement of such writing as compared to the topics of other assignments they have less of an emotional connection with. One of the major factors as to what makes emotion part of the learning environment is the actual work students do in the FYC classroom and the fact that many of these students have never been asked to do this kind of work before. The idea of emotion as embodied was not always recognized, however, it was apparent from the participating instructors' discussions how the physical elements of emotion were in fact very important for instructors to not only empathize with students but to also assess student engagement. One of the most important takeaways from the data collected is how instructors do acknowledge the significant presence of emotion in the FYC classroom environment but that this presence is very much implicit and not something they explicitly discuss.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Conclusions

This study aimed to explore emotion and the various ways in which it works in the FYC classroom. Emotion is already present in this classroom space and, therefore, it is integral for student success the instructor acknowledge and use it in a purposeful, productive manner. It was important I first define or, more accurately, redefine emotion as it pertains to the teaching and learning of writing. Emotion is social and relational as emotions are not only something within individuals; rather, emotions are formed and produced by association between individuals and others. It is additionally significant that emotion is embodied. It is best understood as well as worked with through physical performance and play because emotion is complex and has various influences on students and on the FYC classroom space itself. FYC students are being tasked with entering into composing processes that are many times new and even uncomfortable for them and this results in emotion as having a large influence on the actual work they produce. Students' emotions are often times the topic and subject matter in as well as an affective response to their writing.

#### Lesson Plans

I found when instructors are aware of the many ways in which emotion works in their FYC classes they are better able to use the emotion that is already present in the classroom. As a result of the above findings, I created lesson plans to help cultivate the use of emotion in this classroom space. The purpose of these lesson plans is for instructors to have students use the emotion that already exists in the composition classroom in a productive manner as a way for

students to become more successful writers, critical thinkers, and composers. Some of the lessons focus on emotion in a straightforward manner while other lessons employ emotion in a more implicit manner. The first section of each lesson plan is the actual assignment sheet that would be given to students. The sections following this are the rationales and learning goals contributing to the creation of the assignments and activities with the first parts of these serving as an introduction and framework for the lessons. For two of the lesson plans I also included a short explanation of my experiences doing versions of those assignments and activities as footnotes.

**Assignment title: Group Literacy Narrative “Performances”**

**Activity instructions given to students:**

**Group Literacy Narrative “Performances”**

Keeping in mind the class discussion we had last week about what to do with our emotions when we are writing something that triggers various feelings we are both familiar and unfamiliar with, do the following activity in pairs with literacy narratives written by famous authors. **Have your Literacy Narrative assignment sheets out to reference!**

**Follow all of the steps in order and very carefully:**

1. Begin by reading the narrative together.
2. Go back through and underline the sections of the narrative where the author is expressing, discussing, or otherwise working with emotion.
3. On a piece of paper you will turn-in to me, write a paragraph explaining what these underlined sections do in the overall narrative: What emotions are being shown in the narrative? Are the emotions similar, different, or both? Why are these emotions important to the author’s overall story? Do these emotions connect to literacy? Why or why not?

4. On this same piece of paper, I want you and your partner to create a dialogue between the author and someone they present or talk about in the narrative who is important to their story. **The author and the important character in their story should be having a conversation about literacy. Write the dialogue in persona form! This means that you are taking on the emotions, language(s), experiences, feelings, etc. of the author and the other character when participating in the conversation.**
5. You will then read your conversation to the class! Instead of having groups actually perform in front of the class, we will get in a circle and you can read your conversation with your partner from your seats.
6. We will follow up with a reflection quick write and a class discussion specifically about emotions and the Literacy Narrative.

**Rationale and learning goals contributing to the creation of this activity:**

I chose to do this activity surrounding the larger writing assignment of the Literacy Narrative because, in my experience, writing the narrative can be a very personal and emotionally charged experience for FYC students. The “Group Literacy Narrative ‘Performances’” activity is done after a class discussion about emotions and writing and how emotion can have various meanings, influences, and definitions in the writing classroom. This particular discussion should mostly focus on how emotions like anger and frustration are normal to be working with when doing any type of writing and do not always have to do with the writing assignment or task itself. One way to begin this discussion is by having students either shout out or discuss in small groups then as a class the emotions they’ve felt when doing a writing assignment. Another way to begin the discussion is by having students find a meme that represents their emotional response to the writing and then have them explain it to their group.

As the student instructions illustrate, after students complete the activity (which will most likely take more than one class period given they will need to “perform” in pairs as well) they will do short, individual reflections. They will begin by reflecting on doing the activity itself using the example and narrative and working with the emotions of the author. Then students will reflect on their own literacies and what emotions of their own they may be working with both as it relates to their own story and also the process of writing the Literacy Narrative.

Micciche explains her use of the term “emotion” and how her definition and treatment of emotion describes how it creates meaning precisely because it is relational and complex. This definition also differs from the prevalent idea that emotion is something in which individuals feel inside of themselves and express it outwards; Micciche characterizes emotion as being “dynamic and relational” (*Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching* 28). This will be an important component to include in the class discussion before students complete the “Group Literacy Narrative ‘Performances’” activity. In addition, her discussion goes one step further with Micciche analyzing how emotion studies and body studies are comparable because they both aim to go beyond the effects of rhetoric and, instead, delve into the more meaningful ideas concerning why those devices used to effect are successful or unsuccessful in making meaning. The assignment she outlines in Chapter 3, “Emotion Performed and Embodied in the Writing Classroom,” involving citizenship narratives and how to get students to engage with emotion as well as citizenship and invention was of particular interest when I was creating the above activity assignment sheet. After students read citizenship narratives and then write their own with specific emotions and feelings connected to the narrative they wrote in a “persona” they do a performance group activity, followed by a class discussion “focusing on the emotioned content of citizenship” and its connections to democracy (65).

As discussed, some form of this activity will be useful to implement when considering how to use both the embodied and relational characteristics of emotion in the FYC classroom, however, doing the exact performance activities Micciche discusses having students do in her upper-level English classes might be difficult to do with FYC students. When doing activities that ask students to work with emotion, even if it is the emotions and feelings of authors and writers other than themselves, it is important they are very comfortable doing so. Therefore, the aim in having students be performative with their partner by staying in their seats is to ensure the experience is enjoyable and they can focus on working with emotion rather than focusing on the embarrassment and fear some students will be preoccupied with when having to perform a scene in front of the class.

**Assignment title: Writing Back to Draft Comments**

**Activity instructions given to students:**

**Writing Back to Draft Comments**

This is a two-part assignment concerning the feedback I gave on your drafts. **Please do the 2 parts in order.** Also, be as clear as possible in your explanations and remember I will be reading and responding to your replies ASAP for you to use while revising your drafts.

**Part 1:**

First, spend some time reading over the comments I left on your draft. Then, summarize all (or the gist) of my comments. **Do this summary at the end of your draft with a clear heading and today's date.**

**Part 2:**

**Do the following as either a “reply” to my actual comments or as new comments on your Google Doc of the draft you turned-in.** Make sure to number your responses! You can still

view and respond to deleted comments by clicking on the comment button in the right corner of the doc by the share button to re-open and reply to the comment that way. **Please feel free to reply to more than one comment from me for each number, just be sure to number them correctly!**

1. Reply to a comment you are confused about. This could be feedback from me that you either do not understand what I am asking for or something you do not know how to actually do when revising. Why is this comment confusing?
2. Is there anything you feel you needed feedback on that I should have given you comments regarding and did not? Add a comment in this place and please explain.
3. Do you feel there is anything in your draft you did well but I hadn't commented on? Add a comment in this place and please explain.
4. Reply to a comment from me you have a clear plan for addressing in revision. How will you change this in your final draft? Why will you do so?

**Rationale and learning goals contributing to the creation of this assignment:**

The "Writing Back to Draft Comments" assignment is designed to be completed with a larger-stakes, ongoing writing assignment students have already received extensive feedback from the instructor regarding. As the instructions additionally indicate, the larger writing assignment students turned-in and will be replying to instructor comments on should be an assignment they are currently in the process of revising and will be completing a graded final draft of. In order to be the most beneficial for students the comment assignment should be done after all students have received feedback from the instructor; it should also be assigned with enough time before the final draft is due that students have the time to continue working on revisions using the instructor's comments on students' replies to the initial draft comments.

Along with teaching important aspects of the writing process, this assignment is also designed with emotion in mind because of the purposeful ways in which it encourages both reflection and various types of communication between students and the writing instructor. For example, my students write their larger writing assignments in Google Docs so another component to doing this assignment is that it is much easier for me to read and respond to their writing back to my draft comments in order to help, encourage, and communicate with them even further during the drafting and writing processes.

In the essay, “Working Through Theory in a Community College Composition Classroom,” Howard Tinberg emphasizes the need for FYC students to learn an accurate and useful vocabulary about writing. This, in turn, will allow students to grasp the necessary principles of personal agency and the conscious choices that make up successful writing by improving “student metacognition” (248). The assignment of having students purposefully respond to comments an instructor has given them on a draft of a larger writing assignment has several important aspects. First, in terms of vocabulary building, it allows them to work with, clarify, and even test out the terms the instructor is using in regards to their writing. This is important because it furthers the idea that writing efficiently is done by making active choices as well as them being able to reflect on the successes and failures of those choices. Another way the “Writing Back to Draft Comments” assignment encourages the learning of a vocabulary in students in which personal awareness is further developed is by teaching students the value of drafting. In my experience, students must be taught through various readings, assignments, and activities the principles of writing being a continuous process with individual pieces of writing never being complete but, rather, always being able to be improved upon. Through writing back to the comments given by their instructor, or in other words the person who will eventually give

a final grade to their writing, students are more purposefully thinking of the drafting process and how their next draft(s) can be more successful than their previous draft(s)<sup>2</sup>.

**Assignment title: Rhetorical Grammar Exercise**

**Assignment instructions given to students:**

**Rhetorical Grammar Exercise (3 Parts)**

As Micciche explains, “The grammatical choices we make—including pronoun use, active or passive verb constructions, and sentence patterns—represent relations between writers and the world they live in. Word choice and sentence structure are an expression of the way we attend to the words of others, the way we position ourselves in relation to others” (719). At different times you will be reading a speech, a longer Social Media post, and a short narrative. You will receive and work with one piece of writing at a time. In-class the day the worksheet is due, you will then work in groups to talk about what you’ve discovered about the piece of writing.

Helpful links to consult we also discussed as a class:

- Active and passive voice: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)
- Sentence structure: [https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue\\_owl.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/purdue_owl.html)

**Once you have carefully read the piece of writing, go through to highlight, annotate, underline, or otherwise identify parts of the piece you will need to easily find when completing the worksheet (this means you should also read through the worksheet itself if you have not done so already). You will be turning in the piece of writing along with the**

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<sup>2</sup> When I did a version of the “Writing Back to Draft Comments” activity during one semester of FYC I was pleasantly surprised by how well my students did with answering the questions, the thorough explanations they included, and the questions they had for me as well. What I found most significant about the version of this activity I had students do is how in their replies many students asked larger questions in which to apply to their overall academic writing rather than just on how to improve this one assignment.

**worksheet. Then, fill out the worksheet examining the grammatical choices of the author by answering the following questions.**

**Pay close attention to every component of each question!**

1. Identify a simple sentence in the piece of writing. What is the structure of the sentence before and the sentence after the simple sentence? In your own words, what is the message and importance of the sentence in the overall paragraph? Similarly, what is the message and importance of the simple sentence in the entire piece of writing?
2. Identify a sentence written in active voice. What is the voice of the sentence before and the sentence after this active voice sentence? In your own words, what is the message and importance of this sentence in the overall paragraph? Similarly, what is the message and importance of the active voice sentence in the entire piece of writing?
3. Does the author define or redefine any terms that are important to their overall message in the piece of writing? Why did the author choose to define or redefine the term(s)? Why did the author choose to define or redefine the term(s) in the section they did so? How are the term(s) important to the author's message?
4. Does the author show any emotion or lack of emotion in the piece of writing? Please explain using further examples (meaning not the same things you discussed in the previous questions) of sentence structure and active or passive voice.

**Rationale and learning goals contributing to the creation of this assignment:**

The "Rhetorical Grammar Exercise" is an individual, three part assignment and, as such, students will first need direction and practice as a class doing the exercises they will be completing individually for this assignment. During the class discussion and practice, it will be most beneficial for the instructor to discuss the grammatical choices of an author using an

example piece of writing and pointing to specific parts of the writing. First, it would be best for the instructor to go over the helpful links that are also included in the student instructions to remind students what they are discussing as far as grammar. I chose to focus on voice and sentence structure for the individual exercises, however, it could also benefit students to explain and discuss parts of speech and pronouns in relation to the examples when practicing as a class because these are also important rhetorical choices writers make that students should additionally learn about. The instructor will then ask students similar questions to the ones they will be answering as part of the exercises and point to these parts of the author's writing. After students have done the individual rhetorical grammar exercise three times with different types of writing each time it could be additionally beneficial to have them analyze one another's writing. I can see students analyzing the rhetorical grammar of their peers either in groups or individually as one component of peer review. This will likewise allow students to better see how the grammatical choices they are making as writers are relational as well as influenced by emotion.

In Chapter 1, "On Terms and Context," of her book *Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching*, Micciche presents a detailed discussion of how Joseph Williams neglects a prime opportunity to discuss emotion when he uses Abraham Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address as an example in his book *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace*. Micciche sees it as a missed opportunity because Williams focuses only on the ethical implications of Lincoln's speech. The ways in which Micciche explains how Williams could have included the emotional motivations that likewise prompted how Lincoln's speech was written also connects to the principles of rhetorical grammar Micciche discusses in her other works as well. She argues rhetorical grammar is an important component in teaching students how to make meaning in an active manner ("Making a Case for Rhetorical Grammar" 716). Therefore, implementing a version of

this activity in FYC asking students to read several different works such as speeches, narratives, even Social Media posts about important, emotionally intensified ideas and discuss them as a class in this same manner would be useful in helping students with their own writing. By pointing students to and talking about the sentence-level choices the author made it can show them the influence and relevance emotion has on the rhetorical situation that “goes beyond a banal desire to tap into an audience’s emotions” (*Doing Emotion: Rhetoric, Writing, Teaching* 23). This will better allow FYC students to purposefully reflect on the choices they likewise make in their own writing.

**Assignment title: Final Reflection Visual Essay**

**Assignment sheet given to students:**

**Final Reflection Visual Essay**

While this reflection is asking you to do much of the same work you have been doing for the entire semester, I am also wanting it to include a visual aspect. **The final reflection should be in the format of a Google Slides presentation titled Lastname\_Final and shared with me.** I want you to take a critical and analytical look at your work this semester. You need to not only explain what you have done but also *why* and *how* you did it.

**You will be answering the following questions:**

- What assignments or activities both inside and outside of class, did you enjoy the most or have the most positive experience doing? Why was this experience positive and/or enjoyable?
- What assignments did you enjoy the least? Why?
- Are there components to this course that are more difficult than others? Why or why not?

- Is there anything I could have done differently to help you be more successful in this course? If so what and why?

**The first portion of slides will be images answering these questions.** There are 4 bullets of questions so you should **include at least 4 images on 4 separate slides.** I want you to be able to express your feelings towards the assignments and the class as a whole. I am also expecting you to be creative with the images you include. Then, **once you have added images to answer the reflective questions,** I would like you to answer each question thoroughly by making connections between the questions and writing concise and thoughtful sentences. **The writing portion should be 1 slide and in paragraph form.**

**Rationale and learning goals contributing to the creation of this assignment:**

Because of the misinterpretation of emotions, by both instructors and students, in the writing classroom I aimed to create an open-ended assignment that did not ask students about specific emotions but, rather, gave students the space to work with whatever emotions they are feeling or were at one time feeling. When introducing the “Final Reflection Visual Essay” it needs to be clear students will not be graded on how they feel and instead will have the opportunity to receive all of the points through the thoughtful curation of the images they choose and their explanations and analysis of the questions. Being the final reflection, this assignment is done after students have completed several other purposeful reflections regarding their feelings and work in FYC. This is important because students are more aware of and comfortable sharing their emotions when creating the final reflection and working through the process of composing it.

One of the strongest emotions I discovered as having an influence on students’ writing in FYC is anger, which is most often caused by students being confused or overwhelmed. Baecker

examines anger in the composition classroom as something that can be harnessed in order to have a positive influence in the article, “‘Can You Hear Me Now, Ms. Monster?’: Anger, ‘Thumos,’ and First-Year Composition.” Baecker explains how students will experience the strong emotions of frustration, sadness, excitement, as well as anger, while finding their way through the composing process. Anger in the sense Baecker discusses it in her FYC classroom has a particular definition as being “productive” rather than being a “violent anger” (‘Can You Hear Me Now, Ms. Monster?’”). Baecker discusses an assignment called a visual essay where students illustrate their anger and other emotions they encounter again and again in FYC. A visual essay, as Baecker explains it, combines the personal narrative with academic analysis and argumentation. The actual written reflection portion of the assignment is only done once the visual essay itself is finished. As explained in the title, the “Final Reflection Visual Essay,” my own version of this assignment, was completed as the final because it is additionally important to note that this assignment is done at the end of the semester after students have completed several other papers and assignments in which both personal reflection and thoughtful analysis is required<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> I had students complete the “Final Reflection Visual Essay” in FYC as the final for the spring 2018 semester. As with the Midterm Reflection, in this final reflection a few students discussed their other classes for the question about what assignments “both inside and outside of class” they enjoyed the most. This has also happened in past classes I taught and I purposely chose not to be more specific because if students want to tell me how they are feeling about their other classes I think it is a good thing. Emotion in FYC, as I have found through experience and research, does not happen within a vacuum. It is collectively influenced by other aspects of both the instructor’s and students’ lives outside of the FYC classroom.

## Recommendations

This research study explored and examined the use of emotion by instructors of FYC. Based on the collected data it can be concluded FYC instructors understand emotion as having a critical presence in the FYC space. While the majority of the participating T.A.'s did not talk about emotion explicitly with their students, they explained how they find emotion to be present in the FYC classroom environment and how it has an inherent role in all the writing and composing done for the class. The improvement of student writing as a result of the instructor's purposeful use of emotion was likewise shown through the research I conducted. The data appears promising, however, the actual improvement of student work would need to be measured through the inclusion of it in the research study itself. While this makes it difficult to quantify the development of student work, it does not minimize the improvement described by the participating T.A.'s. The participants explained repeatedly how they found their students' writing greatly improved by emotion through increased student engagement, passion, connection, and freedom. Given the data collected, it can be concluded that the educational experiences, both negative as well as positive, on the part of the instructor has a positive affect on the FYC classroom. The participating instructors relayed how they feel a certain responsibility for creating an open, friendly environment for their FYC students because of their own experiences as a student.

One important component to emotion is how it allows for instructors to better connect with their students and create a classroom where students are comfortable sharing what they are thinking and feeling. Emotion is also, in part, used by students as a way for them to create meaning in the sometimes uncertain and frustrating environment of the FYC classroom. Moreover, when the instructor acknowledges this role emotion plays in the FYC space by

assigning activities and assignments that have students work with their emotions their writing improves. In fact, if students are not given opportunities to work with their emotions in FYC then they often times use emotion in assignments where it is uncalled for (Chandler 66). The recommendation, as is also highlighted by the above lesson plans, is for instructors to consider emotion when planning the everyday practices of their FYC courses.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

## Questionnaire 1

1. What do you view as the role of emotion work in the learning of writing in first year composition?
2. Is this (the role of emotion work in first year composition) something you have ever given any thought to?
3. How do your own educational experiences as a student affect how you interact with your students?

## APPENDIX B

## Questionnaire 2

1. What kind of reflecting have you done about your teaching practices at this time in the semester?
2. What class activities or assignments have your students completed in [FYC] that you felt a certain way about the outcome? Why or why not? What made you feel this way?
3. Do you plan on changing the activity or assignment (from question #2) for future classes? Why or why not? If yes, how will you change it?

## APPENDIX C

## Questionnaire 3

1. Can you describe a specific circumstance where you noticed a student's affect, emotions, or dispositions changing the behavior, either positively or negatively, of other students around them?
2. Has the answer to this question from the first questionnaire, "What do you view as the role of emotion work in the learning of writing in first year composition?" changed during the course of the semester? Why or why not? If it has changed, explain how.
3. How have your educational experiences as a student and as an instructor affected how you interact with your students?
4. Since the middle of the semester, what class activities or assignments have your students completed in [FYC] that you felt a certain way about the outcome? Why or why not?  
What made you feel this way?
5. Do you plan on changing the activity or assignment (from question #4) for future classes?  
Why or why not? If yes, how will you change it?

## APPENDIX D

**Working with Lesson Plans Activity**

In groups of 2-3 we will be working with lesson plans I created and will be including in my final thesis that can help cultivate emotion work in FYC. To begin, briefly skim each lesson plan. The lesson plans are quite lengthy so **I suggest focusing on the actual lesson instructions for students (the first part) and the first paragraph under rationale and learning goals because this serves as an introduction to the overall lesson.**

After you have done this, **each group should chose 1 lesson plan to focus on** for the following activity. When your group has decided, please let me know because I would like each group to work with a different lesson plan.

These lesson plans are yours to keep so feel free to write on and/or highlight them!

**Answer the following questions (as a group):**

1. Which lesson plan are you focusing on? Why did you choose this lesson plan?
2. Can you see yourself using this lesson plan in your FYC class? Why or why not?
3. Similarly, is there anything you would need to change about the lesson plan to make it best fit with your FYC class (this could mean the actual students themselves, the ideas you focus most on, or the assignments you have them do)? Please explain.