Chapter 6. Problematizing Transfer and Exploring Agency

The totality of the literate experience offers a productive logic-in-use for thinking through the production of literate action and the way in which development might occur on a moment-to-moment basis within that production. In this chapter, I bring the totality to bear on two new cases of writers, this time two in their early college careers. In doing so, I aim to accomplish the following:

1. Test the totality of the literate experience as a logic-in-use on writers at a different point in the lifespan and with different research methods;
2. Connect the findings in the totality with ongoing discussions in Writing Studies about transfer; and
3. Suggest new insights on transfer that might emerge from my extension of the totality.

I begin this work with a review of existing transfer research and, in particular, the assumptions of transfer researcher that are incommensurate with the framework of the totality—and, by extension, understanding development from the perspective of the lived reality. The central issue of incommensurability that I have identified in my review of transfer research is the assumptions that transfer makes of *What-Comes-Next*. In brief, transfer research has a tendency to make assumptions about *What-Comes-Next* in a variety of ways: in the work of a given course, in the work of subsequent courses, and in the work students do after leaving the university setting. Below, I articulate these assumptions and highlight research that might serve as starting points for building dialogue between my lifespan-oriented research and transfer research.

What-Comes-Next and Transfer Research

Research on writing development—and, particularly, writing development as participation in social action—offers both roadblocks and possibilities for understanding the ways in which *What-Comes-Next* can be treated as uncertain. Research on the transfer of writing offers further roadblocks and possibilities, albeit ones that are drawn from different traditions and take, as their starting points, different epistemological views. In the next sections, I trace out the ways in which transfer research has assumed a certainty of *What-Comes-Next*. I also identify the ways in which transfer research has begun to pull at the threads of that certainty productively for the lifespan-oriented purposes of my project.

Transfer Assumptions of What-Comes-Next

Transfer has always been of interest for Writing Studies, but the study of it has taken on new life in recent years. Drawing from a range of theoretical and empirical explorations of transfer research in education, Writing Studies scholars have considered transfer through a variety of frameworks: as a rhetorical act (Nowacek, 2011), as work through threshold concepts (Adler-Kassner, Clarke, Robertson, Taczak, & Yancey, 2016; Adler-Kassner, Majewski, & Koshnick, 2012), as movement across activity systems (Grijalva, 2016), as consequential transitions (Wardle & Clement, 2016), as remixing and repurposing (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2014), as metacognition (Gorzelsky, Driscoll, Paszek, Jones, & Hayes, 2016), as dispositional (Driscoll & Wells, 2012; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2010), as caught up amidst acts of enculturation (Tremain, 2015), and as caught within genre awareness (Clark & Hernandez, 2011; Rounsaville, 2012). These approaches to considering transfer, it should be noted, have all been taken up within the past half-decade or so, during the time leading up to and after the Elon University "Research Seminar on Critical Transitions: Writing and the Question of Transfer," which ran from 2011–2013. Snead (2011) and Donahue (2012) provide interesting and more detailed overviews of the many ways in which transfer has been taken up in the study of writing, and particularly first-year writing. My intent in this section, however, is not to provide a comprehensive overview of writing transfer but to identify the ways in which current trends in transfer study are obscuring the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next* and, at the same time, single out approaches and studies that may offer useful through lines for shifting attention in transfer toward the uncertainty at the center of the lived reality.

A pursuit of how what-comes-next is stabilized through literature on transfer might be best begun through the Elon Statement on Writing Transfer (2016). As captured in Anson and Moore's *Critical Transitions* (2016), the Elon Statement attempts, among other things, to capture a range of understandings about transfer and situate them in relation to one another (Figure 6.1). This work not only situates multiple approaches to transfer, but also suggests ways in which the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next* may be obscured.

Figure 6.1 provides a map of how various transfer theories intersect "among knowledge, learners, and contexts" (Anson & Moore, 2016, p. 349). The map attends to the "learner, learner's actions, or learner's processes," the ways in which contexts are described and/or situations are compared, and the ways in which knowledge is constructed and used. Through these three intersecting arenas of transfer theories, the Elon Statement on Writing Transfer suggests relationships among various perspectives on transfer. From the perspective of the lived reality of literate action development (and keeping central to our attention the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*), however, nowhere in this model is there an opportunity to bring knowledge, context/situation together through the eyes of the learner. While the Venn diagram structure of the map suggests that CHAT,

consequential transitions, communities of practice, threshold concepts, and re-mix might be opportunities to structure these three, these all view the writer from the outside, attending to specific variables, but do not emphasize writers engaging in the production of meaning amid *uncertain* and *emergent* circumstances as I described in Part I.
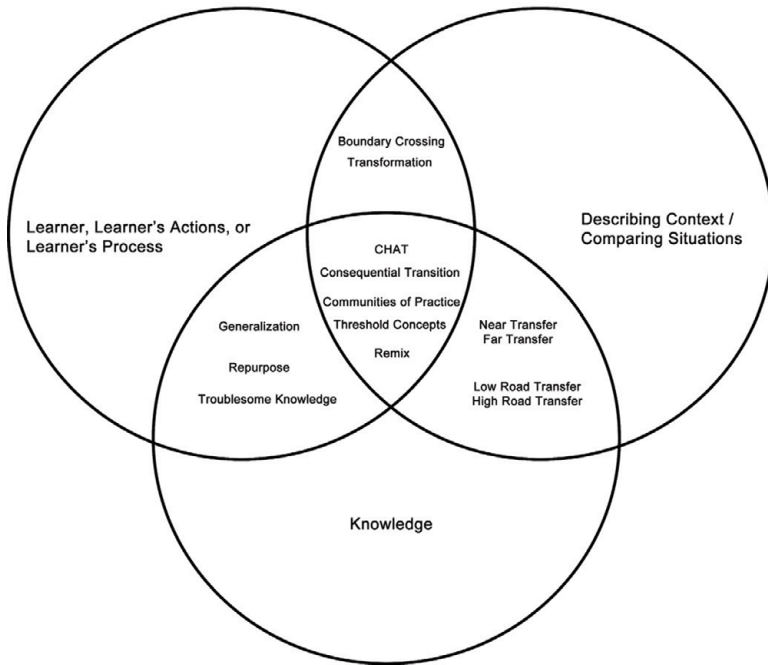

Figure 6.1. A map of transfer approaches (Anson & Moore, 2016).

Before exploring in greater detail the problems and possibilities with the ap-proaches to transfer at the center of the map, however, it may be useful to under-stand the eight principles behind understanding (and teaching for) transfer that the Elon Statement proposes. These eight principles offer an overview of the ways in which transfer has been considered in the statement, which can lead to a better understanding of what CHAT, consequential transitions, etc. offer at the center of the map. The eight principles of transfer, according to the Elon Statement, are shown in Table 6.1.

Various components of these principles seem to suggest an awareness of the ongoing uncertainty that writers engaging in transfer are continually walking into. These principles treat prior knowledge as a "complex construct," and suggest that writers must "transform or repurpose that prior knowledge, if only slightly" in their attempt to motivate that knowledge into a rhetorical performance. In these principles, then, there is an attention to the work of individuals taking up prior knowledge in order to make sense of unfolding situations. However, with-

out the totality as a guide, these principles cannot (fully) take on the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*. In other words, the rhetorical situation that writers enter into is treated as a given, when in fact it remains to be developed by individuals bringing their prior knowledge to bear on the situation as it is unfolded by those individuals. The very definition of transfer in the first principle—"Writing transfer is the phenomenon in which new and unfamiliar writing tasks are approached through the application, remixing, or integration of previous knowledge, skills, strategies, and dispositions"—takes the task (and the approach to the task) as socially set (rather than constructed, if only in part, by the writer), and the writer is left with nothing to do but bring "previous knowledge, skills, strategies, and dispositions" to bear in different ways.

Table 6.1. Principles of transfer (Anson & Moore, 2016).

- Writing transfer is the phenomenon in which new and unfamiliar writing tasks are approached through the application, remixing, or integration of previous knowledge, skills, strategies, and dispositions.

- Any social context provides affordances and constraints that impact use of prior knowledge, skills, strategies, and dispositions, and writing transfer successes and challenges cannot be understood outside of learners' social-cultural spaces.

- Prior knowledge is a complex construct that can benefit or hinder writing transfer. Yet understanding or and exploring that complexity is central to investigating transfer.

- Individual dispositions and individual identity play key roles in transfer.

- Individuals may engage in routinized and transformative (adaptive, integrated, repurposed, expansive) forms of transfer when they draw on or utilize prior knowledge and learning, whether crossing concurrent contexts or sequential contexts.

- Successful writing transfer occurs when a writer can transform rhetorical knowledge and rhetorical awareness into performance. Students facing a new and difficult rhetorical task draw upon previous knowledge and strategies, and when they do it, they must transform or repurpose that prior knowledge, if only slightly.

- Students' meta-awareness often plays a key role in transfer, and reflective writing promotes preparation for transfer and transfer-focused thinking.

- The importance of meta-cognition of available identities, situational awareness, audience awareness, etc., become even more critical in writing transfer between languages because of the need to negotiate language-based differences and to develop awareness about the ways language operates in written communication in each language (Anson & Moore, 2016, pp. 350-351).

Thinking through the lived reality of literate action development, however, suggests that there is a great deal more uncertainty at work in a given writing task than the Elon Statement on Writing Transfer claims. Prior knowledge, tasks, strategies, and dispositions, rather than being constant, can be thought of—through the lens of the lived reality—as regularly being applied anew as a result of the variety of dimensions and environmental variables that each new literate action is constructed from. By treating these elements as stable, the Elon

statement obscures the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next* and, by extension, assumes a nonexistent stability regarding the individuated take-up of transfer activity.

This should not be read as a criticism of the Elon statement, but rather an extension that may enable the field of Writing Studies to more deeply consider and work with the concept of transfer. The purpose of the Critical Transitions conference was to establish an understanding of the way(s) in which transfer is, was, and could be taken up, to serve as "an effort to provide a framework for continued inquiry and theory-building" (Anson & Moore, 2016, p. 345) and the Elon statement reflects that purpose. Furthermore, the findings that have emerged from the research that was taken up for the Elon statement—as evidenced by the principles in the statement itself—serve a useful function in expanding our awareness of how we might better conceptualize how students move into and out of postsecondary classes and, in particular, first-year writing courses. However, my pursuit of understanding how writers grow and change over time from a lifespan perspective, centered as it is on the lived reality of literate action development, requires that the uncertainty surrounding each moment of literate action be centrally attended to.

Figure 6.1 seems to indicate that work on CHAT, consequential transitions, threshold concepts, and remix may be ways in which the interrelationships between learner, social context, and knowledge might be most usefully addressed in order to find threads of uncertainty regarding *What-Comes-Next* in transfer literature. However, as I demonstrate below—with studies from Anson and Moore (2016) as examples—CHAT, consequential transitions, and threshold concepts become problematic when considering the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*. Each of these is geared too heavily toward socially agreed-upon understandings of literate action, and so fails to offer useful bridges into the lived reality—though, as I show later, the possibilities of "remix" suggest a useful pursuit of threads of uncertainty in the form of genre-based approaches to transfer.

In their chapter, Adler-Kassner, Clark, Robertson, Taczak, and Yancey (2016) focus on threshold concepts, defining them as "portals that learners pass through" and claiming that as learners work their way through those portals, they "change their understandings of something" (p. 18). These changes are "transformative" and "irreversible" (Adler-Kassner et al., 2016, p. 18), serving as critical components of learning to communicate in particular communities of practice. These concepts, Adler-Kassner et al. (2016) argue, are tools through which developing writers can identify the boundaries of the communities of practice that they are caught within, as well as critical components in developing metacognitive awareness about the communities that they are part of.

With this framework in mind, Adler-Kassner et al. (2016) set about identifying five threshold concepts for Writing Studies that are "critical for cultivating students' abilities to assemble and reassemble knowledge-making practices within and across communities of practice" (p. 20):

1. Writing is an activity and a subject of study;
2. Writing always occurs in context, and no two contexts are exactly alike;
3. Reflection is critical for writers' development;
4. Genre awareness contributes to successful transfer; and
5. Prior knowledge, experience, attitudes, beliefs set the stage for learning and shape new writing experiences and learning (pp. 20-37)

These threshold concepts, which Adler-Kassner et al. (2016) suggest are methods for helping students think across disciplines, certainly has links to considering the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*. However, like the Elon statement, issues like context, genre, and prior knowledge are treated as discrete, concrete entities. Through these concepts, we are not capable (without significant revision) of locating a writer in a moment-to-moment situation in which she is also an actor in shaping past experience and present situation with and through text.

Activity theory has been taken as a way of approaching transfer in a number of studies, even in Anson and Moore's (2016) text. Blythe (2016) unpacks the issue of the "subject" within the activity system, arguing that "future research into transfer and adaptability in writing—studies informed by social theories of activity or genre—must pay more attention to ways that subjects adapt from one situation to another" (p. 51). Here, Blythe is seen treating the situation as apart from the subject working with it, treating the subject as one that needs to adapt, rather than having each adapt to the other.

This tendency by Blythe to see the subject as working with a set situation continues throughout the chapter, although he offers an interesting exploration of the role of subject within the frame of Beaufort's (2007) framework in doing so. Blythe takes greater steps toward expanding the individuated agency of the subject, and his conclusions suggest that the lack of agency of the subject in the construction of social situations may have been the result of his commitment to the terminology of activity theory and cognitive psychology. But this very limitation of Blythe's suggests issues with taking up activity theory as a way of understanding the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*.

Wardle and Clement (2016) take up Engestrom's (1987) concept of double binds and Beach's (1999) concept of consequential transitions to make sense of particular moments of "rhetorical challenge" (p. 163). Wardle and Clement (2016) draw from Beach to argue that consequential transitions "weave together changing individuals and social organizations in such a way that the person experiences becoming someone or something new" (Beach, as quoted in Wardle & Clement, 2016, p. 164), and suggesting that these consequential transitions occur when writers are working their way through double binds, or moments of receiving contradictory messages (Engestrom, 1987).

Wardle and Clement's work to unpack the consequential transitions at work in Clement's development as a writer across the bulk of her college education proved useful in understanding the ways in which consequential transitions and

double binds serve as shaping agents in Nicole's emerging identity. Even here, however, there is some obscuring of *What-Comes-Next*: it remains difficult to see how the consequential transitions described are crafted by Nicole through her co-construction of the situation. Attending to *What-Comes-Next* more centrally can allow us to see more of the active agency that actors like Nicole have when they work across texts.

The work of Adler-Kassner et al., Blythe, and Wardle and Clement suggest that current attempts to understand transfer through threshold concepts, activity theory, and consequential transitions stabilize *What-Comes-Next*, removing the uncertainty of the unfolding moment by suggesting a stable set of prior knowledge, a stable social situation that research subjects are working with, and a stable sense of identity and self (even if that stability is challenged by the stable social situation that the self walks into). While there may be—particularly in Blythe—some resources that can work to destabilize *What-Comes-Next* through these formats, a more straightforward method to upending *What-Comes-Next* in transfer research is to draw upon research that provides a more dynamic fluidity between prior knowledge and social situation.

Destabilizing What-Comes-Next in Transfer Research

While the research on transfer, as I indicate through the Elon statement and several chapters of *Critical Transitions* above, stabilizes *What-Comes-Next* in several ways, research on transfer with a base in genre studies has the potential to more squarely attend to *What-Comes-Next*. Genre, rooted as it is in phenomenological sociology (Bazerman, 2013; Miller, 1984), can serve as a tool to orient knowledge, learner, and social context in a way that enables a deeper look into transfer while keeping the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next* in mind. Genre-based approaches to transfer have located the transfer of *individual* understandings, knowledge, and skills within and across particular social contexts. This approach has been pursued through the take-up of *genre* and *dispositions*, which may serve as useful tools for locating individuated understandings within the movement of understanding from prior knowledge to unfolding situation. I begin with the dynamic models of prior knowledge and dispositions by Yancey, Robertson, and Taczack (2014) and Driscoll and Wells (2012), respectively, to flesh out additional complexities in transfer research that will set the stage for a genre-based elaboration of what transfer is and can do as a concept.

Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak (2014) have explored how individuals take up transfer within different situations across various classes based on prior knowledge. They wonder "how we can help students develop writing knowledge and practices that they can draw upon, use, and repurpose for new writing tasks in new settings" (2014, p. 2), drawing upon thoughts about transfer in recent discussions in Writing Studies, their own experiences with portfolio writing, and recent discussions in higher education about how theory assists with general learning,

to explore this issue. Through their study, they develop a model of how students use prior knowledge to apply their understandings to new practices. This model consists of three components. First, students can *remix* their work, meaning that they integrate prior knowledge and new knowledge. Second, students can take on an *assemblage* approach to their work by grafting new knowledge onto previously existing knowledge of composing. Third, students can encounter a *critical incident*, or a problem that "helps [students] retheorize writing in general and their own agency as writers in particular" (Yancey et al., 2014, p. 5). Their approach shows not only the various ways that past knowledge can be brought to bear in a given situation, but how that past knowledge can be transformed. Furthermore, Yancey, et al. have, through their attention to critical incidents, suggested that this past knowledge can be challenged and revised according to the complexities of ongoing social situations. The literate actions we perform, it would seem, are shaped by our knowledge of past knowledge, even as our past knowledge is brought to bear in accordance with the needs of the current situation—something that has a potentially transformative influence on our deployment of that past knowledge in the future.

This work by Yancey, et al. (2014) showcases the role that past experiences play in the transfer of knowledge, and—through the concepts of assemblage, remix, and critical incidents—offers ways to understand how prior knowledge can be transformed by unfolding events, as well as vice versa. Driscoll and Wells (2012) expand the concept of transfer by arguing that "dispositions play an equally essential role" as context and curricula in the development of transfer. They identify five qualities of a disposition. Specifically, dispositions

1. Are a critical part of a larger system that includes the person, the context, the process through which learning happens, and time;
2. Are not intellectual traits but are determinants of how those traits are used;
3. Determine students' sensitivity toward and willingness to engage in transfer;
4. Can positively or negatively impact the learning environment; and
5. Are dynamic and may be context-specific or broadly generalized (Driscoll & Wells, 2012).

They see dispositions such as value, self-efficacy, attribution, and self-regulation as having these five dispositional qualities, and suggest that these dispositions may shape engagement with transfer.

When applied as a lens to previous work on transfer, such as Wardle (2007) and Beaufort (2007), Driscoll and Wells (2012) find "that in many situations where students failed to transfer individual dispositions played a role." Clearly, there are multiple dimensions to transfer beyond prior knowledge—like writing development, there are multiple dimensions of human activity and perhaps environmental variables at work. While dispositions offer more potential insight into thinking about what transfer consists of, it does not, on its own, offer ways to

address *What-Comes-Next* in the transfer literature. The dynamic nature of prior knowledge in Yancey et al. (2014) as well as the dynamic nature of dispositions in Driscoll and Wells (2012) shake up the stability of prior knowledge, agency, and social situation that other research has not. In order to incorporate the dynamic nature of dispositions and prior knowledge for the purposes of teasing out threads of *What-Comes-Next*, I turn to recent work with a base in rhetorical genre studies, particularly by Rounsaville (2012) and Nowacek (2011).

Rounsaville (2012), drawing on the work of genre theorists such as Bazerman and Bawarshi, argues that "RGS [rhetorical genre studies] provides a view of genre and genre knowledge that goes beyond conventions such as format, word choice, and various stylistic cues" and, furthermore, that this genre knowledge "compel[s] us to act and write and draw on memory in some ways over others." Rounsaville centers her work in an RGS lineage, drawing on Freadman's theory of genre uptake. The uptake of genres represents the "space of conflicting and discursively informed memory that involves a complex process of selecting and translating prior knowledge" (Rounsaville, 2012) that people work through when engaging in acts of transfer. Much like the dispositions described by Driscoll and Wells (2012) above, genre uptake highlights that there is more to the take-up and transfer of prior knowledge than merely the knowledge itself, that the concept of transfer may be more fragmented than it seems. Genre uptake, however, begins pointing to the outlines of cognitive work that go on while engaging in an act of transfer.

Rounsaville (as well as the people she draws from, such as Reiff, Bawarshi, Freadman, and others) takes her perspective on genre from the work of Bazerman, who—drawing from Schutz (1967)—sees genres as unfinished recipes for action in a given context. That is, in a given setting, a writer perceives and co-constructs a situation that calls forward memory, dispositions, actions, and understandings in patterned ways. Through literate action enabled by these dispositions, actions, and understandings, the writer develops and further perpetuates the situation. In other words, "transfer means more than just the ability to apply one textual convention or strategy to another, less-similar text type" (Rounsaville, 2012). There is a host of understandings of the world that work together in order to engage in the act of transfer, and these understandings are built at least partly on the recipe-like knowledge of genres as well as dispositions. Uptake, for Rounsaville, offers a way to see these aspects working together: "uptake specifies boundary crossing in writing-related transfer of an active, meaning-making site where writers work through and select amongst a range of experiences and knowledges that have been called forth as a result of the unique convergence between prior genre knowledge and local, genred events" (2012). As Driscoll and Wells (2012) demonstrate, this uptake involves more than just knowledge: the space of connection between prior knowledge and local events is infused with dispositional tendencies.

Through the concepts of genre and uptake, then, we can see how prior knowledge is understood, taken up, and used again in a new context through the eyes

of the person deploying that knowledge. Furthermore, thanks to the recipe-like work of genres, we can understand, somewhat, how the situation also constructs the way in which past knowledge is deployed (i.e., since genres are recipe-*like*, and therefore not overly deterministic in nature). As we take part in an unfolding situation, we bring the relevant pieces of our past to bear on the current situation. This includes much more than text forms: our understandings of the contexts and social roles, as well as our dispositions toward the genre, roles, and contexts shape our deployment of that prior knowledge.

The work of Yancey, et al, Driscoll and Wells, and Rounsaville have provided interesting threads into upending *What-Comes-Next* in transfer literature. By suggesting that prior knowledge and dispositions are dynamically situated in relation to both one another and the unfolding situation, Yancey et al. (2014) and Driscoll and Wells (2012) have showcased the ways in which the perceived stability of *What-Comes-Next* in transfer literature can be problematic in using it to pursue the lived reality of literate action development. As moments of transfer unfold, those moments transform prior knowledge and dispositions even as those dispositions and that prior knowledge shapes the moment of transfer.

What-Comes-Next, as a phenomenon, seems to be a reality balanced on the edge of stability and instability, the known and the unknown. As a situation unfolds, literate actors draw on the prior knowledge embedded in the recipe-like genres in their past experiences to shape the situation and decide what to do next. These genred understandings are shaped by the dispositional tendencies of the literate actor. However, the genred understandings are only recipe-*like*, they are not recipes designed to entirely guide action. The deployment of these understandings by a literate actor is an attempt to construct from the unknown—the continually unfolding moment—a set of understandable circumstances on which to act. As each unfolding moment is rendered understandable (i.e., genred), a new moment arises that requires the further constructive work of the literate actor through genres, dispositions, and prior knowledge.

In this genre-based model of transfer, the writer is always engaged in a process of context construction, with acts that we consider "transfer" consisting merely of more difficult acts of context construction based on the available tools (i.e., past knowledge, dispositions). Nowacek's (2011) work on developing writers as *agents of integration* offers a way of looking at transfer that may provide further insight into this act of context construction. This will help us to more fully translate transfer research into the totality.

Nowacek approaches transfer as an act of recontextualization. This approach works from five principles:

1. Transfer understood as recontextualization recognizes multiple avenues of connection among contexts, including knowledge, ways of knowing, identities, and goals;

2. Transfer understood as recontextualization recognizes that transfer is not only mere application; it is also an act of construction;

3. Transfer understood as recontextualization recognizes that transfer can be both positive and negative and that there is a powerful affective dimension of transfer;

4. Transfer understood as recontextualization recognizes that written and spoken genres associated with these contexts provides an exigence for transfer; and

5. Transfer understood as recontextualization recognizes that meta-awareness is an important, but not necessary, element of transfer (Nowacek, 2011, pp. 20-30).

Nowacek's approach to the transfer of writing has its roots in the idea of the development of writing. Nowacek sees transfer as a path along a road to integration, something that she supports through the work of Perkins and Salomon (1992), Bakhtin (1986), and Engestrom (1987). Through these authors, Nowacek places transfer at the midpoint between "no transfer" (i.e., inert knowledge, heteroglossia, and double binds) and "integration" (i.e., high road transfer, fully dialogized consciousness, and learning by expanding). Transfer can be considered as the link between these two stages, a developmental moment wherein students learn to approach a certain task in a given setting differently based on reconceptualizations of their past experiences.

Nowacek's approach underscores the complex social aspects of transfer outlined by Driscoll and Wells (2012) and Rounsaville (2012), but calls attention to the myriad levels of conscious attention at work by actors engaged in transfer. By treating students as individual agents of integration working within a complex social world, Nowacek (2011) is able to highlight how "agents' responses"—i.e., their recipe-like genre knowledge—"may be cued, but they are not predetermined" (pp. 39-40). That is, each act of transfer is an individuated take-up of potentials for action, not a predetermined performance engaged in by genre-driven dopes: the way in which we make sense of our prior knowledge and take it up in an unfolding situation is shaped but not dictated by either prior knowledge or the unfolding situation. The situation and the prior knowledge inform one another, are cued and enacted through the varying levels of conscious attention paid to the literate act by the literate actor. Recontextualization, it would seem, can happen to both the situation and prior knowledge, and across varying levels of consciousness.

Genre-oriented transfer research highlights several important threads in transfer research that can help us understand how *What-Comes-Next* may be destabilized. The movement of writing from one context to another involves more than just the written text—it involves dispositions, knowledge of social roles, and the varying levels of conscious attention, all of which is caught up in complex dynamic between prior knowledge and the unfolding situation. These findings

suggest a constant movement from stable to unstable understandings and social situations, and furthermore that the instability is stabilized through the work of recipe-like prior knowledge and dispositional tendencies as people re-contextualize their past and their worlds to engage in literate action.

One Step More: Removing the Stabilizer in Transfer through the Totality

Nowacek's work—as well as other genre-based research on transfer—offers a productive connecting point to the totality of the literate experience. This transfer research stabilizes *What-Comes-Next* through recipe-like knowledge. This is a cognitive basis of prior knowledge, assuming a stability that the totality does not. In the process of enacting the logic-in-use articulated in Chapter 5, I determined that past practices need to be *scenically* located in the production of social order. So *What-Comes-Next* has to be resolved not by the enactment of a recipe-like knowledge but by possibilities of objects that are mobilized into action. Speaking abstractly, this seems a distinction with a slight difference: the recipe-like knowledge is merely located for the totality in the material realities of a situation, rather than in the mind. In terms of studying literate action development, however, the differences become deeply consequential.

Locating a stability in the knowledge of students can encourage a turn away from the material, moment-to-moment work of constructing social order. By locating transfer in the knowledge that students possess, we turn our research gaze away from the material work of bringing that knowledge to bear in an unfolding situation. So, for instance, a study of how a student in a math class brings a past algorithm to bear on a new problem might focus on what knowledge carried over and, as a consequence, ignore the ways in which that student's fluent work with a familiar notebook and some notes on his cell phone shaped the carry-over of that knowledge.

Nowacek (2011), though attentive to the ways in which transfer is an act of construction, does not provide a mechanism for examining the material work of that act of construction. The recipe-like knowledge that Nowacek turns to instead occludes that work, much like the math student's notebook-and-cell-phone practices, making the scenic production of literate action difficult to see. Without a mechanism for locating how the possibilities of objects are recognized anew in configurations of talk, tools, and texts, writing researchers cannot articulate the connection between individuated literate action development and the collective production of social order.

Furthermore, seeing all acts of transfer as acts of knowing risks a conflation of literate action development with conscious attention—a conflation that, while sometimes fair, does not capture the depth and nuance of some developmental moments. If we take seriously the ethnomethodological work of situ-

ational construction as articulated in Part I, then we must seriously consider that certain habits, inclinations, and understandings are not just unmentioned in acts of transfer, but are actually *unmentionable*, particularly at the moment of their enactment: we might be able to do something, but not know how to talk about it (and, indeed, the talking about it would not be able to effectively get at our able-ness in the first place). What I mean here is something more than simply *low road transfer* (Salomon & Perkins, 1988), in which agents automate certain tasks across a range of settings. In the act of socially constructing a situation, there will be indexical references, unspoken assumptions, and the co-operative work of turns at talk (Garfinkel, 1967). These references, assumptions, and turns at talk are far from automated—they are the unacknowledged efforts of actors to work through and participate in social order. Again, our earlier example of the student in math class engaging with materials around him comes to mind: it is through the coordination of these objects that the past algorithm is rendered present amid his participation in an unfolding situation. To say that this work involves a conscious *knowing how* would be to obscure the complex collaborative work that ethnomethodological efforts identify. The math student is aware in some way of his notebook and cell phone use, but does not recognize how the algorithm is caught up in such coordination. The totality allows researchers to consider acts of transfer without the reference frame of *knowing how* needing to be present.

Transfer, then, needs to be examined without the assumptions of knowing, or the stabilizing influence of recipe-like knowledge. Below, I examine the work that two undergraduate writers do through the logic-in-use of the totality. Through this analysis, I articulate new insights into transfer and how it might be more robustly understood against a background of the ongoing production of social order.

Literate Action as an Undergraduate: The Cases of May and Lilly

The literate actions of May and Lilly, two undergraduate students at a state university in the northeastern United States, offer a compelling site for examining the intersections of the lived reality and existing understandings of transfer in fields of Writing Studies, literacy, and education. May and Lilly are both STEM majors participating in a longitudinal study of writing development across the college years. May entered the university as a Marine Biology major and remained one until she left the university after her sophomore year. May lived most of her life in New England and all of it prior to college on the east coast of the United States.

Lilly was a Cellular and Molecular Biology major in her freshman year, although she shifted her degree focus to veterinary science in her second year. She

attended the university with the goal of not only completing her degree but also of participating in a Division I field hockey team. Away from the university, Lilly assists her family as they work on their dairy farm, one of the largest in the northeastern United States. As part of the longitudinal study, I met with May and Lilly each semester, beginning during early Spring semester their freshmen year. These interviews were open-ended, based on a fusion of a literacy history interview (Brandt, 2001), a text-based interview in the sociohistoric tradition (see Roozen & Erickson, 2017), and a study of ESSPs (Prior & Shipka, 2003). In Table 6.2, I list the texts discussed in each interview.

Table 6.2. Interview texts

May's Texts	Lilly's Texts
Interview 1	**Interview 1**
High school texts (Google Drive)	Biology 200 Class Notes
Biology 100 Notes	Lecture Guides
FSN 101 Notes	OneNote pages and tabs
SMS 101 Notes	Biology essays
English 101 Notes	Introduction to Cellular Biology flashcards
Scheduling Notes	Chemistry equations
SMS 203 Lab Report	Lab reports
SMS 203 Bibliography	Facebook posts
SMS 203 Reading Questions	Twitter posts
SMS 203 Essays	Instagram posts
Interview 2	**Interview 2**
Maine Policy issues notes	Biology lab reports
Ocean temperature and biodiversity notes	Organic chemistry and lab notes
Marine Biology essays	Coastal Maine Studies papers
Marine Ecology Homework assignments	History of Religion papers
Marine Ecology In-class case studies	Microbiology slides
Marine Ecology Mid-term	Self-study guides
Women, Gender, Sexuality 101 Notes	Lab reports
Chemistry notes	Calculus graphs
Chemistry worksheets	Letters to grandmother
Chemistry lab notes	Writing for the farm
Instagram posts	Instagram posts
Snapchat posts	Twitter posts
Facebook posts	Facebook posts
Outing club writing	Email
Water polo club writing	Field hockey video notes

May's Texts	Lilly's Texts
Interview 3	**Interview 3**
Chemistry quizzes	Organic chemistry lab reports
History of Maine Woods essays	Organic history lab notes
History of Maine Woods quizzes	Biology lab reports
History of Maine Woods final exam	Biology lab notes
History of Maine Woods notes	Study guides
EES Worksheets	Agenda notes
Sudoku puzzles	Women, Gender, Sexuality 101 notes
Drawings of writing process and writing activity	Drawings of writing process and writing activity

May and Lilly offer interesting cases of tracing literate action across a wider swath of the lives of participants than the participants in Emily's classroom did. In my search for research sites that were both *strategic* in relation to my ongoing study of lifespan writing development and offered *perspicuous* settings of the ongoing production of social order, a sequence of retrospective interviews proved effective for getting at both. An initial literacy history interview gave a broader context to ongoing literate action. The texts—and their presence during discussion—served to triangulate claims about literate action, ESSPs, and past narratives of literate performance. The repetitive interviews—regular updates throughout the collegiate career—enabled me to trace the development of literate action over time and, by honing in on particular instances of a practice, unpack the transformation of that practice.

Below, I focus on a particular literate practice and its transformation over time: note-taking activity. For both May and Lilly, I trace their note-taking practice from its initial reference in their first interviews to the work they are doing with it at the conclusion of their sophomore year of college. Both writers signal different kinds of transformations in their literate action: May's engagement with "fidget-writing" becomes a more robust, flexible, and responsive practice as she moves deeper into her undergraduate education, while Lilly's note-taking practices undergo wholesale revision in response to particular circumstances. Both writers, I will show, transform their engagement with the world around them through literate action in various ways, and this variety can provide some new insights into what it means to engage in literate action development.

With the note-taking practice at the center of my attention, I bring to bear the totality of the literate experience in the three framings articulated at the end of Chapter 5. I hope to show how the work of note-taking does not just occur across contexts—it, in part, *creates* those contexts, and its transformation over time signals the work of literate action development. Furthermore, by attending to the lived reality through the totality of the literate experience, we can articulate the lived coherence that lies at the heart of the seemingly inexplica-

ble, enduring changes to practices that writers build their literate action upon throughout their lives.

Building a Textual Network: May

May grew up around a wide range of writing by all members of her family. She saw her father, a math teacher, do a great deal of inscribing both at home and in the classroom, when she went to school with him. Her mother, who ran part of an apple farm owned by May's grandparents for part of May's youth, was frequently engaged in various kinds of writing that May witnessed. She saw her brother, two years older than her, writing frequently for school. Her grandmother, who babysat her frequently, was often engaged in recipe writing. "I was always really interested in cursive," said May. "So I would just scribble like loop-dee-loops and I thought that was cursive and I'd be like 'OK, mom, what does this say?'"

May also describes herself as a "fidgety person," and used writing to account for her fidgeting on a regular basis. She witnessed her mother—whom she also describes as fidgety—doing similar things while on the phone with people, in particular: "when she's on the phone, she sort of doodles. So whenever she was on the phone I would just see her like do that." May's family has a number of notebooks around the house that people use different pages of for different purposes, and May can identify her mother's doodling on the phone throughout these notebooks.

May's doodling accounts for her fidgeting in a wide variety of social circumstances:

> A lot of times, if I am watching TV, I am a very fidgety person,
> so I always have a notebook and a pen and I'll just write words
> that I hear or if two people are having a conversation I'll just
> write, so I'll just be a jumble of not sentences even, just words.
> That's kind of weird, but I do that, too. So to like have my
> hands be busy, like watching TV or commercials.

This fidget-writing has a number of different "looks" to it, depending on the circumstances. For example, May often ends up writing her name repeatedly as a way to "be doing something with my hands" when she is bored. But perhaps most interesting in terms of her development as a writer is how this fidget-writing became intertwined with the ways in which she organized herself for work during the semester at college. May saw a carry-over from her fidget-writing to planning out her day: "Sometimes, if I had a busy day ahead, I would like write each time and what I'm going to do at that time. So kind of like planning out my day. Just to like organize it, I guess, visually." May's fidget-writing, here, begins to account not just to the demands of the moment (that is, giving idle hands something to do) but to the demands of a complex schedule of tasks for multiple classes.

My study of May's interviews notes this moment as the start of May's transformation of a note-taking practice for the demands of her new life in higher education. May, much like the co-researchers studied by Roozen (2008, 2009a, 2009b, 2010), lives a richly literate life, and is able to draw on a range of practices that work their way through a variety of lifeworlds to accomplish literate action on a regular basis. It seems, as Prior (2018) has argued, that May is *always* transferring her literate practices from one situation to another—she began to take up the fidget-writing she witnessed her mother doing, and turned that toward the work of organizing herself for college work. Below, I bring the totality of the literate experience to bear on this practice of May's, one step at a time, in order to ascertain the ways in which May develops her note-taking practices over a period of two years.

Framing Ongoing, Joint Action

We can see that May's fidget-writing emerges, for her, from the practices she encounters as a child growing up. The fidget-writing she sees her mother doing on the phone enables her own fidgeting to be pulled into the ongoing production of joint action in conversations, in watching television, in her work for class. Whether it be writing her name, or writing down things that are happening in conversation, on television, or in class, May has used fidget-writing as a way of co-constructing order, of shaping her participation in these situations. We can envision her turns at talk, her participation in the {order} around her, as emerging from an assemblage of actions that involve her doodling.

May's fidget-writing moves with her into the classroom, enabling her to participate in acts of social ordering that come to count as {class} for her, her fellow students, and her teachers. May transforms her fidget-writing from something that simply occupies her hands to something that allows her to move across the various tasks that she needs to accomplish for class: her doodles become class notes, which carry into her independent study, which carry into her assignments as the semester moves along. Figures 6.2, 6.3, 6.4, and 6.5 trace the repurposings of May's doodling to produce order for her not just in a moment but across a range of tasks throughout a period of time.

Figure 6.2, for instance, captures some of the seemingly purposeless "fidget-writing" that May engages in on a regular basis. There appears to be little purpose to the text itself: with the exception of the words "Yellow Stone," in fact, there are no words on the page. But the hearts, the loops, the triangles, the stars are artifacts of a past production of social order in which she could let her "hands be busy" without interfering in the turns at talk and action that constructed the situation. Note the spiral notebook, which was a ubiquitous presence in May's life. May's doodling, here, is not carrying forward in time for her. The production of text kept her hands busy at the moment of writing, and the resulting doodles are not brought to bear in other social situations.
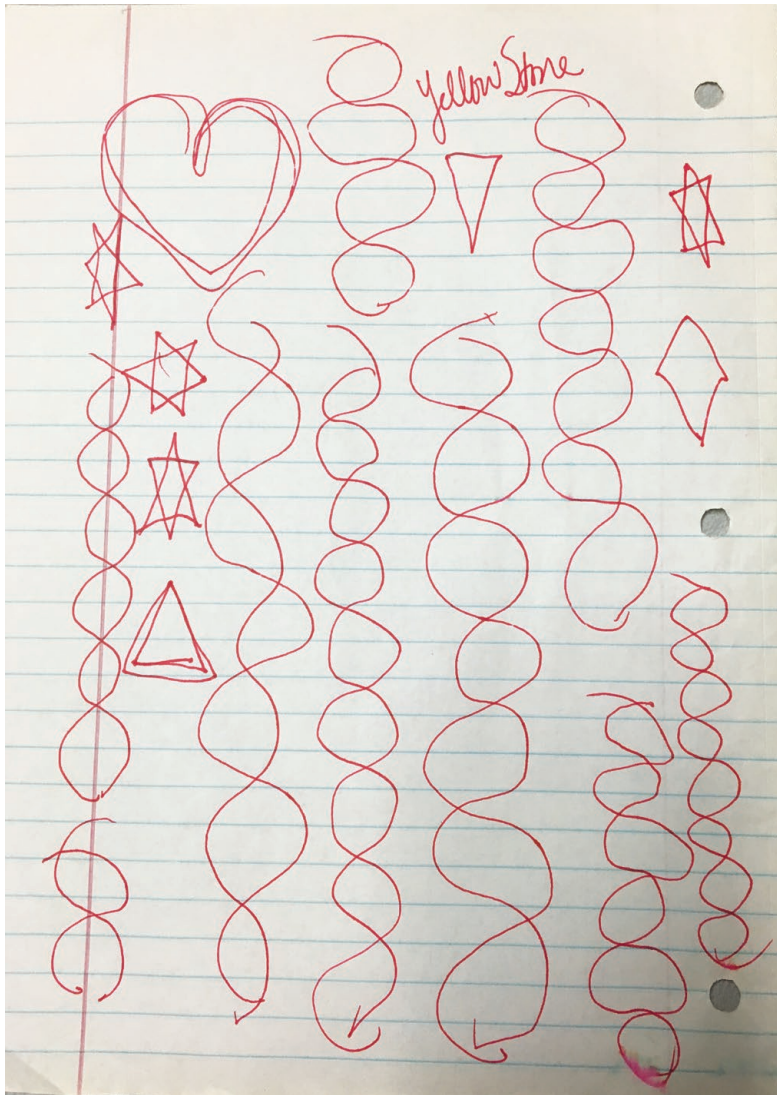
Figure 6.2. May's doodling, I.

Figure 6.3, written during the semester, shows May's fidget-writing repurposed in several ways. First, May is not writing in a notebook—this particular schedule is on a Post-It, although May provides several other schedules that are on both loose-leaf paper and pages torn from a notebook. Second, the fidget-writing has now been oriented toward the work of her undergraduate career. This text brings together test dates, assignment deadlines, and study sessions to help May make sense of the coming academic work. The specific, momentary order that this contributed to is lost, but, as May notes in her interviews, such

writing serves to "visually" plan her coming work in the nebulousness of her daily academic schedule.

May's fidget-writing can be seen shaping the social order of the classes she takes in Figures 6.4 and 6.5. In Figure 6.4, May's fidget-writing draws her into lifeguard training. Note at the top of the page and along the left-hand margin the squiggles, circles, underscoring, and vertical lines. Here, May's hands are kept busy by the notes of the class, but in the moments where notes are not required, she is able to turn back to her fidget-writing in order to maintain her participation in the ongoing production of local social order.
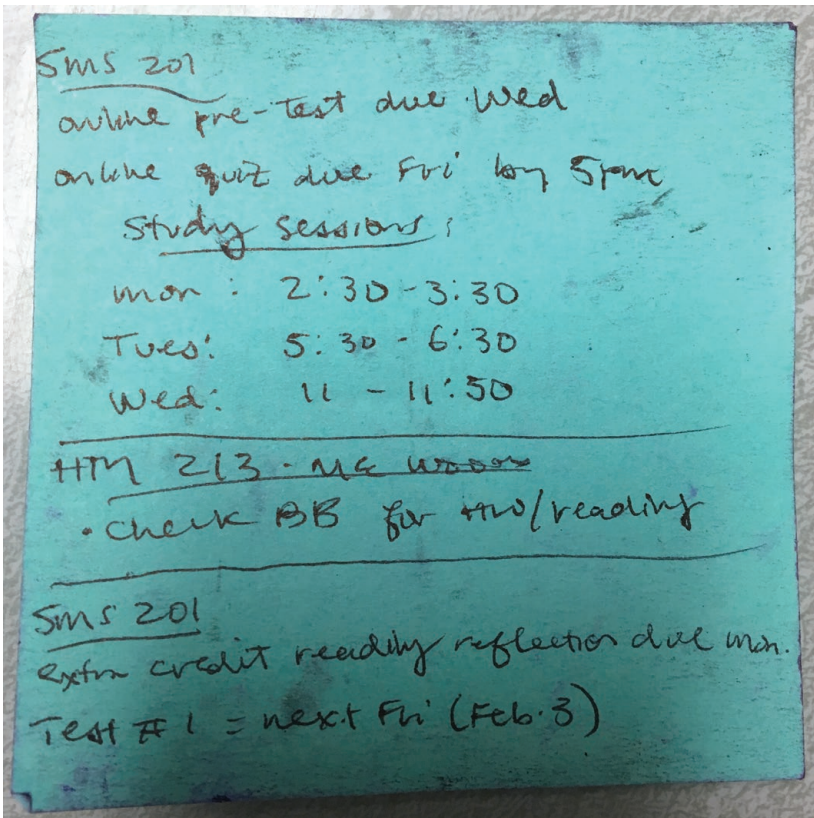

Figure 6.3. May's doodling, II.

Figure 6.5, which shows notes from May's biology class, again captures a mixture of note-taking practices and fidget-writing. The doodles in the upper right of the picture show hybrid work of the fidget-writing necessary for May to keep her hands busy and the work of taking notes for class. May orchestrates these two writings together, allowing her to participate in the ongoing, joint action of the class through the work of keeping her hands busy and her notes from the class meeting legible for future study sessions like the ones mapped out in Figure 6.3.
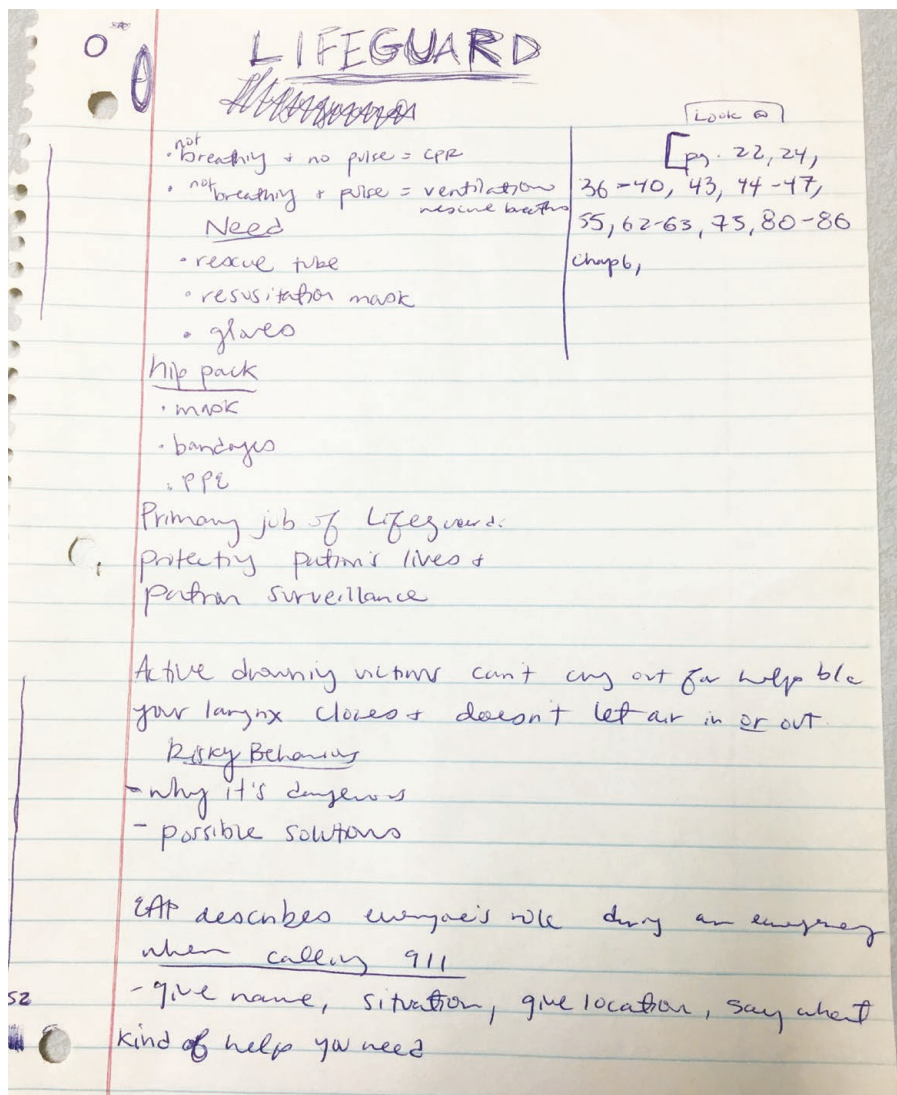
Figure 6.4. May's doodling, III.

At this point, May's fidget-writing, even as it transforms into note-taking for classes, can be framed as a turn taken in the ongoing work of joint action. Just as Holly's work of taking out a pen or pencil in Emily's class contributed to the production of social order there, we can envision May's fidget-writing as a mechanism to participate in the ongoing, joint action of the many contexts that it appears to be co-constructing. With this broader work of social action as a starting point, we can begin to frame the individuated actor.
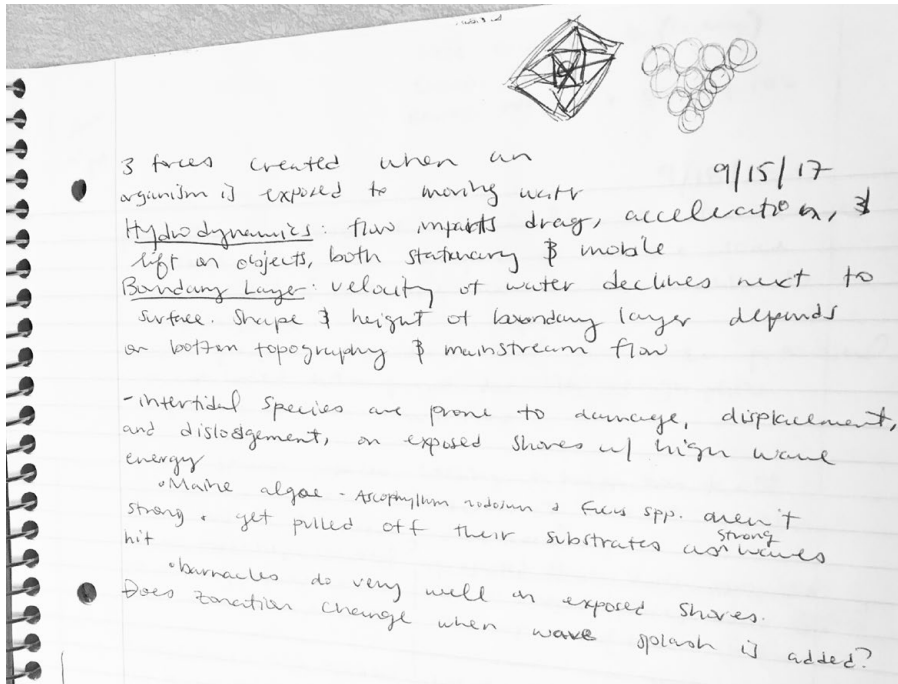
Figure 6.5. May's doodling, IV.

Framing the Individuated Actor

Now that we have a sense of May's fidget-writing and how it is co-constructing the social world around her, we can think about the ways in which those actions contribute to her as an individuated actor in the stretch of circumstances that she employs the practice within. As articulated in Part I, May's engagement with the situation she is participating in is necessarily adumbrated, and the root of that adumbration is the very mechanisms through which she participates in social order. In other words, because she is fidget-writing to co-construct social order, she isn't doing something else. There is an opportunity cost for the fidget-writing-turned-note-taking, as there would be for any other practice. In the second step of tracing the totality, we can see how May's literate action becomes consequential in an individuated way.

A particular focus for tracing out these consequences is through the transformation of her fidget-writing from the "mindless" (in her words) writing during television watching to the planning of her day during the semester. The constant scheduling we see in her writing suggests that May's uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next* is being heightened, the practices she uses to reduce that uncertainty pushed to their limit, and that such practices might have to be repurposed, revised, or in some way changed to address this anomalous amount of uncertainty—what we

called "information" in Part I—a heightened level of uncertainty that calls for repurposed practices. We can see the spike in uncertainty in May's consideration of her own patterns of work. Reflecting on the many computer tabs that she has opened in her computer, May notes,

> I'm just sort of scatterbrained. I know I'll have to do all of these
> different things, and I'll work a little bit on something, and
> then a little bit on another thing. I'm always switching back
> and forth, so I'll have everything open.

May's sense of being "scatterbrained" aligns with the work that the scheduling captured in Figure 6.3 seems to be doing for her. The incredible options for action—not just in what she has to do, but what she *can* do—seems to be a challenge for her to work through. The scheduling allows May to reduce her uncertainty in several ways. First, it provides her with tasks to do and an order to do them in, so that she can prioritize the next event in her day. Second, it serves as an organizer of the social order produced *during the act of writing*. In other words, May's co-construction of social order that began with her fidget-writing was also used to reduce the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next*—that is, to render *information* into a manageable level of uncertainty—both in the co-construction of a moment and, by extension, in the co-construction of future moments.

Framing the Scenic Work of Uncertainty Reduction

May's fidget-writing-turned-note-writing evidently carries across her lifeworlds. She uses it for television, conversation, scheduling, notes in classes, and even some of her extracurricular activity. The third framing for tracing the totality asks how the transformation of a practice by an individuated actor is a scenic accomplishment. How, in other words, were the mechanisms of May's fidget-writing made *materially available* in the ongoing production of social order through these lifeworlds?

The origins of the material availability of such objects can be found in the literate practices of May's household growing up. "At my house," she notes, "we just have a lot of notebooks around the house and everyone just has pages in them from like spans of years ago." The expectation in her house is that opportunities to take notes, to do the kinds of writing that May envisions as a result of her fidgeting, will be available, are lying around, waiting for use when needed by the members of her house.

We can see the continuation of this assumption—what we might, drawing on Chapter 5, call envisioning *possibilities of objects*—in the objects that May comes to write her fidget-writing-turned-notes on. Certainly, May engages in writing in notebooks (see Figure 6.6), but she also finds herself scribbling in the margins of pages, on Post-Its, on the materials that she finds at her dispos-

al. May appears to recognize space on various assortments of paper as opportunities for fidget-writing as needed. Rather than carrying a particular notebook or writing implement from one situation into another, May recognizes in the available spaces of various kinds of paper the opportunity to pursue fidget-writing in its multiplicity of appearances. The acts of fidget-writing that May does seems to recognize new associations that such spaces can be connected to—such as note-taking, or schedule-writing—even if the possibilities of the space (that is, to fidget-write) remain consistent.
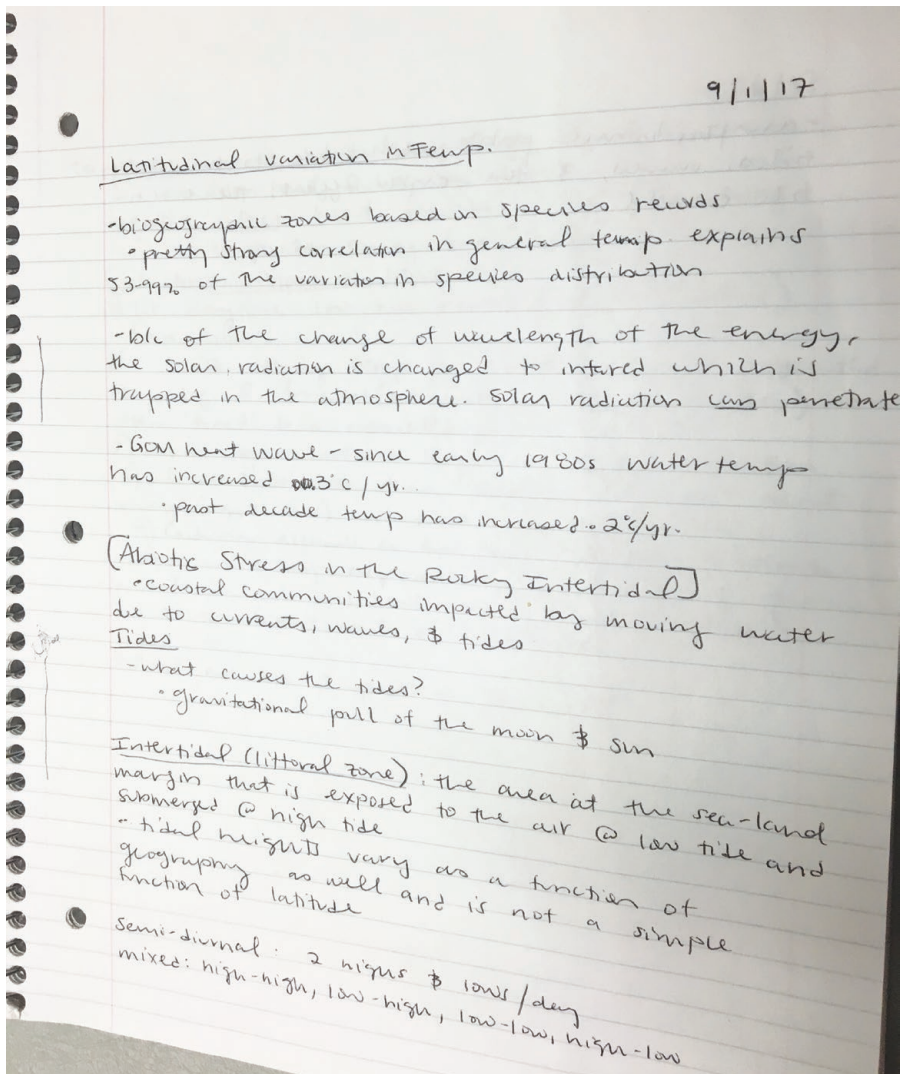

Figure 6.6. May's note-taking.

This recognition of opportunities for fidget-writing serves to help her make sense of her note-taking needs as she moves further into her undergraduate education. May comes to see herself as participating in lecture, in labs, in work at the library, and in the flow of the day during the semester *through* the fidget-writing that she does. This take-up of literate action through fidget-writing on a range of surfaces, for a range of purposes suggests a practice that can proliferate across a range of social action. I refer to this work as *stacking*: May makes available past practices through the recognition of particular possibilities in objects and, by extension, participates in her own literate development and the ongoing production of social order. Experiences using a particular practice (i.e., fidget-writing) are *stacked* on top of one another, adding flexibility and adaptability to such a practice in order to handle future moments of spiked uncertainty. Because of her continued *stacking*, May is able to carry forward her fidget-writing for note-taking, for scheduling, and for a range of other purposes across her early postsecondary experiences. We can compare this flexible act of *stacking* to the bounded practicing of Lilly across the same period of time for a more well-rounded understanding of how practices get instantiated for a next first time.

Constructing Textual Walls: Lilly

Lilly, like May, came to postsecondary life with a complexly laminated set of lifeworlds that could be oriented to the production of various kinds of texts. Throughout her time in high school, Lilly was an active participant in a range of sports, worked regularly on her family's dairy farm, and was heavily devoted to a challenging course load, particularly as a high school senior. Lilly's writing has always been, in her recounting, deeply shaped by the many lifeworlds that she finds herself balancing. She notes, for instance, that she "used to do writing in my free time like in junior high," but subsequently grew out of it. This "growing out" might be easily attributable to the many demands on Lilly's time: school, sports, work on the family farm, and maintaining a social life.

This complex blend of demands continued upon her transition to college. Lilly, still a member of a sports team—the university's field hockey team—was required to put in a certain number of study hours each week. She also had responsibilities at home that, though not impacting her college life on a daily basis, remained present in her emerging orchestration of her lifeworlds on a moment-to-moment basis. In order to trace Lilly's literate action development through the totality, I turn first to Lilly's note-taking, and then to a particular use of that pattern as recounted to me by Lilly during an interview—Lilly's self-fashioned study guides and flashcards.

Framing Ongoing, Joint Action

Lilly's individual study habits begin with a participation in ongoing, joint action

during her classes. Take, for instance, Lilly's work in her biology class during her freshman year:

> I take notes in class on my computer for bio. And then after class—so this is from the chapter from the book. So I read the chapter we're on and I take notes on here [Microsoft OneNote] because lecture's really vague.

Lilly's practice of self-fashioned study guides and flashcards begins by acting as a member of, in this case, her biology course. Lilly's entry into the classroom, her act of sitting in a seat and making entries into OneNote, co-constructs the work of ⊀class⊁ much in the way that May's fidget-writing did for her.

Lilly's decision to use OneNote is an interesting one, particularly given the range of note-taking applications she has at her disposal and her previous uses of hand-written notes. When I asked her why she chose to use OneNote, she said that "one of the other athletes in class used it," and when she tried it, she found that OneNote offered organizational options suited to the work of the way in which she takes notes. Through configurations of interacting with particular fellow students, then, Lilly was turned toward a particular application that shaped the way in which she comes to act as a member of the classes she is part of. The residue of text left after this participation becomes a tool through which the later work of study-guide building emerges.

Lilly's OneNote entries can be seen as serving two functions. First, they serve as a means of making sense of lectures that she perceives as "vague." Though she finds herself struggling to understand what her instructor is trying to say during the lecture, she is able to triangulate sufficient meaning between the words of the instructor, the words of the PowerPoint slide, and her entries on OneNote. These inter-acting objects serve to produce, for Lilly, a progression of social order that come to count as ⊀class⊁. This co-construction of ⊀class⊁ is not the same as a co-construction of *meaning* in the notes that she takes: rather, the ways in which Lilly is able to—along with her instructor, the objects in the room, and her fellow students—keep class going is, in part, by keeping her *writing* going in the notes that she produces.

In Lilly's recounting of her note-taking for class, no significant differences emerge between the notes she takes in her college biology class and the classes that come before or with it. Her participation in class is rendered visible by her note-taking activity, and with the exception of beginning to use OneNote, Lilly's pattern of note-taking has not seemed to change. However, if we are to follow the serial production of social order—that is, what Lilly *does* with these notes—out of and then, later, back into the classroom, then a broader pattern of literate action development begins to emerge, particularly around her preparation for tests. Her practices for participating in classroom life, in other words, fail to visibly signal literate action development in the work of class, but lay the groundwork for development to emerge later in her take-up of course materials.

Framing the Individuated Actor

We can begin to individuate Lilly's note-taking activity as she moves from the classroom to her individual study activities, which take place in a range of places. Figure 6.7 shows Lilly's drawing of the study hall she is required to attend as part of her commitment to her field hockey program on the top, and the desk in her apartment bedroom on the bottom. In these sites, Lilly brings particular artifacts from the joint production of classroom order into her study and writing sessions.
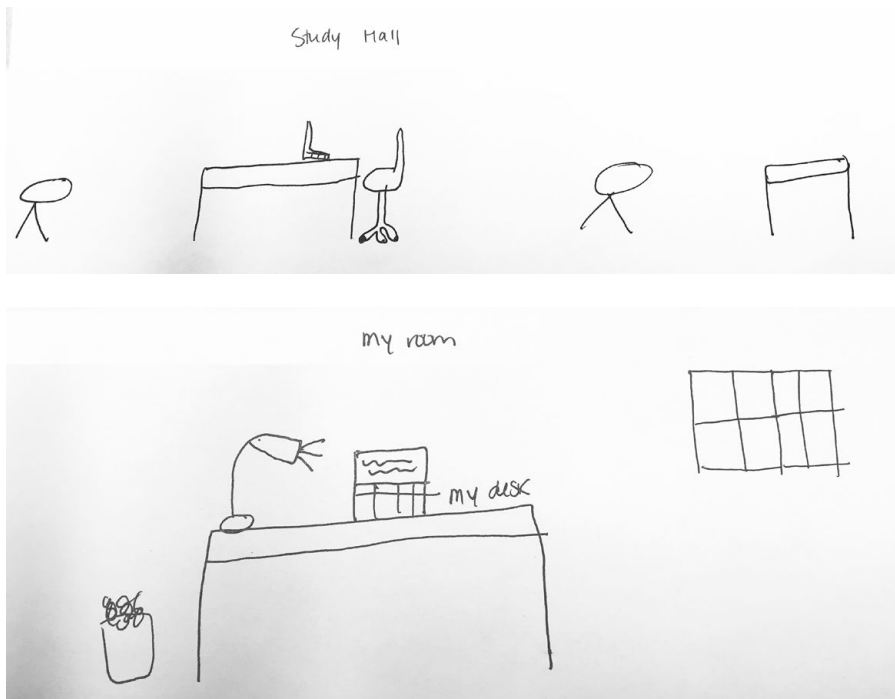

Figure 6.7. Lilly's study hall and apartment desk.

Though Lilly's images are suggestive of these writing and study opportunities as happening in particular places, it is important to realize that they also happen at particular times, and are realized in particular kinds of social order. Lilly arrives at each site with particular tasks to do, and orders the materials about her—the social media on her phone, the distance from other members of the study hall, the availability of light, power outlets, and internet access—to co-construct into being both the site of her academic work and her particular participation in it. Just as in class, Lilly is able to participate in the production of social order, in part, through her notes.

Lilly's notes to enable her to build on the residue of text left from the {class} interactions that she participated in earlier. "I think looking at my notes, looking at what I've starred," says Lilly, "helps me see what we did, how to get that in class." Lilly's return to her notes in a new setting provides her with an opportunity to identify points of confusion, moments when her co-construction of those notes in the re-reading leads to additional information that she has trouble working through. Part of this work involves not only particular spaces (such as the study hall), but the sequencing of tasks over broader periods of time, which allow her to bring in more resources.

A particularly good example of this is the Khan Academy videos that Lilly turns to when needed. As times for major exams draw near, Lilly will "try to go through" her notes to see if she can construct a new understanding of those notes. If not, Lilly can "go and watch Khan Academy videos" to aid the development of new understandings of them. Lilly has a sense that what she is being asked to learn in these classes is not "`just knowing how to calculate something" but "knowing the principles of something." Lilly's use of the Khan Academy's videos, then, serve as a response to a new co-construction of her situation for working with her notes: that of building her understanding of the "principles" of the topic she is working with.

In the work of advancing her understanding of the "principles," in addition to the calculations, Lilly will "try to go through" her notes and "build myself a little study guide. I'll try to highlight things I should know, like keywords and stuff." Part of the work of building study guides involves flashcards, something that she begins college using regularly, but it tapers off by the end of her sophomore year:

> I make flashcards. I had to know these enzymes for today so
> I made these flashcards. I would say I haven't used flashcards
> this semester. I don't know why that is. Usually I study with
> flashcards.

At this stage of analysis, what might be considered through other lenses to be good study habits can be seen, through the first two framings, as Lilly participating in the production of social order, and stitching that social order together from one moment to the next. Lilly's notes move from the classroom to study hall and her bedroom desk, and in the co-construction of those spaces Lilly finds herself in the position of having to make sense of them again. Interestingly, however, it seems that the ongoing production of notes from Lilly's classes lead to some transformation, as Lilly moves away from flashcards later in her work. Lilly seems surprised by it, but later remarks that her new course on Organic Chemistry "is not something you study for with a flashcard." It seems as though Lilly is making the deliberate choice *not* to use flashcards, to enact her practice differently.
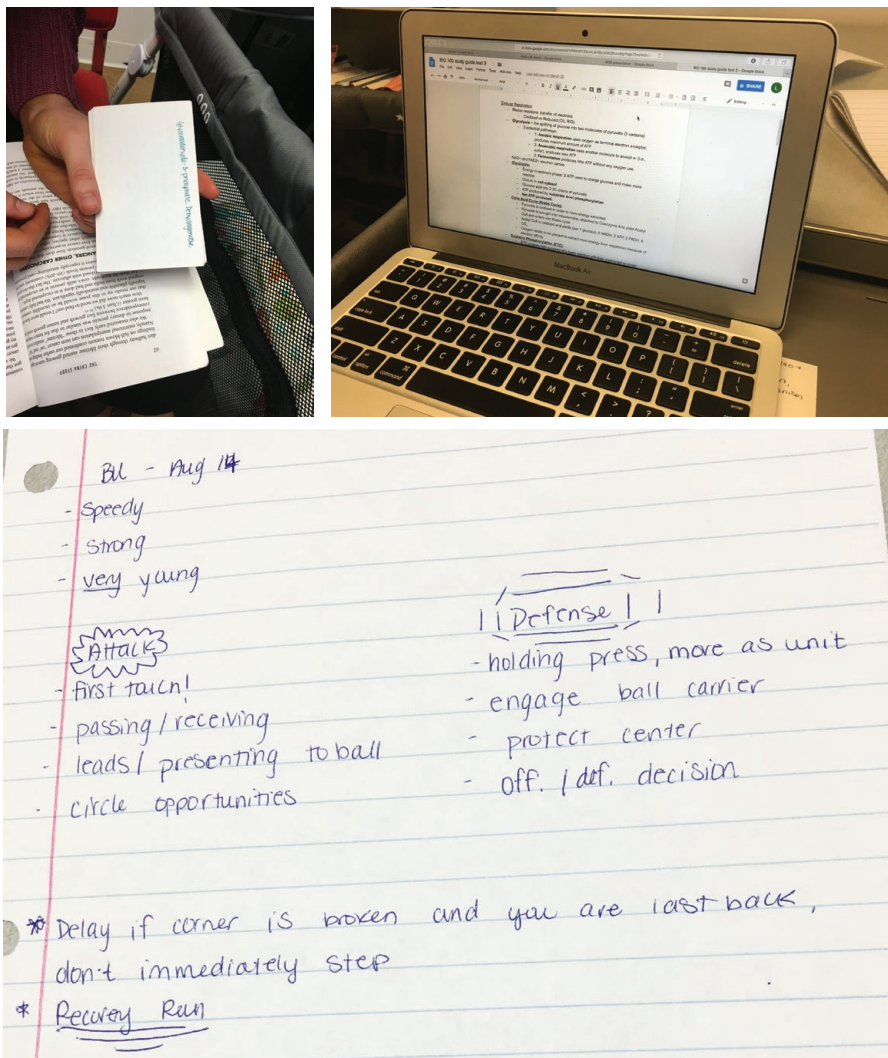
Figure 6.8. Lilly's note-taking.

Framing the Scenic Work of Uncertainty Reduction

In following the note-taking practices of Lilly through her class attendance, her study session attendance, and her work in her apartment, we see that Lilly is constantly doing work to make visible her understandings of various aspects of classroom activity and, doing so, is transforming her note-taking practices. When Lilly arrives at organic chemistry, she struggles to envision the value of her

flashcards in her work and responds accordingly, choosing instead to develop her own study guides in the situated moments of literate action that would normally lead to flashcards. In the interactions of her OneNote entries, her notebooks, her lab books, and other resources on her computer, Lilly realizes a new set of possibilities: one in which the work that emerges for her is not a set of flashcards, but rather a more detailed study guide that lets her get at "the function of the enzyme" that she finds herself struggling with so much.

In this realization of new possibilities for action, Lilly is engaged in work that is decidedly different than the *stacking* that we witnessed with May. Instead of building on the work of her flashcards, Lilly repurposes the objects at her disposal for a different kind of work. Seeing the lack of value in flashcards for such a complex topic as she understands it, Lilly *brackets* her flashcard activity. That is, she sets it apart from the current task, identifying the work of building the study guide as antithetical to the work of making flashcards in order to perceive what she sees as a very different kind of problem.

The bracketing work that Lilly does complicates the vision of literate action development that emerged in the first six cases of this study. In those instances of literate action development, particular, enduring changes were made visible, but those changes were additive—an accumulation of transformations in patterns of literate action. Lilly's activity, when framed as *bracketing*, calls attention to the ways in which she deletes particular kinds of literate action and its attendant materials from the scene in order to accomplish her work. Drawing on the language of the totality, I envision Lilly's bracketing decision as the result of a transformed understanding of *What-Comes-Next* in terms of the progression of her preparation for her organic chemistry exam. Aware of the shortcomings of her previous study habit in this particular situation, Lilly strategically reduces the uncertainty of *What-Comes-Next* in order to locate the uncertainty in her understanding of the necessary knowledge for the exam, not the process of working through the content. Such a bracketing action also puts her in the position of being able to carry on with such bracketing in the future, when her teammates see her study guide and ask for some assistance writing their own guides. What Lilly seems to have done here is make a tactical choice for organic chemistry that eventually came to serve as a transformative moment in her note-taking practices.

Practice Construction: Bracketing and Stacking

May and Lilly's work throughout their two years at the university have engaged in a fair amount of what Roozen (2010) might refer to as repurposing. But a closer analysis through the lens of the totality of the literate experience demonstrates significant, ongoing revisions of these students' understanding of what is asked of them as writers at the university, as well as the resources they perceive themselves as having for going about that work. Notably, these students established patterns

of interconnecting writing throughout their lifeworlds in the moments of literate action performance, drawing as necessary across sometimes widely-disparate resources, experiences, and understandings to complete the texts that they need to complete in order to continue the social order of performing as students at a university.

Note that in each of these cases, the work of orchestrating across lifeworlds is scenically available to each actor. When Lilly organizes herself to write in study hall, for instance, the resources she draws across, such as various classes, or the understandings that she developed during discussions in lab, are materially present—they work with other objects to realize arrays of possibility in the unfolding social situation. The realized possibilities also arrive at the study hall via antecedent situations that, when chained together, realize a moving constellation of densely networked talk, tools, and texts that have the moment of the study hall not as an end in mind but a stop along the way to an ever-more-densely constructed network of ever-more-responsive texts.

But these cases do more than outline the logic-in-use developed in Part I: they realize additional complexities that add to our growing understanding of exactly what constitutes the lived reality of literate action development at a stage of life other than early adolescence, and in a setting other than K-12 education. As I suggest in the preface to Part II, the cases in this chapter offer further strategic and perspicuous settings at different stages in the lifespan and in methods of social engagement with and participation in the world. May and Lilly are in different systems of activity and are co-constructing sense of their literate action in new ways. Their adumbrated sense of participation in the ongoing production of social order is causing agency to be shifted to them in ways that the participants traced in Part I did not. May and Lilly are becoming different kinds of participants in different kinds of social settings, for different purposes, and with different co-configurations of talk, tools, and texts at work. This sense of difference from the participants in Part I leads to some interesting questions about the framework of the lived reality, some possible extensions, and some potential limitations.

May and Lilly's work here extended the work of the totality in some interesting ways—their literate action seems to indicate increasingly intricate and, in terms of material, thinly linked sets of situations through which altered recurrence emerges. That is, May and Lilly's increasing agency in daily college life, as compared to the middle school students in the previous study, appear to draw on a wider array of objects across a broader set of circumstances in order to scenically accomplish literate action. Furthermore, the wide-ranging ways in which these scenic accomplishments transform over time suggest that the ebb and flow of literate action development resonates across the lifeworlds that we work through as social actors. This extension usefully troubles the issue of transfer—it suggests that any act of transfer perceived by an institution is part of a broader set of ongoing relocalizations of literate action in the life of the actors involved—but it

also suggests some questions about how the lived reality operates as a centering influence in the lives of writers. That is, as writers move from one situation to another, dealing with wider or narrower sets of objects and people, how might the lived reality—the means by which *What-Comes-Next* is reduced to perform social action—serve to order, flatten, or otherwise render workable the complex interconnections suggested here? Such questions suggest the need for an explanatory concept. Based on the analysis above, I suggest *circulating agency* as a potential way to render visible to researchers how literate actors come to render *What-Comes-Next* workable.

Circulating Agency: A Potential Concept

I define *circulating agency* as the work of individuated actors in one moment to create and/or use objects that can be flung into future moments and, through their use, circulate an increased capacity to act back to the individuated actor. This concept is similar in nature to "expansive agency" (Dippre, 2018), but attends more closely to the material work of moving agency without also attempting to capture its results. A straightforward example of such work might be the work I do at the start of a class to write the agenda for the meeting on the board at the front of the room. This act allows me, once class begins, to direct the room from one task to another. My ability to act as a teacher in the classroom has been circulated to the list on the board and, later, back to me. Such a concept can help us think through what we saw May and Lilly doing with their literate action earlier in this chapter.

The language of "circulating agency" resonates with posthuman conceptions of agency. In his review of the term agency in *Keywords in Writing Studies*, Accardi (2015) notes that the commonplace definition of agency "signifies the capacity to act," (p. 1) but goes on to highlight that

> A posthumanist or poststructuralist orientation . . . does not locate agency with the subject. According to this lens, agency is found circulating in discourse and dispersed into an ever-shifting field of power relations (Herndl & Licona, 2007, p. 141). In other words, agency cannot be possessed. (p. 2)

Accardi goes on to note that humanist and posthumanist conceptions of agency can be conflated, which, in a sense, is how the concept of circulating agency emerges in my work with May and Lilly's findings. This concept, emergent as it is from the empirical analysis of records-turned-into-data, fits with a situation described by Merton (1968) when articulating the development of middle-range theory through interactions among a discipline and a data set. Beginning with language that is commonly used in the field, I use the intersections of my analysis and particular conceptions of agency to develop a concept that initiates a small difference in understandings of agency circulation from a lifespan perspective,

which can "lead to successively more fundamental theoretical differences" over time (Merton, 1968, p. 42). In other words, the bringing together of agency with bracketed and stacked practices creates an opportunity to generate a new conceptualization of agency that is oriented to the demands of studying the lived reality of lifespan literate action development.

We can understand the ways in which May and Lilly bracket and stack their practices by examining the ways in which May and Lilly *circulate agency* to themselves from one situation to the next. This concept draws on a commonplace definition of agency—the capacity to act—as understood through a posthuman lens: nonhuman objects *also* have the capacity to act on a situation. But this definition departs from typical posthuman representations of agency in that the agency circulates *back to* particular individuated actors as they work to co-construct social order. We can think of May's fidget-writing in class, then, not as a way of passing time but as a way of participating in the production of social order that both counts as classroom activity and is integrated with the serial production of local, social order that she is co-constituting throughout her lifespan.

Consider the broader context of the work that May is co-constructing when she engages in such fidget-writing in class. In preparation for class, May packs a bag with the material she will need: computer, notebook, pens, etc. The notebook and pen, having bearing on the situation (Latour, 2005) of their own, move into the space of the classroom with May: they arrive in a bag, are set up at a space in a lecture hall, and become available to May as she participates in the ongoing production of social order. They are *scenically available* objects through which particular possibilities can be recognized, and May can recognize the possibility of fidget-writing with them. In the packing of her bag for attending class, May has circulated the possibility of acting through fidget-writing into her notebooks and pens, which in their movement from her dorm to the lecture hall become available again to her for use.

The circulation of agency, then, refers to the ways in which objects are imparted with particular possibilities of use by individuated actors and then rendered scenically available in future situations of co-configured talk, tools, and texts. In other words, we circulate capacities to act in particular ways back to ourselves with particular objects that we make available for use from one situation to the next. This concept offers interesting questions for studying lifespan literate action development. For instance, how might the mechanisms of circulation change over time? In what ways might May and Lilly, in their development through adulthood, come to re-orchestrate the talk, tools, and texts around them so that different materials—or new possibilities in similar materials—give them the capacity to act in future moments of literate action? Future studies can dimensionalize further the concept of circulating agency, and by extension allow it to develop as the core of a middle-range theory of lifespan literate action development.

Implications for Transfer Research

Tracing the complex, material work of the situated transformations of talk, tools, and texts that endure across situations suggest productive complexities for understanding research on writing transfer. As indicated above, the agency of writers as they move from one situation to another can usefully complicate the ways in which we consider transfer. How might the circulation of agency in classroom discussion, for instance, enable the transfer of literate practices and knowledge for some, but not others? How might it help writing instructors think about the degree to which students are working to enact their own understandings, shape the course through their own visions of how it should unfold? If, as Prior (1998, 2010, 2017), Roozen (2010), Roozen and Erickson (2017), and others suggest, we look to the multidimensional literate lives of students, how might we more carefully account for that work in our emerging studies of writing transfer?

Writing researchers have conclusively demonstrated that transfer is, if nothing else, an extremely complex phenomenon. The work of May and Lilly does little to simplify this complexity, but it does suggest that looking to the social ordering that occurs in any given moment of transfer are worth attending to in order to understand the ways in which acts that we, as teachers and researchers, consider transfer happen. Making future sites of transfer study more attentive to the members' methods for constructing social situations, as well as how those methods resonate with seemingly unrelated lifeworlds of literate action, would bring valuable insights to our emerging understandings of transfer.

An important aspect of the chapter that stands out for thinking about transfer is the role that agency plays for the students who are co-constructing social order not only in their classrooms but in the chains of social action that lead into and away from those classrooms—into the study habits they engage in, the interactional orders they take up as they talk about the concepts, formula, tools, etc., presented in a given class, and the practices they bring to bear on making sense of that material. The ways in which students transfer knowledge, activities, skills, etc., into and out of particular classes is shaped by the ways in which they work out their sense of *What-Comes-Next* both in the moment of the class and in their engagement with the material of that class during out-of-class assignments. Attending to the ways in which agency is circulated to, through, and back to students from one moment to the next throughout the semester—and the materials through which that agency is circulated—will be important to understanding, in a more fine-grained manner, the ways in which certain practices are bracketed or stacked from one course to the next.

The essential contribution, perhaps, of this chapter to ongoing research on transfer is the vision of the ongoing *work* of the social world within which any given classroom is caught up. If we cease to see a future class as a standalone entity and instead as something that must be co-constructed with the particular students we are interested in studying, then the complex work that goes into the

concepts, practices, etc., that educators hope to bring from one moment to the next may be more fully recognized and worked with in future studies of transfer. Envisioning the production of a class meeting as interactive social work—and work that is deeply interconnected with the many other lifeworlds that participants engage in—is the first step in a more robust, interactionally-aware understanding of transfer that is both attentive to social complexity and productive for educators to think through in terms of curricular design.

Expanding a Vision of Lifespan Literate Action Development

The three steps of uncovering the totality of the literate experience as articulated in Chapter 5 served as a sufficient starting point for studying the literate action development of Lilly and May. As the study of their literate action expanded across lifeworlds and over greater spans of time, it became clear that we needed a concept to account for out how the materials that were available for the take-up of a particular practice were made scenically available to them from one moment to the next and, furthermore, the role they had in making such material available. Tracing the material presence of this agency across events and over a two-year period has provided this study with the first of several tools in studying literate action development through the logic-in-use of the totality.

But the necessity of the concept of agency and its circulation suggests that perhaps attention is needed for yet another. The study of Lilly and May, though beneficial in stretching the totality as a logic-in-use into a different age span and set of social conditions, is hardly the end of the road: Lilly and May, as well as the methods of record collection used with them, may highlight more expansive literate action across a wider range of lifeworlds, but their literate lives have every chance of growing more complex over time. The agency that is circulated back to them can transform in myriad ways over time, as they become caught up within many other literate practices throughout the complexity of their lives.

In order to continue to test the potentiality of the logic-in-use that is the totality, I turn, in the next chapter, to a set of writers, Tom and John, in their thirties and forties. I have selected these writers not merely because of their age but because of the complexity of the practices with which they are engaged, and the histories behind those practices that have shaped their use over time.[6] The length of time that these writers have engaged with their practices offers another opportunity: one of developing a sense of how identity is constructed through the circulation of agency. May and Lilly, though effective participants for tracing agency, were not strategic sites for following the production of identity as I will come to define it in the next chapter. Tom and John, in addition to adding complexity our

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6. Though the complexity and history of the practice is, itself, connected to their age: it is difficult to develop literate practices as complex as John and Tom do without a sustained series of literate practice production from which to build them.

current understanding of the totality, can serve as a strategic site for tracing the work of identity with and as part of literate action over time.