2 Context and Methods for the Study

This chapter treats in summary our three institutional contexts, our research paradigms, and our methods. The next chapter contains a detailed section about each institution—its characteristics, its WAC program, and the research methods we used to collect data about its faculty. Readers not interested in the full details can read only this summary chapter.

That next, more fully detailed chapter is arranged institution-by-institution because our methods and data are so intimately tied to the type of institution and to the history of its WAC program; thus they can best be evaluated in that context. Also, we want to show that we have gathered into *"a* study" not only the 1993–1995 data we collected collaboratively since we decided to write this book, but also the bodies of data we collected earlier, during periods of years at the individual institutions, which were never intended to be united—the Humpty Dumpty that never was. Even our 1993–1995 data were influenced to some extent by the nature of each school and its WAC program.

At the same time, we want to emphasize that when we examined our data, the same themes occurred among faculty at all three schools. So the differences among schools largely disappear when we later discuss what WAC meant to faculty and how it affected them.

The Institutions and Their WAC Programs

Our three institutions represent a wide variety, both in general characteristics and in their WAC programs (see Table 2.1). The University of Cincinnati (UC) is a large, research-oriented, state comprehensive university that includes several two-year and open-admissions colleges. It has 36,000 students. Towson State University (TSU) is a Baltimore-area baccalaureate- and master's-level university with 15,000 students. Whitworth College in Spokane is a small, private, religiously affiliated liberal arts college of 2,000. Papa Bear, Mama Bear, Baby Bear. Also midwestern, mid-Atlantic, and northwestern. Public and private. But we don't claim that these schools represent all of American higher education. We have not, for example, included any

Table 2.1. Summary of the institutions and their WAC programs

	University of Cincinnati	**Towson State University**	**Whitworth College**
Location	Cincinnati	Baltimore	Spokane
Type	Doctoral, research-oriented, but includes some open-admissions and two-year colleges.	Baccalaureate and master's levels. Large variety of programs.	Baccalaureate with some master's level. Liberal arts.
Students	36,000	15,000	2,000
WAC Program Activities	2-day off-campus *workshops*, 1989–present. 1989–1991, led by Fulwiler and Steffens; after 1991, led by Walvoord. Many on-campus *meetings* and *workshops*. Many *spin-off projects*, e.g., a program that works to create a teaching culture in the departments.	Wide variety of *workshops*, on and off campus, offered by Towson and other area institutions, 1984–present, led by many presenters. Ongoing *small faculty groups* respond to one another's writing. WAC director (Dowling) worked intensively *one-on-one, visiting classes*, etc.	1–5-day *workshops*, 1989–1995, led by Walvoord. Periodic short follow-up *workshops and meetings*. *Team teaching* groups in the CORE meet frequently. Faculty across disciplines *tutor in Writing Center*.
Writing-Intensive Course Requirement	None at present, but general education reform in process will require all general education courses to have a writing/oral/visual communication component.	W-I requirement since 1976.	W-I requirement since 1987, plus team-taught CORE courses with writing component.

historically black institutions, any Deep South or southwestern institutions, and any institution with more than a 15 percent minority population. So this is a study of WAC outcomes within three institutions that are different but not representative of the full range.

The individual WAC programs, likewise, are quite different, though they do not encompass the full range of options. They include programs of varying ages: Towson's began in 1976, Whitworth's in 1987, and Cincinnati's in 1989. Workshops have been used in various ways, and their structure and focus have differed, as will be explained later in this chapter. Each campus has additional unique activities. Directors at each campus have played different roles.

Despite their differences, the three programs have included some characteristics common to WAC nationwide (see Griffin 1985; McLeod 1989):

- workshops and other small faculty groups as the basic entering and sustaining activity for faculty;
- activities such as small-group meetings, team teaching, response groups, etc., intended to sustain faculty over the long run;
- voluntary, not forced, participation in WAC for faculty;
- a writing-intensive, or similar, course requirement (e.g., students are required to take a certain number of "writing intensive" courses approved by a faculty committee);
- collaboration of writing faculty with discipline-area faculty; and
- leadership by a director.

But our three programs do not represent the full range. For example, we have no program where students take a composition course that is linked or paired with a course in another discipline (Graham 1992). Nor do we have "fellow" programs, where disciplinary faculty are assigned a student helper (Haring-Smith 1992).

Our evidence indicates that all three WAC programs have been widely viewed as successful on their own campuses. For example, at all three institutions, media records and conversations with presidents and other school officials indicate that these leaders have regularly cited WAC as one of the institution's stellar programs. Faculty we interviewed—no matter what use they had made of WAC ideas or what criticisms they expressed about specific aspects—almost universally expressed respect and appreciation for the programs. At all schools, over time, volunteer faculty enrollment

in WAC activities has been strong. This is a study, then, of the impact on faculty of strong and well-regarded WAC programs that had been in existence from six to eighteen years by the time we finished our data collection.

Our Research Paradigm

We are WAC directors and workshop leaders at our own and each other's schools—change agents who cannot, and do not wish to, stand completely apart from what we study. In our research, we have assumed that there would be no absolute "truth" about the impact of WAC, but that many observers and participants might legitimately construct different interpretations. All interpretations, as well as the data they were based on, would be mediated by language, culture, context, and ideology. However, in constructing our interpretations, we have striven to use research procedures that are accepted as "trustworthy" in the communities to whom we wish to speak (Lincoln and Guba 1985). We will explain those procedures in this chapter.

In shaping our stance, we have been aided by Argyris's concept of "action science" (1985; 1993), Gitlin's concept of "educative research" (1990), and by the various "criticalist" schools (Kincheloe and McLaren 1994). All of these approaches share three themes. First, research is guided by goals of transforming as well as interpreting the contexts under study. Thus we recognize and accept that an interview by the WAC director with a WAC participant may be data for our research questions, but also may itself shape what we're investigating—the impact of WAC on the faculty member. We believe there is no such thing as a neutral way of observing a natural setting. We chose ways of observing that we thought would contribute to our change goals and research goals.

Second, all of the approaches emphasize that researchers and participants work together to create knowledge and change. Thus we acknowledge that the findings of this study are the product of various kinds of interaction and collaboration between us and the many faculty, students, and administrators who participated in the interviews, classes, and other events from which our data are drawn. It is this interaction and collaboration, we believe, that make our data rich and that help us to understand the WAC participants' points of view.

Third, all three approaches emphasize the importance of revealing the ideological and political foundations of the research and of the situations being studied. We try to do that in the following account.

The Early Data Collection on All Three Campuses

This study's chronology can be divided into two periods—before 1993, when the four of us decided to collaborate on this book, and from 1993 to 1995, after that decision was made. The chronological process of data collection is diagrammed in Table 2.2.

Before the 1993 decision to collaborate, each of us, at our own schools, had been collecting over the years various kinds of data about the outcomes of WAC. (Our data are summarized in Table 2.3 and are discussed in detail in the next chapter.)

The data gathered before our 1993 decision to collaborate included questionnaires and interviews from faculty and students, syllabi, assignments, student work, W-I course proposals, classroom observations by the researchers, faculty-authored articles or conference presentations about WAC experiences, and researchers' participant observations of WAC faculty in small groups or committees where the impact of WAC upon them was evident.

Those data have several characteristics: first, the data had nearly always been used in combination—for example, small-group interviews *with* syllabi and course handouts; faculty presentations *with* syllabi and samples of student work.

Second, the individual campus data included, on each campus, a substantial, open-ended listening component that made us hear the complexity of faculty experiences, faculty voices. We did not rely merely on what, in our introduction, we call "match-to-sample" questionnaires. One of our questionnaires, as we explain in the next chapter, was built from faculty responses to open-ended questions, not solely from researcher-defined options.

Third, in many cases the same faculty members had been followed over time with different types of data, allowing us to "triangulate"—that is, to use one type of data, data source, or research method to augment, check, or question another (LeCompte and Goetz 1982; Lincoln and Guba 1985).

Also unique were the span of years and the number of faculty. The data stretched back over five, six, and, in Towson State's case, eighteen years. We had data of some type on approximately 720 faculty members.

Our Approach to Faculty

Our data allow fascinating glimpses into WAC's impact on departments, institutions, curricula, students, and academic structures, but this study focuses on where our data are strongest: how WAC

Table 2.2. Data collection process

	Separate Data Collection			Decision to Collaborate on This Book	Collaborative Data Collection
	1976	1986	1989	1993	1995
TSU	Interviews, classroom observations, case studies, etc.				Data collection continues, culminating in 42 interviews and faculty-authored accounts on all three campuses.
Whitworth		Faculty accounts, team teaching, student response sheets, WAC booklet, etc.			
UC			Questionnaires, interviews, participant observations, classroom research, etc.		

2.3. Summary of all data

	University of Cincinnati	Towson State University	Whitworth College
ulation Studied	Two Populations: *Pop. A:* 117 faculty attendees of two-day workshops led by Fulwiler and Steffens, 1989–1991. (117 = 89% of all those who had attended during those years and were still on campus in 1991.) *Pop. B:* 337 UC faculty who attended two-day workshops led by Walvoord, 1991–1995.	Population: Approximately 200 faculty who participated in WAC activities at Towson or other programs (e.g., Maryland Writing Project). Of these, almost 100 are teaching W-I courses at any one time, though about 50 have never taught a W-I course.	Population: 66 faculty who attended workshops, most led by Walvoord, 1989–1991.
	Types of Data		
Faculty questionnaires used ne, without accompanying rview, documents, etc.	1989–1995: Participant responses completed immediately after 24 two-day workshops. 1993–1994: Questionnaire (Appendix A) on teaching changes mailed to a random 20% of all UC full- and most stable part-time faculty (147 responses = 54% return).	1984–1989: 98 participant responses completed immediately after 6 workshops.	1995: 38 questionnaires (Appendix B) returned by faculty teaching a combined total of 55 W-I classes.
Faculty questionnaires bined with interviews and ument analysis.	1991–1992: 101 from Pop. A (Appendix C).		
Syllabi and W-I course posals.	1991–1994: 18 from Pop. A and 43 from Pop. B: syllabi and W-I course proposals submitted to a faculty committee for approval as W-I courses.	48 W-I course proposals on file.	

e 2.3 continued

Classroom observation by archer, combined with rview, consultation with lty, student interviews, documents.	1993–1994: 2 classrooms (see Walvoord and Bryan 1995).	1982–1994: 21 classrooms, by Dowling. 1983–1986: 1 classroom (see Anderson and Walvoord 1991).	
nterviews or question-es to students in classes ght by WAC faculty.			1989–1991: 1,157 questionnaires (Appendix D) from students in WAC classes during four semesters. 1991: Random group of 16 students in WAC courses, interviewed by Writing Center student consultants.
Faculty-authored articles or sentations about WAC eriences, usually accompa-l by syllabi, student work,	1990: 19 faculty accounts in in-house booklet. 1991–1994: 24 articles or conference presentations by Pop. A. 1995: Documentary video, *Making Large Classes Interactive,* produced at UC on how 5 UC Pop. A faculty make large classes interactive.	1991: 18 faculty accounts in in-house booklet. 1985–1994: 11 articles and 48 conference papers and workshops.	1992: 11 faculty accounts in in-house booklet. 1990–1994: 6 presentations by faculty.
'articipant observation of ll groups of WAC faculty.	1992–94: 43 Pop. A and 23 Pop. B in 90-min. small-group discussions of WAC practices, observed by Walvoord. 4 Pop. A + 7 Pop. B in classroom research groups, led by Walvoord. 33 Pop. A on committees that directly revealed how faculty had been affected by WAC, observed by Walvoord.	1985–1994: approximately 40 faculty in ongoing writing groups, observed by Dowling and/or McMahon. Additional 31 faculty, observed by Dowling or McMahon, in other settings (e.g., W-I course-approval committee).	1990–1994: 7 follow-up workshops/meetings, most with 12–15 attendees, observed by Hunt. Participant observation by Hunt of 9 faculty team teaching CORE courses.

2.3 continued

	University of Cincinnati	Towson State University	Whitworth College
'e–1994 faculty interviews ›ined with document 'sis.		1991: 18 WAC faculty, interviewed by McMahon.	1990–1991: 12 WAC faculty, interviewed by Hunt.
nal round of faculty views and faculty-›red reports, gathered ifically for this book, in -1995. Most accompanied 'llabi and assignments rview questions, Appen-:).	22 faculty, interviewed by Walvoord, Slachman, Udel, and other graduate students.	10 faculty, interviewed by Dowling and McMahon. (5 of these faculty authored their own accounts.)	10 faculty, interviewed by Hunt.

impacted individual faculty. The individual faculty member, then, is the unit of analysis.

In 1993, when we decided to collaborate on this book, we articulated the approach to faculty that each of us, in different ways, had been reaching on our separate campuses. We did not want merely to measure whether or not faculty were using teaching methods that WAC directors defined. We did not want to separate WAC outcomes from the broader faculty growth and development. Our rich and complex data forced us to see faculty not as adopters or resisters, but as seekers who used WAC as a resource in very different ways, according to their own needs and directions, which we were reluctant to judge. Nearly all the faculty had some points of resistance, often for sensible reasons, and nearly all had profited from WAC, often in very different ways. We wanted the book to be full of faculty voices.

We adopted, therefore, the theoretical view of faculty that Hargreaves articulates and that we quoted at length on page 11 (this volume)—the view of faculty as active makers of meaning, as self-directed managers of their own change.

Refining the Research Questions

Within that frame, we articulated for this book five research questions that we thought our data would allow us to address—questions which were important to us as researchers and WAC directors and which, we thought, would be important to our readers:

1. What did faculty expect to gain from WAC?
2. What have their WAC experiences meant to them?
3. How did WAC influence their teaching philosophies and attitudes?
4. How did WAC influence their teaching strategies?
5. How did WAC influence their career patterns?

The Issue of Cause and Effect

The last three research questions raise the question of "influence." We have stated them that way because they were the questions that drove much of our data gathering and because they are the questions that, within the political contexts of most WAC programs, people want to ask and WAC programs try to answer. Constable aptly states our dilemma:

> All researchers know that to detect and record change is not the same thing as to identify the forces causing change. This knowledge is of little relief when the question of greatest interest is indeed 'What causes what?'. . . What is wanted is knowledge of whether initiatives have had the effects intended, but experience tells us that the questions are unlikely to be so simple in practice. (1994, 5)

Our data on "influences" largely (but not totally) relied upon asking faculty about WAC's effect on them. We generally asked our questions in rich contexts—interviews, small-group discussions—often gathering several types of data at several points over time from the same faculty member. These richly contextualized self-reports are valuable data to us because of our respect for the faculty member as a constructor of meaning and our interest in the faculty member's reasons, contexts, and growth. Who better than the faculty member, we reasoned, could tell us whether a particular change was motivated or influenced by what she or he heard in WAC?

But we did not rely entirely upon self-reports. Often, our interviews and small groups were accompanied by syllabi, assignment sheets, and other materials that provided evidence of the changes the faculty member described. Frequently, assignments or teaching ideas had begun in the WAC workshops and small groups where, in most cases, we ourselves were present. We observed classrooms and queried students. These data, and our multiple contacts with faculty over time, helped us to trace the influences.

Defining the Population under Study

As we assessed our data, we decided to place the greatest emphasis upon the faculty who had entered WAC earliest because the long-run view was important to us. These populations are explained in Table 2.3 and discussed at greater length in our next chapter on the individual schools. This decision to concentrate on early joiners meant that our population would probably contain many of those faculty whom Rogers (1983) calls "early adopters" of "innovations." His research suggests that these faculty would be comfortable with risk, not afraid of change, and horizontally networked—that is, with many connections to other faculty across campus, not just within their own departments. "Middle adopters," the research indicates, are slower to take risks and more "vertically" networked—that is, they maintain connections primarily within their own departments. Our personal knowledge of the faculty affirms this view of them as a group, although, as the rest of the book will show, a number of them started in WAC while they were still

young, new, or insecure, and they credit WAC with having helped them to build networks, confidence, and the ability to take risks.

We tried throughout to include women's voices, and they are represented out of proportion to their numbers in the faculties of the three schools. Astin (1993) suggests that women faculty and faculty representing diverse ethnic and racial backgrounds are more likely to be responsive to underprepared students and to use student-centered teaching approaches. Thus this book may reflect the faculty who, either through ethnic and gender socialization or through temperament, are most amenable to the student-centered approaches of WAC.

Gathering the 1993–1995 Collaborative Data

Once we had decided to collaborate, had assessed our past data, and were in the process of refining our research questions and defining our population, we collected interviews and faculty-authored accounts on each campus (see Table 2.3, Item 9; Appendix E). We chose a variety of faculty who, earlier data had indicated, would represent a wide range of responses to WAC. We used these 1993–1995 interviews and accounts, then, to seek diversity of viewpoint; to update our records on some faculty about whom we already had earlier data; to focus specifically on our research questions; to add a body of data that was gathered in a somewhat consistent manner across all three campuses; and to record faculty voices that could be quoted directly in the book. Forty-two faculty—twenty-two from UC, ten from TSU, and ten from Whitworth—gave us interviews or their own authored accounts. We want to emphasize that, in almost all cases, we had earlier data on these faculty, so the interviews were a culmination and an updating. Table 2.4 summarizes the characteristics of the forty-two faculty members.

Data Analysis

Our Methods of Data Analysis

Looking for Common Themes

We analyzed all our data, looking for common themes, by using Spradley (1979; 1980) as a guide. To triangulate by researcher, we examined separately each other's interviews and faculty-authored accounts and then compared our interpretations. At the University of Cincinnati, Slachman and Walvoord identified themes independently.

Contributing to this process were earlier data analyses we had undertaken independently. For example, McMahon at Towson State

Table 2.4. Characteristics of the 42 faculty studied through interviews and self-authored reports, 1993–1995

Tenured:	34	Tenure-track untenured:	3
Nontenure track:	5	Minority:	1
Female:	20	Four-year/Graduate colleges:	39
Two-year colleges of UC:	3		
Disciplines:		Disciplines:	
Natural Sciences:	4	Social Sciences/Business:	11
Math/Computers:	4	Humanities/Languages/Arts:	15
Education and other preprofessional:	8		

n = 22 UC faculty, 10 TSU faculty, 10 Whitworth faculty

had noted a strong "problem-solution" frame in analyzing her eighteen faculty accounts in the booklet she published in-house in 1991. That frame helped to shape our section on why faculty came to WAC.

We had little trouble combining our themes; they were remarkably consistent. We further defined them through collaboration on multiple drafts of this book.

Including Dissident Voices

We tried to make the data analysis trustworthy by seeking out voices which did not fit the dominant themes that were emerging in the bulk of our data. We have included some of those voices in this book. Another way of assuring a range of voices was our large sample size. At Whitworth, we had multiple forms of data from virtually all of the faculty who attended workshops and then remained at Whitworth. At Cincinnati, we collected questionnaires and interviews from 89 percent (117) of the 131 faculty who had completed a two-day workshop between 1989 and 1991 and who were still on campus in 1991. We tracked down this 89 percent sample to try to ensure a wide variety of responses.

Challenges in Data Analysis

We struggled with several challenges throughout our data analysis. The first was the sheer variety of our data, collected under different circumstances, for different purposes, with different questions. We

decided to rely most heavily on the final round of interviews and faculty accounts because they had been shaped for this study, they were somewhat consistent in method across the campuses, and they represented the most recent view. We also used heavily the published faculty accounts and the case studies that included classroom observations. These were the data where faculty spoke in their own voices, and we had their exact words. We used other data to enrich that material, to extend our data back into the past, to triangulate, and to suggest whom to interview in the final round to assure a range of WAC experiences.

Faculty self-reports posed several challenges. We value faculty self-reports because our focus is on how *faculty* make sense of their WAC experiences. These are not "weak" data to us in the same way as are the match-to-sample studies we summarized in the introduction. However, some problematic issues arose. First, asking questions specifically about WAC may have tended to highlight and foreground it from a mosaic where WAC might otherwise not have stood out in such bold relief. Faculty may have tended to give WAC too much credit for changes. Faculty may unconsciously have shaped their reports in the "conversion" or "testimonial" genre. On each campus, our research was directed from the WAC office, and in many cases the interviewer, while not the workshop leader, was the WAC director, a colleague well known to the faculty member. The impulse to please was undoubtedly present.

We countered these tendencies to highlight WAC and to please the WAC interviewer by:

- using a large sample size: trying to reach a large percentage of faculty;
- seeking out faculty who had different viewpoints about WAC;
- gathering data in various settings over time from the same faculty members;
- trying deliberately, in interviews, to bring out dissident points of view;
- examining syllabi and assignment sheets as part of interviews and faculty-authored presentations;
- observing classrooms;
- having the interview, in most cases, conducted by a person who had not led the WAC workshops the faculty member had attended, thereby giving the faculty member more freedom to be critical (Hunt interviewed at Whitworth, where

Walvoord had conducted workshops; Walvoord, Slachman, and Udel interviewed at Cincinnati, where workshops for the "Population A" faculty we studied most intensely [see Table 2.3] had been led by Fulwiler and Steffens; Dowling and McMahon interviewed at Towson State, where Dowling had led the Faculty Writers' Response Group and a few of the workshops, but where many workshops had been led by a number of others);

- talking with faculty in small groups, where faculty spoke before their peers and colleagues.

The small-group context was useful, we felt, because of the strong scholarly tradition of peer review, where faculty are accustomed to being held accountable for their words in a group of peers. Further, the tasks of the various small groups and committees—to conduct classroom research, to plan WAC activities, to respond to each other's writing or teaching plans—tended to bring out fuller data and to draw faculty away from testimonial presentations. The fact that many of the groups met over time and were informal meant that faculty answered unscripted questions about their classroom practices. Moreover, on each campus there were public presentations, both written and oral, by a number of our faculty to groups of their peers—groups that often included departmental colleagues who could evaluate the accuracy of the classroom procedures being described. Presenters responded to open questions from the audience. In virtually all of the public presentations, the teachers showed actual syllabi, assignment sheets, student work, or other documents.

The fact remains, however, that our data are better able to tell what faculty believe to have happened—and what WAC meant to them—than to pin down precisely what kinds of classroom changes actually happened in a scientifically verifiable way.

These, then, are our data and our methods for analyzing them. Throughout, we tried to listen to faculty and to understand their points of view. We believe that readers will find the voices that emerge in this book to be varied, rich, interesting, convincing in their candor, and fascinating in their various reflections on what WAC means to those who struggle daily in the classroom to find better ways of enhancing learning, creating community, and fulfilling the human spirit.

The next chapter presents in further detail each institution's characteristics, its WAC program, and its research data and methods.