

# MAPPING STUDENTS' FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE IN THE FIRST- YEAR WRITING CLASSROOM

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I am literate in the language of  
Soccer  
English  
social medias.  
Making breakfast  
Teaching children  
Running  
Track  
How to drive a car  
Change my oil  
Eating  
— Thomas<sup>1</sup>, first-semester freshman, English 101

Every student who enters the classroom is literate in multiple ways. For Thomas, one of my English 101 students from the fall of 2013, his literacies empower him to engage with the world socially and practically. Literacy allows people to share knowledge and resources within and between communities. Ethnographer Luis C. Moll believes that “[w]e must think of literacy (or literacies) as particular ways of *using* language for a variety of purposes, as a sociocultural practice with intellectual significance” (“Literacy Research” 237, emphasis in the original). In the National Council of Teachers of English’s (NCTE) Position Statement on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Literacies, the authors concur that literacies extend a user’s world. Literacies “are inextricably linked with particular histories, life possibilities, and social trajectories of individuals and groups,” they write (n.p.). Complementing Moll

and NCTE's definitions, Carmen I. Mercado defines literacy "as a sense-making practice [which] is an ongoing quest to understand, through multiple symbolic media or multiple literacies, information that enables us to act on the world" (242). I adopt all three definitions of literacy in this article, but Mercado's definition provides writing instructors with a tool that can help students transition to academia more effectively.

While the literacies students bring with them into the classroom are diverse and sophisticated, like Thomas' literacies, they do not always translate into academic success. Compositionists Patricia Bizzell, Eli Goldblatt, Mike Rose, and Victor Villanueva, among others, have written about how student success, particularly with underprepared or underrepresented student populations, is dependent upon familiarity with academic literacies. As a result, successful "insider" integration into academia means that students learn the literacies of academic and professional discourse communities. Although students bring pre-existing academic literacies with them to college, they still experience difficulties with their transition into academia (see De Oliveira and Silva; Fromme, Corbin, and Kruse; Joliffe and Harl; and Smith and Zhang).

Concerned with first-year students' transition from high school to college, I take a multi-modal approach in English 101 to teach them how to adapt to the variety of discourse communities on campus. During the semester, students create a digital literacy map, a profile of a place, and a public service announcement. The central theme tying these assignments together is the discourse community concept, a vital factor in students' transition. While students must learn how to adapt to new discourse communities, they must feel supported, valued, and respected within the classroom. In a time of adjustment, their success will depend on how welcomed they feel by their classmates and instructors. Therefore, I dovetail students' Funds of Knowledge (FoK) with the discourse community framework as a method for valuing students' knowledge while teaching them how to adapt to campus. The concept of FoK is traditionally defined as the

cultural, social, and subject knowledge people learn within their home communities, such as cooking, farming, or repair. However, it has likewise come to include the social relationships and literacies that allow people to exchange information and knowledge within their own discourse communities (Moll et al. “Funds of Knowledge for Teaching” 85). FoK, as I conceive of it, serves as an overarching umbrella in which students’ pre-existing knowledge about community membership and literacies reside. FoK complements Patricia Bizzell’s recommendation to investigate and celebrate “the relationship between the academic discourse community and the communities from which [our] students come” (108). FoK scholarship, like the best practices of composition pedagogy, illustrates how instructors can empower students by validating their home knowledge while teaching them how to be members of multiple communities.

In this article, I share with *Journal of Teaching Writing* readers how they can support students’ pre-existing knowledge through a digital literacy map assignment. This assignment requires students to visually plot out four of their discourse communities and the accompanying literacies of those communities. Explicitly, the literacy map is meant to introduce students to discourse community concepts. Implicitly, it supports and celebrates students’ FoK, as they draw on their digital- and community-specific knowledge to map their communities.

Since examples of similar literacy maps are difficult to find, I include four representative but different student examples and accompanying reflections from my fall 2013 semester of English 101 at the University of Wisconsin-Stout. These examples highlight three trends that emerged from my students’ maps and reflections: (1) they recognize that their social success depends on their insider membership, (2) they understand the importance of having a literacy sponsor as they transition from outsider to insider, (3) and they know that becoming an insider on campus will help them enjoy their time while in college.

Mapping students’ lives celebrates the classroom’s collective FoK by publicly acknowledging students’ expertise. Furthermore,

this assignment, like similar assignments that celebrate students' preexisting knowledge, legitimizes the FoK students bring into the classroom. As well, the digital literacy map assignment unearths the kinds of FoK first-year students find valuable: the literacy map gives instructors insight into the communities, literacies, and FoK that are valued by their students. With this knowledge instructors can find ways to better integrate their students' FoK into future classroom activities and assignments, a move that may partially bridge the gap from high school to college.

### **Funds of Knowledge as Community Currency**

The phrase "Funds of Knowledge" (FoK) is attributed to anthropologist Eric R. Wolf's book *Peasants* (1966) in which he highlights the various funds peasants use to engage in social exchange, such as the exchange of ceremonial funds or rent funds. While Wolf does not explicitly define FoK, the term's contemporary rendering derives from his explanation that peasants "exchange their own labor and its products for the culturally defined equivalent goods and services of others" (3). Educational psychologist Linda Hogg explains that Wolf's term "define[s] resources and knowledge that households manipulate to make ends meet in the household economy" (667). Consequently, FoK originally denoted skills and knowledge sets needed for economic, social, and cultural survival or success. Within the last two decades, however, the definition has expanded to "refer both to the content and the social relationships that facilitate the exchange," writes Moll ("Literacy Research" 232). The concept of FoK is an interdisciplinary but useful framework for writing instructors and literacy scholars alike as it frames people's literacy acquisition and application within the context of their home communities. As well, it complements literacy sponsorship scholarship, such as Deborah Brandt's work (2).

The research of anthropologist Carlos G. Vélez-Ibáñez and ethnographer Luis C. Moll in the 1980s and 1990s largely define the FoK scholarship. As colleagues at the University of Arizona, they were sometimes co-collaborators studying FoK in Hispanic

and Mexican communities within Tucson, Arizona, and across the border to determine the ways Hispanic and Mexican households created an exchange of knowledge and resources. Vélez-Ibáñez and Moll discovered that Mexican and Hispanic people create home communities that instill functional and cultural literacies within their members to increase cultural and economic stability. These home communities privilege FoK that are often radically different from those FoK valued within the mainstream Western society. As a result, Vélez-Ibáñez and Moll observed, Hispanic and Mexican immigrants faced challenges adapting their literacies to those valued in Arizona. While Vélez-Ibáñez and Moll's scholarship provides a case study of one particular people group, their conclusions can be applied to illustrate the difficulties all people face transitioning into new, unfamiliar discourse communities.

Vélez-Ibáñez's study of border families highlights the reciprocal relationships and roles among Mexicans—for example, one person could serve many roles as an uncle, a soccer coach, and a mechanic—that allow them to politically, socially, and culturally support the needs of their community (29). His research shows how Mexican communities exist within “residentially-based networks with a historical sense of cohort identity” that encourages a sharing of resources and support (32). While not termed by Vélez-Ibáñez, these Mexican and Hispanic households function as discourse communities drawn together by common needs and shared literacies. For these working-class Mexicans, FoK are essential to their economic survival. Evident in Vélez-Ibáñez's scholarship is how FoK acts as currency between community relationships and personal literacy.

While Vélez-Ibáñez's research was an effort to push against ethnocentric clichés (28), Moll, with fellow researchers Cathy Amanti, Deborah Neff, and Norma Gonzáles, wanted to discover the underlying reasons for a “persistently high rate of educational failure” within the Latino populations of Tucson (Moll “Literacy Research” 211). Moll et al. began their research by examining the FoK within Hispanic households hoping to identify fissures that

impede Latino students' success. Their findings indicate, in part, that Latino students' educational failure is a result of their difficulty transitioning to the Western school system. Moll notes that students' FoK are often disconnected from their classroom curriculum and activities ("Literacy Research" 216). This results in students feeling isolated and marginalized. In order to help Latino students transition to the mainstream school system, Gonzáles, Moll, and Amanti advocate for including "contextualization" within the classroom, defined as "making meaning and connecting school to students' lives" ("Introduction" 8). Without this connection to students' home communities, instructors—regardless of the student populations they teach—run the risk of alienating their students. Therefore, writing instructors of all types of learners, from novice to expert, may consider using the principles of FoK to support their students' learning.

### **The Importance of Mapping: Showcasing Students' Lived Experiences**

Mapping creates a visual representation of content allowing students to conceive of their FoK in a new way. Nancy Barta-Smith and Danette DiMarco explain, "[T]hrough map literacy, students can learn how to integrate their understanding of reading and writing, steps in the research process, and various knowledge bases" (67). Providing innovative and different methods of conception is vital to developing flexible, creative communicators. Furthermore, mapping out knowledge is one way to celebrate students' contributions and "place" in the world. Barta-Smith and DiMarco iterate, "Everyone is on the map, even the cartographer. No one stands outside" (80). Conceiving of literacy as mappable is "a commitment to viewing literacy as spatially and materially constrained," Erin Penner Gallegos explains, because the literacy map "value[s] the landscape in which each particular writing classroom is situated" ("Mapping Student Literacies" n.p.) Thus, the classroom becomes a discourse community in which students share and respond to each other's

FoK. Mapping students' lives teaches students to visualize their place in the world. Additionally, the act of mapping students' FoK validates the knowledge they bring with them into the classroom while situating their lives and experiences into a larger, global context.

In 2011, as a third year doctoral student at the University of New Mexico, I learned about literacy maps from my colleague and friend Gallegos. After talking about our similar challenges in teaching first-year students how to adapt to the writing and reading expectations in English 101, she introduced me to her literacy map assignment in which students map their discourse communities and accompanying literacies. Gallegos invented the assignment "out of [her] concern for making discourse communities more tangible to [her] students, and out of a desire to make [her] class more place-based" (Email correspondence). For Gallegos, the literacy map "encapsulates the belief that literacy, and literacy practices, are inherently tied to the material realities that define the lives of our students prior to and during their brief time in our classrooms" ("Mapping Student Literacies" n.p.). Similarly to Gallegos, my iteration of the literacy map emphasizes the intertwined relationship between discourse community membership and literacy, highlighting how communities use literacies in similar and different ways. Our assignment differs, however, in that Gallegos emphasized the place-based component with an assignment arc that included the literacy map, a literacy narrative, and a disciplinary or professional discourse community profile.

In Gallegos' original conception, students could choose to create their literacy maps as physical documents (on poster board, printed maps, or construction paper) or digitally. In my version, the literacy map is a digital assignment in which students practice digital literacy. My university is a "laptop campus" in which every undergraduate student is issued a laptop, and students carry their laptops with them everywhere; however, they are not given training in how to use the computer programs, unless faculty incorporate it into the coursework. Therefore, even though first-

year students have the technology with them on a daily basis, many of them do not know how to use basic functions, such as page numbering in Word. In order to harness students' technological FoK while teaching basic digital literacy, I added the map's digital component. The digital nature of the map allows me to introduce students to basic programs and features on their computers. As well, the digital component becomes a conduit that encourages them to apply their technological FoK to class work—something they often have difficulty doing. In the end, students typically create their maps through a Word document, PowerPoint, Prezi, or some other digital medium. Sometimes there are those students who love to draw and want to create paper maps; therefore, I am always flexible in the format, although all students are required to submit their maps electronically.

Like Gallegos' assignment, my students choose four discourse communities in which they are insiders, and they must show a visual relationship between the communities' literacies. Each map must include a map key that helps readers navigate the content and design elements. Finally, to visually illustrate the relationships between communities and literacies, students are required to use graphics, images, colors, or fonts to make this relationship clear (Appendix A). After submitting the map, students spend ten minutes writing a reflection in-class about what they learned about discourse communities and insider/outsider membership (Appendix B).

After teaching the literacy map for four years, my purpose for the assignment has evolved. Initially, I adopted the literacy map as a way to teach students how to reflect upon and evaluate discourse communities. This, I figured, was the first step in their transition into academia. However, I have since learned that students have difficulty with this connection. Either they do not know how their FoK can inform academic discourse community membership, or they do not have the language to talk about it, even after several weeks of class discussion. Alternately, the discourse communities they want to talk and write about are those communities they have



left behind, or the social communities of which they have recently become members. First-year students are hyper aware of their need to “fit in” with the campus community, and much of their time and effort is spent building a social support system. In fact, many first-year students place more energy into developing relationships than navigating academia. As a result, my scope has shifted from emphasizing the transition to academia to including the entire campus. Broadening this scope allows my students to select the new discourse communities that they feel most comfortable with, such as social, professional, or academic ones.

### **Literacy Maps in English 101 at the University of Wisconsin-Stout**

In the fall semester of 2013, I devoted the first three weeks of the semester to the digital literacy map assignment. In the first week, students were assigned readings about discourse communities, such as the “What is a discourse community?” web page from the University of Central Florida and University of Texas—El Paso student Gabriela Andrade’s e-portfolio blog. As well, students were encouraged to find web pages themselves that explained the purposes of discourse communities. I coupled online material with textbook readings about rhetorical purpose (audience, purpose, and genre) to teach my students to actively think about their mapping choices and authorial intent. In the second week, students were introduced to how discourse communities shape identities and literacies through readings from Bradford Hall’s *Among Cultures*. Additionally, they had a chance to explore online, interactive “Story Maps” created by ArcGIS users. ArcGIS is an application-based geographic information system in which users map stories and content, such as “Boston 911 Calls,” “Zoo Babies,” or “The Rapid Rise of Farmers’ Markets.” These Story Maps allow for conversations about design principles, discourse communities, the rhetorical situation, and literacies. In the third week, students began drafting and finalizing their maps. During this week, one class period became a workshop in which I

briefly conferenced with each student about his or her map, troubleshooting problems as they arose. Since students' FoK largely informs the mediums they select for their maps, few problems arise. The problems students do encounter are design-related, such as formatting text boxes and graphics. Most students used Word or PowerPoint to create their maps. However, three students—either art students or those who just love to draw—chose to draw or collage their maps, and one student used Prezi.

To bolster students' understanding of the literacy map, we spent nearly every class period in small group and large group discussions with activities that refined students' understanding of the assignment. Because students had their laptops with them, they used their laptops everyday to take notes, define terms, and conduct simple Google searches. While they brought to the classroom FoK about web browsing, online research, and note taking, those FoK needed to be cultivated in many ways. Students needed to learn how to use the internet to define more complicated content, like the terms "discourse communities" and "literacy," or troubleshoot PowerPoint and Word formatting problems. Despite their technological FoK, they rarely took the initiative to use the internet to problem solve, whether in class or out of class. In addition, I integrated students' FoK by creating activities that capitalized upon their knowledge about social groups, such as friend groups from high school, and helped them identify corresponding literacies. We spent time talking about the intricacies of their communities, noting which literacies overlapped or were shared between communities. To draw connections between their lives and the assignment, I regularly called upon individual students to answer questions about their communities and the corresponding literacies. These in-class discussions built friendships between students and provided a forum to showcase their multiplicity of talents, interests, and skills. In the last week of the assignment, students shared their knowledge through peer review and a "museum walk" of the final product, where they walked around and looked at each map on the laptop screens. The peer-on-peer sharing of knowledge

empowered students to reflect upon their experiences and knowledge with pride, and they learned to adapt their FoK to support their classmates.

The following four student examples were selected to demonstrate four very different conceptualizations of the literacy map. Despite the differences, one common thread emerges from their maps and reflections. The maps illustrate the FoK students privilege, namely knowledge that allows them to engage socially with the world. In particular, social media and technology are dominant FoK that allow and encourage students to interact within their discourse communities and across communities. Within the corresponding reflections, students identify the importance of their social (friend) communities. As well, they were able to apply discourse community concepts to their new university friend groups. Perhaps most interestingly, the maps and reflections illuminate to what extent friend, family, and workplace communities trump other kinds of communities, like academia.

Amy's literacy map reveals the shared knowledge between her family, lakers (her lake community), jobs, and Facebook communities (see Figure 1). The ways in which she represents similar literacies through colored boxes, such as "texting" and using the "phone" that both connect her family community and jobs community together, showcases how her FoK empowers her to communicate with different groups. Furthermore, her effective uses of colors as a design principle draws readers' eyes to the similarities and differences between her communities' literacies. In another representation of her FoK, Amy's maps her communities using both people and places to represent her communities. This is a more complex perspective of discourse community construction as it highlights that communities can be organized around people or places. Amy's map builds upon my classroom lectures about how discourse communities are organized around groups of people (like a family) or a location (like Facebook).

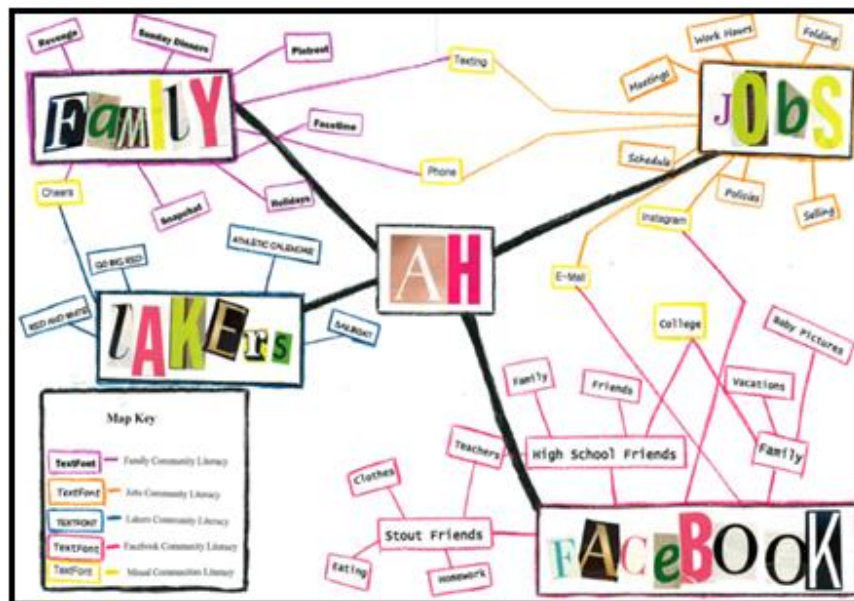


Figure 1. Amy’s Literacy Map

In Amy’s reflection, she is able to explain that discourse community membership is intimately connected with particular kinds of literacies, a sophisticated connection in only three weeks of class. She writes,

*An insider of a community will most likely know the terms that are used, the language, and communication. Whereas if an outside member were to look into a community that they are not connected to they will have no idea what is going on or what people are talking about.*

Even though Amy reflects generally about her understandings of discourse community membership, she articulates more specifically the importance of discourse when adapting to a new environment. Amy’s application of her FoK is expected as a new member to the University of Wisconsin-Stout discourse community. She continues,

*These terms can make you more aware of the communities you are in and make you realize what ways to act is okay in a specific community. This can help you transition by giving more information to us as freshman. The way we communicate with people is a big factor. If I never would have made friends by communicating I would not have any friends which would not have allowed me to part-take in the discourse communities that I am now in on our campus. Communication is also important because if we never communicate with professors when we are confused about something we would never figure out answers.*

As a first-semester college student, as all of my students were, Amy is keenly aware of the importance of communication between different groups of people, an important skill if she hopes to be successful at UW-Stout. Even though she was not able to explain how her newfound discourse community and literacy knowledge supports her transition to academia, she focuses on the most important element to her—her social community in college. This is not a surprising point as most first-year students actively build a circle of friends within their first semester. Nevertheless, her ability to recognize that communication is audience-specific is an example of the FoK that she brings into the classroom, a skill learned before coming to college.

In a very different rendering of the literacy map, Tiffany's map represents her discourse communities through the technology that binds them together (see Figure 2). For example, she uses colored circles to represent her communities while using graphics and logos to represent their literacies. For Tiffany to communicate with her communities, she must be literate in social media, like Instagram, Skype, and Snapchat. In an example of the uniqueness of each student's map, Tiffany only includes people-based communities (family, high school friends, neighborhood friends, and online friends). This is a very different approach from Amy, who primarily includes places.



Figure 2. Tiffany's Literacy Map

Applying her digital literacy FoK, Tiffany brings into the classroom her knowledge about effective design, such as her use of white space and balance, which optimally communicates her map's content without overwhelming her readers. Furthermore, her focus on the communication styles used by her communities, predominantly app-based social media and texting, reveals the extent to which being a digital native shapes Tiffany's literacies.

Tiffany's reflection is more specific and shows a complex understanding of how discourse communities affect insider and outsider membership. Responding to the prompt that asks her to consider how her discourse community knowledge can support her transition to become a campus insider, Tiffany explains the importance of a literacy sponsor:

*Discourse communities are a group of people that speak the same language and share a culture with one another. An outsider of the*

*community would, when thrown into the group, be very confused about the things the community does and say. An insider is someone who is part of the community. With an insider's help an outsider can eventually learn and become part of the community. For instance, someone who has no idea about painting getting thrown into a classroom of art students may not understand what acrylic paint is or how to properly use it. But with the students help, this person can become knowledgeable about the discourse community of acrylic painting.*

Tiffany's reflection masterfully articulates how academic courses function as individual discourse communities with particular literacies. For students without disciplinary FoK, the transition is more difficult. However, her acrylic paint example illustrates how FoK can be used as currencies of exchange between classmates. Although Tiffany is not an art student, she recognizes the importance of students sharing their disciplinary FoK to help each other transition from outsider to insider. Encouraging students to become FoK sponsors creates a community of sharing and support. Moreover, it may ease students' transition from high school to college.

Greg's literacy map primarily defines discourse community membership through places and events, highlighting the importance his home FoK have upon his identity (see Figure 3). Greg, hailing from Sauk Prairie, Wisconsin, situates all of his communities within that town, a common rendering of many students' literacy maps. Unlike Tiffany's focus on social media and technology, Greg's FoK rests in the events and places that draw the Sauk Prairie community together. For example, he makes connections between the Fourth of July and the Wisconsin River, categorized in the "Special Events" and "Important Places" community, respectively.

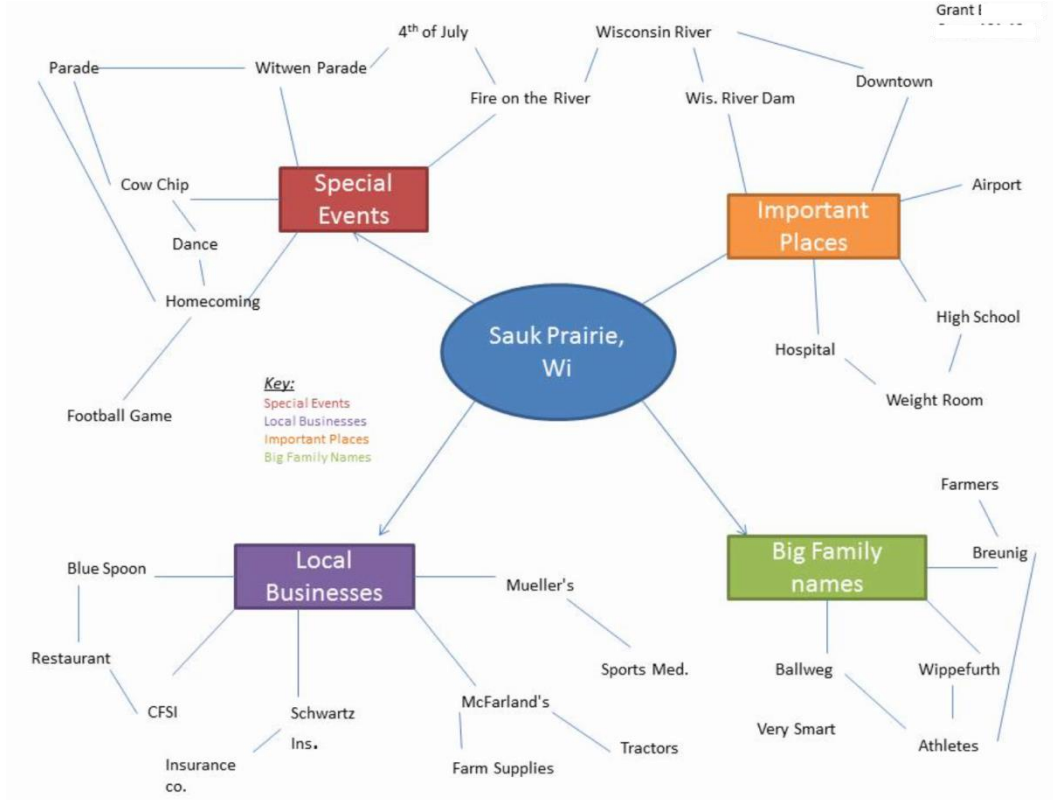


Figure 3. Greg's Literacy Map

In a connection that harkens back to the origins of FoK, Greg's map seems to be informed by an economic framework. Even though his FoK may not be entirely based on economics, the fact that his map represents important places, people, and businesses that contribute to the Sauk Prairie community (and most certainly the economy) shows how people's FoK—even eighteen-year-old students—are affected by the economy around them, as Wolf claimed in the 1960s.

Furthermore, students' social networking FoK emerges from their reflections. Most students' reflections indicate their concern with building a social network at UW-Stout. This fact should not be surprising as most new freshman are more interested in creating a support system and social network than communicating



with their instructors or reflecting upon the benefits of their General Education courses. However, they bring similar friendship-specific FoK that affects how they make and maintain friendships; and this is a vital part of campus assimilation and academic success. Greg writes,

*We all belong to thousands of discourse communities, weather it be going to church, liking to draw, a favorite show or favorite food, we all have different passions and knowledge that help us become members of specific communities in the world today. And here at college with thousands of kids coming together and meet each other for the first time it is important to be able to join the new, and vast amount of communities that surround you and be able to bound and form friendships with the other members of the communities that you belong to. Doing this will help lead you to a better and more enjoyable experience over the next 4 years here at Stout. Becoming a Stout insider is one of the most important thing a new freshmen must due here in their first semester.*

For Greg, like other students in the class, navigating discourse community membership can improve their college experience. In the first-year writing classroom, discourse community concepts are an invaluable method to teaching novice writers how to conceive of academia as a community with particular expectations and assumptions. Inexperienced writers, Irene L. Clark explains, must learn to extend perceptions of audience beyond a single person (141). Therefore, capitalizing upon students' FoK to extend their perceptions of audience may make them more effective learners as they transition from high school to college.

Greg's observations show in what ways new students think through the reality of their first semester. At UW-Stout, all first-year students are required to live in campus dorms; as a result, making friends becomes even more important. Without a support system in the first semester, students are less likely to return to campus the spring semester or sophomore year. Another student, Bev, reflects upon the importance of insider membership this way:

*“We all want to be a part of the Discourse Community of Stout because otherwise we will feel like we don’t belong here and we should’ve picked a different school to attend.”* And without the right friends, students may take a longer time becoming insiders. Chris affirms this point: *“Becoming more of an insider has helped a ton because I have become friends with some upper classmen who have helped me through some of the first few weeks and always are able to point me in the right direction.”* Greg, Bev, and Chris’ wise observations denote the importance of building a community of support. Student-created communities of support can smooth the rough edges of the college transition and increase first-year student retention rates in ways that may not be achieved through adult-orchestrated methods.

Finally, Jeff’s map illustrates how his home communities impact his discourse community membership and literacies. Similar to Greg and Tiffany’s maps, Jeff’s FoK are impacted by the social media, events, and places frequently used by his discourse communities (see Figure 4). His literacy map is equally complex because it includes social media, locations, websites, and interpersonal FoK that allow him to transact with his world. By conceptualizing his literacy map as a map of Wisconsin, Jeff can truly visualize how his communities overlap and interact regardless of time and space. Unlike most of my students’ maps, Jeff includes the university and his major as integral facets of his campus discourse community. Because the University of Wisconsin-Stout does not require first-year students to declare majors, most students omitted the academic discourse community from their maps. Jeff’s addition of Cross-Media Graphics, his major, on his map is evidence that he is starting to think about academia as its own, unique discourse community.

Jeff’s reflection indicates audience awareness FoK, a skill he most likely brought into the classroom with him. He wrote, *“Communication is used throughout each community although the means of communication may vary. You may tweet at some of your friends, but probably not your grandma. Everyone has an identity, and it’s the communities that we are apart of that define it and who we are.”*



Figure 4. Jeff's Literacy Map

Jeff's example illustrates a FoK about communication that will enable him to effectively communicate with the different people around him. Moreover, Jeff's reflection demonstrates a complex understanding of how members' identities are influenced and shaped by their fellow community members. My hope is that he effectively applies this FoK to his communication situations on- and off-campus, in order to increase his personal, professional, and civic success.

As the first assignment of the semester, the digital literacy map gives students language to talk, write, and evaluate the communities around them. With this assignment, I intend to capitalize upon the knowledge students have when they walk into English 101 and start the semester with what they know—their

own communities. While the digital literacy map can be taught at any point in the semester, I use it as the first assignment because it teaches students how to visually represent their discourse communities, an easier method of plotting out their communities than the written word. Furthermore, the literacy map provides a visual representation of students' FoK that usually does not emerge from in-class discussions. Finally, this first assignment disarms them, a deliberate rhetorical move that I make to foster course buy-in. First-year students expect "College English" to include essays about literature, and they are quite excited to create something very different from their previous English assignments.

The other two assignments, the profile of a place and the public service announcement (PSA), require students to explore two other new communities, one off-campus and the listeners of a local radio station, respectively. The profile moves students from what they know, their own communities, to a place they do not know, like a coffee shop, park, or church. Through observations and interviews, students learn to articulate how places draw or deter particular discourse communities. The PSA assignment asks students to shift their gaze to another community, the listeners of a local radio station, and to create a research-based PSA for the listening audience. These three assignments build upon students' FoK while intersecting literacy and discourse community concepts, and in all three assignments I empower students to apply their own FoK as they transition from campus outsider to insider.

## **Recommendations**

My students' maps and reflections demonstrate that first-year students know, either implicitly or explicitly, how to apply their FoK to engage with the world around them. This is not surprising as FoK are community-learned. Regardless of where students grew up, they bring into the classroom very similar FoK, as well as personal applications of discourse community scholarship. In following sections, I offer several recommendations for how

instructors may want to adapt the digital literacy map to their own students' needs, whether those students are in elementary school or graduate school.

### **Mapping Academic Communities**

For instructors who would like to place an explicit emphasis on supporting their students' transition to the academic discourse community, readers may consider developing a literacy map assignment in which students apply their FoK to map different academic discourse communities that they encounter across campus. This map might plot students' different courses within a semester, requiring an exploration of how literacies are similar or different depending on the academic disciplines. Such an assignment would encourage students to evaluate and assess the academic communities around them, even if they have not declared a major. Additionally, examining academic communities may support students' transition from disciplinary novice to (semi) expert if they learn to find similarities between their academic communities and their own home communities. Furthermore, writing instructors can weave into class discussion or writing assignments questions in which students explore how their academic FoK—from note taking to communicating with instructors—can be applied to different courses and rhetorical situations.

Requiring students to analyze the academic communities around them, regardless of their insider or outsider status, may bridge the gap between students' FoK and the academic literacies they are exposed to. Instructors might consider requiring their students to interview a university professor or professional to learn more about the literacies of that course and discipline. A literacy map with an explicit emphasis on academia could encourage students to “learn to speak our [academics'] language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing,” as David Bartholomae has advocated (273). Moreover, the mapping of academic communities may support students' disciplinary

inquisitiveness and provide them with the tools to make more informed choices about their professional goals.

### **Literacy Maps: A Means for Digital Literacy Communication**

Although most students are smart device (iPhone, Android, iPod, tablet, etc.) natives, which is a FoK they bring with them to college, they still need guidance communicating in a complex, social, technologically-driven world where audiences and media switch and overlap in a matter of minutes or seconds. Harnessing students' technological skills within the writing classroom teaches them how "to communicate in ways that speech does not," explains Dennis Baron (75). Likewise, Rebecca de Wind Mattingly and Patricia Harkin write,

Students who don't get enough exercise in paying attention to context and audience in their native forms of computer-enabled writing are more likely to fail to meet the needs of context- and address-sensitive audiences in the types of writing situations encountered in college and the workplace. (16)

Instructors may consider including a digital literacy map within their course curriculum as one method for teaching their students how to navigate the digital literacy landscape. As technology becomes more complex, and technology users develop more sophisticated types of communication, computer-enabled writing is an increasingly important aspect in the writing classroom. The fast-paced society in which our students live means that they must learn to slow down and think about their communicative choices. Without this guidance, students may not learn how to evaluate the data-driven professional and social communities they are exposed to. The literacy map is just one assignment that can be used to teach students how to thoughtfully apply their digital literacy knowledge to a higher stakes situation.

While some of my students enjoyed creating their maps from markers and colored pencils, instructors might consider teaching their students how to use the technologies around them, like Google Maps, Scribble Maps, Odyssey, or ArcGIS, which are four mapmaking websites in which students can create interactive maps. Partnering the digital literacy map with more advanced mapmaking technology can bolster students' dexterity with digital communication while building upon their technology and design savvy. While digital communication is not necessarily "better," it is a medium that students engage with on a daily basis. Writing instructors may want to harness students' preexisting, digital FoK to develop their digital communication dexterity.

### **Creating Literacy and Discourse Community Sponsors**

The physicality of the maps, either on paper or computer laptops, inspires students to present/display their work for other forums. Publicly sharing students' maps, either through museum walks or campus events, teaches students how to assume the role of literacy sponsor while creating work for an audience beyond the instructor. According to Brandt, literacy sponsors are "agents" who are "local or distant, abstract or concrete, who enable, support, teach, model, recruit, regulate, suppress, or withhold literacy and gain advantage by it in some way" (2). Therefore, instructors may want to adopt the literacy map to teach students how to sponsor each other. This sponsorship may take the form of students collaborating on map design, helping each other define community literacies, or sharing how they are applying their FoK to their campus experiences. Moll calls this transmission of knowledge an "activity of sharing" (223). Classroom-based sponsorship through activities of sharing may ease students' transition as they learn to adapt their FoK to support their classmates. Additionally, sharing students' work provides a public forum in which students gain practice creating work for a real-life rhetorical situation.

Fostering a sense of community through sponsorship and sharing is critical to supporting students' transition to the new

campus community. Dana L. Mitra notes, “Research in developmental psychology finds agency, belonging and competence to be necessary factors for adolescents to remain motivated in school and to achieve academic success” (655). In addition, Julie Ballantyne’s 2009 study at the University of Queensland, St. Lucia, showed that students’ sense of belonging was largely connected to their academic success (48). Appreciating and respecting students’ FoK, whether through assignments or classroom discussion, are important first steps in helping students envision themselves as contributing members of the academic community. For instructors of peripheral or underrepresented student populations, using the literacy map as a method of sponsorship might be one way to facilitate necessary connections between students’ home communities and campus. Framing the literacy map as literacy sponsorship acknowledges that students come to college with sophisticated and complex FoK that can be used to help others succeed; as well, the literacy map assignment presents an opportunity to teach students how to adapt to different discourse communities without losing their senses of self.

The impact of this digital literacy map assignment extends beyond students’ abilities to map out their community memberships in a medium where knowledge remains private and static. Instead, the literacy map is a genre that allows for and fosters a community of sharing within the classroom. Like other assignments that support and value students FoK, the literacy map encourages students to share knowledge and experiences without feeling threatened. Brian, another one of my English 101 students, writes in his map reflection, “*I’ve learned that we as individuals are not alone in a big world. We are apart of multiple groups that we don’t even think of...It ends up being like a giant spider web of contacts!*” Thus, the map provides an opportunity for students to give voice to their FoK while recognizing and developing their own network of friends and future colleagues.

The digital literacy map assignment is valuable because it empowers students to think about their FoK as currency and



themselves as agents. Once they learn how to harness their currency and agency, they can use their new skills to move within and between communities. Because students already bring some community- and literacy-based FoK into the classroom, the literacy map fosters an explicit awareness that provides students with tools to reflect and act upon their own community memberships, as well as become insiders into the communities they wish to enter. Kelsey reflected, “*I feel that this [literacy map] unit helped me into realizing that everyone was an outsider when they first came here, but slowly transitioning into a college makes me feel like an insider.*” My goal is to impress upon my students that their FoK can contribute to their campus success in ways that do not suppress their pre-college identities. Using the FoK framework as my guide, I am inspired to create assignments that support students as they move between and across discourse communities—a critical skill needed in order to become effective academics, professionals, and citizens.

#### Note

<sup>1</sup>All names have been changed, and students’ writing style is unedited.

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## APPENDIX A

### Sequence One: Literacy Map Prompt

#### *The Task*

In this assignment, you will be presenting information that you are familiar with—your own literacy and discourse communities—in a way that might not be familiar to you: You’ll be creating a map.

What is a map? A map is a visual and verbal text that conveys information, often very complex information, to the people who view it. Consider this quote:

Maps are an important source of information from which people form their impressions about places and distributions. Each map is a view of the earth that affects the way people think about the world. Our thoughts about the space in which we live and especially the areas beyond our direct perception are largely influenced by the representations of space that we see, and the way we think about our environment influences the way we act within it. (Michael Peterson, “Cartography and the Internet: Implications for Modern Cartography”)

#### *Purpose*

The information that you will convey through your map has to do with your own discourse communities, and the literacy practices of those communities. The map you create will be both personal and public, because it will convey your impression of and interaction with the world(s) that you live, write, and communicate in.

#### *Audience*

Your audience for this map is your peers in this class and the rest of the UW-Stout community, including other students, staff, and administrators. Think about how you want these people to understand you and where you come from.

This map is both a geographic (shows relations between places) and a concept (shows relations between ideas) map. *Be creative!*

#### *Literacy Map Guidelines*

Your map should be made through one single PowerPoint slide or drawn and scanned document.

When considering how to show relationships between communities, you might want to use an actual map of the city, state, country, or globe to represent how far removed each of your communities is from one another. Or you can design another way to show the relationships and proximities between communities. You should also think about how you might represent the similarity of discourse communities that are not close to one another in real space. For virtual communities, you should think about how to relate them to real communities.

Your map should include

- Your name
- Headings with names of each of four communities
- Names and examples of literacies each community uses
- A map key that helps your readers navigate the document and explains any visual symbols
- Visual relationship between communities (arrows, lines, circles, etc.)
- Visually pleasing design and image choices

## **APPENDIX B**

Spend ten minutes writing about the following two points. Include specific examples in this reflection.

1. What did you learn over the last few weeks about discourse communities, insider/outsider membership, literacy, communication, and/or identity?
2. How might your new knowledge about the terms and concepts of discourse community, insider/outsider membership, literacy, communication, and/or identity help you transition as a Stout outsider to a Stout insider?

