A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF ENGLISH INSTRUCTORS’ COURSE DESIGN AND PEDAGOGICAL DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES AT PRIVATE LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

by

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of Educational Leadership, Policy, and Technology Studies in the Graduate School of The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2018
ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English teachers at liberal arts colleges. Principles of course design iterated by Fink (2013) through the Integrated Course Design (ICD) model provided a framework for the study. The participants in this study were full-time English department faculty members teaching English 102; participants were of varying ages, educational backgrounds, and years of teaching experience. The participant group included an even number of male and female instructors. Study participants reflected the elements of Fink's ICD model to at least a moderate degree.

Data for the study was collected through face-to-face interviews with each instructor, classroom observations, and review of course-related documents. Thematic analysis using qualitative methods facilitated the organization of data into manageable strands. Thematic coding identified connections between the collected data and the research questions. Use of one-on-one teaching strategies emerged from data analysis; this is reported in Chapter IV.

The study examined instructors’ moves as they planned and taught their 102 courses. Through these means, alignment was found between best practices presented in literature and what occurred in actual teaching and learning situations, or, put another way, between theory and practice. In particular, evidence of these components of course design described by Fink (2013) was found in the participants' course design and pedagogical decision-making processes: Backward Design, Educative Assessment, Goals for Significant Learning, Use of Reflection, Consideration of Situational Factors, and the six taxa of Significant Learning.
DEDICATION

I undertook the doctoral process as a way to learn more about college-level teaching and the history of higher education in our country. Doing this research filled in a lot of “gaps” for me as a first-generation college student. I have written this dissertation with my fellow first-gens in mind and I have tried to incorporate information that is informative to the academy and to them.

I dedicate this work to first-generation college students and to the generations before us, who made our journeys possible.

To us from falling hands they threw
The torch; be ours to hold it high. *

Paraphrased from “In Flanders Fields”
by John McCrae
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>America/American</td>
<td>(A resident of) the United States of America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HBC</td>
<td>Historically Black College</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICD</td>
<td>Integrated Course Design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPEDS</td>
<td>Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invisible College</td>
<td>Small, private college with limited resources (Astin &amp; Lee, 1972)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRB</td>
<td>Institutional Review Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>Noninvisible</td>
<td>Refers to an institution of higher learning that <em>does not</em> fit the criteria for invisible colleges</td>
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<tr>
<td>SoTL</td>
<td>The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning</td>
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<td>TLAs</td>
<td>Teaching and Learning Activities</td>
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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the support of my dissertation committee members, including Dr. Jerome Ward, whose work inspired this study, and my chair and mentor, Dr. David Hardy. Thank you also to all of the faculty and staff members at The University of Alabama, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and Western Carolina University who made this dissertation possible.

Thank you to my former teachers at St. Barnabas School and John Carroll High School - You laid a strong foundation of academic productivity and ethical behavior which continues to serve me well.

I thank my ancestors, who have metaphorically patted me on my back, whispered in my ear, and ridden back and forth to Tuscaloosa with me more times than anyone could ever count. They gave me the inspiration, the courage, and the perseverance to see this process through to its completion.

Finally, I thank my family for their undying love and support: My father and mother, Johnny and Willie Mae Moore; My siblings, Avis, Phillip, Damian, and Damita; My niblings, Reeshawna, Marius, Latorria, Robert, Taurean, and Jonathan; and my wonderful husband, Eric. No matter what I try, you guys are always there to cheer me on. Thank you all for believing in me and encouraging me through this process and throughout my life.
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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This study looked at the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English department faculty members teaching freshman-level English courses at small, private liberal arts colleges. These courses were designated at the participating research sites as English 102, American Literature, however, composition, not literature, was the focus of each course. Participants made many decisions regarding the content covered in their courses, as well as decisions about how they taught that content to their students. The process of making these decisions was found to be complex and rarely articulated to others in depth. The moves that instructors made when planning and teaching their English 102 courses could prove to be important for beginning as well as experienced professors to think about.

Situational factors such as the characteristics of institutions, students, and faculty members were found to affect the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members at small, private, not-for-profit, four-year liberal arts colleges. Findings from this study increase the fund of knowledge about the work that liberal arts faculty members did when designing their 100-level English courses, the pedagogical practices that they used, and the ways that these elements compared to the principles of the Integrated Course Design (ICD) model set forth by Fink (2013).

This study was important and timely because course design and pedagogical decision-making processes are not always voiced, but rather, just occur as a matter of course. Exploring and analyzing the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English
professors at liberal arts colleges increased knowledge of this aspect of college teaching. Professors can benefit from reading about the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of others.

**Statement of the Problem and Purpose of the Study**

An issue in practice which needs study is that faculty members often do not dialogue about how they plan and teach their courses (Huber & Hutchings, 2006; Shulman, 2004). Educational theory was taught in college and university teaching coursework, but once professors were out in the field, the realities of how they planned and taught their courses were not always shared with others (Huber & Hutchings, 2006). How education theory and teaching practice intersect in the college classroom was not explored widely in the past. There was a perceived need for new and nascent professors to learn how those working in the field went about the business of planning and teaching their courses.

There had been some study regarding the facilitation of lasting learning in college courses (Bain, 2004; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Fink, 2005; Fink, 2013; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). The planned structures, elements, and delivery methods of some of the best college instructors in the business were known (Bain, 2004; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011), because books and articles documented the teaching practices of top educators (Bain, 2004; Biggs, 2014; Landrum, 1999; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). However, there were still unanswered questions about how the planning and teaching of a required course at a small college compared to or contrasted with the best practices articulated in the theories, such as: What does the reality of a higher education course look like? Does real practice match the theories? In what ways? How does the reality differ? To what extent is evidence of theory seen in practice? What practices have faculty members found to be effective that do not yet appear in the literature?
Teaching, one of the three traditional components of a professor’s work life (Boyer, 1990; Birnbaum, 1988), may be more important to some faculty members than others, or may be given varying attention throughout the course of a career. Even for those who care a great deal about college teaching and learning, higher education is structured such that professors rarely see each other teach (Huber & Hutchings, 2006; Shulman, 2004). How or if best practices are brought to life, accepted, revised, or rejected in a professor's teaching career can play out in multiple ways, unseen to other practitioners. How some liberal arts college faculty members navigated the processes of planning and teaching their courses was made evident and knowable through this research.

Lack of insight into the day-to-day course design and pedagogical decision-making of college faculty members (Huber & Hutchings, 2006; Shulman, 2004), could lead to difficulty for new or struggling faculty members to learn and hone the craft of teaching. As this research targeted the realities of college and university teaching, present and future faculty members can learn how or if teaching theories came to life through the moves that instructors made in planning and teaching their courses.

Although on some campuses, teaching has not been weighted equally with research and service in tenure decisions in the past (Angelo & Cross, 1993; Austin, 2010; Boyer, 1990; Grasgreen, 2010; Tierney & Bensimon, 1996), growing memberships in organizations such as The International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (Huber & Hutchings, 2006; ISSOTL, 2014) and The Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD Network, 2007); the increasing number of voluntary teaching certificate programs for doctoral students across the country (Grasgreen, 2010); and the publication of journals such as The Journal of College Teaching and Learning, To Improve the Academy, and
College Teaching indicated that college and university teaching remained a subject of interest in higher education. Indeed, a national SoTL fellowship initiative administered by the Carnegie Foundation had 21 openings in 2005, for which it received more than 300 applications (Huber & Hutchings, 2006). Ways to foster lasting learning in college and university courses seemed to be of interest to many educators. Finding out about the moves that college educators made to facilitate lasting learning whether guided by educational theory or not, was the purpose of this study.

Ward (2012) sought to examine the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English faculty members at community colleges. This research study sought to examine the same research phenomenon at small, private, not-for-profit, four-year liberal arts colleges.

New and nascent higher education faculty, more experienced faculty members interested in the teaching and learning phenomenon, and adjunct faculty members may all benefit from learning how full-time faculty members planned and taught their courses. Learning more about how courses were designed and pedagogical decisions were made could assist in the improvement of teaching and learning, leading to improved learning outcomes for students and improvement of the reputations of colleges and universities.

**Delimitations**

The research study took place from the summer 2017 through the fall of 2018. Data were collected on the campuses of two small, private, liberal arts colleges in the United States. A sample of 10 to 12 English department faculty members who taught English 102 was sought; four faculty members participated.
Limitations

Data were collected on the campuses of two small, private, liberal arts colleges in the United States, therefore, may not translate to other higher education environments. A sample size of 10 to 12 English department faculty members was sought, however 4 English department faculty members participated in the study; a larger sample size may have produced different data. Since, faculty members with other work histories were not represented.

Assumptions

Because of the anonymity of institutions and participants it was assumed that the statements of the participants were reflective of their actual experiences. It was also assumed that participants in this study were representative of the liberal arts college faculty population and that the participants in Ward (2012) were representative of the community college population.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

At small, private, not-for-profit, four-year liberal arts colleges…

Research Question 1

how do instructors go about developing a course, including learning goals, teaching and learning activities, and assessments?

Research Question 2

how do instructors go about delivering instruction?

Research Question 3

to what degree do elements of the courses reflect the over-arching qualities and components of Fink’s Integrated Course Design model (Fink 2013)?
**Research Question 4**

How do the findings of this study compare or contrast with the findings of Ward (2012)?

**Background and Rationale**

Ward (2012) looked at course design and pedagogical decision-making processes by English department faculty members at two-year colleges. This study examined course design and pedagogical decision-making processes by English department faculty members at four-year liberal arts colleges. The context in which learning takes place can affect almost everything to do with teaching and learning, including course design and pedagogical decision-making processes, course content, classroom interactions, classroom assessments, course scope and sequence, syllabus format, job satisfaction levels of faculty, student characteristics, and student attitudes and behaviors. It was helpful to review literature dealing with some of the contextual characteristics of liberal arts colleges and the lived experiences of liberal arts faculty members.

**Institutions**

The world of higher education has never had an accepted definition of the liberal arts college and still does not, even though liberal arts colleges are the oldest form of higher education in the country. Even in 2018, experts differed in their ideas on what defines a liberal arts college (Breneman, 1990; Leslie, 1992; Meiklejohn, 1915; Schmidt, 1957). Clark (1997, Fall) mentioned that one conceptualization of liberal arts colleges was comprised of "baccalaureate colleges,' heavily private and varying greatly in quality and in degree of concentration on the liberal arts" (p. 22). Some members of academe held that some colleges which were previously thought of as liberal arts colleges no longer belonged in that category. For example, Breneman (1990) held that Liberal Arts I colleges were those that focused on the baccalaureate degree, without multiple graduate programs (p. 5). Colleges that awarded at least
40% of their degrees in liberal arts were deemed to be Liberal Arts II colleges (Breneman, 1990, p. 6). Traits analysis as a method of defining the liberal arts college, i.e., *if it has this, this, and this, but none of that, it counts as a liberal arts college*, was used by Breneman (1990) and others to demarcate the liberal arts college (Breneman, 1990; Tarrant, 2015).

The Carnegie Foundation provided one source for classification of higher education institutions. However, Carnegie defined the liberal arts college in different ways at different times. One could make sense of the term, liberal arts college, in light of the thoughts of others, but in an individual manner. For example, Astin (1999) allowed that the number of professional degrees awarded by a college could, in effect, change its status from a liberal arts to a comprehensive college, while the title *university* has been appropriated by some institutions which were actually liberal arts *colleges* (p. 99). For the purposes of this research study, a liberal arts college was considered to be a small, private, not-for-profit, four-year, primarily undergraduate, largely residential college. Two institutions were invited to participate in this study because they fit these traits and also because they described themselves as liberal arts colleges. Both chosen institutions agreed to participate in the study.

**Faculty**

Faculty member participants set the tone in their classrooms, influenced by the environments of their campuses. These faculty members designed courses and made important decisions touching the teaching and learning experiences of their students. The working environment for faculty members at small, private, not-for-profit liberal arts colleges influenced how they did their jobs. According to one source, liberal arts colleges as well as universities that grant doctoral degrees have often assigned nine to twelve-hour teaching loads (Clark, 1997, p. 26-27). A professor with this teaching load would need time to prepare lessons, grade
assignments, prepare and grade assessments, and meet with students during office hours. Additionally, time would need to be allotted for various other commitments on campus which could include committee work, grant-writing, and research time. At the time of this research, this was standard for full-time faculty members; however, many institutions relied quite a bit on part-time or adjunct faculty members (Bowen & Tobin, 2015, p. 18). The number of adjuncts swelled in the years prior to 2018, perhaps as a form of flexible and inexpensive labor (Bowen & Tobin, 2015, p. 104; Clark, 1997, p. 34-35). Indeed, Bowen and Tobin (2015) posited that if the trend continued, “traditional faculty will represent a decreasing percentage of the overall community of teachers and educators” (Bowen & Tobin, 2015, p. 251). Adjunct faculty members might have been seen by some as inexpensive labor, since institutions did not pay for benefits for them, however, since adjuncts typically did not serve on committees, full-time faculty members tended to fill all of the necessary spots. For example, "Those who work in the less-selective settings also more frequently work part-time. During the last two decades, the ranks of the part-timers have swollen to over 40 percent of the total academic work force" (Clark, 1997, p. 27). If more than 40% of the academic work force was employed part time, this left roughly 60% of the work force available to do 100% of some tasks. Full-time faculty members working at moderately selective or below colleges might have felt a significant strain at work due at least in part to high teaching hours and multiple duties outside the classroom. The teaching load was anticipated as a crucial element in describing the work environment of faculty members, as it seemed plausible based on prior research. However, work load was not revealed as a significant factor in the work lives of the participants. Other factors such as institutional policies, student readiness, and instructional resources were identified as important influences by study participants at both research sites. These factors are described in Chapter V, Discussion.
Students

No higher learning institution could exist or function long without students, their raison d'être. But students can appear at colleges unprepared to do college-level work. Student readiness for college was found to be an issue on campuses across the country, despite students’ having earned high school diplomas (Glessner, 2015, p. 32). This meant that many students who entered college did not demonstrate full readiness to commence college-level academic courses and tended to struggle to succeed in their classes. Glessner (2015) noted, "Students who are enrolled in developmental English classes cannot possibly be successful in other liberal arts classes where reading and writing skills are paramount" (p. 33). How students functioned in a freshman English class when many of them might have begun their college careers with a noted deficiency in one or more subjects partially contextualized this research.

Chapter Summary

This research study explored the course design and pedagogical decision-making moves of faculty members at small liberal arts colleges in an attempt to highlight these processes for the benefit of academe and to compare the findings at four-year liberal arts colleges to the findings at two-year community colleges (Ward, 2012). This study was important and timely because course design and pedagogical decision-making processes were not often articulated, but rather, occurred as a manner of course, without being documented and shared (Shulman, 2004). To analyze the internal and external processes of planning and teaching a 100-level course on a liberal arts college campus and disseminate those findings for the benefit of others was still a relatively new practice in much of the academy in 2018 (Bain, 2004; Shulman, 2004; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). Instructors’ choices and decisions when teaching a course could be significant for beginning as well as experienced professors to think about. Oftentimes, new
college faculty members were assigned teaching responsibilities without regard for the depth of their pedagogical training (Robinson & Hope, 2013). These same new faculty members and others may have relied on the theories they learned, without much reflection upon how or if those theories were facilitating learning in their classes (Schön, 1987; Larrivee, 2008). Without available research on the day-to-day thought processes and adjustments made by their peers, some of these faculty members might have gone on year after year teaching current students with worn-out or ineffective tools.

Non-tenured faculty members could feel pressed for time due to all of their responsibilities on campus (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996), and therefore might have devoted a minimum of time to their teaching, at least in part because on some campuses, teaching was not always weighted equally with research and service in tenure decisions at the time of this study (Boyer, 1990; Grasgreen, 2010). After earning tenure, faculty members might feel little need to change what they had done previously in teaching their courses. Faculty members in this situation could benefit from reading about the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of others. Faculty members on campuses where teaching weighs on par with other duties could also benefit from research of this kind. If this area of research grows, faculty could benefit by becoming more familiar with the daily work processes of their teaching peers throughout the country. This research study revealed teaching options that some faculty members may not have considered before. Finally, this research could allow practitioners to see how course design and pedagogical decision-making processes on their campuses compare with those on other campuses and with what the books say should occur. This study contributed to knowledge about faculty decisions and practices and how they influenced teaching and learning. This, in turn, could guide future decisions regarding faculty development opportunities.
CHAPTER II:
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In order to conduct research in the liberal arts college setting, it was helpful to know something about the history and composition of these institutions and how those factors contextualize research. Studying the history of the liberal arts college was not a straightforward undertaking because there has never been a succinct, widely accepted definition of the liberal arts college. Even the terminology involved, liberal arts and college, seemingly commonplace words, had complicated definitions in this context. For these reasons, this portion of the literature review examines the history of the liberal arts college, exploring the origin of the liberal arts tradition in this country and how the meaning of liberal arts college has changed over time, in order to give a rationale for how these terms will be applied in this study.

The College

We have never had a distinct definition of the liberal arts college in this country and as of 2018, we still did not (Breneman, 1990; Leslie, 1992; Meiklejohn, 1915; Schmidt, 1957). College can be used to refer to four-year institutions of higher education functioning within the larger academic world. A college can also function as a part of a larger university, as well. For the purposes of this study, college was used to refer to four-year institutions of postsecondary learning which award the bachelor’s degree and may or may not award graduate degrees, as well.

In light of the rapid growth of for-profit colleges and fully-online colleges prior to this study, the purpose of a college continued to evolve. In the past, educators were of different
minds on this topic, also. The Yale Report, published in 1828, stated the goal of a college education was to discipline and furnish the mind (Leslie, 1992, p. 79, 183; Schmidt, 1957). The Report also indicated that “of the two, discipline was by far the more important” (Schmidt, 1957, p. 55). The publication of the Yale Report shows that there was at least some level of debate prior to 1828 as to the purposes of higher education. One source indicated that, “In defending the classical curriculum, the [Yale] report defined the purpose of college as ‘to lay the foundation of a superior education’” (Geiger, 2011, p. 47). Based on the Yale Report, then, the purpose of a classical college education was to train the mind and then to give it something to think about, which could prepare a student for further studies if he wished.

From early on, liberal arts colleges in the United States were simultaneously alike and unique, thus defying easy definitions (Leslie, 1992). This remained true at least to some extent in later times. Schmidt (1957) asserted, “The vigor of the old American college in its golden age derived from its clear purpose and simple philosophy, and the acceptance of both by its constituency” (p. 146). Following this way of thinking, the liberal arts colleges in the early days of America were purposeful in design and viewpoint, and functioned in harmony with their stakeholders. Given that the publication of the Yale Report indicated some level of controversy regarding the purpose of the liberal arts college, perhaps the statement from Schmidt (1957) could be taken to mean that each individual college had its own purpose and way of doing things, and, to that college, those intangible items were unambiguous. However, taken on the whole, the creation of the liberal arts college did not follow a clear-cut, straight, and narrow path.

Because there is no universally accepted definition of the liberal arts college, much about it is contextual and open to interpretation, thus making it a prime area for qualitative research.
The liberal arts college first developed in the United States as a representation of the college experience in England as the early settlers remembered it (Leslie, 1992; Schmidt, 1957).

**Expert Opinions**

Defining what a liberal arts college is has caused difficulties for some education researchers, as there has never been one generally accepted explanation of what a liberal arts college is. Writing for publication in 1957, the author of *The Liberal Arts College* mused:

One may ask for how much longer such an evolving institution is likely to retain its basic character, whether in fact it has not already changed beyond recognition. The answer is not easy because the term liberal arts is not very precise. (Schmidt, 1957, p. 237-238)

What is known is that higher education in America started with one institution, Harvard, which was modeled after a liberal arts college in Europe. From there, other liberal arts colleges, namely William and Mary and Yale, patterned themselves after Harvard. These three colleges then served as models for liberal arts colleges founded after them. Roughly 200 years after the founding of Harvard, the university model began to come into vogue and by 1910, began to overshadow the liberal arts college model (Schmidt, 1957). Liberal arts colleges still exist today, but much has changed since 1636 when Harvard was founded. Experts debate about how much liberal arts colleges can change and still remain liberal arts colleges (Breneman, 1990; Evangelauf, 1990). Breneman (1990) defined the liberal arts college based on educational ideals and economic structure (p. 4) and concluded that it is changing into “a small professional college” in order to survive (p.6).
The Liberal Arts College Today

Defining Traits

This portion of the literature review examines traits of the contemporary liberal arts
college. Today’s American higher education environment includes liberal arts colleges;
universities; agricultural, technical, and mechanical colleges; and community colleges, some of
which are brick and mortar institutions and some of which are online institutions. One way to
determine the type of institution is to examine its characteristics or defining traits. This can be
particularly helpful when discussing liberal arts colleges, as we do not have, nor have we ever
had a distinct definition of the liberal arts college. Yet and still, some understanding of what is
meant by the term had to be reached in order to conduct research. Astin (1999) explored some of
the common features of liberal arts colleges and offered a working definition. Some of the
characteristics that liberal arts colleges are commonly believed to hold are that they are learning-
centered, private, selective institutions where the majority of students live on campus.

Learning-centered Ethos.

One trait of liberal arts colleges may be that they tend to be learning-oriented, whether
they are independent entities or parts of larger universities. According to one source, some
characteristics of private liberal arts colleges are "positive relationships between students and
administrators, and a positive faculty attitude toward students' abilities and preparation…small
size, a residential program, a strong faculty commitment to student development, trust between
students and administrators, and generous expenditures on student services" (Astin, 1999, p. 84-
85). Having a strong commitment to student development, trust between students and
administrators, and generous expenditures on student services were all counted as indicators of a
learning-centered ethos. On this topic, one source stated that institutions that are learning-
centered stress lifelong learning and a need to exist as a cohesive group of learners (Corderman, 2008, p. 21). The campus environment of liberal arts colleges described by Astin (1999) fits the criteria for learning-centered institutions set forth by Corderman (2008); consequently, being learning centered was seen as a common trait of these colleges. Being learning-centered or otherwise-centered could affect the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members. Particularly, being otherwise-centered at a college where being learning-centered is the norm, or vice versa, could greatly affect a faculty-member’s course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. Through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, this study unearthed the centeredness of some English department faculty members at small, private, liberal arts colleges and shed some light on how their centeredness affected their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. This could in turn inspire faculty members throughout the academy to reflect upon their own centeredness and how it may affect their course design and decision-making processes.

**Pedagogy.**

A commonality found among liberal arts colleges deals with pedagogical decisions and actions of their faculty members. Clark (1997) asserted that, "in the best private liberal-arts colleges professors involve their undergraduate students in research as an effective way to teach and to learn" (p. 33). Making the decision to include undergraduates in their research as a teaching method was shown here to be indicative of liberal arts faculty members. Possibly, pedagogical decisions made at liberal arts colleges tend to differ somewhat from the decisions made by faculty at some universities. For example:

A 1990 Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching study, 'Are Liberal Arts Colleges Really Different?' compared liberal arts colleges to research universities through
a faculty survey, and the researchers found that 'there were, indeed, sharp differences in
the emphasis on teaching between liberal arts colleges and research universities. (Tarrant,
2015, p. 65)
The study referenced found distinct differences between the weighting of teaching at liberal arts
colleges versus research universities. Pedagogical tools and the importance placed on teaching
may be linked to the type of institution of higher learning. The chosen research sites are all
liberal arts colleges. Faculty at these colleges may include students in their work in ways
unlikely to be seen at research universities, however, this was not mentioned or observed. Also,
the weight placed upon these faculty members’ teaching may differ from the weight placed upon
faculty members at research universities. Although the study did not include research
universities, it did examine the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of
faculty members at liberal arts colleges; how those faculty members made decisions related to
their teaching practices might show some common themes among liberal arts college faculty
members which could be useful for the academy to know.

Selectivity.

Selectivity and elitism are related, possibly because a college education was used by
some in the past to delineate the upper-, middle-, and working-classes (Leslie, 1992, p. 247). It
has been said that, "Selectivity is, among other things, probably the most commonly used
yardstick of an institution's degree of prestige or 'eliteness'' (Astin, 1999, p. 78). The more
selective an institution is with regard to its enrollment, then the more elite it may be perceived to
be. Astin (1999) used the criterion that "A 'selective' college was defined as one where the mean
SAT composite score of the entering students [was] at least 1200" (Astin, 1999, p. 94). The
National Center for Educational Statistics reported that in the 2015-2016 school year, the average
student earned a score of 494 on Critical Reading and 508 in Math (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Averages were not available for the academic year immediately preceding 1999, however, enrolling students with average composite scores roughly 182 points higher than the average student score might seem to indicate selectivity on the part of the institution.

Some persons associate selectivity or elitism with liberal arts colleges. Astin (1999) commented, "Many of our most elite or selective liberal arts colleges today were among the first such colleges to be founded in the United States" (p. 79). So, this source seemed to suggest that elitism is not in and of itself a recipe for the liberal arts college, but that of the first colleges founded in our country, which were liberal arts colleges, many that remain today operate as selective or elite liberal arts colleges. Selectivity or elitism alone may not be a defining factor of a liberal arts college, but many select or elite institutions of higher learning do happen to be liberal arts colleges, according to Astin (1999). So, one might say that there is some connection between liberal arts colleges and selectivity. Furthermore, "many of us are inclined to equate a 'residential liberal arts education' with an elite form of higher education" (Astin, 1999, p. 79).

Here, residential campuses were linked with liberal arts and elitism. According to Geiger (2011), some private institutions became more selective after World War I because they, "became more sensitive to the social composition of their students and the implications it had for their collegiate image….Selective admissions were part of a larger pattern of fashioning elite status” (p. 57). Leslie (1992) concurred with this, stating that enrollments were purposely limited at Bucknell University, Franklin and Marshall College, Princeton University, and Swarthmore College after World War I in order to maintain the campuses’ social norms, guarantee available housing for the student body, and differentiate these campuses from universities (p. 253-254). Here, selectivity was shown to be used as a tool to build elite status.
Some might use the words elite and superior synonymously. However, according to one source, elitism probably should not be conflated with superiority:

The common belief that an elite or 'high quality' institution provides a superior environment for learning is so far not supported by the evidence (Astin, 1968b; Nichols, 1964; Rock, Centra, & Linn, 1970). On the contrary, the cognitive skills of a student seem to develop at the same rate whatever the selectivity of the institution he attends.

(Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 82)

For the purposes of this study, elitism was be used synonymously with selectivity but was not intended to connote superiority of any kind. Furthermore, although selectivity or elitism may be used as one defining trait of liberal arts colleges, one source asserted that, "most residential liberal arts colleges today are not highly selective or elite" (Astin, 1999, p. 79). A combination of common characteristics was used to determine if a college was a liberal arts college or not; selectivity or elitism, then, was used as a defining trait if it was found in addition to other common traits of the liberal arts college. Selectivity of student enrollments was seen to affect the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members. To what extent college selectivity did or did not affect the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English department faculty members at small, liberal arts colleges is something that this research uncovered. This information could affect the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of higher education faculty members at the research sites as well as at other institutions.
Purpose.

Perhaps another trait to consider is a college’s function. Some of the same concepts used to describe the purpose of the liberal arts colleges of the past were used by Astin (1999). For example:

A liberal education in a small residential setting is really about encouraging the student to grapple with some of life's most fundamental questions: What is the meaning of life? What is my purpose in life? What do I think and feel about life, death, God, religion, love, art, music, history, literature, and science? (p. 98)

Here, the liberal arts college experience was connected with small colleges where most students live on campus. Additionally, Astin (1999) also seemed to focus on the learning goals for students as a way to demarcate the liberal arts college. An institution which has purposed itself to encourage students to tackle the big questions of life and think the deep thoughts of man was identified by Astin (1999) as being a liberal arts college. This is somewhat reminiscent of the argument for definition by curriculum supported by Schmidt (1957) and Meiklejohn (1915):

These five elements, then, a young man must take from a college of liberal training, the contributions of philosophy, of humanistic science, of natural science, of history, and of literature. So far as knowledge is concerned, these at least he should have, welded together in some kind of interpretation of his own experience and of the world in which he lives. (p. 50)

In terms of the defining traits of liberal arts colleges, the curricular purpose of the institution seemed to be viewed by some as a strong indicator. However, even though commonalities of size, privacy, residential campuses, and curricular purposes can be used to guide the decision on what a liberal arts college is and what it is not, differences still abound. Even within academe,
some opinions differ on the purpose of a college education. For example, some see college as a
time to broaden the mind, and some see college as a path to a higher-paying job than a person
with only a high school diploma can get. How a faculty member perceives the purpose of college
might have impacted how s/he makes course design and pedagogical decisions. This study could
have added to the field of education by offering previously unheard opinions on the purpose of a
higher education and how purpose and practice can converge within the freshman English
classroom, however this was not found.

Uniqueness.

The liberal arts college as it exists in the United States is one of a kind (Leslie, 1992, p.
258). At the time of this study, in some ways, each liberal arts college was unique. Even within a
sample of only 1,000 private institutions, Astin (1999) saw differences. Indeed, the author stated
that, "private liberal arts colleges are in certain respects more diverse than any other type of
higher-education institution” (p. 78) as some are quite well endowed financially and some are
not, some are connected to religious denominations and some are totally independent. Curricula,
pedagogies, the availability of post-baccalaureate programs, and levels of selectivity also differ
from one liberal arts college to another (Astin, 1999, p. 78). The modern liberal arts colleges did
evolve from the same model but in unique ways (Leslie, 1992; Schmidt, 1957), therefore, in
some ways, these colleges can be difficult to describe all-inclusively, but they are all leaves on
the same tree (Leslie, 1992, p. 28). Because of the sites involved in this study, institutional
uniqueness appeared in the data collected. Through analysis of the data, I was able to identify the
effects of institutional similarities and differences upon the course design and pedagogical
decision-making processes of some English department faculty members at small, private, not-
for-profit, mostly residential, liberal arts colleges. This information may prove useful to faculty
members and administrators throughout academe as a way to think about and discuss their own institutional uniqueness with regard to pedagogy and how it impacts teaching and learning experiences on campus.

*Environment.*

The thoughts, beliefs, traditions, values, and perceptions pervasive on a college campus may help to create the environment in which students and faculty members operate. Physical characteristics such as urban, rural, or suburban surroundings; campus buildings and green spaces; and even seating and lighting within classrooms may shape the campus environment. When thinking of a liberal arts college, environment may play a role. For example, "Traditionally, what is thought of as a liberal arts college refers to a small, highly residential, independent, nonprofit undergraduate institution with a small student-to-faculty ratio and with a curricular focus on the traditional liberal arts fields, and whose students attend full-time" (Tarrant, 2015, p. 72). Here, the environmental details of campus size, student living arrangements, funding sources, student classification, the ratio of students to faculty, and curricular focus were all included as defining traits of the liberal arts college. Tarrant (2015) used the terms New Invisible Colleges and New Elite Colleges in reference to liberal arts colleges. This author saw the ratio of students to faculty as a crucial component of the liberal arts campus environment and wrote, the “low student to faculty ratio demonstrates the continuing commitment of both the New Invisible Colleges and the New Elite Colleges to maintaining an environment that fosters student and faculty interaction” (Tarrant, 2015, p. 81). Here, student and faculty interactions were linked to having a low student-to-faculty ratio. Tarrant (2015) saw keeping this ratio low as a commitment on the part of liberal colleges to maintaining this aspect of their campus environments. Factors associated with liberal arts colleges such as smallness,
residential campuses, independent status, not being run for profit, educating mostly if not solely undergraduates, having a small student-to-faculty ratio, focusing on a liberal arts curriculum, and having students who mostly attend college full time might influence the environment of a campus. Participants could have mentioned any or all of these factors as influences on their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes, however, these topics, with the exception of a small student-to-faculty ratio, were not mentioned.

**Small size.**

A common characteristic of liberal arts colleges may be their small size. In a critique of liberal arts education at the time, one academic professional wrote:

> At present, about the best one can say is that some Liberal Arts colleges are better than most. They are generally small colleges, not parts of great universities. They have a limited and often highly selected enrollment, and carefully selected staff, and adequate physical equipment. (Bain, 1953/1954, p. 631)

Bain (1953/1954) listed small size as an attribute of liberal arts colleges, along with independent status, selectivity with regard to students and faculty, and sufficient physical plant. Writing about liberal arts colleges roughly two decades later, another source also referred to the small size of liberal arts colleges, stating, “the typical small [liberal arts] college is characterized by a more friendly atmosphere, closer contacts between faculty and students, a stronger identification with the institution, and a feeling on the part of the students that they matter as individuals” (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 99). A combination of common characteristics was indicated here – small size, friendly environment, close faculty-student interactions, strong fidelity to the college, and learner-centered ethos. The sites in this research share several liberal arts college traits, including: smallness, residential campuses, independent status, not being run for profit,
educating mostly if not solely undergraduates, having a small student-to-faculty ratio, focusing on a liberal arts curriculum, and having students who mostly attend full-time. Both colleges are also affiliated with Christian denominations. Although similar in multiple ways, these colleges differed in some ways, dependent upon how environmental factors have interplayed at each campus and upon faculty members’ perceptions of their work environments. I chose different, independent liberal arts colleges as research sites for this study to view English department faculty members at work at comparable but separate liberal arts colleges and learn how course design and pedagogical decision-making at the colleges compared and varied, possibly in response to campus environment.

A Working Definition

This portion of the literature review establishes a working definition of the liberal arts college for this research. History credits Voltaire with the introduction of this concept: in order to discuss an idea intelligently, it must first be made clear what is meant by its key terms (William, 2006, p. 33). This is a daunting task when discussing liberal arts colleges, as there are many opinions on what constitutes such an institution of higher learning and no distinct definition has ever been agreed upon (Breneman, 1990; Clark, 1997; Evangelauf, 1990; Tarrant, 2015).

Traits analysis has been discussed as one method of defining the liberal arts college. However, deciding what traits should be included on the list, determining how many traits must be present, establishing which traits are must-haves, and agreeing on any potential deal-breakers is problematic. Another method examines the purpose of the institution. Schmidt (1957) asserted, “The liberal arts and sciences were those subjects of general interest and importance that were considered the indispensable intellectual equipment of an educated person” (p. 43).
Following this line of logic, the course content and mission statement of a college might tell more about its liberal arts status than its other characteristics.

The Carnegie Foundation is one source of classifications for higher education institutions. However, Carnegie has defined the liberal arts college in different ways at different times, therefore, some experts still differ in their ideas on what constitutes a liberal arts college. Perhaps one must make sense of this term in light of the thoughts of others, but in an individual manner. According to one source:

In its classification of higher-education institutions the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching designates a large number of private liberal arts colleges as "comprehensive colleges and universities" because they had come to award a substantial number of their undergraduate degrees in "professional" rather than "academic" fields (primarily business, education, nursing, and allied health). For the purposes of this essay, these institutions will be considered as "private liberal arts colleges" as long as they claim to offer a "liberal arts education" to undergraduates and as long as their graduate and professional programs are not so extensive that they are considered to be a "university" by the National Center of Educational Statistics. It should also be noted that some private colleges that are self-designated as "universities" (e.g., Wesleyan University) are basically liberal arts colleges and will be considered as such in this essay. (Astin, 1999, p. 99)

Astin (1999) established a working definition of the private liberal arts college based in part on traits analysis and partly on Carnegie classifications. Indeed, Bowen and Tobin (2015) included graduate and professional programs as traits of research universities. For the purposes of this study, a mixture of traits analysis and national database and college
website inquiry was used; in this study, the term liberal arts college was used to refer to a small, private, not-for-profit, four-year, primarily undergraduate, largely residential institution of higher learning. The National Center of Educational Statistics was consulted to verify traits such as institutional size and primacy of undergraduates. Finally, institutions that did not define themselves as liberal arts colleges were not included.

**Liberal Arts College Students**

**Readiness**

This portion of the literature review examines some traits of modern college students, particularly students at liberal arts colleges. No higher learning institution could exist or function long without students. But students often appear at colleges unprepared to do college-level work. Writing in the late 1950s, George P. Schmidt, a noted professor of history at Rutgers University, stated:

The freshman classes that assembled on American campuses a hundred years ago were in most cases an ill-assorted lot. The professors thought so at any rate. But they usually do. Great plans for high achievement often had to be deflated because the material was not there. College after college had to lower its sights to a more realistic level. They were especially weak in grammar and mathematics, said the professors at Hobart. That was in 1840. We are still saying it today. (Schmidt, 1957, p. 70)

Over 50 years after Schmidt (1957), student readiness for college remained an issue on some campuses across the country. For example, "More than 65 percent of college first-time freshmen in 2000–01 failed at least one entrance test" (Glessner, 2015, p. 32). This means that over half the students who entered college at that time did not demonstrate full readiness to begin college-level academic courses. Glessner (2015) referred to a 1998 study by Amey and Long
looking at underprepared college students which found “a strong correlation between mandatory placement in reading, English and overall student success” (Glessner, 2015, p. 32). Students who come to college ill-prepared may tend to struggle to succeed in their classes. Glessner (2015) noted, "Students who are enrolled in developmental English classes cannot possibly be successful in other liberal arts classes where reading and writing skills are paramount" (p. 33).

How students function in a class such as English 102 when statistically over half of them began their college careers with a noted deficiency in one or more subjects proved to be an interesting research context.

As far back as the turn of the last century, college student readiness was an issue. According to one source:

At the instigation of Nicholas Murray Butler [president of Columbia, 1901-1945] and Charles W. Eliot [president of Harvard, 1869-1909] the College Entrance Examination Board was organized in 1900 to frame and conduct examinations for graduates of private preparatory and also public high schools, the results to be accepted by member institutions in lieu of entrance examinations of their own. (Schmidt, 1957, p. 183)

Butler and Eliot sought a way to ascertain in a reliable way what skills the college freshmen were bringing to campus with them. Others in the field may have seen the value of this, since they became member institutions and accepted the results of the standardized test in place of their own entrance exams. At any rate, the creation of the College Entrance Examination Board might indicate that academic professionals shared some concerns regarding what they could reasonably expect new arrivals to campus to know and be able to do. The need for college-ready students was once expressed in this way: “A wide-ranging, well-stocked, critical mind is a necessity for a liberal education” (Bain, 1953/1954, p. 629). For education to take place, it is helpful for college
students to be prepared to learn. This may be of particular importance at liberal arts colleges, where historically, a learning-centered, teaching-heavy environment tends to abide.

Remediation on some college campuses has become a reality as a scaffolding mechanism; students who have completed high school and enrolled in college but who have not scored high enough on college placement exams may take remedial classes in subjects such as math and English. Typically, these students must then pass the remedial classes before they can register for required coursework in the remediated area(s). In highly selective liberal arts colleges, lack of college readiness, and the need for remedial classes may not be much of an issue. According to one source, “Remedial education is spread throughout American higher education, from leading universities to community colleges, but it is relatively light when selectivity is high and quite heavy when selection is low or even nonexistent” (Clark, 1997, p. 31-32). Remedial course work may function as a way to bridge the gap between high school and college for some students on some college campuses.

Selectivity or elitism is one potential defining trait of the liberal arts college, but even so, institutions differ as to how selective they are. If selectivity is inversely proportional to lack of college readiness, this could mean that students at liberal arts colleges which are not highly selective may have need of remedial classes. Students who struggle in one or more academic subjects and require remediation may face dire academic consequences, particularly if reading is identified as an area of weakness (Glessner, 2015). For students taking the 102 course, the abilities to comprehend and analyze college-level written and visual texts independently, and to discuss and/or write about those texts reflectively was crucial for success in the class. These same skills could be vital to the students in many of their other liberal arts classes.
At some institutions of higher learning across the country, students perform below college-level, leading to transfers, delayed graduation dates, and/or attrition. According to one source, "It is virtually an institutional secret that academic life is so often reduced to the teaching of secondary-school subjects" (Clark, 1997, p. 32). Put another way, “higher education cannot be high” if higher education faculty must teach subject matter and soft skills which students should have learned prior to college (Bain, 1953/1954, p. 625). In a liberal arts setting, lack of student readiness could be devastating to students as well as faculty, given that faculty may tend to focus on their teaching at these institutions and the colleges themselves may tend to have more learning-centered environments than some other types of institutions. Part of the problem might be that, "Another study indicates a family’s income can determine the quality of high school a young person attends, which in turn can influence the type of curriculum taken and the student’s readiness for postsecondary study" (Glessner, 2015, p. 32). Here, social class and college readiness collided. Liberal arts colleges are perceived as elitist by some, due at least in part to their level of selectivity. Decreased access may smack of restrictedness to some, however, according to Glessner (2015), students may be placed on or off a college trajectory years prior to their freshman year of college. Indeed, Astin and Lee (1972) reported that “The average academic ability of…entering students turned out to be the best single measure of an institution’s affluence” (p. 3). If a family makes a low income, they may live in a part of town with sub-par schools. A sub-par high school might not have Advanced Placement classes, physics, chemistry, and biology labs, and might not offer a college-preparatory curriculum. A student who graduates from this type of high school might not be as ready for college work as his or her peers, thus relegating the student to remedial courses, thus potentially delaying his/her college graduation. Following this train of thought, income, social class, and college readiness may be conjoined in
such a way that a student may be prevented from ever attending a liberal arts college not because of superciliousness on the part of the college but by virtue of having been born into a family with low income. At highly selective liberal arts colleges, then, the average student may come from a middle- to upper-class background and readiness and household income may be interwoven. The selectivity level of the college and/or the readiness of students to perform college-level learning tasks might influence the ways that a professor chooses to plan and teach a course, particularly a lower-level, required course. The impact of students’ college readiness on English department faculty members’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes surfaced during the study through face-to-face interviews with faculty participants, through classroom observations, and through analysis of course-related documents. College readiness may be an issue at many colleges and universities, thus knowledge gained regarding how issues related to readiness impact course design and pedagogical decision-making processes at the research sites could inform readiness plans and decisions at many institutions.

Characteristics

Each liberal arts college campus can have its own sociocultural, power, and historical contexts which can shape student perceptions and practices, due at least in part to the way liberal arts colleges came into existence and evolved. Also, the students who attend a college may influence the common experiences of the student body and all stakeholders. In some ways, then, student characteristics may help to shape the environments of the liberal arts colleges that they attend. As one source noted:

The characteristics of its student body is one of the most significant attributes of any institution. Institutions have traditionally regarded the quality of their students as important, both because it reflects on their own image or reputation and because it is the

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students who, as alumni, will ultimately provide the principal source of private support for the institution. Of equal importance is the kind of social and intellectual climate that the students themselves create. Recent research (Astin, 1963; Astin, 1968a; Astin & Holland, 1961) has suggested that the characteristics of its student body may be the most important single determinant of the academic and interpersonal climate of an institution. (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 49)

Each student can contribute to the whole of the college through the decisions s/he makes regarding major course of study, housing, participation in extra-curricular activities, and countless other areas during his/her matriculation. Ultimately, as stated by Astin and Lee (1972), the students can become the face of the institution. The characteristics of the students, then, may affect how the college perceives itself, how it is perceived by others, and how faculty members plan and teach courses at the college.

**Generation Z.**

An 18 year-old, entering college for the first time in the fall of 2017 would have been born in 1999. This would make that incoming freshman student a member of what some call Generation Z. Regarding students from this generation, one source stated, "These youngsters will pay attention and will be motivated to learn material that makes them appear more web savvy or helps them to become more knowledgeable about the Internet" (Geck, 2006, p. 21-22). It is believed by some that students who were born after the proliferation of digital technology in this country, including Generation Z students, have some common traits, including a desire to become more knowledgeable about the internet.

According to one source, "Although Generation Z is not yet defined in the dictionary, the term is sometimes used to describe the already-existing net generation of teenagers born in or
after 1990 in technologically advanced countries" (Geck, 2006, p. 19). Technological tools such as cell phones and tablets were very popular in the early days of the 21st century, and some thought that these items changed the ways that people taught and learned. Because "The Generation Z birth years closely correspond to the conception and birth of the World Wide Web" (Geck, 2006, p. 19), first-time college students have probably never lived in a world or learned in an environment where there was no internet, no computers, and no cell phone connectivity. Some believe that Generation Z learners have been affected by readily accessible technology since, "They are the most electronically connected generation in history" (Geck, 2006, p. 19). The students at the liberal arts college research sites were described as having some Generation Z traits.

Although Generation Z students always had access to the internet, there was some question as to how efficiently these learners used technology. For example, not all college students were proficient at using technology for educational purposes; some had trouble finding, analyzing, and using credible online sources (Bennett, Maton, & Kervin, 2008; Nasah, DaCosta, Kinsell, & Seok, 2010; Greene, Yu, & Copeland, 2014). So, while these learners may have had ready access to technology, it was not totally certain that they are digitally literate. This term, digital literacy, has been used to indicate the mental tasks which need to be performed when decoding multimodal, computer-based information (Greene, Yu, & Copeland, 2014). Having grown up in a world where the wisdom of the ages was at their fingertips at all times may not have taught Generation Z students how to navigate the web to find authoritative information from credible sources. That is to say that in at least some ways, "These youngsters are often just familiar with the tip of the internet iceberg" (Geck, 2006, p. 20). While lack of digital literacy may be one trait of the Generation Z student, another related trait may be uncritical consumption
of online data. English faculty members at small, liberal arts colleges may concern themselves with the prevailing traits of their students and may adjust or adapt their course plans and pedagogical decisions based upon their students’ characteristics as they perceive them. How student traits, including being members of Generation Z, affected course design and pedagogical decision-making processes is something that was explored through this study. As Generation Z students may be enrolled on many college and university campuses across the country, learning how these students’ traits, possibly including lack of digital literacy and the uncritical consumption of online data, impacted course design and decision-making processes at the research sites may help faculty members and administrators throughout academe as they make plans and decisions which touch these students.

**Digital literacy/uncritical consumption.**

While the internet can be a valuable research tool, knowledge of how to use it well can lead to the best results possible. With regard to modern college students, at least one source reported a deficiency in how these students utilize internet capabilities. Greene, et al. (2014) found that, "These learners lack digital literacy skills, and their uncritical consumption is dangerous given the often-misleading nature of online information" (p. 55). By saying that there was uncritical consumption taking place, this source indicated that students may give every internet source equal weight without verifying the credibility of those sources. Additionally, contemporary college students need to have the ability to find, analyze, synthesize, and use online information while also keeping track of their own learning progress (Gerjets, Scheiter, & Schuh, 2007; Bråten, Britt, Strømsø, & Rouet, 2011; Greene, et al., 2014). Greene and colleagues (2014) indicated that it is incumbent upon students to evaluate sources and examine their thinking and learning processes continually. This may not have been as much of a burden to
prior generations of college students, as publishing houses strive to avoid disseminating unreliable information. A student needs to think hard about the sources s/he uses and why. Being uncritical may refer to the sources that students use and may also refer to the engines that they use to search for those sources. Since English 102 typically involves student use of sources in order to write essays, it may explain why some of the participants in the study chose to include internet search strategies as a part of their 102 courses.

It may be helpful for college students to be aware of their own learning and thinking processes and to be able to analyze these and make adjustments as necessary. According to some research, Generation Z students may struggle with this. As one source put it, "They often do not have the metacognitive skills to know when to stop using Google and other search tools and to try a different information search strategy" (Geck, 2006, p. 20). Ignorance of when to change from one search tool to another could be considered a form of uncritical consumption, i.e., students may not know how to critique the search engine that they are using and make the decision to switch to another one. It is possible that students may not be familiar with multiple search engines; if so, this could constitute a lack of digital literacy. Geck (2006) continued, "This generation's overreliance on Google as its first choice to find answers indicates that they may not be aware of other information search strategies and resources, especially print materials that are better suited to answer certain types of questions" (p. 20). Here, digital and print literacy skills were questioned, in that Generation Z learners may struggle to critique digital sources as well as printed sources. Either or both cases may be considered a form of uncritical consumption. The Generation Z learner may be the kind of college student who does not analyze and critique his/her learning methods and research strategies and who does not or cannot judge which sources
are credible and which are not. This could impact students’ abilities to succeed in a 100-level English course, which could impact how faculty members plan and teach the class.

Possibly, Generation Z students have been credited with technological competence that they do not in fact possess. If Generation Z students have been credited with more technological skills than they possess as a group, it could follow that their training in how to use these tools might have been lacking in some ways. For example, "Many of these students have never engaged in formal exercises comparing advantages, disadvantages, strengths, and weaknesses of the Web with other informational tools such as books and print journals" (Geck, 2006, p. 20). Although they may have had the internet their entire lives, students from the Generation Z population may never have learned how to evaluate digital versus print resources and thus, may have trouble deciding between the two. Furthermore, even effective, self-regulating learners may not have the mental skills necessary to recognize reliable information sources online, eschew sites which present information in a subjective or rhetorical way, and synthesize information (Greene, et al., 2014). Even at selective, private, liberal arts colleges, students may struggle to use technology efficiently, may lack digital literacy, and may consume online information indiscriminately. This may be even truer at historically black liberal arts colleges where selectivity tends to be unequal to other liberal arts colleges. In a course such as English 102, where reading, writing, and analysis skills can be crucial to performing the necessary learning tasks of the course, a lack of digital literacy or uncritical digital consumption could be disastrous. Also, some English department faculty members may not have grown up with readily available digital technology. How these faculty members account for lacking technological skills on the part of their students and possibly themselves could play a part in the faculty members’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. This research offered an opportunity for
English department faculty members at the research sites to discuss this issue, however, digital literacy did not emerge as a theme. Any thoughts, ideas, or struggles that they might have shared could have been of importance to other faculty members throughout the academy who make decisions about the use of technology in their courses.

**Technology.**

Even though Generation Z college students may not be as proficient at using the internet as some might have thought, the proliferation of technological tools in this country may have served to set up certain expectations within these young people. Because the internet has always existed for them, they may have high expectations for technology (Geck, 2006, p. 20). For example, Generation Z students may be more likely to use the internet to look up phone numbers, check spelling, or get directions, whereas prior generations may have been more likely to use print materials to complete these tasks. Likewise, Generation Z students may prefer registering for classes, checking grades, and dialoging with group members online instead of in person. This could imply assumptions on their parts, however, that campus Wi-Fi will always be up and running, that professors will all know how to use grading software efficiently, and that all group members will have ready access to technology tools on a par with their own. Indeed, the internet may allow for methods of collaboration unknown 30 years ago, since internet "connectivity permits teens to communicate and collaborate in real-time regardless of physical location; to access a wealth of diverse information, including vast digital collections; and to author or contribute content instantaneously to web sites and weblogs" (Geck, 2006, p. 19). For these reasons, today’s college students may realistically expect to research and collaborate on a global scale while still in undergraduate school. Potential results might run the gamut from original, innovative products to plagiarism. Today’s college student population, including
students at small, private, liberal arts colleges, may see the world, data, research, collaboration, and publishing in totally different ways than people their parents’ age might. This could affect how these students learn, which might affect how faculty choose to plan and teach their courses.

Early and continuous exposure to the internet and technological devices may affect how students mentally process information. For instance:

Because of their early exposure to large amounts of graphic and web content and their comfort level with new digital applications, teens will be receptive to new information incorporated with graphics or introduced using Webquests and other types of Internet-based lessons. (Geck, 2006, p. 21)

Generation Z undergraduates may in fact be more receptive to multimodal presentations of new information, which could affect how a faculty member might select course content and/or choose pedagogical strategies.

Another area potentially affected by modern-day technology may be how students prepare for class. One source found that Generation Z students increasingly rely upon the internet to do their homework (Geck, 2006). One purpose for assigning homework may be to allow the student opportunities to think meaningfully about the course content outside of class. If Generation Z students lack sufficient digital literacy and critical thinking skills, (Bråten, et al., 2011; Geck, 2006; Gerjets, et al., 2008; Greene, et al., 2014) the goal of having students think meaningfully about course content outside of class may not be achieved if students use the internet to complete homework assignments. Generation Z students may share the belief that they can and should use technology liberally in their pursuit of a college degree. As one source stated, "These youngsters believe that the information they need to find a research answer or to complete a homework assignment is freely available on the Internet" (Geck, 2006, p. 20).
Generation Z undergraduates may lack digital literacy skills and may indulge in uncritical consumption of internet data. The accessibility of the internet may have caused them to expect that technology use is a ubiquitous, essential component of higher education. These student characteristics and expectations may affect the way that college faculty members make course design and pedagogical decisions. Some information on this topic surfaced during the study; its dissemination may impact how members of the academy plan and teach their courses, particularly with regard to students' use of digital technology.

Some other traits.

In addition to being members of Generation Z and having certain expectations and beliefs about technology, some additional traits may be common within the student populations of small, private liberal arts colleges today. With regard to Historically Black liberal arts colleges, which fit the criteria for what one source calls invisible colleges, "Attendance at [historically black liberal arts colleges] seems to increase the chances that a student will be a guest in a professor's home or will argue with a teacher in class" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 88). One of the research sites for this study, Boadicea College, is a small, private, Historically Black, liberal arts, invisible college, while Appelbaum College is a predominantly White institution. At both colleges, freshman students are most likely members of Generation Z, however, students at Boadicea might be more likely to have visited a professor’s home than students at Appelbaum, and might be more vocal in class. Interestingly, students at Boadicea College may differ from other college students with regard to classroom behavior, as, "In the classroom of the typical invisible college, the student is much less verbally aggressive” than students in other four-year college classrooms (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 71). So, while Boadiceans might have been likely to argue with professors, according to Astin and Lee (1972), they might also have been much less
verbally aggressive than other four-year college students. In the study, neither Appelbaumians or Boadiceans were observed to argue with the professors, however, a Boadicean student was seen being verbally aggressive in the classroom.

One of the commonalities Astin and Lee (1972) found among invisible colleges, i.e., small, private colleges with limited resources, was that many invisible colleges are religiously affiliated. Boadicea College is affiliated with a Protestant Christian denomination, as is Appelbaum (college websites). Astin and Lee (1972) reported that going to Protestant-affiliated institutions negatively affects students’ levels of satisfaction with college facilities as well as student performance on the MCAT (p. 87-88). So, Boadicean students may be less outspoken in class than Appelbaumians. However, students at both colleges may be dissatisfied with their college’s physical plant and may also be less likely to perform well on the MCAT. Overall, student beliefs, behaviors, attitudes, and characteristics can have profound effects on college environments, including how faculty members choose to design and teach their courses. Evidence of this was seen at both institutions.

At the beginning of the liberal arts tradition in this country, students and faculty members were male. Eventually, most colleges became coeducational. At the research sites for the study, students might have been more likely to be female than male, due to a trend at institutions of higher learning. For example, “In 1968, the overall male-to-female ratio for all degree-granting postsecondary institutions was 60:40. By 1979, females became the majority at just over 50%, and in 2012, the ratio of male-to-female had almost reversed and was at 43:57” (Tarrant, 2015, p. 18). A typical student at a small, private, not-for-profit, liberal arts college, then, is likely to be a female (Tarrant, 2015, p. 18) born after 1990 who wants to know more about the internet (Geck, 2006, p. 21-22), and has grown up in an environment with ubiquitous internet and cell phone
service (Bennett, et al., 2008). She would stand a 50/50 chance of having entered college with an insufficient fund of knowledge for college-level work in one or more subjects (Glessner, 2015, p. 32). This student might lack digital literacy (Greene, et al., 2014; Nasah, et al., 2010), engage in uncritical internet content consumption (Geck, 2006, p. 20), struggle to perform internet searches (Geck, 2006, p. 20; Greene, et al., 2014), and feel overwhelmed by the amount of search results she uncovers (Greene, et al., 2014). It is likely that she would lack critical thinking skills and struggle to use technology efficiently (Greene, et al., 2014). She would probably have high expectations related to technology (Geck, 2006, p. 20) and might be more receptive to multimodal presentations of new material (Geck, 2006, p. 21).

The typical student at an invisible college would likely be a female and might share many of the traits of her generation. Additionally, she might have matriculated with a low college admission score (Clark, 1997, p. 31-32). She might have visited a professor’s home, and also might tend to argue with a professor in class (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 72), and might be dissatisfied with her college’s physical plant, as might her contemporaries at a predominantly White small, private, liberal arts college such as Appelbaum (Astin, 1999, p. 87-88). Students can be affected by the places and times in which they were born and raised and they may bring their backgrounds with them to college campuses (Wiggins & McTighe, 2010). Each college may have its own environment, which can be shaped by students’ and other stakeholders’ common experiences. College faculty might make course design and pedagogical decisions based at least in part on the sociocultural, power, economic, and/or historical contexts of their institutions. Because students share common life experiences, they may resemble each other in some ways, yet differ in other ways; effects of student influences may be reflected in faculty members’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. How educators perceive
and choose to react to traits of the student body and how their perceptions and choices affect their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes was at least partially revealed in this study; knowledge of the findings may be beneficial to faculty members and administrators who teach courses and design programs for college students.

**Outcomes**

Students at liberal arts colleges might expect to share in some similar outcomes from their undergraduate experiences. For one thing:

Liberal arts colleges, more than other types of institutions, enhance the student's chances of enrolling in graduate study, winning graduate fellowships, and eventually earning the doctorate degree…Most of the effects summarized above appear to be attributable to the private liberal arts college's small size, its residential nature, and the strong student orientation of its faculty. These three qualities, in turn, lead to positive outcomes because they enhance student involvement in academic work and increase the amount of student-student and student-faculty contact. (Astin, 1999, p. 83)

Even though there may be variations within the liberal arts world such as curriculum, religious affiliation, and level of selectivity, Astin (1999) reported that the liberal arts college student has a greater chance of attending graduate school and earning a doctorate than students from other types of institutions. Some common traits of the liberal arts college such as small size, highly residential campuses, and close student-faculty interactions may be responsible for the likelihood of students’ attending and completing graduate school. It may be worthwhile to note that liberal arts colleges have been associated with such desirable student outcomes. As one source indicated, "Residential liberal arts colleges in general, and highly selective liberal arts colleges in particular, produce a pattern of consistently positive student outcomes not found in any other
type of American higher-education institution" (Astin, 1999, p. 77). Students at residential liberal arts colleges such as Appelbaum and Boadicea may benefit from their undergraduate years in ways that students at other types of institutions may not.

Some of the common traits of the liberal arts college experience can lead to good outcomes for students. To illustrate, "One can argue that smallness tends to preserve the student's sense of identity and to offer him a much wider range of meaningful opportunities" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 99). Since liberal arts colleges tend to be small and have been so historically, students at these institutions today may reap benefits, one of which may be a heightened sense of one’s essential self. Other potential outcomes are that:

Students attending private liberal arts colleges, compared to students attending other types of institutions, are more satisfied with the faculty, the quality of teaching, and the general education program, and are more likely to view the institution as student-oriented. Attending a private liberal arts college also enhances the student's odds of completing the bachelor's degree, being elected to a student office, trusting the administration, and seeing the institution as being focused on social change. (Astin, 1999, p. 83)

Something about attending a private liberal arts college may increase the likelihood of these encouraging results. Students at Appelbaum and Boadicea may share at least some of the qualities of liberal arts college students identified by Astin (1999), however, students were not the subject of this research.

Liberal arts colleges in general, and the research sites for this study in particular, do vary from each other to some degree. Astin and Lee (1972) stated that:
A given student will tend to get lower grades at a selective college than at an unselective one. In spite of his lower grades, however, he is less likely to drop out of a selective college than an unselective one. (p. 82)

If this holds true, then students at Appelbaum College might make lower grades than students at Boadicea College, but students at Appelbaum might be less likely to drop out than students at Boadicea, since Boadicea is less selective (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Additionally, "It seems safe to conclude that the student who attends an invisible college is likely to be somewhat less satisfied with his college after one year than is the student attending a public college" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 86). Appelbaum and Boadicea are private colleges. However, since Astin and Lee (1972) coined the term invisible colleges to refer to institutions of higher learning that are small, private colleges with limited resources and indicated that all HBCs except two are invisible colleges (p. 30), it may be surmised that if a student at one of the research sites were to be dissatisfied with college after the first year, that student would likely be a Boadicea student. The instructors who participate in this study will be teaching or will have taught freshmen students within the past year.

Another variance between the colleges selected for this study deals with students’ major courses of study. To illustrate:

Elite [liberal arts] colleges tend to steer their students toward majors and career choices in the arts, humanities, and social sciences, whereas the invisible colleges steer their students toward the physical sciences (physics, chemistry, the earth sciences, and so forth), the health professions (non-M.D.), and, to a lesser extent, the biological sciences. (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 90)
If this holds true, students at Appelbaum may be more likely to major in the arts, humanities, and social sciences since this institution is more highly selective regarding student enrollment than is Boadicea. Boadiceans may be more likely to major in physical sciences, health-related professions, or biology. If Astin and Lee (1972) got it right, English department faculty members teaching a class full of arts, humanities, and social sciences majors at a selective liberal arts college might be apt to teach the course differently than English department faculty members teaching physical science, health-related profession, and biology majors at a less-selective school might. Students’ choices of majors could be impacted by their campus environments and faculty members’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes may be influenced by students’ majors. If the findings of Astin and Lee (1972) apply, all of academe might benefit from finding out how these elements may work together to influence the teaching practices of some of their colleagues. However, in this study, data were not collected regarding students' chosen majors.

Students at HBCs might expect educational outcomes somewhat similar to the outcomes for students at other small, private, liberal arts colleges, but with some differences. For example, according to one source, students at invisible colleges tend to be practical in their thinking and motivated toward a particular occupation or profession (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 57). According to Astin and Lee (1972), students at HBCs, with the exception of two institutions, are also students at invisible colleges. In addition, it was noted that students who attend Protestant colleges are more likely to join social fraternities or sororities than students at other institutions (Astin, 1999, p. 87). Based on these research reports, Boadicea College, an HBC affiliated with a Protestant denomination, might be expected to have practical-minded students who are motivated by vocation and who are members of Greek-letter organizations. Appelbaum College is affiliated
with a Protestant denomination, so it may have high percentages of fraternity and sorority members as students as well.

There may be a degree of difference between student outcomes at a Historically Black liberal arts college versus student outcomes at a non-Historically Black liberal arts college. One finding associated with the Historically Black liberal arts college is that:

Evidence from two sources suggests that attending an HBC has positive effects on the African-American student's grade-point average (GPA), intellectual self-esteem, satisfaction with college, and chances of attending musical events, participating in protests, tutoring other students, choosing a career in science, and graduating with honors. (Astin, 1999, p. 88-89)

Boadiceans, then, may have these attributes. The likelihood of their possessing these qualities, particularly having a high GPA and graduating with honors, may be even more likely than in the past because they also belong to Generation Z. In all students of this age group, “Evidence suggests that these students will devote large amounts of time engaging in activities personally relevant to them” (Geck, 2006, p. 20). If Boadicea’s students are satisfied with college, have high intellectual self-esteem, and are vocationally oriented, these traits, combined with Generation Z’s tendency to spend a great deal of time on activities they perceive as being personally relevant may lead to higher grades and graduation with honors because they may be inclined to study a lot. Data related to student attributes were not directly sought in this study, however, faculty participants did refer to students/student attributes as situational factors during data collection. This study focused on faculty members' course design and pedagogical decision-making process; students and student attributes were only significant as they related to faculty member participants' course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.
In all cases, traits of the modern liberal arts college have been shown to influence the educational experiences of students. For one thing:

With respect to an institution's size, recent research seems to confirm the folklore about the “small intimate college” as opposed to the “impersonal multiversity.” In the small college, faculty and students are usually on fairly familiar terms, and both tend to be interested and absorbed in the classwork. The environment is cohesive, and the students feel that the administration is concerned about them as individuals. (These findings apply equally to small invisible and small elite colleges). (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 82-83)

Astin and Lee (1972) looked at liberal arts colleges of different sorts, terming the schools with limited financial resources as invisible colleges. They found that regardless of the schools’ financial means, there was something about the small size of these colleges that led to an atmosphere of faculty-student harmony of interests and responsibilities concerning course work.

In addition to being small in size, liberal arts colleges tend to be highly residential. This has been shown to have at least some impact on students’ educational experiences. For example:

One of the most apparent advantages [of dormitory life] lies in the tendency of this life to intensify academic atmosphere. The student is apart from his home. The building he occupies is made for the college; he lives with other students. (Thwing, 1915, p. 393)

Thwing (1915) asserted that there was something about living away from familiar surroundings, in an institutionally provided building, in close proximity to others who were engaged in similar pursuits, which intensified the purpose for which one had come. Perhaps this is why military boot camps, Greek-letter organizations, and athletic teams have historically housed people together. In terms of academia, Thwing (1915) outlined a connection between dormitory life and a heightened educational atmosphere. As liberal arts colleges tend to focus on undergraduate
students, most of whom live on campus, these students may be receiving their education in an academically intensified setting. In the early days of liberal arts colleges, “The collegiate way of living and the constant presence of tutors gave students complete immersion in both religion and learning” (Geiger, 2011, p. 39). This may still be true to at least some extent at today’s religiously-affiliated, highly residential liberal arts colleges such as Appelbaum and Boadicea. Students living on campus at today’s liberal arts colleges may also be more prone to attend graduate school (Astin, 1999, p. 83), have a high sense of identity (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 99), and be inclined to spend lots of time on things that they perceive as relevant to them personally (Geck, 2006, p. 20). To design their courses, some faculty members might choose to take these and other student attributes into consideration. To what degree faculty members perceive and are influenced by elements such as institutional climate and tradition and student body makeup and goals, and how these elements may impact faculty members’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes emerged to some degree from this research. Faculty members in many academic departments at different types of intuitions of higher learning throughout the country might benefit from reading about this.

**Learning**

Astin (1999) explored effects of the liberal arts college experience on students. He found a negative correlation (−.72) between faculty perceptions of their institution’s level of student orientation and institutional size (Astin, 1999, p. 84). This may mean that the smaller the institution was, the more likely its faculty were to perceive the college as being student-oriented. Astin (1999) reported survey results from faculties at 221 colleges and universities. Student orientation was described through use of seven variables: interest in students' academic problems, interest in students' personal problems, commitment to institutional welfare, sensitivity
to minorities’ issues, availability outside of office hours, frequency of student-faculty interaction, and, scored negatively, treating students like numbers (Astin, 1999, p. 84).

Faculty rated their institutions on these variables. A high perception of student orientation on campus was found to be representative of most private liberal arts colleges, particularly those with Protestant connections (Astin, 1999, p. 84). The sites for the study are private, liberal arts colleges with Protestant affiliations, so, it may be that faculty at these institutions see themselves and their colleagues as student-oriented. It was interesting to see how perceptions of teaching at student-oriented colleges affected faculty members’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. Likewise, it might be interesting for faculty members and administrators at student-oriented campuses and those at institutions with other major foci to read about how their colleagues’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes were influenced by working at a student-oriented institution.

Today’s liberal arts students may be navigating their ways through their courses of study in student-oriented learning environments. This could impact how these students learn. For example, research has shown that learners’ academic success may depend on their ability to self-regulate their learning (Greene, Yu, & Copeland 2014). Because students may need access to learning strategies appropriate for their course work, being able to self-regulate could be a crucial skill for them to have. As one source indicated, what should happen in an ideal situation is that after a learner has completed a task, s/he should reflect on their performance of the task and adjust their beliefs and knowledge base so that they can complete future tasks with greater proficiency (Greene, Yu, & Copeland, 2014). If students do engage in this form of self-regulation with regard to their learning, faculty members might want to take this into consideration when planning and teaching their classes. Conversely, if students struggle with
introspection, reflection, or self-regulation, this might be something for faculty to bear in mind when making course design and pedagogical decisions. A student in freshman English who does not independently think about and learn from his/her performance in class might need diverse types of practice in and outside the classroom in order to achieve the course objectives set by the professor. Self-regulation may be one example of a student learning factor that could impact the way that a student learns and therefore how a faculty member plans and teaches. How students learn and how teachers teach may be connected in innumerable ways. The synchronous, recursive nature of teaching and learning was a dynamic phenomenon to observe and describe. How the teaching and learning transaction affected the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English department faculty members at small, liberal arts colleges was partially revealed through this research. The findings of this study may help to inform the teaching and learning processes at colleges and universities now and in the future.

**Liberal Arts College Faculty**

**Purpose**

This portion of the literature review examines traits of modern faculty members, particularly faculty members at liberal arts colleges. Just as students can be an essential component of the college campus and can be a vital part of the teaching and learning process, so can college faculty members. Indeed, a college faculty member may have myriad responsibilities, including setting the tone in his or her classroom and establishing a purpose for learning. On the importance of the college teacher, one source opined:

But let the teacher be that rare individual who combines deep scholarship with a gift of expression and genuine human sympathies and the drab classroom was transformed into a dwelling-place of light. Such a man could enliven even the dullest material, for he had
the wisdom and the versatility to use his subject, whatever it might be, as a means for achieving that most exhilarating of experiences: a genuine meeting of minds. (Schmidt, 1957, p. 93)

This statement addresses the importance of having the right person for the job of teaching college students. It also agrees with the teaching ideals set forth by Fink (2013) with regard to crafting meaningful learning experiences for students. College teaching may be about more than what takes place in the classroom; it may include what students take with them and remember after the course is over. To create these kinds of lasting learning experiences, it may be necessary for college faculty members to plan and teach creatively and strategically. Eliphalet Nott, president of Union College, 1804 – 1866, said of college teaching:

> It has been my endeavour these twenty years, since I have had the care of youth, to make men rather than great scholars. I shall not give you long lessons, but shall lead you to exercise your own minds in much thought. (Schmidt, 1957, p. 115)

While colleges today may not exhibit an *in loco parentis* mindset, faculty members at small colleges have been shown to interact more closely with students than faculty members at other types of colleges do (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 99). So, to an extent, faculty members at these institutions may still feel some degree of responsibility for their students’ wellbeing. The making of men and women from high school boys and girls may require the help of all college stakeholders. Faculty members plan and teach lessons; perhaps those lessons inspire students to think. Designing courses, planning and teaching lessons, and interacting with students can be key parts of the college faculty member’s job. How a faculty member views his/her purpose at work was significant in studying how that faculty member makes course design and pedagogical decisions. For example, a faculty member who feels as Eliphalet Nott did might take great care
in preparing students’ coursework. How faculty perceptions of their purpose(s) in the classroom affect their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes was revealed at least in part through this research. Members of the academy who feel the same and those who feel differently about their purpose(s) in the classroom might benefit from reading the findings of the study.

**Teaching Load**

Designing courses, planning and teaching lessons, and interacting with students are part of teaching, which is part of a faculty member’s job. Depending on the nature of the interactions with students, some might count as teaching and some might count as service, which is another component of a faculty member’s work. Traditionally, the college professor’s job was divided into three parts: teaching, research, and service (Boyer, 1990; Birnbaum, 1988). So, while aspects related to teaching are the focus of the study, it may be important to remember that even allowing for some overlap, given the traditional tripartite arrangement for faculty members’ work, teaching and teaching-related tasks are only roughly 33.3% of the job. However, at least as far back as the early 1900s, some faculty members have been expected to squeeze a lot into the teaching part of their responsibilities at some institutions. As one source put it:

> It is no state secret that the average professor in the small college has from one to five courses each year in addition to his classes in literature. Some subjects gathered at random are: Advanced Composition, Literary Study of the Bible, Short Story, Word Study, Teachers’ Course. (Burd, 1914, p. 106)

At a time when literature written in English was fighting for a place in the traditional, classical curriculum, Burd (1914) indicated that faculty members in some small colleges were being stretched thin, teaching multiple courses on myriad subjects. Things were not reported to be
much different at some higher education institutions in the late 1990s. For example, "The 'doctoral-granting universities' that are not well supported to do research often exact teaching loads of nine to twelve hours, as do the liberal-arts colleges, especially those outside the top fifty" (Clark, 1997, p. 26-27). Teaching a large number of courses might be perceived as burdensome, especially in light of the traditional, tri-fold obligations of college faculty members to contribute to the institution in teaching, research, and service. Indeed, it has been noted, "Fifteen hours of classroom teaching each week is far too much for the maintenance of a scholarly life: even twelve hours is excessive"(Clark, 1997, p. 33); and:

One reason legislators, trustees, and the general public often fail to understand why ten or twelve hours in the classroom each week can be a heavy load is their lack of awareness of the hard work and the serious study that undergirds good teaching. (Boyer, 1990, p. 23)

Institutional expectations with regard to teaching, research, and service and how much time faculty members are expected to devote to each component, combined with the number of different courses a professor is expected to teach, could potentially affect how faculty members design and teach courses, particularly if a faculty member perceives his or her teaching load to be excessive. How a logistical factor such as the teaching work load may affect a faculty member’s course design and pedagogical decision-making processes was a possible topic of conversation during the face-to-face interviews in the study, could have been witnessed during the classroom observations, and might have appeared during analysis of the course-related documents, however, work load issues did not surface during data collection. Reading about how some faculty members organized the time that they devoted to teaching-related tasks might have been useful to other faculty members and college administrators.
Environment

One’s surroundings can be crucial to one’s abilities to teach and to learn. At colleges, one's department is one element of a faculty member’s environment. According to one source, "The work of Tony Becher and others on the cultures of individual disciplines has shown that bodies of knowledge variously determine the behavior of individuals and departments. Disciplines exhibit discernible differences in individual behavior and group action" (Clark, 1997, p. 24). Working in the English department versus the History department, then, can affect how a faculty member behaves. It was interesting to see similarities between English faculty members at the research sites. Further on the subject of teaching environment, one source noted:

Professors [at leading private liberal-arts colleges] often waxed lyrical in interviews about the small-college environment tailored to undergraduate teaching: …“I think that it is one of the least constraining environments I know of,” “It is a better form of life,” or "My colleagues are fantastic. The people in this department are sane, which in an English department is not always the case.” (Clark, 1997, p. 28)

So, based on Clark (1997), the perception of one’s teaching environment can have some effect on one’s attitude toward work. For example, if a professor felt overburdened with responsibilities or felt free and invigorated at work, this might show in his/her planning and teaching. Likewise, how a professor feels about his/her disciplinary department might also be evidenced by what and how s/he plans for the course, by what and how s/he chooses to teach, and by what course content s/he chooses to include or omit. Discovering how faculty members impacted their students’ learning environments through their course design and pedagogical decisions offered opportunities to increase awareness of the influences of situational factors such as faculty working environments on the education of today's college students.
Part-Timers

Although this study was designed to examine the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of full-time faculty members teaching freshman English at small, private, liberal arts colleges, the presence of part-time faculty members at the research sites might have impacted the study. It has been noted that:

In all institutional sectors, part-timers have long been with us...But the use of part-timers grew greatly during the last two decades as a form of mobile and inexpensive labor….their large numbers weaken the influence of full-time faculty vis-a-vis trustees and administrative staff. (Clark, 1997, p. 34-35)

It was possible that some part-time faculty members might have been working in the English departments at Appelbaum and Boadicea. The presence of these employees could have impacted the study in a number of ways. For example, part-time faculty members’ willingness to work for lower salaries and/or decreased benefits might have been perceived by full-time professors as a threat to their continued full-time employment. Additionally, the employment of part-time faculty or adjuncts could have, over time, decreased the number of full-time faculty members at the college, which could, over time, have lowered the number of possible research participants for the study. Specifically, "Those who work in the less-selective settings also more frequently work part-time” (Clark, 1997, p. 27). According to this source, there was a greater chance of encountering part-time faculty members at Boadicea College than at Appelbaum College. Astin and Lee (1972) referred to colleges like Boadicea as invisible and more likely to cease to exist than other liberal arts colleges (p. 11). Since Boadicea may be less likely to survive over time, it was disappointing that research participants at that site were scarce. Clark (1997) reported that more than 40% of the total academic work force works part-time (p. 27). Recruitment of full-
time English department faculty members for the study was challenging, possibly because increased use of part-time faculty members can mean decreased use of full-time faculty members. Thus, while part-time faculty members were not identified as possible research participants, yet and still, their existence may have impacted the study. How full-time faculty members function with respect to part-time faculty members could impact how the full-time faculty members make course design and pedagogical decisions, especially if they feel in some way threatened by the part-timers’ presence. How the employment of part-time faculty members might have impacted this research is something that might have been uncovered in this study, however, explicit questions about part-time faculty members were not asked and they were not mentioned as situational factors by participants. However, ways in which full-time and part-time faculty members function in the workplace, and how their working relationships might affect course design and pedagogical decision-making processes is information that could be useful to the academy.

Working Conditions

The spaces in which faculty members work may be influenced by financial and power structure resources and processes. An institution’s financial means may affect faculty members’ teaching practices. For example,

In [sectors of academe other than universities], however, involvement in the mainline disciplinary associations declines: there is less to learn that is relevant to one's everyday life, and travel money is scarce in the institutional budget. Academics then go to national meetings when they are held in their part of the country. They look for special sessions on teaching; they break away to form associations (and journals) appropriate to the sector. (Clark, 1997, p. 30)
If this is the case, by attending national-level conferences held by disciplinary organizations such as the National Council of Teachers of English, college faculty members may engage in activities such as making contact with potential research partners, previewing new textbooks in their field, and learning new planning, teaching, or assessment techniques. However, faculty members at some institutions may be prevented from attending such conferences and engaging in such activities because of institutional budgetary constraints. Attending such a conference when it is held in one’s part of the country might allow one to attend every two to four years; this might not be often enough to nurture lasting contacts with distant colleagues or stay abreast of new techniques in the field. Even though researching and publishing with colleagues might bring notoriety and financial assistance in the form of grants to one’s institution, if Clark (1997) is accurate, faculty members at institutions other than universities may be unable to attend national meetings with any regularity, potentially hindering their professional growth. Working within such parameters might impact one’s attitude toward the college as well as one’s course design and/or pedagogical decisions.

Workplace politics may influence who has power on campus and in what ways they might wield it. As one source indicated:

Academics in [leading private four-year colleges] generally have strong countervailing power of a professional kind that is rooted in their personal and collective expertise…they exercise much internal control. They expect to dominate in choosing who to add to the faculty and what courses should be taught. They expect to be consulted in many matters rather than to receive orders from those in nominally superior positions. (Clark, 1997, p. 34)
So, on some campuses, faculty members may exert power over the internal workings of the institution, affecting hiring decisions (Bowen & Tobin, 2015, p. 139) and course offerings. This could mean that research participants might have felt that they owed loyalty or obedience to another faculty member, even if that faculty member were to engage in questionable pedagogical practices. In other words, pressure to conform to the status quo might have been stronger than any onus to facilitate lasting learning. This, coupled with a perceived lack of options due to diminished contact with national colleagues, could serve as a debilitating factor in a faculty member’s working conditions. Institutional finances and/or power structures, then, may potentially impact a faculty member’s course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

By focusing on faculty members who have taught at least one year, the likelihood of faculty members in this study feeling pressured by others or cut off from opportunities may be decreased somewhat. How working conditions such as institutional resources and power structures impacted how college faculty members planned and conducted their courses could be of interest to professors and administrators throughout the academy, as working conditions may impact people in various positions at all types of institutions.

**Characteristics**

There are some traits that have been identified with faculty at liberal arts colleges. It was reported toward the end of the 1990s that seven percent of all college and university faculty work at liberal-arts colleges (Clark, 1997, p. 26). This small group of faculty members may share some characteristics with each other, perhaps depending on what people teach and where they teach. One source indicated that academic discipline and institutional location are vital influences on work-related thinking and behaviors (Clark, 1997, p. 22). English teachers, then, may be different from sociology teachers. And liberal arts faculty members may differ from state
university faculty members. Stated another way, English professors may somehow be alike and sociology professors may somehow be alike; liberal arts faculties may resemble each other, and state university faculties may resemble each other. Altbach (2011) concurred:

Faculty are…divided by discipline and department. While one may speak broadly of the American professoriate, the working life and culture of most academics is encapsulated in a disciplinary and institutional framework. Variations among the different sectors within the academic system – research universities, community colleges, liberal arts institutions, and others – also shape the academic profession. Vast differences exist in working styles, outlooks, remuneration, and responsibilities between a senior professor at Harvard University and a beginning assistant professor at a community college. (p. 230)

Because English department members at small, private, not-for-profit, liberal arts colleges share academic and institutional contexts, their work lives might be similar in some ways. The sites for this study are connected to Christian churches (college websites). So, in addition to their relative size, private, not-for-profit status, and highly residential campuses, these institutions also share the trait of being religiously-affiliated. It was interesting to see English department faculty members at these institutions sharing similar work-related traits and experiences; interviewing and observing these faculty members and analyzing their course documents offered a glimpse into their work lives, habits, and decision-making processes. How faculty members at these institutions made course design and pedagogical decisions is the crux of this study; researching at sites which are similar to each other in multiple ways led to comparable yet not identical findings. Findings such as these may be of use to persons throughout higher education as they make decisions touching faculty course design and pedagogy.
Tenure

One aspect of faculty work life is tenure. Created as a way to protect academic freedom and offer job security for faculty members, tenure has been a tradition within the academy (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Presently, concepts associated with tenure are coming under scrutiny and revision. As one source indicated, “We are in a period of profound change in American higher education, and it is likely that these changes will result in further weakening of the power and autonomy of the professoriate” (Altbach, 2011, p. 229). Changes regarding tenure amount to a situational factor which could affect how faculty members feel about their careers and how they operate within the sociocultural and power structures of their institutions. Altbach (2011) continued by stating, “Full-time but non-tenure-track appointees are a new and growing category of faculty. They usually hold limited-term jobs and often have a major responsibility for teaching” (Altbach, 2011, p. 230). Part-time faculty members have become a part of many college campuses across the country; now, according to Altbach (2011), some faculty members are being hired to work full-time, but with no possibility of tenure. Prior to this, the dividing line between those faculty members who were eligible for tenure and those who were not was the full-time/part-time delineation. Hiring a full-time faculty member without putting them on the tenure track is new, and might be perceived as a threat by some faculty members, as it might seem to indicate that tenure on their campus may someday cease to be recognized. Additionally, if full-time, non-tenure track faculty members are usually hired for a specific time period, full-time, tenured or tenure-track faculty members might view them as outsiders who are not fully invested in the institution’s mission and challenges.

Tenure-related issues may impact who ends up standing in front of college classrooms. For example, the American Association of University Professors has said that tenure is now held
by a minority of higher education faculty members (Railsback, Williamson, and Hamilton-Bunch, 2012, p. 133). As more and more non-tenure-track faculty members assume roles within higher education facilities, those on the path to tenure could feel that they are being phased out. As tenured professors retire, there may be no guarantee that incoming faculty members hired to replace them will be allowed to pursue tenure. The feeling of belonging to a shrinking minority or being an unwelcome presence at work could have bearing on how faculty members operate within their work environments, including how they plan courses and make teaching-related decisions.

Another way that tenure may affect who teaches college courses involves gender. According to one source, “at these private liberal arts colleges, more women (24%) are employed full-time and not in tenure track positions than men (12%)…Women on average were less likely to have tenure” (Railsback, Williamson, and Hamilton-Bunch, 2012, p. 142). If women on average are less likely to earn tenure at private liberal arts colleges, then the women who teach there may primarily teach freshmen and sophomores, as tenured professors may prefer to teach older undergraduates or graduate students if their college has a graduate school. This, in turn, could mean that more men would have tenure and would teach the older students and fewer women would have tenure and would teach the younger students.

At Appelbaum and Boadicea, the research sites, it could have happened that most faculty members who teach freshman English were non-tenure-tracked females. However, as it happened, 75% of participants had tenure, including all of the female participants. How these faculty members made decisions regarding their courses was interesting to see and provided an opportunity to learn how their working conditions, including tenure-related issues, impact how and what they plan and how they teach. As tenure- and gender-related issues may be important at
any number of colleges and universities, this study offers a chance for higher education professionals to learn more about these work-related situational factors and how they may impact course-design and pedagogical decision-making at their own institution.

According to the American Association of University Professors, “The number of tenured female faculty members decreased to just over one-third at baccalaureate and master’s degree granting colleges” (Banerji, 2006; Railsback, et al., 2012). If one in three tenured faculty members at baccalaureate colleges is female, there is a chance that there are many female faculty members who are not tenured. Non-tenured faculty members may tend to teach lower-level courses, so the chances may be great that freshman English gets taught by a non-tenured female faculty member. If so, the research participants for this study might have been non-tenured females, however, the only non-tenured participant was male. Data were not collected regarding the tenure status of others in the departments.

Each institution of higher learning may have its own climate and traditions. Tenure-related issues could potentially impact the campus environment. For example:

Nationally, the number of non-tenure-track faculty members and part-time faculty members is steadily increasing, particularly as universities and colleges implement cost-cutting strategies. Finding ways to integrate these faculty members into the institution's community and culture and to ensure the quality of the skills and abilities they bring to their work will have important implications for professional development. (Gappa, Austin, and Trice, 2007, as cited in Austin & Sorcinelli, 2013, p. 88)

Non-tenure-tracked faculty members, be they part-time or full-time, may problematize the tenure tradition. Symbolic convergence can take place over time; people who work together in the same environment for a long time can tend to develop their own vocabulary, share inside jokes, and
bond with each other through shared experiences (Bess & Dee, 2008, p. 617). What tenure means, who earns it, and who does not, could create disturbances in the development of symbolic convergence. Over time, faculty members might become less likely to associate with each other in lasting ways because of the temporal nature of their appointments. Viewing one’s job as temporary might influence one’s course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. Non-tenure tracked faculty members are a possible situational factor influencing a faculty member’s work environment. If non-tenure-track faculty members exist on one’s campus, or may exist on one’s campus in future, it may be important to learn how these college employees function within their workplaces, and how their presence may affect their own and others’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

**The Historically Black Liberal Arts College**

**Invisible Institutions**

The colleges chosen as research sites for the study are Appelbaum College and Boadicea College. These colleges are as alike and as different as any other liberal arts colleges. They share these traits: liberal arts curriculum, not for-profit, private, religiously affiliated, and small (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). One difference is that while Appelbaum serves a predominantly White student body, Boadicea is a Historically Black College. This portion of the literature review examines some traits of Historically Black liberal arts colleges and how those traits may contextualize research. Appelbaum demonstrates selectivity of their student body (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Boadicea’s level of selectivity cannot be ascertained in this way as they did not submit selectivity data to IPEDS for the school years 2016-2017. However, Boadicea’s college website does refer to an open-door policy with regard to admissions (college website). Appelbaum and Boadicea are both undergraduate-dominant colleges (college
Boadicea has a less diverse student body; IPEDS data from the 2016-2017 school year showed that 96% of Boadicea’s students were Black, 2% were White, and .8% were of two or more races (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). Astin and Lee (1972) coined the term invisible college, "defining invisibility operationally as having a small and unselect student enrollment and being of private status" (p. 93). Boadicea meets these criteria for invisibility as well as an additional condition, because it is a Historically Black College:

    About half of all black institutions in the United States (46 of 93) are private colleges and of these, all but two are invisible colleges….In short, for all practical purposes, any black private college can be considered invisible almost by definition. (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 30)

Boadicea, then, fits Astin and Lee’s (1972) criteria for invisible colleges, because it is a small, private, historically, and predominantly Black college that is not selective with regard to student admission.

    Astin and Lee (1972) identified some traits specific to invisible colleges. Since Boadicea qualifies as an invisible college, these traits may be particularly significant to the institutional climate there. One of these traits involves limited financial wherewithal. The authors stated that private, little-known colleges receive little support from the state and do not compete well for federal grants (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 11). The colleges chosen are both private, but the assumption here is that because Boadicea is private and invisible, it may have fewer financial resources than Appelbaum, which does not fit the invisibility criteria because it is at least somewhat selective regarding student enrollment and is not a Historically Black college. Astin and Lee (1972) stated quite clearly that, “With respect to financial resources the invisible colleges are in a dismal position. They receive far less money from virtually all sources of
revenue than do either elite or middle private colleges” (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 47). At Boadicea, because it fits the criteria of institutional invisibility, there may be a significant lack of funds. Minimal financial resources might affect a college in multiple ways including physical disrepair, limited technological equipment and access, and small numbers of full-time faculty members per department. It may be more difficult to recruit participants at Boadicea than at Appelbaum because Boadicea may have significantly fewer full-time faculty members in the English department due to institutional invisibility. How Boadicea’s status as an invisible college affected the course design and pedagogical decision-making of its faculty members was at least partially unearthed through this research.

Purpose

A part of the history of Historically Black Colleges may give some insight into how they became invisible institutions. The liberal arts college tradition began to include African-Americans in the early to mid-1800s, but this occurred mostly at colleges designated for that purpose. For example, although Oberlin began admitting African-American students in 1835, (About Oberlin: History, 2016), the prevailing trend in higher education at the time was to establish separate colleges for Black students. Therefore, "As early as 1846, the American Missionary Association was formed with the intention of bringing higher education to the Negro" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 19-20). From the beginning, then, education for persons of color may have been perceived as a challenge separate from the challenge of educating persons who were not of color. Given that the practice of separate but equal was eventually determined to mean separate and unequal with regard to education in this country, Historically Black Colleges may have been destined to be perceived as subpar, with invisibility as a result.
Colleges for persons of color were founded to educate a traditionally marginalized population in the United States and therefore have needed to spend a great deal of time on remediation and emphasizing vocational curricula (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 20). With an open-door admissions policy, Boadicea is still operating within these parameters, as accepting all students who apply means working with at least some students who could not gain admission elsewhere. This might be because the students are at a disadvantage, academically. IPEDS data for the graduating class from the 2013-2014 school year showed that the four most popular degree areas at Boadicea were General Business Administration and Management (22%), Criminal Justice/Law Enforcement Administration (22%), General Biology/Biological Sciences (13%), and Social Work (11%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2017). These degree areas may be examples of practical, occupation-related curricula, however, due to Boadicea’s admissions policy, its students appeared to be more academically challenged than students at Appelbaum. The faculty participant at Boadicea was focused on preparing students with a wide range of skills, talents, and abilities to find occupations after college, which, in turn, influenced the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes in ways not seen at Appelbaum, however, findings from Boadicea will still be compared to findings at the other college, as the institutions resemble each other in multiple ways. It may be that findings from Boadicea shed light on course design and pedagogical decision-making processes at other invisible colleges, as well.

Some Institutional Characteristics

Religious and moral influence.

The liberal arts colleges of old were openly allied with religious organizations. In the case of invisible colleges, religious affiliation appears to remain a strong trait, as "one of the major distinguishing characteristics of invisibility is affiliation with a religious denomination"
(Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 29). As with the overall category of the liberal arts college, a preponderance of traits may be used to delineate invisible colleges.Having religious ties seems to be almost an imperative, but does not in and of itself define a college as invisible. Astin and Lee (1972) associated invisible colleges with moral considerations for students, since they reported that invisible colleges acted in loco parentis more often than elite liberal arts colleges, "inflicting harsher penalties for drinking, for aggression" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 71-72). Faculty at Boadicea might have been influenced by moral considerations for students to a greater extent than faculty at Appelbaum, even though both colleges have religious affiliations. This might have affected course design decisions made by Boadicean English department faculty, particularly regarding course content choices. The religious affiliation of the college, combined with the belief that the college must at least in some ways stand in place of the students’ parents, could have affected the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of Boadicea’s English department faculty, however, this was not revealed in data collection. The only participant who mentioned religion was at Appelbaum, but his comment was not in reference to his course. How these elements affect their work as college educators may be significant to the participants themselves; to other English or other department faculty members; college administrators at small, liberal arts colleges; and faculty members or administrators at other invisible institutions, as well as any member of the academy who wishes to know more about course design and pedagogy.

**Finances.**

Although the global and national economies of the early 2000s were troubled, invisible colleges seem to have been plagued by financial woe for so long that it became a distinguishing trait. For example, "Several factors that characterize the invisible colleges…[include] their very
limited financial resources and their lack of prestige in the academic world" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 39). Facing economic hardship year after year could affect the sociocultural milieu of a college campus. For these reasons, doing without or making do could be routine at Boadicea, and interviews and classroom observations supported this. Astin and Lee (1972) asserted, “The data make it clear that invisible colleges spend substantially less money per student for educational and general purposes than does either the elite or middle group of private colleges” (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 41). IPEDS data support this statement because in the fiscal year 2016, Appelbaum College spent $9,510 per full-time equivalent on instruction and Boadicea College spent $4,382 per full-time equivalent on instruction (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). On this one measure of educational spending Boadicea spent less than half of what Appelbaum spent per full-time equivalent in 2016. This may indicate that Boadicea does, indeed, spend much less per student for educational purposes than the other institution. Indeed, Astin and Lee (1972) referred to invisible colleges as “have-not” institutions (p. 93). Less money could mean employing fewer faculty members, which could mean increased class sizes. Boadicean faculty were found to have significantly larger classes and other situational factors also affected their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes in ways that Appelbaum faculty did not report. Over time, spending less money per student for educational purposes may have caused the institutional climate at Boadicea to evolve in ways that another college climate may not have. Through this research, academe may learn more about how institutional finances, i.e., being a have-not institution, may affect the course design and pedagogical decision-making practices of faculty members. This topic may be of particular interest given global and national economic situations.
Boadicea, as an invisible college, does differ from Appelbaum in some ways, but both are liberal arts colleges and share many traits. One example is that, “the invisible college student is more likely to attend college close to home, although both invisible and elite colleges are primarily residential” (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 50). So, while students at liberal arts colleges may tend to live on campus, students at invisible liberal arts colleges such as Boadicea may tend to live on campus and come from homes relatively close to the college campus. Astin and Lee (1972) used this tendency to criticize invisible colleges’ abilities to attract students:

The fact that the homes of students attending the typical invisible college tend to be located closer to the college than the homes of students attending the typical elite college is further evidence of the invisible college’s poorer drawing power and comparative obscurity (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 51).

While the analysis presented by Astin and Lee (1972) is plausible, it is perhaps worthwhile to note that although these students come from homes close to the campus, they choose to live on campus instead of commuting. This might be an indication that the college does somehow draw students to itself. Also, considering that these colleges may admit students who have significant academic challenges, the choice to live on campus could indicate a substantial amount of buy-in on the part of students and their families. How faculty members plan courses for students who live on campus may be a factor at both colleges; how faculty members plan courses for students who live on campus, come from areas near the college, and may be struggling academically may be more of an issue at Boadicea. The course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members who teach at colleges where a large number of undergraduate students live on campus may be of interest at similar and different types of institutions, since many institutions
offer on-campus housing and taking this into account when planning courses and teaching lessons may be a novel concept for some instructors.

Faculty.

Astin and Lee (1972) presented some faculty traits found in invisible colleges such as Boadicea. For one, "nearly one-third of the invisible colleges have faculties where none of the members has a doctor's degree" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 39). This could have produced an impact still felt on invisible college campuses today. Those invisible institutions which survived the late 1960s and remain in operation today might have been galvanized to attract more doctorate-level faculty; conversely, they may have seen their ability to survive without faculty who hold terminal degrees as an indication that faculty with doctorate degrees are not needed. Boadicea was in operation prior to 1972 and remains in operation today. Neither the college website nor the U.S. Department of Education’s IPEDS lists college degrees for Boadicea’s faculty members, thus it is not known at this time what percentage of its faculty members hold doctorate degrees. This information was obtained regarding the Boadicean participant during interviews, however, data were not collected for non-participating faculty members at either institution due to web page layout and needed updates. It was interesting to learn that there were more similarities than differences between the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of participants with doctorate degrees and participants without doctorate degrees.

Some other traits found common to faculty members at invisible colleges involve professional demeanor and expectations for student behavior in classes. According to one source, instructors at an invisible college are less likely to be gregarious, outspoken, energetic, and entertaining than faculty members at elite liberal arts colleges. They are also less likely to interact with their students informally. Additionally, their classes may tend to be more highly
structured and formal, with the professors taking attendance and assigning seats (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 71)

In this regard, faculty members at invisible institutions appear to regard students somewhat similarly to the way elementary and secondary teachers do. Withholding or lacking humor, maintaining decreased familiarity, taking attendance, and assigning seats are some characteristics of k-12 teachers and a traditional admonishment for them is, “Don’t smile until Christmas,” the idea being that a teacher who shows his/her human side to the class will lose students’ respect. During classroom observations at the research sites, it was interesting to see that faculty members at both institutions held true to the depictions set forth by Astin and Lee (1972). For example, faculty members all took attendance and interacted with students with decreased familiarity in class. How faculty members, particularly invisible college faculty members, interact with their students and structure their classes may come about because of their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. How these elements interplayed and affected teaching might be interesting for higher education faculty members and administrators to read about.

**Student finances.**

In addition to invisible colleges’ facing economic hardships, they may tend to attract more students from economically challenged backgrounds than other liberal arts colleges do. As one source stated, “Judging by mean percentages, invisible colleges enroll close to four times as many students from families with poverty-level incomes as elite colleges do” (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 53). This may be a reason that invisible colleges remain invisible; money and power are sometimes conflated in this society, thus families without money may tend to have limited power. Enrolling students from non-powerful families might not be a way to attract students
from families with great power; thus, invisible colleges may remain invisible, having limited financial resources and power, due in part to enrolling students whose families have limited financial resources and power. How student finances, family income levels, and/or family and student power may impact course design and pedagogical decision-making processes could have been revealed through participant interviews, however, this topic did not emerge during data collection. The possible effects of money and power on faculty members’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes are topics which may be of interest at many institutions of higher learning, including the research sites for the study.

**Institution.**

Astin and Lee (1972) identified the invisible college by its traits. While Boadicea is a liberal arts college, it is an invisible liberal arts college, sharing some institutional characteristics with other liberal arts colleges like Appelbaum, while also sharing some institutional characteristics with other invisible institutions. Some liberal arts colleges are considered to be elite schools, and some are not. As one source put it, "Most observers would agree that a status hierarchy exists in higher education whereby the elite colleges set the pace, the standards, and the goals for all four-year liberal arts colleges" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 96). How Boadicea and other colleges compare to the standards set at elite liberal arts colleges is one way to describe them. Traits analysis, viewing those traits that given colleges have in common, is another way to describe similarities and differences among the institutions and identify categories such as elite or invisible.

Some of the traits of the invisible institutions may not be positive ones. For example, "Institutional characteristics contributing to dissatisfaction include the relatively poor school spirit at the invisible colleges, their location (primarily in the South and Midwest), their lack of
affluence, and paradoxically, their low tuition fees" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 88). In identifying traits found to be common among small, private college with limited resources, Astin and Lee (1972) showed that when students at invisible colleges become discontented with their colleges, traits of institutional invisibility are sometimes the cause. In addition to sometimes causing student displeasure, invisible colleges have been shown to have a more fragile existence than other types of colleges and universities, being “the most likely to become extinct" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 11). Whether Boadicea describes itself in comparison to standards set at elite colleges, in comparison to the traits of other liberal arts colleges, or in some other way might greatly impact faculty perceptions of their tasks as instructors. Discovering how institutional perceptions may affect faculty course design and pedagogical decision-making processes was one aim of this research. Knowing how faculty members at Boadicea perceive their institution and plan their courses and teach their classes could add to any future discussions of the invisible college.

Faculty members and administrators at invisible and noninvisible colleges and universities may be interested to know how faculty perceptions of an institution of higher learning may affect the planning and teaching of courses and the fostering of lasting learning.

**Outcomes.**

The undergraduate years may contain many experiences, however, when the four years have ended, students can be left with outcomes which could affect their lives indefinitely, such as lasting learning. Invisible colleges, like elite colleges, do have “impact on the student's educational progress or degree aspirations" (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 98). Students at invisible liberal arts colleges and at elite liberal arts colleges may all hope to earn degrees at the end of their undergraduate years. However, the degrees that the students earn from their colleges may not afford them equal social and cultural capital, since:
An undergraduate degree from one institution may constitute a much better entrée to a graduate or professional school or to a high-level job than does the same degree from another institution, regardless of the candidate’s real talent and regardless of what he has learned or what skills he has acquired in college. It seems safe to assume that the more visible an institution, the greater and more numerous are these fringe benefits. (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 81)

Here, the authors referred to fringe benefits accrued via baccalaureate degrees. They defined fringe benefits as:

any outcome that results not from an actual change in the student himself but rather from his having done his time, so to speak, at a particular college and from the knowledge that other people have of this fact and the inferences they draw from it. (Astin & Lee, 1972, p. 81)

So, spending one’s undergraduate years at an invisible college may not earn one the same outcomes as attending a different type of college might. Regardless of students’ strengths, talents, and abilities, those who attend invisible colleges may not be afforded the same social and cultural capital as they might have been, had they attended and graduated from a noninvisible college. Four years at an invisible college, then, may not yield the same outcomes as four years at a noninvisible college. Some possible outcomes at invisible colleges may stem from their student bodies. According to one source, invisible colleges today tend to enroll slightly more females than elite colleges and higher education institutions in general (Tarrant, 2015, p. 22). If invisible colleges tend to enroll more females than males, it may mean that they ultimately graduate more females than males. It may also mean that their campus climates tend to be more
in tune and responsive to women’s needs and issues than campus climates at elite colleges. Colleges like Boadicea, then, may serve more females than males.

Summary

Boadicea College differs from Appelbaum because it is what has been termed an invisible college – a small, private college with limited resources. Boadicea College was created to educate persons of color, and still does so, with a student body that is more than 95% African American (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Boadicea has an open-door admissions policy and its students tend to favor pragmatic curricula. Like Appelbaum, Boadicea has Christian denominational ties. Faculty members at colleges like Boadicea have been known to act in loco parentis with more regularity than faculty members at other colleges. One of the criteria for being an invisible school which Boadicea fits is to have limited funds. Also, many students at Boadicea may come from homes which are geographically close to the college and may come from poor families. The students who graduate from there may take entry-level jobs in vocational fields. Their degrees from Boadicea may open a limited number of doors for them. Boadicean faculty may tend to have rigid classroom routines.

Boadicea presented an interesting research opportunity because it shared some traits with Appelbaum– small, liberal arts, not-for-profit, religiously-affiliated, highly residential – yet it may also share some traits with other invisible colleges. Learning how the sociocultural, psychosocial, political, financial, and power structures of these campuses impacted college faculty members as they designed courses and made decisions about their teaching practices proved to be a worthwhile research endeavor. The findings of this study may offer food for thought for full- and part-time, tenure-tracked or non-tenure-tracked faculty members and administrators on multiple types of campuses across the country.
The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

This portion of the literature review examines the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning and how this research might conform to this relatively new area of inquiry within academe. Traditionally, college faculty members have been charged with three responsibilities, namely, teaching, research, and service (Boyer, 1990; Grasgreen, 2010; Birnbaum, 1988). Historically, as the university model displaced the liberal arts college model in popularity, an increased emphasis on research developed (Schmidt, 1957; Leslie, 1992). Charles W. Eliot, former president of Harvard, is noted to have said, “A university which is not a place of research will not long continue to be a good place of teaching” (Eliot, 1898, p. 231; Wegener, 1978, p. 19). As universities grew, corporations and government entities began pouring money into universities to sponsor research.

Up until about 1990, research became more and more significant in university tenure decisions in an almost unchecked fashion, but a landmark publication began to stem the tide a bit. In 1990, Ernest Boyer published *Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate*, which helped to launch the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) movement. Through SoTL, faculty members are encouraged to examine their teaching practices, work to improve them, and share their journeys with other faculty members.

This study was rooted in SoTL practices, as it examined and analyzed the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English department college faculty and the findings are reported. By learning about the practices of others from the published study findings, interested faculty members may inform their own teaching practices. It is possible that faculty member study participants could also learn about their own habits and thought processes through participation in the study. SoTL, even by virtue of its name, emphasizes the importance
of teaching and learning. Faculty members remain accountable for teaching, research, and service even though research has received more emphasis in the past (Boyer, 1990, p. 15). Some SoTL adherents support a more equal consideration of teaching when institutions make tenure decisions, while some insist that teaching and learning form the core of the higher education purpose (Green, 2008). According to one source, "Putting learning at the heart of the academic enterprise will mean overhauling the conceptual, procedural, curricular, and other architecture of postsecondary education on most campuses" (Wingspread Group on Higher Education, 1993, as cited in Cross, 2001, p. 34-35). So, while some SoTL adherents may be more radical in their beliefs than others, a high regard for teaching and learning seems to be common to all.

**SoTL Work**

Finding an exact definition for what constitutes SoTL work may not be as difficult a task as defining the liberal arts college, yet challenges do exist:

One of the first lessons we have learned is that the scholarship of teaching and learning is neither a single nor a simple thing…It is teaching that involves inquiry into learning and that is being made public in a way that can be critiqued, reviewed, built upon, and improved. (Huber, 2001, p. 22)

Huber (2001) offered the criteria that SoTL work must be published, critiqued, reviewed, built upon, and improved. This would mean that if a published work, for whatever reason, was not built upon and improved, that it would not qualify as a part of SoTL; it is possible that Huber may have gone a bit too far in its definition. It is conceivable that a faculty member might engage in inquiry that is eventually built upon but not improved; even if much was learned about teaching and learning and all other criteria were met, the Huber standards for SoTL would not have been met if the original work had not been improved upon. Huber acknowledged that SoTL
work is not easy to define and offered one possible definition. Huber and Hutchings (2006) softened the criteria a bit by stating that SoTL “invites” faculty to research and share so that colleagues “can build on their insights” (p. 25). Other definitions have also been put forward. For example, "SoTL work focuses on teaching and learning at the college level and is primarily classroom and disciplinary based. SoTL also involves application or use" (McKinney, 2006, p. 39). McKinney (2006) restricted SoTL to college-level teaching, which Huber (2001) and Humber and Hutchings (2006) did not. One might say that restricting SoTL to college-level teaching was implied by Boyer (1990), which looked at professorial teaching however, McKinney (2006) stated it explicitly.

Although having stated in no uncertain terms that SoTL is restricted to college-level teaching, McKinney (2006) allowed that variations within college teaching can apply. The author wrote, "I have gleaned that SoTL may sometimes include scholarly teaching, faculty development for teaching, and using one’s traditional research in the classroom, in addition to systematic study of teaching and learning made public" (McKinney, 2006, p. 43). McKinney and Huber (2001) differed, as the latter source required that inquiries be made public to be considered SoTL work, while the former source did not. McKinney (2006) made no such stipulation regarding making inquiries public, but rather allowed that there are at least three possible teaching and learning activities which do not include publication but are indeed SoTL efforts-- scholarly teaching, faculty development for teaching, and using one’s traditional research in the classroom. McKinney (2006) also presented the idea that SoTL may be defined differently at different types of institutions. For example, "Although there are certainly exceptions, research extensive and research intensive universities focus on a view of SoTL as published and presented empirical research" (p. 43). Here, universities with varying degrees of
intensity with regard to research are portrayed as viewing SoTL in their own way, as empirical research, published and presented. This view is similar to that of Huber (2001) because publishing and presenting the research would make it public. Elsewhere in the text, McKinney (2006) allowed for making SoTL work public, but did not require it, somewhat similarly to Huber and Hutchings (2006).

Differences of opinion notwithstanding, scholars across the country have engaged in SoTL work. One author noted that:

for SOTL work to become as accepted as the scholarship of our own discipline, it must entail a public account of some or all of the full act of teaching - vision, design, enactment, outcomes, and analysis- in a manner susceptible to critical review by the teacher's professional peers and amenable to productive employment in future work by members of that same community. (Shulman, 1999)

Lee Shulman, one of the foremost SoTL scholars, is here quoted as being supportive of making SoTL work public in order to elevate it as a form of scholarship. Shulman is also credited here as having stated that SoTL work should be peer reviewed and able to be used by others. Huber (2001) agreed with Shulman (1999) insofar as both required SoTL work to be public, critiqued, reviewed, and applied or used by others. Lack of accord on exactly what SoTL work entails could cause some difficulties, according to one source, because, "this ambiguity and lack of consensus can be problematic, resulting in confusion, questions of legitimacy, difficulties in persuading nonbelievers, and concerns about the appropriate mission of new SoTL journals, organizations, or conferences" (McKinney, 2006, p. 44). As a relatively new movement within the grove of academe, SoTL is still in the infancy phase, as the professoriate discovers what it is, how it works, and what it adds to the field. McKinney (2006) would seem to prefer that the
infancy phase be completed posthaste in order to limit misunderstandings and establish SoTL as an accepted part of higher education.

There is some debate about what the focus of SoTL is. As one source noted, "The scholarship of teaching and learning promotes inquiry into the learning and teaching process, and different disciplines offer alternative ways of making this inquiry" (Benander, 2009, p. 36). Benander (2009) seemed to indicate that SoTL’s most important use was as a framework for inquiry. Burns, Merchant, and Appelt (2013) concurred, but took it farther by stating:

In SoTL, the focus is on discovering or applying teaching methods that affect the learner in a positive manner. SoTL follows the systematic inquiry process just as discipline-specific research would. SoTL is disseminated and thus may be applied to a variety of teaching and learning situations, not just the classroom of one scholarly teacher. (p. 506)

Benander (2009) championed the multiple uses of SoTL as a method of inquiry for faculty members. Burns, et al., (2013) acknowledged SoTL as a valid inquiry method and also placed value on SoTL inquiry because it can lead to benefits for students. And, Burns, et al., agreed that SoTL work is published work, they projected that many students could benefit. This research adheres to SoTL’s standards and utilizes it as a lens of inquiry for qualitative research.

**Evolving Definition**

A fairly young undertaking, SoTL has numerous definitions. It has been opined that, "There is not complete consensus on the meaning of SoTL….Perhaps that is as it should be, given the variety of social contexts (institutional, disciplinary, and international) in which SoTL exists" (McKinney, 2006, p. 38). Thus, because it may be used in different ways in different circumstances, this source asserted, SoTL by its very nature can mean different things to different people. McKinney (2006) continued, "I define SoTL as systematic reflection and study
on teaching and learning made public—a definition chosen by an appropriate body of individuals at my home institution” (p. 38). Here, McKinney conceded that she had her own personal working definition for SoTL. This may be a crucial point, because if faculty members think about SoTL as they plan courses and make pedagogical decisions, their thinking may be guided by someone else’s ideas on SoTL or by each individual faculty member’s own ideas on the subject. How faculty members think about their teaching and their students’ learning and how their thought processes play out in their teaching contexts is the crux of this research study.

McKinney (2006) allowed for the dissemination of information gained through SoTL inquiry to occur via “live or virtual presentations, performances, or publications” (p. 39); this research study was published in bound form as well as in digital format, via an internet database. Thus, it qualified as SoTL work and utilized SoTL as one lens of inquiry during the data collection phase.

How scholars think about SoTL may impact their use of its process. In one multiple case study of four education programs, researchers conducted semi-structured interviews with new interprofessional education facilitators. The authors stated, "A key issue which this study illuminated was the need for conceptual clarity of interprofessional terms, as the facilitators continued to struggle with this element of their work within their respective programs" (Egan-Lee et al., 2011, p. 336). A clarifying quote followed this assertion:

All fields of study develop specialized vocabularies to articulate what they do and mean....Problems arise and misunderstandings occur without a shared meaning of terms…Precise definition may be even more important in fields where the meaning of terminology may seem intuitively obvious (i.e. “good bedside manner”). (Arnold et al., 2009, p. 179; Egan-Lee et al., 2011, p. 336)
This speaks to a recurring theme throughout SoTL literature. Cross (2001) referred to "nomenclature wars" as "a sure sign that social change is on the way" (p. 32). Throughout the SoTL literature consulted, a great amount of space was dedicated to the definition and clarification of terms. As a relatively new area of research, analysis, and discussion, the improvement of college teaching may need to involve the hammering out of what means what to whom in what contexts.

This study may add to the SoTL body of literature by studying the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of working faculty members. Aspects of several definitions contributed to the definition of SoTL which guides this study, as it will be made public (Burns, et al., 2013; Huber, 2001; Huber & Hutchings, 2006; McKinney, 2006; Shulman, 1999); will be critiqued and reviewed (Huber, 2001; Shulman, 1999); and will focus on teaching at the college level and be English-discipline based (McKinney, 2006). It is not possible at this time to know if the findings of the study will be applied or used by others as suggested by McKinney (2006) and Shulman (1999). However, the traditional, five-chapter dissertation format was chosen because of its familiarity within academe. It was hoped that use of this accustomed format would facilitate others’ reading and use of information contained within the dissertation. The study was designed to advance SoTL research as well as to facilitate understanding of how course design and pedagogical decision-making processes functioned in the lived experiences of English department faculty members at small, liberal arts colleges.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Integrated Course Design Guiding Ideologies**

This portion of the literature review examines the Integrated Course Design (ICD) model and how it is used in this study as a theoretical framework. Research has been published on
creating lasting or significant learning (Bain, 2004; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Fink, 2005; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). This same concept is also referred to as enduring understandings (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). These sources support five elements of college course planning and teaching as effective methods for fostering lasting learning: backward design, educative assessment, goals for significant learning, use of reflection, and consideration of situational factors. Because these elements are all encompassed in the ICD model (Fink, 2013; Fink 2016), ICD is used as a theoretical framework to describe and analyze research study data.

This study was inspired by Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses, by L. Dee Fink (2013). In this resource, the author set forth a method of course design for use by higher education faculty members. The core of this study deals with how faculty members make course design and pedagogical decisions in authentic contexts and how the realities of these processes stack up against The Taxonomy of Significant Learning (see Figure 1 on p. 95), backward design, educative assessment, significant learning, use of reflection, and consideration of situational factors. Another angle of inquiry involves a previous research study, Ward (2012) and its findings. Ward (2012) looked at faculty course design and pedagogical decision-making processes at two-year colleges; this study looks at faculty course design and pedagogical decision-making processes at four-year liberal arts colleges. In addition to comparing and contrasting research findings to Fink (2013), the study’s research findings will be juxtaposed with the findings of Ward (2012).

Fink (2013) deals with the ICD model, one method of course design for lasting learning. In ICD, “The teacher takes responsibility for deciding what would constitute high-quality learning in a given situation and then for designing that quality into the course and into the learning experience” (Fink, 2013, p. 68). It is the teacher or faculty member’s decision-making
processes, then, which drive this method. Perhaps integral to the ICD model are the guiding ideologies of backward design, educative assessment, goals for significant learning, use of reflection, and consideration of situational factors. A tool connected to ICD is the Taxonomy of Significant Learning. This section of the literature review deals with guiding principles or ideologies of ICD including the Taxonomy of Significant Learning which guides the creation of learning goals for lasting student learning in a course.

**Backward design.**

Designing a course backward means deciding first what information learners should know at the end of the course and using that to plan the course (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 14; Wiggins & McTighe, 2010, p. 211). This means beginning with the desired results in mind, then working backward to decide the content and methods to be used (Allen & Tanner, 2007, p. 86; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 15; Wiggins & McTighe, 2010, p. 211). The next step might be planning the culminating assessment, followed by drafting the learning goals, choosing the teaching and learning activities, and creating the syllabus (Fink, 2013, p. 70-71). A similar three-step strategy for backward course design is: Identify desired results, determine acceptable evidence, and plan learning experiences and instruction (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005; Wiggins & McTighe, 2010). Backward course design is the reverse of what many instructors do (Wiggins & McTighe, 2010, p. 211). For example, writing the course syllabus is one of the last tasks in designing a course using ICD, but may be one of the first things a faculty member not using ICD would do. In some cases, the faculty member may even receive a pre-written syllabus from a department head. Fink (2013) opined, “My experience suggests that a backward design, that is, creating the assessment activities first, greatly clarifies and facilitates answers to the question of what the learning activities need to be” (p. 71). Starting with the end, after the course has
finished, and working backward toward the beginning of the course could help a faculty member to set a purpose for each component of the course (Wiggins & McTighe, 2010). Once the course is planned and viewed from the beginning to the end, proponents of the ICD method believe that learners should be able to see why each part of the course is necessary and connected to the others.

**Educative assessment.**

The ICD model makes a distinction between auditive and educative assessment, with partiality toward the latter. While ICD advocates backward course design, it advocates forward-looking, or educative assessment. Conversely, auditive assessment, “is typically based on backward-looking assessment, with exams that look back on what was covered during the last several weeks and aim simply at determining whether the students ‘got it’ or not” (Fink, 2013, p. 93). One way to think about auditive assessment may be as traditional, summative assessment, i.e., a method of finding out how much information students have retained up to that point. In contrast:

The primary purpose of educative assessment is to help students learn better. As long as society requires grades, teachers will need a valid and fair basis for their grades. The problem is that most teachers do not know how to go beyond grading to being able to provide the kind of feedback and assessment that will enhance the learning process itself, that is, to do more than simply record the results of the learning process. (Fink, 2013, p. 93)

Educative assessment can be formative or summative, but looks forward, in an effort to help the learner to improve, instead of backward, at what the student has retained. For example, “Instead of reciting, restating, or replicating through demonstration what he or she was taught or what was
already known, the student has carry out exploration and work within the discipline” (Fink, 2013, p. 96; Wiggins, 1998, p. 22). In educative assessment, the emphasis tends to be more on applying acquired knowledge in ways appropriate to the field of study and getting better and better at it, rather than on recalling and reiterating facts. Educative assessment looks at where the student is and points them toward ways to improve, such that, “The idea is to focus student learning on realistic and meaningful tasks through cycles of performance-feedback-revision-new performance” (Fink, 2013, p. 96). Whereas auditive assessment may tend to look at what the student has grasped up to a certain point, educative assessment may be thought of as an indication of what the student needs to do or learn next.

Educative assessment may hinge on the formative types of feedback that professors give to students. Fink (2013) termed this FIDeLity feedback. FIDeLity is an acronym for Frequent, Immediate, Discriminating, i.e., based on clear benchmarks and standards, and Lovingly delivered (p. 94). While professors may want to give students frequent feedback, this can be a challenge when using auditive assessment, particularly in classes with large enrollments. Giving immediate feedback can also pose a problem, again because of problems of logistics. As students learn to think and act in ways appropriate to the disciplinary area of study, they can assess their own work and the work of their peers, so, faculty using ICD may not have all of the responsibility for assessing student work. For example,

Some teachers…have students read copies of other students’ draft papers and give feedback. To do this, students have to have some sense of what constitutes a good paper and then apply those criteria to new papers, in this case, the papers of other students. (Fink, 2013, p. 103)
In this way, students engage in educative and formative assessment simultaneously by editing their peers’ work; here, students perform the work of the discipline, offering each other feedback which could lead to the revision of a draft and a better performance on the next draft, while seeing how their writing measures up to the learning goal. It is possible that many professors base their formative and summative assessments on criteria, such as might be found on a rubric.

However, how professors can deliver feedback lovingly might a new concept for some. One explanation is to consider the kind of thought that loving feedback may produce in a student’s mind, e.g., “This teacher is providing me with the information I need if I want to learn and improve my ability to engage in this kind of activity, now and in the future” (Fink, 2013, p. 103). Thus, loving feedback may refer to the kind regard that a mentor might have for a mentee. By incorporating educative assessment and FIDeLity feedback throughout the course, a professor using ICD methods can facilitate growth and learning that can make students ready for the culminating assessments of the course and for retention and use of their acquired knowledge after the course ends.

Goals for significant learning.

As one source stated, few instructors are satisfied with the achievement of knowledge if it is not remembered, if the students are unable to use it in solving problems in which the knowledge is relevant, or if the students fail to relate the knowledge to relevant attitudes. (McKeachie, 2010, p. 7)

There has been some study concerning the facilitation of this kind of lasting learning in college courses (Bain, 2004; Biggs & Tang, 2011; Fink, 2005; Fink, 2013; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). One published method for fostering this type of learning is the ICD model, which is based
at least in part on Wiggins and McTighe (2005). The Wiggins and McTighe model of course design has been most popular in k-12 education (Allen & Tanner, 2007), while the ICD model is targeted toward college teaching. One aspect of the Wiggins and McTighe (2005) model which influenced the ICD model was backward design (Allen & Tanner, 2007). Perhaps another component of the Wiggins and McTighe model which impacted ICD was the kind of learning that adherents strive to facilitate, which Fink (2013) terms significant learning and Wiggins and McTighe (2005) terms enduring understandings (Fink, 2013; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). In both cases, courses are designed to facilitate learning which lasts after the specific course has ended. So, the enduring understandings of Wiggins and McTighe (2005) may be comparable to the significant learning of Fink (2013), both of which are examples of learning designed to last past the end of a course. For example, significant learning was described as “learning that makes a difference in how people live” (Fink, 2013, p. 7), and that “requires that there be some kind of lasting change that is important in terms of the learner’s life” (Fink, 2013, p. 34).

Also, at an ICD workshop for college educators called "Designing Courses for Significant Learning" in 2016, Fink and Associates directed the workshop participants to dream the Big Dream. That is, decide what they as instructors want learners to remember and be able to do two years after taking their class. Thus, enduring understandings and significant learning are both concerned at least in part with knowledge and skills that change students’ perspectives and stay with them even after the course is over (Fink, 2013; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). In ICD, learning goals are written with the facilitation of significant learning in mind. Goals for significant learning, in- and out-of-class teaching and learning activities, and assessments work together for a common purpose in ICD (Fink, 2013; Fink, 2016). Knowing what types of
learning one wishes to engender could play a part in one’s course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

At the Chicago ICD workshop in 2016, college and university faculty course planners and one doctoral student worked with experienced practitioners of the ICD model in hands-on learning experiences targeted to facilitate in-depth, working knowledge of the ICD model. Early in the workshop, participants were instructed to daydream and imagine that they were going to teach a course in which all the students enrolled were capable of achieving anything, and then to decide what they as instructors would want those ideal students to remember and be able to do two years after taking their class. The result of this activity was called the Big Dream (Fink, 2016). If one is using ICD, once the Big Dream of significant learning retention has been articulated by the course designer, everything s/he decides and plans after that should come about in connection to and in support of the Big Dream. Fink (2013) connected dreams and course planning this way:

Essentially all faculty have rich and exciting dreams for their teaching, even though these dreams are sometimes buried deep beneath the challenges and difficulties of everyday teaching. However, when you formulate the learning goals for your courses, this is a good time to put yourself in touch with your own deep dreams and to let these inform and shape the goals for your courses. (p. 91)

In order to formulate goals for significant learning, Fink (2013) advised that it was important for faculty members to allow their teaching dreams to impact their course design decisions.

It may be worth noting, however, that this source also stated that faculty dreams may sometimes lose priority to the problems and worries of teaching. It was interesting to observe English faculty in their natural habitats, going about the business of planning and teaching. The
external pressures placed upon faculty members were evident in classroom observations and inspired some detailed discussion during interviews. Additionally, it was fascinating to find out that professors do indeed have dreams regarding teaching, and what those dreams are. Finally, the possible impact of dreams on course planning and pedagogical decision-making may be interesting for the academy to read about. For example, at least one faculty member's dreams informed and shaped the goals for learning that she set for her course. When faculty members’ dreams did not do this, there was something else of note that informed and shaped learning goals for their courses. This study unearthed some information such as how goals for significant learning find their ways into faculty course design plans, and how goals for lasting learning play out in pedagogical decisions as faculty teach their classes and interact with students. Through the publication and dissemination of the findings, this research could foster discussions about the history of the liberal arts college, faculty members’ situational factors, SoTL, and ICD, and how these elements may impact the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members at colleges and universities across the country.

**Use of reflection.**

In a course designed using ICD, reflection is required, from the Big Dream at the beginning, through every phase of the course to completion, and even afterward. Some SoTL practitioners may reflect constantly upon their teaching practices and seek ways to improve. Reflection, then, is a part of ICD and also a part of the SoTL process. ICD asks the faculty member to reflect and also suggests that they incorporate student reflections as a part of their integrated course design. According to Fink (2013):

> It can be helpful to focus your attention on four important aspects of your activities as a teacher:
To what degree are your goals for the course being achieved?

How effective are particular learning activities and your overall instructional strategy?

Are the feedback and assessment procedures helpful and fair?

How effectively do you interact with students? (p. 160-161)

How English department faculty members at the research sites reflected on their teaching was interesting to discover. Indeed, any reflections they shared, as well as how they answered questions regarding their teaching practices were of interest. Regardless of their methods of reflection, the results were quite telling in terms of their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. Faculty members at other institutions who do or do not use reflection, who might answer these questions from Fink (2013) similarly to or differently from the research participants, might be interested to learn how reflection enters into the teaching practices of some of their colleagues.

One type of writing which can be used for reflection by faculty and students is called substantive writing. Fink (2013) defined substantive writing as, “writing that is focused on a topic and that attempts to present an organized statement about the information and ideas the writer has about that topic (p. 129). In terms of its purpose, “Substantive writing allows and prompts writers to thoroughly think through their own ideas on a topic; hence, the process of substantive writing itself often deepens the writer’s understanding of the topic” (Fink, 2013, p. 129). It is possible that faculty members may use substantive writing to reflect on aspects of their teaching practices, maybe even as part of SoTL work. Faculty members may also include substantive writing in their lesson plans for students to do in and/or out of class as at least two participants did. It was interesting to learn what types of substantive writing experiences English professors built into their courses and whether they engage in this type of reflective writing
themselves as they plan their courses. This might also be useful for course instructors at other institutions to read about.

For students in a course designed using the ICD model, reflection could be an important part of moving from point to point throughout the course, heading toward the culminating activity, and beyond. If students know and use aspects of the course after they have completed it, this might come about because of reflection on what was learned and what it means in real world contexts. In terms of course design, one source stated, “After students have encountered new information and ideas and had new doing or observing experiences, they need time to reflect in order to decide what meaning to give these other learning activities” (Fink, 2013, p. 122).

English courses, by their very nature, can be thought-provoking. One wonders how much time for reflection, if any, English professors build into their course designs. A professor using the ICD model might do this intentionally; a professor who is unfamiliar with the ICD model might still incorporate student reflection into his/her pedagogical strategies. Time spent in the field with faculty members showed when and how reflection is employed in the freshman English classroom, and showed how the use of reflection affected participants' course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

Requiring students to keep a learning portfolio could augment student reflection. As it was stated:

Knowing that they will be doing a learning portfolio encourages students to reflect along the way on what they can and should be learning from a particular experience, how well they are achieving the learning goals…and what else they need to be learning. (Fink, 2013, p. 132)
A professor might even choose to require that a certain number of written reflections be included in the learning portfolio, further imbedding the concept of reflection as an important learning activity within the course. Freshman American literature faculty members' utilization of reflection themselves, their requirements for student reflection, and the ways faculty and student reflection affect the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members were revealed in this study. Time spent with participants in their work environments, talking with them about how they design their courses and why, and how they select and use pedagogical strategies within their classes was informative in terms of learning how these education professionals function, day to day. This study included faculty interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These methods allowed for study of the research phenomenon, how English department faculty members at small, private, liberal arts colleges plan and teach a course, in detail. The publication of the findings may lead faculty members at the research sites and at other institutions to examine their own use of reflection as a part of their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

**Consideration of situational factors.**

Qualitative researchers often go out into the field where participants are and collect data within authentic contexts. Within the lived experiences of participants, multiple layers of contextual factors may be at work simultaneously. With respect to this study, the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members in the English departments at Appelbaum and Boadicea might have been influenced by the liberal arts tradition and curriculum, their institution’s history, their perceptions of power structures on campus, institutional selectivity, invisible or noninvisible college status, current hiring and tenure trends, student readiness, departmental policies and procedures, attitudes regarding SoTL work, chosen
methods of course design, and/or peer relationships with their colleagues. Peer relationships can play a key part in how faculty members go about their jobs, one part of which is their teaching. As one source stated, “The key point to remember…is that it is important to do a careful in-depth job of collecting and analyzing information about various situational factors. Skipping this step or doing a cursory job will result in bad decisions later on” (Fink, 2013, p. 81-82). This statement was made in reference to the ICD process. Taking situational factors such as peer relations into account while designing a course could be a crucial step if one wanted to design a course that speaks to the needs of students, fulfills institutional and departmental expectations, and facilitates significant learning, all while working in close proximity with others who teach sections of the same course or teach courses which precede or follow. Just as qualitative research is not a sterile process, the participants in the study did not work in vacuums; their relationships with their peers were impactful. As one source stated, "Our faculties are constrained by limited resources and, therefore, conflict, negotiation and the development of networks of support are critical for the work to get done” (Lieff, 2010, p. 429). For some faculty members, then, the situational factor of colleagueship may be more than a contextual element – it may be a means of survival.

Working in proximity to each other at similar tasks can help to create a similar sociopsychological group mindset within peers (Bess & Dee, 2008). And, as one source put it, "The work experience of groups of individuals in similar contexts is an untapped resource for improving practice" (Albers, 2008, p. 79). Colleagueship could affect course design and pedagogical decision-making processes in multiple ways, particularly where strong sociopsychological constructs exist. According to Albers (2008), colleagueship can be a method for improving teaching practice. Presumably, this would be likely to occur within a work environment with a sociopsychological attitude supportive of growth, improvement, and/or
change. In a sociopsychological environment where the opposite were true, it might not be likely that faculty members would feel encouraged or supported to make changes in their teaching practices. Peer relationships, then, may promote the improvement of teaching or they may discourage it, depending on the situational factors impacting a faculty member’s work context.

Collaboration may be one way to build peer relationships and effect change within the work environment. According to one source, "Collaborative problem solving has the potential to raise performance standards by developing peer norms based on learning from one another's successes and working together to effectively overcome individual challenges" (Albers, 2008, p. 81). Collaborating to elevate peer norms may be one way that faculty members can work to shape some of the situational factors in their work contexts. The sociopsychological constructions within an academic department can influence how faculty members design their courses and teach their classes because these factors can help to determine whether people work collaboratively or not and whether people view change positively or negatively. The ICD model, encompassing the principles of backward design, educative assessment, goals for significant learning, use of reflection, consideration of situational factors, and guided by The Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013), may work to help faculty members design courses in purposeful ways to facilitate long-term educational outcomes for students. Discovering whether or how faculty members make use of the principles of ICD at small, private, not-for-profit, predominantly residential, four-year, liberal arts colleges was the aim of the study. Through studying faculty participants in their work environments, observing them teach their classes, engaging them in dialog through one-to-one interviews, and examining their course documents, I ascertained how English department faculty members operated within their work contexts to plan and teach the course. Published findings from the study may serve to inform the thought
processes of present and future college and university faculty members and administrators with regard to course design and pedagogy. The Taxonomy of Significant Learning is a component of the ICD model that it is necessary to examine.

**Integrated Course Design Taxonomy of Significant Learning**

In ICD, the course designer writes learning goals based on the Taxonomy of Significant Learning, which includes six different categories. “Each category of significant learning contains several more specific kinds of learning that are related in some way and have a distinct value for the learner” (Fink, 2013, p. 34). The concept of lasting learning holds that students may be more engaged in class and may remember what they learned after the course is over if the instructor plans and teaches the course using ICD principles, including incorporating learning goals and teaching and learning activities from six categories. Figure 1 shows the Taxonomy of Significant Learning. The categories are: Foundational Knowledge, Application, Integration, Human Dimension, Caring, and Learning How to Learn. The Human Dimension category is the only one with 2 subcategories: Learning about Oneself and Learning about Others (Fink, 2013, p. 35; Fink, 2016). Each category addresses a different kind of learning. It is incumbent upon users of the ICD model to use this taxonomy to plan courses. As was stated, “The more of the six kinds of significant learning you can include as goals for your course and really support, the more likely each kind of learning will happen” (Fink, 2013, p. 91). How faculty formulate learning goals for their courses and how they “really support” them come to light in this study.
Faculty members choose how they incorporate the types of learning in the taxonomy. As one source put it, “The objectives distinguished within the taxonomy are not ordered within a hierarchical framework. Fink instead intends them to be viewed as overlapping, and in fact interactive and potentially cogenerative in the sense of stimulating one another” (Allen & Tanner, 2007, p. 88). At the ICD workshop in Chicago, most participants chose to include Foundational Knowledge at the beginnings of units of study, since they saw this type of learning as necessary for other types of learning to occur (Fink, 2016). Foundational Knowledge includes, “understanding and remembering the information, ideas, and perspectives that form the basis for other kinds of learning in the subject” (Barkley & Major, 2016, p. 7). At the workshop, some participants and facilitators referred to Foundational Knowledge as the basic recall information.
that faculty want students to know in order to do other work within the discipline (Fink, 2016). How faculty members at Appelbaum and Boadicea incorporated Foundational Knowledge into their course plans was evidenced in the study through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These faculty members’ peers at their own and other institutions of higher learning may be interested to learn how Foundational Knowledge worked as a part of course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

Application.

Because the six types of significant learning were designed to work together, any one category, such as Application, can appear at any point during the course. Fink (2013) described Application as learning to engage in new actions (p. 35; Fink, 2016). As students move through a course, they may engage in Application any number of times as they learn to do new things. One source mentioned how Application can apply to authentic experiences by stating that Application in this sense refers to “applying knowledge to real situations through critical and creative thinking, problem solving, performance, and skill so that foundational knowledge becomes useful” (Barkley & Major, 2016, p. 7). With Application, Foundational Knowledge can be used in new and imaginative ways to achieve a desired purpose. How faculty members at Appelbaum and Boadicea incorporated Application into their course plans was discovered through interviews, classroom observations, and/or document analysis. These faculty members’ peers at their own and other institutions of higher learning may be interested to learn how Application functioned as a part of course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

Integration.

ICD stands for Integrated Course Design; as it is used here, integrated refers to the ways in which the faculty course planner weaves connections between all of the elements of the
course, such as in-class activities, course readings, out-of-class activities, and assessments. This differs from the significant learning Integration taxon. According to one source, significant Integration learning involves “making connections between ideas, learning experiences, and different realms of life so that everything is put into context and learning is more powerful” (Barkley & Major, 2016, p. 7). The Integration taxon, then, refers to the type of learning in which students connect different components of what they are learning in a class with each other and with other aspects of their lives. One example of Integration in a freshman English class might be the moment when a student learns that the analysis skills applied to a literary text in that class may also be used to understand texts in other content areas, such as history or political science. At the ICD workshop, a facilitator stressed that the more connections faculty members can help students to make between what they are learning and elements outside of the course, the greater will be the chance that students will remember the subject matter of the course after it ends, which is one of the goals of significant or lasting learning (Fink, 2016). A faculty course planner using ICD might work consciously to make connections between elements of the course explicit and might also strive to help students to attach their new knowledge and skills to various areas of their lives. How faculty members at the research sites facilitated Integration in their courses emerged during the study through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These faculty members’ peers at their own and other institutions of higher learning may be interested to learn how Integration was utilized as a part of course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

**Human dimension.**

The Human Dimension is the only category in the Taxonomy of Significant Learning with two parts; in order to foster lasting learning in the Human Dimension, the faculty course
planner facilitates student learning about the self and about others. Fink (2013) suggested, “ask yourself whether you would like the students to see themselves in some new way…ask whether you want your students to gain a new understanding of how to interact with other people in relationship to this subject” (p. 90). It was interesting to learn what questions faculty members asked themselves when they designed their courses and how their hopes for students affected their course designs. One source asserted that Fink’s Human Dimension represents “learning about the personal and social implications of what learners are learning, thus giving the learning significance as learners learn about themselves and others” (Barkley & Major, 2016, p. 7). Through Human Dimension learning, students may come to understand themselves and others better. How English department faculty members at small, private liberal arts colleges used the Human Dimension in their course plans was discovered during the study, which included interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These faculty members’ peers at their own and other institutions of higher learning may be interested to learn how the Human Dimension operated as a part of course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

*Caring.*

Lasting learning in the Caring category can allow students opportunities to be concerned about something in a deeper way than they were before. Fink (2013) explained, “Sometimes a learning experience changes the degree to which students care about something. This may be reflected in the form of new feelings, interests, or values” (p. 36). Although a learning experience such as this might happen organically in a classroom from time to time, in a course designed using the principles of ICD, these experiences are worked into the course on purpose. Barkley and Major (2016) agreed with Fink (2013), indicating that Caring denotes “developing new feelings, interests, and values that help learners care about what they are learning, which
gives them the energy they need for learning more about it and making it part of their lives” (p. 7). In a course designed using ICD, students would not merely take in information and reiterate it at test time; instead, they would be given opportunities to examine and reconfigure their values. How faculty members at the research sites incorporated Caring into their course plans was something that came to light during the study through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These faculty members’ peers at their own and at other institutions of higher learning may be interested to learn how Caring was incorporated into course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

**Learning how to learn.**

At the ICD workshop, a facilitator mentioned several times that Learning How to Learn seems to be the hardest category for faculty to grasp (Fink, 2016). He indicated that multiple times, faculty members have complained that the ICD method did not work for them in their courses; when questioned about it, these faculty members stated that they did not understand Learning How to Learn, so they left it out. For significant learning to occur, the facilitator stressed, instructors must include all six categories of learning, including both subsections of the Human Dimension and Learning How to Learn (Fink, 2016). Learning How to Learn can include teaching students how to continue to add to their fund of knowledge in the subject matter. This type of learning addresses, “learning about the process of learning, including a particular kind of inquiry (such as the scientific method) as well as how to become a better, more self-directed learner, which enables learners to continue learning and do so with greater effectiveness” (Barkley & Major, 2016, p. 7). Indeed, Fink (2013) advised, “They may be learning how to be a better student, how to engage in a particular kind of inquiry (such as the scientific method), or how to become a self-directing learner” (p. 36). In the freshman English classes observed,
Learning How to Learn took the form of learning how to locate credible sources online. Interview revealed that learning where the on-campus writing center is and what its services are was also a part of learning how to learn. When students gain agency in terms of their learning experiences, they can grow in power as individuals; when this comes about as a result of purposeful planning on the part of a faculty member, it is called Learning How to Learn.

The focus of ICD is on designing courses with integrated components, with each category and subcategory of the taxonomy connected to the others. ICD can be used as a recipe for planning courses that matter to students in the present and in their futures. Whether and how faculty course planners utilize the principles of ICD in their teaching is the focus of the study. Faculty interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis were used during the study to learn about the processes faculty members engaged in as they planned courses. The ICD method as explicated by Fink (2013) was used as a framework for interpreting the data collected in the study.

**Use of Fink’s Model in the Study**

Fink (2013) offers a standard for effective teaching on the college level to which real life teaching can be compared. Green (2014) offered a way to understand theoretical frameworks in qualitative studies, defining theory as methodical, organized statements detailing the relationship between two or more entities for the purpose of coming to know a phenomenon or how things work (Green, 2014). It is in this way that Integrated Course Design is used in this study. ICD as explained by Fink (2013) serves as a theoretical framework, that is to say, as organized, systematic, interrelated statements. Two entities or variables being studied are the faculty member at the college and the evidence of how s/he plans and teaches a freshman English course as uncovered through faculty interviews, classroom observations, and analysis of course
documents. The purpose of doing this research in this way was to understand the nature of how two entities, English department faculty members at small, private, not-for-profit, liberal arts colleges and their course design and pedagogical decisions worked together to educate students in the course and whether/to what degree these real life occurrences resembled methods purported to foster lasting learning. Thus, principles of the Integrated Course Design model including backward design, educative assessment, significant learning, use of reflection, consideration of situational factors, and The Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013; also, see Figure 1 on p. 95) were used as a theoretical framework to specify the nature of the relationship between a faculty course designer and evidence of his/her course design processes for the purpose of understanding whether or to what extent pedagogical methods created to foster lasting learning were utilized in the real-life course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members at small, private, not-for-profit, liberal arts colleges.

**Chapter Summary**

The history and composition of modern liberal arts colleges contextualized research in these settings. What is meant by the term liberal arts college has changed over time, due in part to how the liberal arts college came to be and how it evolved over time, which did not follow a straight trajectory. Themselves influenced by European educational traditions, Harvard, William and Mary, and Yale were the earliest examples of the American liberal arts college and influenced other colleges founded after them. Other elements from the past which were highly influential on the liberal arts college were the classical curriculum, local influences, and religious beliefs (Leslie, 1992, Schmidt, 1957). The predominance of the liberal arts college ended with the ascension of the university model.
The liberal arts colleges of today evolved from the early liberal arts college model, but in unique ways (Leslie, 1992; Schmidt, 1957; Wegener, 1978), therefore, liberal arts colleges are difficult to describe all-inclusively. Because of the ways in which it has evolved and the changes it has undergone since its beginning, even experts in the field disagree as to how to define the liberal arts college. For the purposes of this study, liberal arts college is used to mean a small, private, not-for-profit, four-year, primarily undergraduate, largely residential institution of higher learning. Two colleges fitting this description, Appelbaum College and Boadicea College were chosen as research sites for this study. This research study, situated on liberal arts college campuses, tapped into an extensive history and a vital part of American higher education.

Each college campus may have has its own sociocultural, sociopsychological, power, and historical contexts which can shape students’ and faculty members’ perceptions and practices. In today’s liberal arts colleges, the pervasive thoughts, beliefs, traditions, values, and perceptions of each institution may help to create the environment in which faculty members and students teach and learn. The students who attend a college may influence the common experiences of the student body and all stakeholders. Characteristics of the students can affect how a college perceives itself, how it is perceived by others, and how faculty members design and teach their classes. Some characteristics which could affect how a faculty member chooses to design and teach classes and which some of today’s college students have been shown to exhibit are: lack of readiness to do college-level work, lack of digital literacy, uncritical consumption of online data, and expectations that technology use is a ubiquitous, essential component of higher education. Residential liberal arts college students today may be likely to attend graduate school, have a high sense of identity, and be inclined to spend lots of time on things that they perceive as
relevant to themselves, personally. Common student traits and expectations might potentially affect the way that college faculty members make course design and pedagogical decisions.

The sociocultural, sociopsychological, power, and historical contexts on college campuses could potentially impact how faculty members do their jobs. Some factors which could affect the ways in which faculty members design and teach their courses are: perceptions of teaching loads, perceptions of work environments, presence of part-time faculty members, tenure, institutional finances, religious affiliation of the college, and other institutional characteristics such as size, selectivity, private status, institutional invisibility or noninvisibility, and large numbers of residential students. Interviewing and observing English department faculty members at comparable institutions and analyzing their course documents through this study offered a glimpse into their work lives, work habits, and decision-making processes as they related to course design and pedagogy.

Boadicean faculty were found to have contextual influences on their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes that Appelbaum faculty did not. This is because Boadicea College is comparable to the other college in some ways - small, liberal arts, not-for-profit, religiously-affiliated, highly residential - but offered a slightly different context for research because it is a Historically Black liberal arts college. Due to the purpose of the college, students at Boadicea were more academically challenged than students at Appelbaum. Faculty at Boadicea were not found to be influenced by moral considerations for students to a greater extent than faculty at Appelbaum; both colleges have religious affiliations. These elements affected course design and pedagogical decisions made by Boadicean faculty in unique ways. Additionally, Boadicean students may have come from families with less economic capital and power than the families of students at the other colleges. Enrolling students whose families have
limited financial resources and power may have impacted the sociocultural and
sociopsychological environment of the Boadicea campus, which could in turn have affected how
faculty members did their jobs, however, this was not revealed in this study.

This research study, inspired by *Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An
Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses*, by L. Dee Fink (2013), follows the
traditions of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. The traditional, five-chapter dissertation
format was used because of the academy’s familiarity with this design. It was hoped that use of
this accustomed format might facilitate others’ use of information contained within the
dissertation, a practice in in keeping with the principles of SoTL.

The core of the study dealt with how faculty members made course design and
pedagogical decisions and how the realities of these processes compared to the principles of the
ICD model as explained by Fink (2013). Additionally, findings from this study were compared to
the findings of Ward (2012). Ward (2012) and this study differ in the type of institution from
which participants were recruited. Other aspects of the research design have been held as
constant as possible in order to render research findings which can be juxtaposed.

The ICD model offers a detailed, purposeful way to plan college level courses. One of its
primary goals is the facilitation of lasting learning experiences which students can retain and use
after the course ends. The attributes of ICD used as a theoretical framework in this study are:
educative assessment, goals for significant learning, reflection, consideration of situational
factors, and the six taxa of Significant Learning. Time spent with faculty members in their work
environments, talking with them about how they design their courses and how they select and
use pedagogical strategies within their classes was useful in terms of learning about the daily
routines of these education professionals. The effects of faculty members’ work contexts was
evident in classroom observations, and inspired some detailed discussions during interviews. This research study included faculty interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These methods were chosen to allow for detailed study of the research phenomenon.

Learning whether or how faculty members make use of ICD principles at small, private, not-for-profit, predominantly residential, four-year, liberal arts colleges and how this compares to or contrasts with how faculty members at two-year institutions were reported to use ICD by Ward (2012) was a principal aim of this study. Through observing faculty research participants in their work environments as they taught their classes, by engaging them in dialogue through one-to-one interviews, and by examining their course documents, I ascertained how English department faculty members teaching freshman English operated within their work contexts to plan and teach the course. Principles of the ICD method as explicated by Fink (2013) were used as a framework for interpreting the data collected in order to specify the nature of the relationship between a faculty course designer and evidence of his/her course design processes for the purpose of understanding the nature of the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members at small, private, not-for-profit, liberal arts colleges. Published findings from the study might serve to inform the thought processes of present and future college and university faculty members and administrators with regard to course design and pedagogy.

While Ward (2012) looked at the correlations between ICD and the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English faculty at two-year colleges, this study added to the literature on course design and pedagogical decision-making processes by asking similar questions within a different setting. Specifically, the four-year liberal arts college offered a unique and varied context within which to do research. The historical, cultural, and geographical
milieux of these colleges, including an invisible institution, added a layer of meaning to the research findings that might be hard to find elsewhere.
CHAPTER III:
METHODOLOGY AND METHOD

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English department faculty members at small, private, not-for-profit, liberal arts colleges in light of the Integrated Course Design (ICD) model popularized by Fink (2013) and to juxtapose the findings with those described by Ward (2012). The course design decision-making process refers to how English department faculty members plan course content, including teaching and learning activities and assessments, and make decisions about the pedagogical strategies that they use to teach their freshman English courses.

College English professors make many decisions regarding the content of the courses that they teach. They also decide how to teach the content to their students. The process of making these decisions is not usually articulated to others in depth and is complex, being affected continually by situational factors such as perceptions of campus climate and student needs. Beginning and experienced professors may find it important to know about the choices that instructors make when planning and teaching a course. An issue in practice which needs study is that faculty members often do not dialogue about how they plan and teach their courses (Huber & Hutchings, 2006; Shulman, 2004). Learning more about faculty course design and pedagogical decision making processes can aid the academy, because although educational theory is taught in college and university teaching coursework, once professors are out in the field, the realities of how they plan and teach their courses are not always shared with others (Huber & Hutchings,
How education theory and teaching practice intersect in the college classroom has not been explored widely in the past. There is a perceived need for new and nascent professors to learn how those working in the field go about the business of planning and teaching their courses.

This study added to the knowledge base in college teaching and filled a gap in the existing literature concerning course design and pedagogical decision-making at liberal arts colleges. Research in the area of liberal arts college teaching may be important to present and future instructors and administrators throughout academe who could benefit from an understanding of instructors’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes as they affect teaching and learning in higher education. This study offered a glimpse into the lived work experiences of faculty members. Reading about this type of research can be useful because faculty members rarely see each other teach classes (Huber & Hutchings, 2006; Shulman, 2004).

Chapter III provides information regarding the research context, theoretical framework, data collection methods, research questions, data analysis, researcher positionality and bias, and timeline for the study. First person is used to refer to the researcher in the rest of this chapter, as she functioned as an instrument for the research.

**Research Context**

The physical setting for this study included two private, liberal arts colleges in the United States which are referred to by pseudonyms: Appelbaum College and Boadicea College. Participant interviews, observations, and document collection were done in person at each participating site, with the exception of Barbara's interviews, which took place at a local eatery, per her request. This is in keeping with common qualitative strategies, as:
Qualitative researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study….This up close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research. (Creswell, 2009, p. 175)

Creswell (2013) adds that researching in the natural setting allows for face-to-face interaction over time (p. 45). Visiting each college site allowed for experiential knowledge of the lived experiences of the participants as they functioned within their work spaces. As the research sites are similar yet different, visits to each site made it possible to view how the sociocultural, sociopsychological, and historical contexts of each college shaped faculty members’ perceptions, practices, and course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. Sites were purposefully chosen.

**Purposeful Sampling**

**Sites**

Sites were chosen for this study based on the definition of liberal arts college used: a small, private, not-for-profit, four-year, primarily undergraduate, largely residential institution of higher learning. Two colleges fitting this description, Appelbaum College and Boadicea College, were chosen as research sites for this study.

**Appelbaum College.**

The U.S. Department of Education administers the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), an online database of statistical information related to higher education in the United States. Data from IPEDS for 2017-2018 described Appelbaum College as a religiously-affiliated, four-year or more, private not-for-profit, degree granting (primarily baccalaureate or above), baccalaureate college (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In the fall
of 2016, Appelbaum received applications from over 3,700 students and admitted roughly 1,800 of them (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Of those admitted, slightly more than 300 students enrolled at Appelbaum full-time. IPEDS reported the total enrollment at Appelbaum College that fall to have been 1,293 students and 1,284 of those students were enrolled full-time. Roughly 80% of all students enrolled during the 2017-2018 school year were White, 12% were Black or African American, and 5% were Asian (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Ninety-five full-time instructional staff members and 46 part-time instructional staff members were employed by Appelbaum in the fall of 2017 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Of the chosen research sites, Appelbaum was more selective and had it had lower enrollment than Boadicea in 2017-2018.

**Boadicea College.**

Data from IPEDS for 2017-2018 described Boadicea College as a religiously-affiliated, four-or-more years, private not-for-profit, degree-granting (primarily baccalaureate or above), baccalaureate college (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). At the time consulted, IPEDS did not list the number of applications for admission received at Boadicea College in the fall of 2017. IPEDS did report a total enrollment at Boadicea that fall of 1,820 students, and full-time student enrollment of 1,771 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Ninety-six percent of all students enrolled 2017-2018 were Black or African American, 2% were White, and 1% were Hispanic (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Eighty-one full-time instructional staff members and 31 part-time instructional staff members were employed by Boadicea in the fall of 2017 (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). The college indicated that it had an open-door admissions policy in 2017-2018 (college website). Boadicea is a Historically Black College (HBC); Appelbaum is not. It had no admissions data reported to IPEDS and an open-door admissions
policy mentioned on its website, and had a less diverse student population than Appelbaum. This college also had a slightly higher percentage of full-time instructional staff members than the other institution.

**Constructivist Paradigm**

Pasque, Carducci, Kuntz, and Gildersleeve (2012) defined the term paradigm thusly: “A paradigm or worldview provides fundamental assumptions through which you live and experience the world… it is how we think research can and should operate within the world in which we live” (p. 24). The constructivist paradigm is one commonly used research paradigm in qualitative research. Stake (2010) described the constructivist viewpoint by stating: “In qualitative research, many of us take a constructivist view that there is no true meaning of an event; there is only the event as experienced or interpreted by people” (p. 66). Some researchers believe that everyone constructs his/her reality throughout life. For example, two people who work in a warehouse with no windows and thirty-foot ceilings, who arrived at work 15 minutes apart, might experience different weather before they entered the building—one sunshine, and one rain. Once they each entered the building and could no longer see outside, Person One’s reality would be fair weather outside, as he perceived while there, but Person Two’s reality would be rain outside, as she perceived while there. Both constructions of reality would be based on true experiences and therefore real to the people involved. Each person’s experience would color his/her perception of reality and aid in his/her construction of the truth about the world outside the warehouse.

This simple example may be applied to more complex issues, such as how to decide what is important in planning and teaching a college English course. Each person may perceive and define reality for him/herself (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 63). So, deciding what is
important in planning and teaching a college English course could depend on each course planner’s perceptions and constructions of reality and truth, just as the perceptions of the people in the scenario might have influenced their constructions of the reality and truth about the weather. Faculty members’ different perceptions of the same planning and pedagogical tasks may add to the fund of available knowledge. It has been said, “…we feel enriched by the different perceptions, the different experiences people have, in the same place at the same time. We sometimes call it ‘multiple realities’” (Stake, 2010, p. 66). Researching the multiple realities involved in how different English faculty members at different but similar colleges make course design and pedagogical decisions indicates a constructivist paradigm.

The constructivist paradigm was appropriate for this study. Calhoun (2002) and Hatch (2002) referred to this paradigm as constructivism, while Creswell (2013) referred to it as social constructivism, and stated that those researchers who operate within this research paradigm:

Look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research, then, is to rely as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation. Often these subjective meanings are negotiated socially and historically. In other words, they are not simply imprinted on individuals but are formed through interaction with others (hence social construction) and through historical and cultural norms that operate in individuals’ lives. (Creswell, 2013, p. 24-25)

Use of this paradigm to structure the study was a good fit, as the goal was to learn as much as possible about the participants’ experiences with course design and pedagogical decision-making. The participants shared viewpoints, ideas, and experiences that varied but were not incomparable to each other. The constructed realities and truths of faculty members at the
colleges were considered to be representative of comparable but different historical, sociocultural, sociopsychological, power structure, and cultural norms.

The constructivist paradigm also was chosen for the study because of its potential capacity to elicit responses from participants. Hatch (2002) indicated that research studies performed based on the constructivist paradigm:

Include enough contextual detail and sufficient representation of the voices of the participants that readers can place themselves in the shoes of the participants at some level and judge the quality of the findings based on criteria other than those used in positivist and postpositivist paradigms. (p. 16)

Arguably, this is exactly what a qualitative study should accomplish – the researcher getting all the data that is obtainable within the context and reporting the details thickly and richly (Creswell, 2009, p. 191-192; Stake, 2010, p. 48-50). With a report of this type of research, readers might see and feel the experiences of the participants for themselves, which could be essential because the participants’ experiences and thought processes shaped their constructed realities. Just so, readers’ experiences and thought processes might shape their understanding of participants’ constructed realities and their own constructed realities at their workplaces.

Through this study, I learned how the faculty member participants made course design decisions. Contextual details and thick, rich description of the data are included in the research report (Creswell, 2009, p. 191-192; Stake, 2010, p. 48-50). Sharing the voices of the participants helped to achieve these goals. By meeting a broad range of participants and examining their ways of designing their courses, spending time with them at their workplaces and asking open-ended questions, I learned about their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. Use of the constructivist paradigm reflected my ontological, epistemological, axiological, and
methodological thoughts and actions relative to the research and it affected its intended product - a study of English department faculty members’ course design and pedagogical decision-making process. The next sections of this chapter discuss my ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological leanings as a constructivist researcher.

**Ontology.**

While sleeping, a person may dream. At that moment, for that person, the dream is the reality, e.g., a monster is chasing them. Upon awakening, the person can adjust his/her perception of reality. Ontology is one’s philosophical assumption about the nature of reality. Reality may be perceived as a mental construct created and modified constantly by each person. A constructivist’s philosophical assumptions that multiple realities are constructed might be one way to explain how both the dream experience and the awake experience are real to the person, within his/her actual time. Likewise, research participants in the study may have multiple constructed realities.

In his book *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings* (2002), J. Amos Hatch offered this advice to beginning qualitative researchers: “Starting with a research question begins in the middle and ignores the fundamental necessity of taking a deep look at the belief systems that undergird our thinking” (p. 12). A new researcher might begin the thought process for a study by asking, “What do I want to know?” Next, the researcher might ask, “How can I find that out?” Through literature review and reflection, a plan of action might be reached. Having established that, the researcher might begin further reflection and planning. Just as Hatch (2002) indicated, this hypothetical researcher would be thinking about the middle of his/her study. Instead of beginning in the middle, looking at the constructivist paradigm and the possible consequences of its use in research allow one to begin examining thoughts about what can be
known about the world and how best to discover it. Ontologically, each participant’s mental constructs regarding course design and pedagogy may be created and modified constantly by that participant. This study allowed for a close look at the shifting realities of college-level teaching in a required freshman course at small, private liberal arts colleges.

This study focused on the realities of course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English department faculty members at liberal arts colleges compared to the theoretical framework of the principles of ICD as laid out by Fink (2013), and compared the findings to the research findings of Ward (2012). Evidence of ICD was uncovered through this research. It may be possible that other realities of the decision-making processes were mentally constructed by each participant, as shown in Figure 2. What could be learned about the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English department faculty members at small, private, liberal arts colleges was at least partially brought to light by interviewing and observing those faculty members in their work environments, and by analyzing some of the results of their course design decision-making processes, such as their written course documents. Studying and publishing findings regarding this microcosm might benefit the macrocosm of higher education.

**Figure 2. Qualities of the Constructivist Paradigm**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ontology (Nature of reality)</th>
<th>Epistemology (What can be known; Relationship of knower &amp; known)</th>
<th>Methodology (How knowledge is gained)</th>
<th>Products (Forms of knowledge produced)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Constructivism</td>
<td>Multiple realities are constructed</td>
<td>Naturalistic qualitative methods</td>
<td>Case studies, narratives, interpretations, reconstructions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge as a human construction Researcher and participant co-construct understandings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data Source: Hatch, 2002, p. 13**

**Epistemology.**

An aim of this study was to discover what could be known about the realities of the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of the faculty member participants during the allotted time of the study. Coming to know what can be known touches on the topic of
epistemology. According to Hatch (2002), epistemology asks, “What can be known, and what is the relationship of the knower to what is to be known?” (p. 11). A follower of the constructivist paradigm might add to this by saying, “…in the main, knowledge is not seen in the constructivist tradition as independent of the knower…” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 63). The relationship of the knower to the known, then, may be described by saying that the knower is the instrument which makes the knowing possible.

Perhaps one can never know anything in the truest sense; for example, people once knew that the earth was flat, but now, people know that the earth is round. Following this train of thought, one may know what one knows until one knows something different; meaning that knowledge is subjective because it is dependent upon the knower and his/her negotiated meanings with others. This epistemological theory, reflective equilibrium, comes from the work of the philosopher, John Rawls (Rawls, 1971). In my effort to know, the plan for this research was to gain proximity to the research phenomenon and then use all possible tools of perception to find out all that could be learned in that context.

With regard to this study, constructivist epistemology was used. Constructivist epistemology is:

A philosophy that emerged from the work of Russian psychologists during the mid-1900s, which suggests that individuals make and socially construct their own meaning…. Researchers should search for individually constructed meaning; Researchers should seek to understand the way meanings are constructed; truth is a result of perspective and therefore knowledge and truth are created rather than discovered. (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 23)
The constructivist theory of knowledge, then, asserts that knowledge is constructed socially by people, and therefore, is dependent upon a person’s circumstances and perspectives. A researcher using the constructivist paradigm might want to learn each participant’s truth as s/he lives it. This is applicable to this research study, as dialoguing with participants in the interviews gave a way to cognize each participant faculty member’s knowledge and truth relevant to the decision-making processes that they utilized when planning courses and teaching.

Creswell (2009) and Stake (2010) spoke of the investigator as an instrument in qualitative research, saying that, “Research is not a machine to grind out facts. The main machine in all research is a human researcher…the researcher is a listener, an interviewer, and a finder of the observations others are making” (p. 36). In qualitative research, the human researcher can be an integral part of the sense-making of the data, since s/he can analyze the data, code it for themes, and report his/her findings. Even before that, the researcher chooses the research topic and questions and collects data. An important concept related to constructivism may be that “Reality and knowledge reside in the minds of individuals. Knowledge may be uncovered by unpacking individual experiences” (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 56). Thus, the researcher may function as a part of the qualitative research process by working with participants and participant data to decompress information and learn from it; what the researcher learns during that process and how s/he learned it may then become a part of the research report, which others may read, use, and improve upon. I functioned as an instrument in the research study, interviewing and listening to participants, transcribing interviews, observing classes, collecting and analyzing documents, coding it for evidence of ICD and reporting my findings.

When a researcher interprets data, the values and experiences of the researcher and the participants may receive validation. Stake (2010) stated that “the interpretations of qualitative
research give emphasis to human values and experiences” (p. 37). The investigator’s function as an instrument of the research is in line with the constructivist paradigm, as Figure 2 indicates that its epistemology includes “Knowledge as a human construction; Researcher and participant co-construct understandings” (Figure 2, Hatch, 2002, p. 13). Put another way, constructivism includes the belief that only people’s individual constructions of their realities may be known, so research involves acquiring information regarding individually constructed knowledge. (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 63). In this study, I as the researcher functioned as an instrument in the research study and worked with participants to construct meanings based on their lived experiences and their real practices in an effort to learn about their constructions of their realities as English department faculty members and teachers of English 102 at small, private, liberal arts colleges.

One possible drawback of using the constructivist paradigm is that according to Calhoun (2002), “Taken to the extreme, such a position is open to the criticism that it denies the possibility of transcultural and historical understanding” (p. 90). Care was taken during the study to sift all data for its intended meanings. Follow-up questions were asked as needed to hone in on participants’ stated ideas. Multiple methods of data collection were utilized, so as to minimize the likelihood of misinterpreting data. Additionally, permission was obtained from an Institutional Review Board IRB at an accredited university to conduct research involving human subjects prior to recruiting participants; university guidelines were followed throughout all phases of the study. Appendix D shows the IRB approval to conduct research involving human subjects. These measures worked together in this study to aid in the understanding of research data and to avoid such criticism of the constructivist paradigm as mentioned by Calhoun (2002).
Axiology.

Creswell (2013) asserted, “All researchers bring values to a study, but qualitative researchers make their values known in a study” (p. 20). Each person has a set of values; even if a person made it a practice to value nothing, valuing nothing would constitute that person’s value system. According to Creswell (2013), “In a qualitative study, the inquirers admit the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases as well as the value-laden nature of information gathered from the field” (p. 20). The values of the researcher are involved in the decision to do a qualitative study and in choosing research sites. Because this study included face-to-face interviews with participants regarding their processes as they made course design and pedagogical decisions, my values as a researcher were involved in formulating and asking the interview questions, deciding when to probe for more information and when to refrain, and in the note-taking process. The values of the participants were involved in their choosing to participate in the study, in the documents that they prepared and shared, in how they responded to the interview questions.

My values as a researcher were also involved in the classroom observations and the document analyses, since decisions were made in real time regarding what to attend to and what to write down. The participants’ values were also involved, since they chose what and how to teach during the classes and had at least some input into the course syllabi and handouts. As researcher, I was positioned as a neutral party as much as possible so as not to influence the participant data more than could be helped; values were bracketed. At the same time, I made attempts to perceive how a participant’s values affected his/her responses, compared to the values expressed in ICD. Pasque, et al., (2012) asserted that methodology is tightly connected to ontological, epistemological, and axiological assumptions; the authors stated, “The qualitative
inquirer would do well to strive for methodological congruency with the interactive triad of being, knowing, and valuing” (p. 22). I embraced this interactive triad throughout the study, and the story of this aspect of the research process is included in the research report.

Theoretical Framework

The principles of the Integrated Course Design method set forth by Fink (2013) were used as a theoretical framework for this study. Data obtained through classroom observations, interviews, and document analysis were compared to the ICD model and to the findings of Ward (2012). Fink (2013) offers a standard for effective teaching on the college level to which real life teaching can be compared. The purpose of doing this research was to understand the nature of how two entities, English department faculty members at small, private, not-for-profit, liberal arts colleges and their course design and pedagogical decisions worked together to educate students in the course and whether/to what degree these real life occurrences resembled methods purported to foster lasting learning. Thus, the principles of the ICD model were used as a theoretical framework to specify the nature of the relationship between a faculty course designer and evidence of his/her course design processes for the purpose of understanding whether or to what extent pedagogical methods created to foster lasting learning were utilized in the real-life course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members at small, private, not-for-profit, liberal arts colleges.

Sampling Strategy and Sample Size

I selected participants who were faculty members in the English departments at Appelbaum and Boadicea Colleges who have at least one year of teaching experience at their college. I recruited people who had taught in the past year, and who were currently teaching at
least one section of freshman American Literature, which is known as English 102. I chose this population because of their ability to improve my understanding of how the realities of course design compare with the principles of ICD. I chose Appelbaum and Boadicea because they are small, private, not-for-profit, highly residential liberal arts colleges. In qualitative research, this strategy for selecting participants and research sites is termed purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2009, p. 174; Creswell, 2013, p. 156). In this study, I purposefully chose participants who fit the criteria of teaching English 102 at a liberal arts college. This is known as criterion sampling (Creswell, 2013, p. 158). Faculty members who met the inclusion criteria were approached and asked to participate. Five persons fit the selection criteria at Appelbaum and two at Boadicea; all were invited to participate. It was anticipated that participants would represent a wide range of ethnicities, genders, and years of experience, creating a diverse cross-section of persons and perspectives. My goal was to enroll 10 participants, five per site. At a minimum, I hoped to enroll at least three participants at each site. Ultimately, four faculty members participated in the study - three from Appelbaum and one from Boadicea. Also, one of the participants at Appelbaum declined to be observed. Having a low number of participants changed the planned research design because I was able to spend more time observing in the classrooms than I would have been able to do with a higher number of participants. I had four participants. I observed three of them for six hours each. Table 1 shows in detail the field work that I conducted for the study.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field Work</th>
<th>Interview1</th>
<th>Interview2</th>
<th>Obs. 1</th>
<th>Obs. 2</th>
<th>Obs. 3</th>
<th>Obs. 4</th>
<th>Doc. Anal.</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
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<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1.5 hours</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>10 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
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<td>6 hours</td>
<td>4.5 hours</td>
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<td>4.5 hours</td>
<td>4.5 hours</td>
<td>4 hours</td>
<td>34 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Data Collection Methods

Data Collection

The ways in which data are collected is a crucial consideration in the research process. Specifically, “Research methods…involve the forms of data collection, analysis, and interpretation that researchers propose for their studies” (Creswell, 2009, p. 15). This study, guided by the constructivist paradigm, used the methods of face-to-face interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis. These are common methods in qualitative research (Hatch, 2002, p. 13; Stake, 2010, p. 20), perhaps because they elicit data that is desirable to qualitative researchers. According to one source:

Qualitative description of how things work relies heavily on personal experience. The researcher usually has face-to-face encounters with the activity. Interviews are arranged to learn more about the experience of the participants. Episodic and situated description of the activity gives the reader a vicarious experience of happenings. The evidence for the researcher’s assertions about how the thing works often includes much description of personal experience. The evidence should be affirmed by repetition and challenge, much of it experiential. Qualitative research is a disciplined working through to experiential understanding, small amounts aggregating to larger insights. (Stake, 2010, p. 69-70)

Through multiple interviews of participants in similar contexts at multiple sites this research may help readers of the research report to learn more about the lived experiences of English department faculty members at small, private, liberal arts colleges as they relate to the realities of course design and pedagogy. This study extends the work begun by Ward (2012), which examined the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English faculty members at two-year colleges. I took notes during data collection and analysis to try to capture
episodic and situated descriptions of activities during interviews and classroom observations. I planned to conduct one interview at the beginning of data collection with each participant. I then planned to observe each participant teach English 102, and then conduct the second interview with that participant. However, in working with Frank, Dallas, Barbara, and Sarah, I conducted both interviews first and then did observations, due to their scheduling needs. I observed Barbara, Frank, and Sarah’s 90-minute classes four times, for a total of six hours each, and did not observe Dallas, according to his choice.

**Interviews.**

I interviewed participants by means of an interview protocol (Creswell, 2009, p. 183), a list of open-ended questions and probes. Stake (2010) described the interviews in qualitative research as gaining one-of-a-kind data or insights from the interviewee in a conversational manner, with the researcher asking questions to clarify the data or insights to learn about a phenomenon that the researcher could not find out about on his/her own (p. 95). This description from Stake matches the reasons why interviews were employed in this study. That is to say, interviewing allowed me to apprehend the thoughts and interpretations of participants through conversations in real time and ameliorated the process of learning how each faculty participant made pedagogical and course design decisions based on his/her constructed reality. If confusion ensued, I was able to ask the participant to make clear his or her intent, thus fine-tuning my grasp of the participant’s meanings and perceptions. Finally, even though decision-making is often a silent, mental process, I was able to ask questions to find out about the participants’ thoughts, which I was not able to observe myself. These measures led to a more accurate interpretation of the data than might have come about otherwise.
Two interviews of approximately 90 minutes each were conducted face-to-face with each participant in a place of their choosing. Most participants chose to be interviewed on their campuses, however, the participant from Boadicea chose to be interviewed at a fast food restaurant both times. Interviews included one participant at a time. During interviews I used, “generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants” (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). This method of data collection granted me first-hand access to English department professors in their work environments. Questions and probes were used to foster conversations with each participant. During the interviews, I took notes by hand and also used a digital recorder. The recordings were later transcribed, analyzed, and coded. Appendix A contains the Interview protocols for the study.

**Observations.**

During the classroom observations, I was a complete observer, not participating in the classes (Creswell 2009, p. 179). I took notes on the actions of the faculty member participants and the students during the observations using an observation protocol (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). This method of data collection allowed for observation of course design and pedagogical decision-making in real time. I did not participate in the classes or use audiovisual recording devices in order to remain as unobtrusive as possible, thereby affecting the data collected as little as possible. I asked follow-up questions as needed after the class was dismissed and students left the room. I analyzed and coded my notes after collecting the data. Appendix B contains the Observations Protocol for the study.
Document collection.

I collected the course syllabus from each participant as well as handouts related to the classes that I observed. I analyzed and coded these items for evidence of course design decisions, particularly for evidence of ICD.

Data Security and Participant Confidentiality

Each research site was contacted and asked for permission to conduct independent research on the campus. The sites chosen gave permission for research to occur. Each site was analyzed for comparable traits of the liberal arts college such as small size, private status, and largely residential campus. Each college was given a pseudonym. Potential participants were made aware of their rights to participate or decline prior to any data collection. Participants read and signed the Informed Consent document as approved by the IRB prior to study participation. Appendix E shows the Informed Consent document. Each participant was given a copy of the document that they signed. Participants were informed orally and in writing that they might choose to terminate their participation in the study at any time with no penalty to themselves or to their institutions. Participants gave themselves pseudonyms to protect their privacy. All digital recordings of interviews were erased after transcription. Electronic drafts pertaining to the study were stored on the researcher’s computer in encrypted files. Transcribed interviews and all notes will be kept in a locked metal cabinet in my home for five years after the completion of the study. After five years, all electronic drafts, interview transcriptions, and notes pertaining to the research will be destroyed.

Research Questions

To reiterate, the participant data collected for the research study is guided by four research questions.
At small, private, not-for-profit, four-year liberal arts colleges…

**Research Question 1**

how do instructors go about developing a course, including learning goals, teaching and learning activities, and assessments?

**Research Question 2**

how do instructors go about delivering instruction?

**Research Question 3**

to what degree do elements of English 102 courses reflect the over-arching qualities and components of Fink’s Integrated Course Design model (Fink 2013)?

**Research Question 4**

How do the findings of this study compare or contrast with the findings of Ward (2012)?

**Data Analysis**

I examined items such as course syllabi and classroom handouts for evidence of course design and pedagogical decision-making processes during document analysis. This method was beneficial to the collection of data because it yielded information useful for the study that was acquired without disturbing the flow of conversation during the interviews and without interrupting the class sessions. The data obtained was valuable because these documents are portable, physical examples of course design and pedagogical decisions made by the participants to use in teaching their courses (Creswell, 2009, p. 180; Hatch, 2002, p. 116; Stake, 2010, p. 89)

I analyzed and coded documents for evidence of ICD. Appendix C contains the Document Analysis Protocol for the study.

I read my notes, transcribed the interviews, and read and analyzed participants’ course-related documents. I lean coded all of these initially for evidence of ICD: Backward Design,
Educative Assessment, Goals for Significant Learning, Use of Reflection, consideration of Situational Factors, and the six taxa of Significant Learning. All data were analyzed and coded based on the theoretical framework of the ICD model as described in Chapter II, and then were juxtaposed with the findings of Ward (2012).

Lean coding involves using a short list of "five or six categories with shorthand labels or codes" (Creswell, 2013, p. 184). I lean coded the syllabi and course-related documents using the Taxonomy of Significant Learning, (Fink, 2013; also, see Figure 1 on p. 95) Backward Design, Educative Assessment, Significant Learning, Use of Reflection, and Consideration of Situational Factors, watching for evidence of these principles of ICD. While ICD elements functioned as a prefigured coding scheme in this study, I was careful to look for emergent codes, as well (Creswell, 2013, p. 185). As I read the interview transcripts, observation notes, and course documents, watching for evidence, I wrote the corresponding term, such as "reflection" or "situational factor" next to it if it applied. After I had coded everything, I cut and pasted the evidence into lists for each term. I then used these lists to decide if there was sufficient evidence to say that that particular element was found. For example, if only one or two examples of reflection had been found, I would not have said that adequate evidence of reflection was found.

I did not count the frequency of codes because, “counting conveys a quantitative orientation of magnitude and frequency contrary to qualitative research. In addition, a count conveys that all codes should be given equal emphasis” (Creswell, 2013, p. 185). Given the situational factors such as characteristics of the learners; physical elements of the learning environment; and institutional, departmental, or program curricular goals at work at any given time in a classroom, I did not give each occurrence of ICD principles equal importance, but instead weighed each one against the principle set forth by Fink (2013) to decide if the
occurrence was a reasonable representation of ICD. After lean coding, I classified all the data according to themes (Creswell, 2013, p. 186). In some instances, one element exemplified more than one principle well (Fink, 2013). In this case, I used the code, Multiple Principles. These data proved to be interesting, as they showed integration, an important part of ICD. Finally, I juxtaposed my findings with the findings of Ward (2012), looking for similarities and differences.

**Researcher Positionality and Bias**

In qualitative research, the researcher may function as an instrument, gathering, interpreting, and analyzing data (Creswell, 2009, p. 175; Creswell, 2013, p. 45; Stake, 2010, p.20, 36-55). Additionally, qualitative researchers often disclose their positionality in relation to the research phenomenon and the research participants as a part of the research process (Hatch, 2002, p. 193; Stake, 2010, p. 168). The qualitative researcher may be wholly involved in the research project, from the decision to research a specific phenomenon and the choosing of research sites and participants all the way through to the submission of the research report for publication. As it has been noted, “The concept of self as research instrument reflects the likelihood that the researcher’s own subjectivity will come to bear on the research project and any subsequent reporting of findings” (Bourke, 2014, p. 2). The researcher’s functioning as a research instrument, then, may introduce some degree of bias into the research, as human beings are not totally objective at all times. Who a person is and how s/he experiences the world should be made known about the qualitative researcher and the qualitative research participant (Creswell, 2009, p. 175-176). It is the researcher’s job to reveal his or her positionality and bias prior to beginning research and to reflect upon positionality and bias continually while
conducting a qualitative research project (Hatch, 2002). This section of the chapter discloses my positionality and bias relative to the research sites and potential participants in the study.

At one time, positionality was conceptualized in terms of binary opposition, i.e., the researcher was considered a part of the researched population or not. This was termed insider/outsider positionality. According to one source:

Early discussions in anthropology and sociology of insider/outsider status assumed that the researcher was either an insider or an outsider and that each status carried with it certain advantages and disadvantages. More recent discussions of insider/outsider status have unveiled the complexity inherent in either status and have acknowledged that the boundaries between the two positions are not all that clearly delineated. (Merriam et al, 2001, p. 405)

A person can be multifaceted - not just one thing or another-so it is helpful to think of a person as not easily defined by binary distinctions. As indicated by one source:

The nature of qualitative research sets the researcher as the data collection instrument. It is reasonable to expect that the researcher’s beliefs, political stance, cultural background (gender, race, class, socioeconomic status, educational background) are important variables that may affect the research process. (Bourke, 2014, p. 2)

A qualitative researcher examines his/her positionality depending upon the research to be conducted, because various aspects of the researcher’s self might position him/her in relationship to the research and the research participants. With regard to this study, I have never attended or worked at a liberal arts college. Currently I work as an instructional designer at a regional university. I am a female first-generation college student. I have taught English 101 before, but not English 102. I am opposed to the use of racial labels, believing that their use perpetuates a
negative social construct. I refer to one of the institutions in the study as an HBC only because the institution refers to itself as such. I reference race and ethnicity groups with respect to the research sites because this is an often-used way of describing and analyzing student enrollments at higher education institutions.

As a part of researcher positionality and bias, it can be beneficial for the researcher to disclose experiences, biases, prejudices, and/or orientations likely to have shaped the study and the approach (Creswell, 2009; Hatch, 2002). This is in light of positionality theory, which grew out of standpoint theory. According to one source:

Positionality theory advances standpoint theory, which tended to look at one aspect of a person’s experience, e.g., gender and associated power conditions. The concept of positionality resists a fixed, static, essentialistic view of standpoints that is associated with many strands of standpoint theory – for example, that all women have a particular unchanging view. (Kezar, 2002, p. 96)

The insider/outsider concept referred to by Merriam et al (2001), then, could be considered a form of standpoint theory. Positionality theory, however, allows for the researcher to see the research phenomenon, the study participants, and the participant data from multiple viewpoints because the researcher’s self has multiple facets. One experience of mine which may have bearing on the research study and approach is that I have some experience planning and teaching English courses. In terms of potential bias, I am a SoTL scholar whose teaching practice includes the creation of a learning-centered environment for students. I use the ICD method when planning courses and making pedagogical decisions.

I incorporated triangulation as a strategy to avoid bias. According to Hatch (2002), triangulation occurs when the researcher attempts to verify or extend data through other sources
(p. 92). Stake (2010) referred to triangulation as the process of looking several times and indicated that “Evidence that has been triangulated is more credible” (p. 123, 125). Creswell (2013) was in line with Hatch (2002) and Stake (2010), stating that triangulation involves the use of many sources, approaches, researchers, and concepts to verify data (p. 251), and that using triangulation validates research findings. To avoid bias, I sought information via classroom observations, analysis of classroom documents, and face-to-face interviews with each research participant.

Another strategy I employed involves awareness and disclosure of potential biases throughout the process (Bourke, 2014; Hatch, 2002). I realize that my past experiences and my affinity for SoTL work could possibly lead to bias. However, by disclosing my positionality here, by remaining vigilant and communicative regarding signs of researcher bias throughout the research project, and by seeking data from each participant in three ways, I strived to serve as a lens for the reader to view and experience the research phenomenon in as objective a manner as possible.

**Chapter Summary**

Qualitative research may be at once a daunting challenge, a colossal responsibility, and an orbicular journey of discovery. I used theory-based, documented methods of qualitative inquiry to conduct field research to capture the authentic, lived experiences of research participants in their work environments. My aim was to include contextual details, representations of the voices of the participants, and thick, rich descriptions to allow readers to perceive the constructed realities and lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2010). The qualitative methods of personal interview, classroom observation, and document analysis were utilized (Creswell, 2009; Creswell, 2013; Hatch, 2002; Stake, 2010).
Interviews occurred face-to-face in a semi-structured way, via a list of open-ended questions. Appendix A shows the Interview Protocol used. Some follow-up questions and probes were pre-written and some were created and used in real time, as the course of the conversation dictated. During observations, I remained detached from the research participants and the students and took written notes. Students were present during observations but were not the focus, as the instructor of the course was the research participant. All data, including interview transcriptions, observation notes, and course syllabi and other course-related documents, were analyzed and lean coded for evidence of the principles of ICD which functioned as a theoretical framework for the study. Lean codes came from The Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013, p. 35; see also, Figure 1 on p. 95) and from other principles of ICD, including backward design, educative assessment, significant learning, use of reflection, and consideration of situational factors. Research data were then organized into themes and analyzed based on the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter II. Next, findings from this study were juxtaposed with the findings of Ward (2012), which looked at the same research phenomenon, faculty course design and decision-making processes, within a different context, i.e., two-year colleges as opposed to four-year colleges. Research findings, analyses, conclusions, and suggestions for further study were incorporated into this doctoral dissertation.
CHAPTER IV:
RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Introduction

In line with the constructivist paradigm, I researched the multiple realities involved in how English department faculty members at different but similar colleges made course design and pedagogical decisions. This paradigm was a good fit for the study, as the goal was to learn as much as possible about the participants’ experiences with course design and pedagogical decision-making. During data collection, participants shared viewpoints, ideas, and experiences that varied but were not incomparable to each other. I considered the constructed realities of participants, shaped by their experiences and thought processes, to be representative of comparable but different historical, sociocultural, sociopsychological, power structure, and cultural norms.

Through this study, I learned how the faculty member participants made course design decisions for their English 102 classes. In this chapter, I will include contextual details and thick, rich descriptions of the data (Creswell, 2009, p. 191-192; Stake, 2010, p. 48-50) in order to share the voices of the participants. By meeting the participants and examining their ways of designing their courses, spending time with them at their workplaces and asking open-ended questions, I learned about the realities of their teaching practices.

Use of the constructivist paradigm reflected my ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological thoughts and actions relative to the research. Principles of course design iterated by Fink (2013) through the Integrated Course Design (ICD) model provided a
framework for the study and I determined that the participating instructors’ courses reflected elements of Fink's ICD model to a significant degree. I found alignment between ICD, a best practice presented in literature, and what occurred in actual teaching and learning situations, or, put another way, between theory and practice. I found evidence of these components of course design described by Fink (2013): backward design, educative assessment, goals for significant learning, use of reflection, consideration of situational factors, and the six taxa of Significant Learning, in the participants' course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. In this chapter, I will report the evidence of ICD that I found through the research.

I obtained permission from an Institutional Review Board (IRB) at an accredited university to conduct research involving human subjects prior to recruiting participants; university guidelines were followed throughout all phases of the study. The participants were four full-time English 102 instructors of varying ages, educational backgrounds, and years of teaching experience. By chance, there was an even number of male and female participants. I took a close look at the shifting realities of college-level teaching in a required freshman English course at small, private liberal arts colleges, focusing on the realities of the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of the faculty member participants. I then compared the participants' perceived realities to the theoretical framework of the principles of Integrated Course Design (ICD) as laid out by Fink (2013). I found multiple examples of ICD in each participant's practice. What could be learned was at least partially brought to light by interviewing and observing participants in their work environments and by analyzing their written course documents, which came about as results of participants' course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.
In an effort to know, I gained proximity to the research phenomenon and then used all possible tools of perception to find out all that could be learned in a given context, be it in an interview, during an observation, or while reading course documents. I tried to learn each participant’s truth as s/he lived it. In particular, dialoguing with participants in the interviews gave me a way to cognize each participant’s knowledge and truth relevant to the decision-making processes that they used. Interviewing allowed me to apprehend the thoughts and interpretations of participants through conversations in real time and ameliorated the process of learning how each participant made pedagogical and course design decisions based on his/her constructed reality. When confusion ensued, I asked the participant to make clear his or her intent, thus fine-tuning my grasp of their meaning and their perception. Decision-making can be a solely mental process, but I was able to ask questions to find out about what went on in the participants’ heads when they made decisions. This led to a more accurate interpretation of the data than I could have arrived at otherwise.

During four classroom observations each of Barbara, Frank, and Sara, each 90 minutes long, I was a complete observer, not participating in the classes (Creswell 2009, p. 179). Dallas, the fourth participant, declined to be observed. I took notes by hand on the activities of the faculty member participants and their students, using a protocol (Creswell, 2009, p. 181). Appendix B contains the Observations Protocol that I used. This method of data collection allowed for note-taking on course design and pedagogical decision-making in real time. In an effort to be unobtrusive and affect the data as little as possible, I did not use audiovisual recording devices. I used the protocol that I designed, which has designated spaces for teaching/learning objectives, in-class activities, assessment(s), feedback, Foundational Knowledge, Application, Integration, Human Dimension, Caring, Learning How to Learn, and
the physical layout of the classroom. This facilitated most of the coding that I needed to do. However, to be sure that my notes were accurate, I double-checked what I had written and drawn after each observation. I recoded as necessary and then analyzed my notes for any missed data, including evidence of ICD elements. I also collected the course syllabus from each participant as well as handouts related to the classes that I observed. I coded these items for evidence of ICD.

I functioned as an instrument in the research study. I interviewed all four participants in person, twice, for an hour each time. I used open-ended questions and followed up with probes as necessary to foster conversation. In the interviews, I worked with participants to construct meanings based on their lived experiences and their real practices. I took notes by hand and also used a digital recorder to capture episodic and situated descriptions. After each interview, I transcribed what had been said. Then, I read back through each transcript to be sure to grasp the participants' intended meanings and to code for elements of ICD. When needed, I asked follow-up questions at the next interview or via email to hone in on participants’ ideas. I used multiple methods of data collection, so as to minimize the likelihood of misinterpreting data. In addition to interviewing participants and observing classes, I collected and analyzed course documents. I lean-coded the documents for evidence of ICD, and then analyzed them for themes. Appendix C contains the Document Analysis Protocol.

My values as a researcher were involved in formulating and asking interview questions, deciding when to probe for more information and when to refrain, taking notes, and formulating and asking follow-up questions. My values were also involved in the classroom observations and the document analyses, since I made decisions regarding what to attend to, what to write down or draw, and what to ignore. The values of the participants were involved in their choosing to participate in the study, in how they chose to plan and teach their classes, in the documents that
they prepared for the students, and in how they responded to the interview questions. Also, they chose how to teach during the classes and had at least some input into the course syllabi. I was positioned as a neutral party as much as possible so as not to influence the data more than could be helped. I made attempts to perceive how each participant’s values affected his/her teaching and compared these perceptions to the values expressed in ICD.

Pasque, et al. (2012), stated, “The qualitative inquirer would do well to strive for methodological congruency with the interactive triad of being, knowing, and valuing” (p. 22). I embraced this interactive triad during data collection, attending to who I was and who the participants were, focusing on what each of us knew and did not know within the context, bracketing bias, and valuing my own decisions as a qualitative researcher and my participants' cooperation.

**Demographics**

Full-time faculty members who had taught 102 in the last calendar year of the study sites were eligible to participate in the study. Everyone who was eligible was invited and those willing to participate were enrolled. Four faculty members, two male and two female, at two small, private liberal arts colleges participated. Because of the female participants, I was able to see, among other things, how some female college faculty members functioned within their work environments at liberal arts colleges multiple generations after higher education became coeducational. Gender was not mentioned as being significant in the work lives of the participants; therefore, perhaps the initial goals of co-education have been achieved.

All four participants were teaching English 102 at the time. Table 1 shows demographic information related to the participants. Ages ranged from 40 to 63; the average age of the participating faculty members was 51.5 years. Years of experience in the field of education
ranged between 10 and 46 years with an average of 28 years. All participants were Caucasian. For three participants, Dallas, Frank, and Sarah, the highest degree held was a Ph.D. Barbara’s highest degree was a master’s. Years at their current institution ranged from 2 to 35 years, with an average of 18.5 years at the institution. All of these faculty member participants designed courses and made important decisions touching the teaching and learning experiences of their students.

The working environments of the participants - small, private, not-for-profit liberal arts colleges - influenced how they did their jobs due to institutional/departmental and therefore external expectations. Work load was not revealed as a significant situational factor in the work lives of the participants. However, other factors such as characteristics of the learners as shown through student readiness, and specific context of the teaching and learning situation seen through instructional resources were identified as important situational factors affecting course design and pedagogical decision-making processes by participants at both sites.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Highest Degree</th>
<th>Years in Field</th>
<th>Years at Institution</th>
<th>Tenure Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Boadicea</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>M.A. English</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dallas</td>
<td>Appelbaum</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Ph.D. Rhetoric and Composition</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Not Tenured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Appelbaum</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Ph.D. American Studies</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Appelbaum</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>Ph.D. Comparative Literature</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Tenured</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant Profiles

Following is a profile of each participant, based on the in-person interviews, teaching observations, and analyses of course-related documents. Each participant chose his or her own pseudonym.
Barbara

Barbara was the sole faculty participant at Boadicea. In her first interview, she talked about being focused on preparing students with a wide range of skills, talents, and abilities to find occupations after college, which, in turn, influenced her course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. She was a petite woman with slightly graying hair, piercing eyes, and a bubbly personality. Barbara chose to have both of her interviews at a local fast-food restaurant. She arrived each time in casual, stylish sportswear and coordinating footwear. She said that she was planning to retire soon. She was the only participant from Boadicea College although she voluntarily tried to recruit some of her colleagues. In the classroom, she wore business attire, arrived on time, and set up her laptop computer to cast her notes onto the projection screen. She was knowledgeable, thorough, and respectful of her students. Her office was a standard-sized cubicle decorated with colorful artwork in a large room containing 7 or 8 other cubicles and colleagues.

At Boadicea, English was not a separate department, but was instead a part of the Humanities division, therefore, some of the occupants in the other cubicles taught English while some taught music, theater, or a world language. Although Caucasian students were seen on campus, all of the students present in Barbara’s classes on observation days appeared to be African-American. Her class had the most unpredictable student attendance numbers, ranging from 8 students present to 16 students present; 25 students were on the roll. The average number of students present on observation days was 11. This was the largest class that any participant had, based on the roll, however, all 25 students were never present on an observation day. Barbara had the most years of experience in education and was the only participant whose highest degree was a master’s. Neither the college website nor the U.S. Department of
Education’s IPEDS lists college degrees for Boadicea’s faculty members, thus I never learned what percentage of its faculty members held doctorate degrees. I was unable to collect information about non-participating faculty members at either institution due to web page layout and needed updates. However, it was interesting to learn that there were more similarities than differences between the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of participants with doctorate degrees and the participant without a doctorate degree. For instance, all participants' practices, regardless of the instructor's highest degree, contained elements of ICD.

**Dallas**

Dallas was a part-time musician who taught full-time at Appelbaum and also directed its writing center. He had a youthful appearance, with shoulder-length brown hair and an easygoing manner. He was the youngest of the participants, with the least number of years in the field. He was the only non-tenured participant. He was the only participant who declined to be observed, but he participated in the interviews and shared his syllabus with me. All of the Ph.D. holders had degrees in different areas. Dallas’ degree was in rhetoric and composition. His office was adjacent to the campus writing center and was spacious and sparsely furnished. There was a Harry Potter Gryffindor scarf hanging on the wall over his desk. It was important to him to keep his teaching fresh and innovative and one of his main learning goals for students was that they learn to live with inquiry.

**Frank**

Frank was the English department head at Appelbaum. He was tall and lean, with a deep voice and a ready laugh. He wore a dress shirt and trousers at each interview and in all of his classes. His interviews took place in his office, which was on the same hall as the classroom where he taught 102. His office walls were lined with shelves which were neatly full of books
and collectible figurines. In class, Frank was personable, knowledgeable, and thorough. He held a Ph.D. from one of the oldest liberal arts colleges in the country. During the classroom observations, a graduate assistant worked with Frank in his 102 class. There were 16 students in the class: 11 White males, 2 White females, 2 African-American males, and 1 African-American female. Frank used small group work during each of the classes observed, except for the session in which he met with the students in the library and they worked independently to begin their research papers. Although both colleges were religiously-affiliated, I did not find participants to be noticeably influenced by religious or moral considerations for students. Indeed, Frank was the only participant to mention anything to do with religion. His comment, however, was not in reference to his course, but to the possibility that an institutionally granted opportunity for students to make up for a poor grade was perhaps due to the college's religious affiliation.

**Sarah**

Sarah was the eldest participant and had 40 years of experience in education, second only to Barbara’s 46 years of experience. She had been at Appelbaum for 35 years at the time of this research. Sarah’s passion for education came across in the excited way that she spoke about her experiences with students, sitting in her cheerfully decorated office in which every horizontal surface was covered by layers of papers several inches thick. Sarah was a faculty sponsor for a girls’ sports team at the college and she regularly interacted with those students and their parents outside of class. She wrote with her students in class and shared her writing with them, hoping that they would in turn share some of what they had written. During the classes I observed, Sarah used lecture as her primary method of instruction except for the session in which she met with the students in the library and they began working on their research papers.
Evidence of ICD Derived From the Qualitative Data

Principles of the Integrated Course Design (ICD) model including backward design, educative assessment, goals for significant learning, use of reflection, consideration of situational factors, and The Taxonomy of Significant Learning were used as a theoretical framework to specify the nature of the relationship between faculty course designers and evidence of their course design processes for the purpose of understanding whether or to what extent pedagogical theories designed to foster lasting learning were utilized in the real-life course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of faculty members at small, private, not-for-profit, four-year, liberal arts colleges. Evidence of some concepts and practices related to ICD was found through the person-to-person interviews of all participants and also through classroom observations. In the next sections, I will describe the evidence of ICD that I found in the participants' teaching practices.

Backward Design

Designing a course backward means deciding first what information learners should know at the end of the course and using that to direct the process (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 14; Wiggins & McTighe, 2010, p. 211). This means beginning with the desired results in mind, then working backward to decide the content and methods to be used (Allen & Tanner, 2007, p. 86; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005, p. 15; Wiggins & McTighe, 2010, p. 211). The next steps might be drafting the learning goals, choosing the teaching and learning activities, and creating the syllabus (Fink, 2013, p. 70-71). Notice that writing the course syllabus is one of the last tasks in designing a course using ICD, but may be one of the first things a faculty member not using ICD would do.
I did not find evidence was not found of participants designing their courses by deciding first what learners should know and be able to do at the end. However, all spoke of being expected to follow the same syllabus or policy as other faculty members and departing from it and/or approaching its aims in novel ways to incorporate their own learning goals for their students. So, in a way, the syllabus provided the end goals for them, and they found their own ways to work backward from the syllabus to design their courses. One novel approach was found in Frank’s course. Two of Frank’s own learning goals for his students were “understanding that there are more than just two perspectives, that you can’t make an argument without understanding as many of those as possible,” and learning to differentiate between substantive, usable research sources and false or untrustworthy sources. When I asked Frank to match these learning goals of his to the syllabus he pointed “demonstrate sound logic,” and “use appropriate quotations,” but in Frank’s course, these learning goals were guiding forces, because he made the pedagogical decision to use U.S. Supreme Court cases as his writing prompts for the students. In so doing, he did address the items on the syllabus, but also, he emphasized his personal learning goals for his students.

Sarah from Appelbaum College once made the decision to break departmental policy for her students’ good. She said that at one time, the English department had a policy that everyone should use group workshopping in their course, but in her English 102 course, it just was not working, so, Sarah said, “I just figured, Okay, I’m not gonna tell anybody, but I’m gonna quit doing it”! Instead of student workshopping, Sarah substituted one-on-one teacher/student conferences, which she believed helped the students’ writing more. Even though workshopping was an expectation of the English department, Sarah, upon reflection, believed it was not beneficial in her class and she made the decision to drop it. Although no examples of ICD
backward design were found, these two examples indicate that the participants did make plans and decisions pertaining to their courses with student learning goals in mind and manipulated their course designs to work with the syllabus they were given accordingly.

**Educative Assessment**

Educative assessment looks forward, in an effort to help the learner to improve, instead of backward, at what the student has retained. The emphasis of this type of assessment tends to be on applying acquired knowledge in ways appropriate to the field of study and getting better and better at it, rather than on recalling and reiterating facts. Educative assessment looks at where the student is and points them toward ways to improve, such that, “The idea is to focus student learning on realistic and meaningful tasks through cycles of performance-feedback-revision-new performance” (Fink, 2013, p. 96). I saw evidence of this in interviews of each participant and through teaching observations. During her second interview, Sarah spoke about a student in her English 102 class who was the son of Mexican immigrants who worked in agriculture. Through the papers he wrote for her class, he shared his knowledge of genetically modified crops and beekeepers who move from farm to farm to do their work. Sarah said that the student had brilliant ideas, but struggled to write complete sentences, instead writing mostly fragments and run-ons. Sarah said that she gave him feedback based on his writing performance, used modeling to provide him with illustrations of ways to improve his writing, worked with him on revision strategies, and afforded him opportunities for new performances. When I asked Sarah how she worked with this student, Sarah said that she:

Spent a lotta time with him and showed him examples...then tried to get him to talk back to me to make sure he understood what the examples indicated, but then he would still do it. But, he was...was coming up with very interesting topics. He’s a smart kid, you know,
so…I encouraged him to go to the writing center…. And…you know, spent time with him, and let him know that …I’d learned so much from his topics, and that he could be really, much more effective …if he could do the sentences correctly, because his ideas were great and they deserved, you know, the good sentences. Yeah.

Through the recursive process of writing essay drafts, Sarah utilized educative assessment.

In his English 102 course, Frank put students into groups for the first class essay and then moved them on to write individual drafts. In the first class that I observed, he distributed copies of group essay drafts and asked each student to find one thing to improve in the second essay draft. In this way, students and the professor engaged in whole group discussion and provided feedback on the group drafts. Students then met in small groups to discuss needed revisions. Frank encouraged the students to visit the campus writing center before submitting the next draft of the group essay. Also during this class session, Frank assigned the students their first draft of an individual essay, in which the students were to write about how their own position on their group’s Supreme Court case differed from the group’s opinion, and why their personal opinion was the correct one. In making the assignment, Frank encouraged students to “feel free to incorporate ideas from today’s class”. Through the pedagogical moves that Frank made during this class session, he evidenced Fink’s performance-feedback-revision-new performance sequence of educative assessment.

Goals for Significant Learning

Significant or lasting learning is concerned at least in part with knowledge and skills that change students’ perspectives and stay with them even after the course is over. In ICD, learning goals are written and courses are designed to facilitate lasting learning. I found evidence of lasting learning goals in each participant's course. Barbara’s lasting learning goals were not
stated explicitly on her syllabus, however, she revealed during interviews that her syllabus is years old, mandated by the humanities division, and not changeable by her alone. She did say that she wants students to know and remember:

that writing is never finished and that reading is a conversation with the reader and the writer, and that it’s important to write in the margins of your books, and…you know, that it’s important to get people to help you with what you write….But I guess…I mostly just want them to get an attitude, though. I want them to get the habit of being a scholar.

Here, Barbara iterated a desire for her students to "get the habit of being a scholar," which on the Taxonomy of Significant Learning is called Learning How to Learn Fink (2013).

Dallas did not have lasting learning goals stated explicitly on his syllabus either, but they were implied through the Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs) that he chose for his course. His writing prompts for his English 102 course included creating a marketing campaign for a new product with a specific audience in mind and creating a conference brochure. In the directions for writing a literature review, Dallas wrote; “Literature reviews are a standard genre in the academic community, although they are most common in the social and behavioral sciences” and that literature reviews can be “incorporated into a scholarly article, dissertation, or book.” His writing prompts and directions show that the writing skills practiced in the class were intended to be used effectively outside/beyond the class.

Frank’s syllabus stated explicitly, “you should leave this course with a greater ability to write well-reasoned and well-supported arguments” which indicated that Frank expected his students to carry these abilities onward with them. During an observation in Frank's class, a student asked “Is there always a common ground?” referring to a court case that the students were writing about. Frank’s answer was, “You always have to seek it.” Frank's us of the word
always, his vocal tone, and his facial expression showed that he wanted students to apply his
directions to their writing and to life after their freshman year of college.

Sarah’s syllabus included multiple examples of the Fink Taxonomy of Significant
Learning. Table #2 shows examples from the Goals and Outcomes section of her syllabus:

Table 3
Representative Syllabus Items and Taxonomy Connections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Syllabus Item</th>
<th>Taxonomy connection(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clarify and develop your own ideas</td>
<td>Foundational Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use the ideas of other thinkers to strengthen your own</td>
<td>Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discover and develop your own writing voice</td>
<td>Learning How to Learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research and use sources effectively</td>
<td>Foundational Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engage in an intellectual dialogue with sources</td>
<td>Integration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read your papers and those of your classmates with a constructive critical eye</td>
<td>Human Dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Produce finished drafts of your best work</td>
<td>Foundational Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employ these skills in your other courses and in non-academic writing tasks</td>
<td>Application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The last item was quite clearly a goal for lasting learning. Also, during a class observation, Sarah
verbally announced to the students that they would meet in the library for the next class meeting
and use technology in topic generation and research. She added that students could use these
same technology skills to search for internships in the future, an example of Caring and
Integration, two taxa from the Taxonomy of Significant Learning. In ICD, learning goals are
written and courses are designed to facilitate lasting learning. Although Fink's terminology was
not used, each participant's practice included elements of ICD, including the desire for lasting
learning for students.
Use of Reflection

How English department faculty members at the research sites reflected on their teaching was interesting to discover. Regardless of their methods of reflection, the results were telling in terms of their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. It was also interesting to learn what types of substantive writing experiences English professors built into their courses for students. Time spent in the field with participants showed reflection was employed by the professors in how they thought about and wrote/revised their course documents and in their English 102 classes via the teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs) they incorporated. Talking with participants about how they designed their courses and why and how they selected and used pedagogical strategies within their classes informed me about how these education professionals functioned, day to day.

I used faculty interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis in this study. These methods allowed me to examine the research phenomenon - how English department faculty members at small, private, liberal arts colleges planned and taught a course - in detail. Integrated Course Design (ICD) asks the faculty member to reflect and also suggests that faculty incorporate student reflections or substantive writing as a part of their integrated course design. In particular, Fink (2013) indicated that faculty should reflect on these issues: 1) To what degree goals for the course are being achieved, 2) The effectiveness of particular learning activities and the overall instructional strategy, 3) The helpfulness and fairness of feedback and assessment procedures, and 4) interactions with students (p. 160-161). Through qualitative research methods, I found some evidence of these types of reflection in each participant's teaching practice.
One way that Barbara utilized student reflection was by giving the following writing prompt to her students as an in-class Teaching and Learning Activity (TLA): “What did you learn from this class? What did you do well? What would you like to do better?” These questions asked the students to reflect upon their experiences in the class. Barbara reflected on the effectiveness of learning activities throughout the course, as she put it: “like, say, I give a particular essay assignment and everybody does badly on it. I’ll say, “Okay, that assignment didn’t work. How can I change it”? Or after a TLA, she said she might say, “Oh, that went well”! Barbara said that because of a lack of time, she sometimes did not get to reflect right away on how well goals for the course were achieved or the overall instructional strategy, although she wanted to. Specifically, she said, “A lotta times, it might not be until much later that I can look back and I can think, ‘Oh, you know, I did a good job on that class.’ Like, you know, about July”. However, Barbara did reflect on her teaching practice and she incorporated student reflection as a part of her TLAs.

Dallas used reflection to decide the order of the major writing projects that he assigned during the semester and also to decide whether the cost of student textbooks was warranted, given the amount of time they are used in the course. I saw these as examples of reflection about the overall instructional strategy and about interactions with students. Upon reflection during a previous semester, Dallas had made the decision to move from peer editing to whole group workshop for student drafts. He said:

I’ve totally gotten away from “peer review”…in the sense that most people think of it, which is, you sit…with another student and you trade papers and read ‘em and mark em. I don’t find that to be helpful at all. In fact, I find it to be detrimental. Because the students don’t know how to comment on each other’s papers. They just don’t.
In the whole group workshop strategy that Dallas began to use after reflecting upon the drawbacks of peer editing, and was using during my data collection, four students at a time submitted essay drafts electronically prior to class. Each student in the class read the drafts independently, outside of class and shared his/her comments at the next class meeting. In this way, Dallas used his reflection on the effectiveness of peer edit feedback procedures to inform his pedagogical decision to incorporate student reflection and feedback in a new way in the course. His use of reflection to guide his pedagogical decisions was in line with ICD strategies.

When asked about his teaching philosophy in his first interview, Frank revealed how he reflected about the effectiveness of particular learning activity interactions with students:

I borrow from Paolo Freire. The notion that…if I’m the only one talking in the class, then it’s probably going to be a failure. In fact, I’ve often come out of classes patting myself on the back for my brilliance, and then realize, Wait a minute. Just because I was brilliant, doesn’t mean that anybody learned anything.

Frank used reflection to change his course design based on perceived learner needs in that he moved his required research paper to the end of the semester, to the beginning of the semester, and then back again, to give students time to find a topic they wanted to write about (research paper at the end) and give students early practice critically synthesizing information from sources (research paper at the beginning). Frank used reflection to guide his course design, which is an ICD strategy.

The timing of the required research paper is something that Sarah was in the process of reflecting upon at the time of her interviews. At that time, her course plan had the research paper at the end of the semester, but she said:
That in some ways is a problem, because…it is, it’s worth more, and it’s…more work, and all their other classes are ramping up, you know? Uh, but on the other hand…the way I perceive the structure of my class is…moving outward from the self to the academic…to intellectual discourse….the research paper, it requires you know, more…and that’s when they’re engaging with…kind of…academic discourse. But, it…having it at the end kind of…and I warn them at the beginning, I say, “You know…the big assignment is gonna come at the end and you’re gonna be all busy in your other classes, so you know…plan your time. I don’t know. Maybe I should think about putting it closer to the beginning. I don’t know….And, and they also…are much more pressured by their other classes, so they…they get like overwhelmed? Um, so, I don’t know. That’s something I might think about. You know?

Sarah’s thoughts on the timing of her research paper was one example of reflection about the helpfulness and fairness of a particular assessment in light of students’ other obligations. Each participant showed use of reflection as a part of their teaching practice. Frank and Sarah reflected on timing of assessments. Dallas reflected upon Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs) and feedback procedures. Barbara reflected upon effectiveness of her course design and also incorporated student reflective writing into her course. Reflection is an element of ICD.

Consideration of Situational Factors

Just as qualitative research is not a sterile process the participants in the study did not work in vacuums. The external pressures placed upon faculty members were evident in classroom observations and inspired some detailed discussion during interviews. Within the lived experiences of the participants, I found that multiple layers of contextual factors were at work simultaneously. Through studying faculty participants in their work environments, observing
them teach their classes, engaging them in dialog through one-to-one interviews, and examining their course documents, I saw how English department faculty members operated within their work contexts to plan and teach their courses. The course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of the participants were influenced by many situational factors including the expectations of external groups, characteristics of the learners including student readiness, and specific context of the teaching and learning situation including class size and campus resources. Taking situational factors into account while designing a course was a crucial step to design a course that spoke to the needs of students, fulfilled institutional and departmental expectations, and facilitated lasting learning. I found that situational factors such as the characteristics of institutions, students, and faculty members affected the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of the participants.

The Integrated Course Design (ICD) model, encompassing the principles of backward design, educative assessment, goals for significant learning, use of reflection, consideration of situational factors, and use of the Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013; also, see Figure 1 on p. 95) worked to help faculty members design courses in purposeful ways to facilitate lasting learning for students. I learned that situational factors were a significant part of participants' course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. In particular, the specific contexts of the participants' teaching and learning situations evidenced by resources; the attendance and readiness characteristics of the learners; expectations of external groups shown through institutional/departmental mandated reading selections and the requirement for a research paper assignment; and the characteristics of the instructors exhibited through their levels of flexibility were situational factors in the participants’ practices. Expectations of external groups, specific context of the teaching and learning situation, characteristics of the teachers, and
characteristics of the learners are all situational factors (Fink, 2013, p. 76-77). The following sections show evidence of the situational factors that influenced the participants' teaching practices in detail.

Specific Context of the Teaching and Learning Situation.

I chose different, independent liberal arts colleges as research sites for this study to view English department faculty members at work at comparable but separate liberal arts colleges and to learn how course design and pedagogical decision-making at the colleges compared and varied, possibly in response to campus environment. Through this study I learned something about how the words college and liberal arts and any emotions, beliefs, or attitudes invoked by them impacted the work performed by college faculty member participants, although Dallas was the only one to use the term, liberal arts college. The study served as one way that faculty member participants could give voice to their beliefs about course design and pedagogical decision-making within the context of a modern liberal arts college.

This study offered a chance to see how liberal arts colleges changed in some ways and remained the same in some ways since the dawn of the university in America. The research sites shared several traditional liberal arts college traits including: smallness, residential campuses, independent status, religious affiliation, educating mostly undergraduates, having a small student-to-faculty ratio, focusing on a liberal arts curriculum, and having students who mostly attend full-time. Although similar in multiple ways, these colleges differed in some ways, dependent upon how environmental factors have interplayed at each campus over the years and upon faculty members’ perceptions of their work environments. For example, how the classical curriculum, of which the studies of literature and rhetoric have always been a part, was imparted to students arose as a topic for discussion in interviews, was observed in the classroom, and was
evidenced through course documents. Specifically, Barbara, Dallas, and Sarah included the reading of literature in their courses; Frank chose to use Supreme Court cases instead. However, all four participants did include a study of rhetorical strategies into their writing instruction.

resources.

Resources impacted how the participants planned and taught their courses, but in opposite ways. Dallas, Frank, and Sarah all mentioned sending students to the campus writing center during the course of their interviews. I interviewed Dallas in his office the first time, and the second time in the campus snack bar. His office overlooked the writing center, which was spacious and brightly lit with multiple tables. During our first interview, there were two student tutors working in the center. Dallas worked with the writing center as a part of his job, and noted that he found it rewarding to work with the tutors and to see students come in and improve their writing skills. During a classroom observation, Frank encouraged his students to visit the writing center prior to submitting their next essay drafts, and Sarah shared in an interview that she has on occasion walked a student to the center and introduced them to a peer tutor as a way of facilitating the student’s use of the center. The writing center appeared to be an integral part of how Dallas, Frank, and Sarah taught their 102 courses. However, no mention was made of a writing center at Boadicea. A walk around the campus and a search of the college’s website did not produce evidence of one.

Other resources used at Appelbaum included use of video comments on students’ written work as a way to provide timely feedback. Email was used to issue course-related reminders to students, to supplement classroom teaching, and check up on students who had missed class. Participants used Facebook messenger to engage in chat with students about their work. During classroom observation, Sarah recommended that students access the Purdue University Online
Writing Lab if they did not have their textbooks with them at a given time. Inclusion of these resources indicated that Appelbaum faculty and students had ready access to the internet and internet-capable devices. I did not hear of or see any of these methods at Boadicea. Also, netbooks, laptops, and cell phones were in use during each class session I observed at Appelbaum. I only saw one or two cell phones used in Barbara’s classroom at Boadicea, with the exception of Barbara’s own personal laptop which she brought to class with her each time. Finally, desktop computers were present and used/usable by the participants during each Appelbaum observation. On the contrary, no desktop computer was present during Barbara’s classes. She told me in her second interview that not only did she need to bring her own PC in order to have access to one for her classes, she also had to pay out of pocket for a special cable so that her laptop was compatible with Boadicea's IT system. LCD projectors were located in all of the participants' classrooms, however the projectors at Appelbaum were connected and working, but the projector at Boadicea was not connected. I noticed during all of my observations in Barbara's classroom that various cables and cords hung from the projector, which was mounted on the ceiling. During an interview, Barbara revealed that the projector was unusable. While resources such as writing centers and computers were not required to teach English 102, it did appear that the Appelbaum faculty participants had a choice of tools available to do their job, but Barbara did not, even though all of the participants were teaching the same course. So, characteristics of an invisible college such as physical disrepair and limited technological equipment and access were observed at Boadicea and were seen to affect Barbara's course design and pedagogical decision-making. At Appelbaum, resources seemed abundant. A wealth of resources or a lack thereof affected the course design and pedagogical decisions of all participants.
Characteristics of the Learners

I found that characteristics of the leaners were especially influential upon Barbara’s course plans and pedagogical decisions. Barbara reported in her interviews that many students at Boadicea were significantly academically challenged, due to the college's open admissions policy. The open admissions policy at Boadicea was not a factor at Appelbaum, so that students at different levels of readiness showed up in English 102. So, Barbara planned and taught her course differently than the other participants. For example, although all six taxa appeared in Barbara's teaching, overall, her classroom observations showed a great deal of practice with Foundational Knowledge, while Frank and Sarah's classroom observations included more Application, Integration, and Learning How to Learn.

Attendance

Barbara mentioned two characteristics of learners, attendance and readiness, as significant situational factors in her course design and pedagogical decision-making. With regard to attendance, I noticed in her classroom observations that Barbara had unpredictable student attendance numbers, ranging from 8 to 16 students present, with 25 students on the roll. The average number of students present on observation days was 11. The varying number of students present in class meetings affected the TLAs that Barbara chose to use in the class. She stated in interview:

And who’s gonna show up today? It’s not…it’s diff..yeah, the number of students in a class…if there’re more students, if there’s a bigger class, I tend to do group work or something or, it depends on the size of the class.

Tardiness was also a factor, as Barbara reported that:
I don’t like 50 minute class meetings. I like an hour and twenty minutes. Fifty minutes, you can’t do anything. Because the students come in fifteen minutes late, half of ‘em, anyway. Um, they’ll come in halfway through the class, or, you never know who’s gonna show up for a particular class, so I do a lot of repeating.

On her observation days, multiple students came to class late each time, and with the exception of two students, there were different students present each time. I found that characteristics of the learners were especially influential upon Barbara's course plans and pedagogical decisions. I did not notice absenteeism, tardiness, or rotating attendance in Frank or Sarah's classes, and neither Dallas, Frank, or Sarah mentioned attendance as an issue affecting their pedagogical decisions. Students’ attendance habits did affect Barbara’s teaching practices.

**Readiness**

Student readiness was also a significant situational factor in Barbara’s 102 course. Through her answers to follow-up questions, Barbara revealed that student readiness, another situational factor common to all the participants, slowed down the process of covering required short stories in her class. Frank and Sarah talked about readiness as a factor in their pedagogical decisions, also. Dallas did not. For students taking the 102 courses, their abilities to comprehend and analyze college-level written and visual texts independently and to discuss verbally and/or write about those texts reflectively was crucial for their academic success due to the emphases on rhetoric that instructors had woven into the designs of their courses. The impact of students’ college readiness on English department faculty members’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes surfaced during the face-to-face interviews with Barbara, Frank, and Sarah, through classroom observations of these participants, and through my analysis of their
course-related documents. Of the three participants who mentioned student readiness as an influence on their teaching, the degrees of readiness discussed varied greatly.

The readiness issues described by Frank and Sarah were of a different nature than those described by Barbara. Frank spoke of mechanical errors made by students such as writing sentence fragments and using semicolons incorrectly. He also noted that some students struggled with paper organization, writing topic sentences, sticking to a point, or knowing the difference between stating an opinion and proving a position. Even with these readiness challenges, Frank asserted that “any student that comes in our classroom can [succeed]. It’s the ones who stop coming to class or don’t turn in assignments…who end up failing themselves”.

Sarah’s comments about student readiness in her English 102 class were along the same lines as Frank. She stated, “what I can discern from [students] is that some of them have not had the kind of basic skills instructions that their classmates have had, and maybe need some help on sentence structure and stuff”. The readiness issues reported by Frank and Sarah were significant to their pedagogical decision-making, but were of a different degree than those reported by Barbara.

Because of Boadicea’s open enrollment policy, Barbara indicated that she experienced “a great deal of diversity” in her students’ readiness to take English 102. She said in interview: [Boadicea’s] got open enrollment. So, you have people coming in, reading at maybe 4th grade level sometimes. And that may be after they’ve gone through the fundamental studies class. It’s real hard. You know, when you have the…when you have the bright students and you have the readers, it’s hard to keep them interested and then to try to motivate the other ones….assignments get put off, and put off, ‘cuz the students aren’t ready.
Dallas did not report student readiness as a factor in his teaching practice, however Frank, Sarah, and Barbara mentioned it as a concern when they planned and taught their courses. Thus, how students functioned in a freshman English class when many of their generation began their college careers with a noted deficiency in one or more subjects partially contextualized this research. In Barbara's case, the college's lack of selectivity affected the readiness levels of the students in her class. Barbara had to adapt her course design and pedagogical decision-making processes because she chose to teach the content in a way that the students could comprehend.

Through the qualitative research methods that I used, I found that elements of Integrated Course Design (ICD) were a part of how each participant planned and taught English 102. In particular, I found evidence of the following ICD elements: backward design, educative assessment, goals for significant learning, use of reflection and consideration of situational factors.

**Expectations of External Groups**

One aspect of external expectations, the impact of government policies on faculty members at small, private liberal arts colleges today, might have been an interesting topic of conversation during face-to-face interviews during the research study, however, government policies were not mentioned as significant situational factors by the research participants. Additionally, how faculty members were impacted by teaching at private colleges might have been an interesting topic to explore, such as how private status impacts faculty perceptions of and attitudes toward such concepts as academic freedom and social justice; how these ideas affected course design and pedagogical decision-making processes might have arisen through dialogue during interviews, might have been evident during classroom observations, and/or might have surfaced through analysis of course documents during the study. However, these
influences did not arise during data collection. Perhaps these topics might be explored through another research study.

Participants' teaching practices were, however, affected by sociocultural, psychosocial, historical, and political influences and power dynamics on their campuses with regard to teaching and learning environments. Participants decided which pedagogical tools to use to promote lasting learning. One tool from the past found still in use was the lecture method, which all participants used at least minimally.

At Appelbaum, Dallas, Frank, and Sarah expressed that they each made changes to their courses to benefit student learning. None of these participants mentioned any type of institutional interference with their plans. However, Barbara, at Boadicea, talked in her interviews about her college's administrators repeatedly pulling students out of her class for assemblies without warning; she also explained that the powers that be on her campus insisted that she distribute and follow a syllabus that she believed should be rewritten to meet student needs. Power dynamics played out in different ways on the campuses and affected course design in both instances. That is to say, due to lack of interference, Appelbaum faculty felt free to make changes to their courses for student benefit and did. Conversely, institutional management of students' bodies, instructional time, and English 102 content made Barbara felt powerless to make changes in her course's syllabus. Even so, she was still able to choose the pedagogical methods she felt would help students to grasp the prescribed curriculum. How Barbara felt about her disciplinary department was evidenced by what and how she planned for the course, because she felt she must include the course content they mandated. Learning how Barbara impacted her students’ learning environments despite institutional/departmental interference through her course design and pedagogical decisions increased my awareness of the influences of situational factors such as
faculty working environments on the education of today's college students. English 102 was a required liberal arts or general education course at both colleges. How the participants made course design decisions and what affected those decisions may certainly have affected the learning of all the students who took their courses.

Institutional policies touching the learning environment affected the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of the participants and were articulated in face-to-face interviews and through the course documents I obtained. The research sites differed widely on this issue. It was interesting to see that on both campuses, participants found a way to facilitate student learning, without or in spite of institutional/departmental mandates. This study offered a way for participants at sites which were similar to each other yet also different to voice their experiences, an opportunity that all expressed as a positive one. Expectations of external groups were communicated by the institutions and English departments through the syllabus and required research paper.

**Syllabus.**

Each participant spoke in some way about how the demands of a syllabus shaped their planning and teaching; because of this, the expectations of the institution/English departments represented in the syllabus and the characteristics of the instructors shown through their levels of flexibility were entwined. At Appelbaum, there were shared departmental learning goals for English 102, but each faculty member had autonomy to address those goals as they felt the learners in their classes needed, provided that they included a research paper as one of the required written pieces, and that each student wrote a set number of pages overall by the end of the course. The research paper, then, was conflated with the syllabus and faculty flexibility.

Dallas felt the least constrained by the syllabus, stating that “I’ll always have the class
planned before I get in there. The minute I get in there, I’m willing to throw that out. Same with
the syllabus”. Frank was not in favor of a standard syllabus that everyone was required to follow,
however, he did state that he thought “we could do more, to, to make sure, to work with each
other to have some standardization”. Sarah noted that the lack of a departmental syllabus was the
aspect of teaching 102 at Appelbaum that she found most appealing. Barbara, the only
participant from Boadicea, reported displeasure with her syllabus in her first interview. Among
other things, she stated that the syllabus she was obliged to use required more short stories than
she could cover with her students in one semester. Also, Barbara noted that “We have to…we
have a department syllabus that we’re supposed to follow, and so, I have to balance the
requirements of the syllabus with where the students are”. So, Dallas had a syllabus which he
followed but felt free to abandon as needed, Frank did not want a standard syllabus but was in
favor of a bit more standardization in future versions, Sarah delighted in not having a syllabus
that everyone had to follow, and Barbara taught with a departmental syllabus but found it an on-
going challenge. In each instance, the syllabus represented expectations of external groups
functioning as situational factors which touched everyone’s planning and teaching.

**Research paper.**

Participants concerned themselves with the prevailing traits of their students and adjusted
or adapted their course plans based upon their students’ characteristics as they perceived them.
How student traits, including being members of Generation Z, affected the research paper
assignment was something I discussed with the participants in their interviews. Each of the
participants’ course designs included an assigned paper requiring online research. For Dallas, the
main issue regarding this research paper was its timing; he preferred to place it as the fourth of
five required papers, so that he had ample time to offer feedback. Frank placed the research
paper as the last paper and spent roughly a month of class time on it. In his course, the research paper was a culminating activity, allowing students to showcase all that they had learned, including integrating appropriate quotations into sentences well, using MLA citation correctly, demonstrating sound logic, and producing a clear thesis. Frank iterated these and other skills that he assessed via the research paper and then he noted, “Every single one of these…I work on, at least, over and over and over again throughout the term, so by the time I get…to the final paper, to the research paper, I’m better able to say that will be a fair test of whether they got it or not”. For Frank, students’ abilities to write a research paper well was his Big Dream (Fink, 2016).

Sarah outlined elements of the research paper as items she hoped students would remember and use after the class was over, so, this paper was her Big Dream for her students as well (Fink, 2016). She said she wanted students to know and remember after taking her English 102 course that, “Um, it’s always best, even though you think you know about something, to research some reliable sources….Research some reliable sources, including…a source, that may not agree with you”. Dallas, Frank, and Sarah all stated that they worked toward the research paper through the other TLAs that they included in their courses prior to it. Barbara also indicated that the research paper was an important part of her 102 course, stating that she designed the research paper as an argumentative essay which allowed students to talk about their learning experiences in the course. For all participants, the research paper’s timing, topic, and/or status as a major assessment was a crucial part of their course design and was mandated by their departments. Because the research paper was in all cases a departmental requirement, the paper was a situational factor influencing the participants' practices.
Characteristics of Instructors

Whether or how liberal arts colleges defined themselves and whether or how the university model impacted participants' views of their workplaces might have been learned by interviewing English faculty members at liberal arts colleges through this research study, however, data pertaining to this did not emerge. In one of his interviews, however, Dallas did mention multiple times that he is thankful to work in a private liberal arts college because it allows him to be flexible in his teaching methods and because of the learning experience that environment affords his students.

How modern liberal arts college faculty members used their expertise to make course design and pedagogical decisions was a topic for discussion during face-to-face interviews and classroom observations in the study. Specifically, Dallas drew upon his knowledge of jazz music to inspire improvisation in his students' writing. Frank's knowledge of students' needs as academic writers caused him to use court cases in his course. Barbara's involvement with a charitable organization led to her use of letter-writing as a Teaching and Learning Activity, and Sarah's work as a sports sponsor on her campus affected her interactions with students within and outside her classroom.

How much if any of the idea of in loco parentis remained in force at small, private, liberal arts colleges and how it affected the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English faculty members was a source of dialogue and was witnessed during classroom observations. While students were not the focus of this study, faculty-student interactions were mentioned in interviews and observed in the classes. Boadicean students might have been likely to argue with professors, according to Astin and Lee (1972). They might also have been much less verbally aggressive than other four-year college students. During data
collection, students at neither college were observed to argue with the professors, however, a 
Boadicean student was seen being verbally aggressive in the classroom. Barbara did not 
reprimand the student. Overall, student behaviors, attitudes, and characteristics were only noticed 
in conjunction with faculty participants. How educators perceived and chose to react to traits of 
the student body and how their perceptions and choices affected their course design and 
pedagogical decision-making processes was at least partially revealed.

Sarah got to know the athletes on the team she sponsored personally, and acted as a 
liaison between the student-athletes and their professors from time to time. Frank stressed the 
importance of office visits to his students as a line of communication outside the classroom. 
Dallas created video chats for his students as a method for feedback on assignments, and Barbara 
schlepped her personal computer back and forth to class so that her students' learning would not 
suffer due to Boadicea's lack of instructional resources. While these examples did not describe 
actions as directly *in loco parentis* as were seen on liberal arts colleges prior to 1900, they did 
indicate that these professors were student-oriented - they went beyond requirements to show 
concern for their students as learners and as people. The participants were all found to be 
student-oriented and learning-centered, however, Dallas, Frank, and Sarah were learning-
centered on a learning-centered campus. Due to its reported class cancellations and its lack of 
instructional resources, Boadicea was judged to be other-centered. The centeredness of 
participants in relation to the centeredness of their college work environments affected course 
design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

**Flexibility.**

I found that issues related to the characteristics of the instructors, evidenced by instructor 
flexibility, affected their planning and teaching of their English 102 courses in ways that were
opposite to each other. Dallas, Frank, and Sarah experienced greater flexibility in their jobs than Barbara. The end result was the same: the lack of flexibility Barbara was allowed to display affected how she planned and taught 102, while the ability to be flexible in their work affected how the Appelbaum participants planned and taught their courses. Flexibility, which he termed variation, was quite important to Dallas’ teaching practice, as was a small student-to-faculty ratio. He laughingly shared in his second interview:

I’m totally willing to change things and throw things out, add things, um, and I’m lucky because I’m in a situation where I can do that. Like, you’re able to do that at a small, private, liberal arts college, right? Which is wonderful.... I believe in variation. I’m a strong believer in variation, so... Even variation for variation’s sake.... Um, so I guess you’d call it kind of an ADD classroom, but, we do come back to things.

Dallas credited his musical background for his penchant for flexibility, saying that:

I used to be a [jazz] musician. So, the cool thing about that that I’ve learned is that you build in space for improvisation. So, as a teacher, I try to make sure I have all the... I have my course planned, you know, I know exactly... I have a good sorta framework. But I also plan it in such a way where I know, that like, I can go off and I can build in room for improvisation. Particularly in class.

So, for Dallas’ teaching, part of the plan was leaving room to be flexible and abandon the plan.

In Frank’s course, flexibility is particularly important in terms of writing prompts. He shared in an interview how he struck upon the idea of using court cases:

I came across this, uh, a court case.... It had to do with flag burning from the 1980s, uh, and it set the two justices who wrote the majority and the dissenting opinions on the flag burning case against one another. And we could read that and talk not only about, uh, the
different positions, but also the different rhetorical styles that they used in order to make their cases, their points, and I realized from that that this was an intriguing way to get into social issues.

Frank said that he began using the court cases after trying other types of prompts relating to pop culture and the classics. He said that he used the cases as springboards for students to find topics for their research papers:

especially in the research paper, I’ve encouraged them at every turn to explore their own interests. If you think you’re gonna be a biology major, or you really like science, let’s try to approach your topic from that angle…. people are dealing with the death penalty. Right? Which is generic. Write a paper on the death penalty and you could get 1,000 papers exactly the same. But when you take a court case, it adds some specifics and then, within that, I can say, Well, are you more interested in the physical effects on the body... the chemicals that’re being used to put a prisoner to death? Maybe the, uh, psychology of the prisoners? Are you more interested in the uh, legal aspects? Maybe there’s some sort of business aspect to… So, I do my best to give them options that will encourage them to follow their own pursuits.

In Frank’s English 102 course, his flexibility in using court cases as writing prompts afforded students guidance and choice in their research paper topics.

Sarah required types of papers, for example, a personal essay and an expository essay, but allowed students to choose their own topics. Because she was not bound by a departmental syllabus, she had the flexibility to give students freedom to choose topics that mattered to them. She stated in her second interview that she engaged in brainstorming activities with students to
help them generate ideas, but that she insisted that students choose their own topics. Sarah said this was her way to introduce learners to their own academic writing voices.

Barbara reported that a lack of flexibility in her workplace affected how she planned and taught her course. She stated in her first interview:

Seventy percent of our students have to make at least a C. If they don’t, we’re punished…. [Administrators] take points off our portfolio. So that, what, you have to… they’re affecting what I do in the classroom. Well, they’re affecting how I evaluate my students, because, you have to be pretty secure and pretty something to say, Fine. Fire me. I’m not going to pass failing students. You know, you can get on your moral high horse, and I get fairly well on my moral high horse, but I do still have a job. And so, I have to think of things that students will succeed at. I have to think of assignments that I can give them that they can make good grades on. I have to, I have to… Well, there’re these little multiple choice quizzes … and I set ‘em up as exercises. So the student can take the quizzes as many times as they want to get the grade that they want. Now, see, that is so they can succeed.)

As Barbara explained it, the lack of flexibility in Boadicea’s grading policy affected the Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs) that she chose to include in her course to promote student learning. For all of the participants, flexibility was a situational factor which affected their teaching practices. Situational factors and their effects on course design are a part of Integrated Course Design (ICD). In the next section I report participant data relevant to the six taxa of significant learning: Foundational Knowledge, Application, Integration, Human Dimension, Caring, and Learning How to Learn.
Fink's Taxonomy of Significant Learning

When lean coding with the elements of ICD, I was surprised to find out that professors did indeed have dreams regarding their teaching. For example, Barbara's dreams for her students to finish college informed and shaped the goals for learning that she set for her English 102 course. Barbara's goals for significant learning found their ways into her course design plans, because she planned and taught for her students' lasting learning after her course ended. The concept of lasting learning holds that students may be more engaged in class and may remember what they learned after the course is over if the instructor plans and teaches the course using Integrated Course Design (ICD) principles, including incorporating learning goals and teaching and learning activities from each category of the ICD taxonomy. Figure 1 on p. 95 shows the Taxonomy of Significant Learning. The taxonomy includes six categories: Foundational Knowledge, Application, Integration, Human Dimension, Caring, and Learning How to Learn. The Human Dimension category is the only one with two subcategories: Learning about Oneself and Learning about Others (Fink, 2013, p. 35; Fink, 2016).

Each category addresses a different kind of learning. Fink stated that “When a course or learning experience is able to promote all six kinds of learning, one has had a learning experience that truly can be deemed significant” (2013, p. 38). In this section of this chapter I present evidence that I found of all six kinds of learning in a single teaching and learning experience. Through interviews, classroom observations, and document analysis, I learned how faculty members at Appelbaum and Boadicea incorporated Foundational Knowledge (understanding and remembering), Application (thinking, managing information), Integration (connecting ideas, learning experiences, and realms of life), Human dimension (learning about the self and others), Caring (developing new feelings, interests, and values), and Learning How
to Learn (becoming a better student, inquiring about a subject, becoming a self-directed learner) (Fink, 2013, p. 35) into their course plans.

I used the ICD method as explicated by Fink (2013) as a framework for interpreting the data I collected. I found evidence of all six taxa in one course or learning experience in the teaching practices of Barbara, Frank, and Sarah. In discussing his English 102 course, Frank stated in an interview:

The cases themselves could be used as evidence within a student paper…. They offer analogies, they offer…their own use of precedent….I have them working in groups to read the cases because they’re very difficult. They sort of have to help each other understand what the case is all about. So, for the past…I started doing that very early in my time here, so, for the past maybe 14 or 15 years…that’s the way I’ve done it. Uh, Here’s a court case. Let’s talk about the issues. You’ll gradually graduate from those groups into individual papers. Uh, and, yeah, finish up, basically: What does your ideal society look like? How far are you willing to let, say, free speech go? Or, at what point is a restriction on religious liberty reasonable or not reasonable? So, we have a lot of good discussions because of that, uh, and they [chuckles] they fight back, because court cases are boring. They’re hard. And it’s frustrating, because they start out with sometimes very firmly held positions that get challenged. Sometimes very easy, knee-jerk, stereotypical positions. And I say, well, okay, you’re on opposite ends of the spectrum with other people in your class or in your group. How do you talk to one another so that you don’t change your own mind, but sharpen your own argument by considering what the other person has to say?
In writing papers for Frank's class, his students demonstrated Foundational Knowledge by reading and understanding the prompt and the directions. Application took place when the students utilized their abilities to write the sentences and paragraphs that made up the papers and exemplified their critical, creative, and practical thinking skills. Frank designed his course so that students initially wrote papers in groups and then moved into writing papers separately. This was an example of Integration, as the students connected their ideas and learning experiences from the group essay to their own experiences as independent writers. Because Frank chose to use court cases as writing prompts in his 102 course, students had the opportunity to learn how they and their group members felt about the social issues involved in each case as well as the challenge of synthesizing their thoughts and incorporating them into a group essay. Thus, Frank included the Human Dimension, learning about the self and others, into his course. The cases that Frank used as prompts involved social issues, therefore, when he posed questions such as, “What does your ideal society look like? How far are you willing to let, say, free speech go,” he was guiding students into Caring - developing new feelings and interests relative to living in this society. Finally, Frank had the students read the court cases in groups to facilitate the decoding of intricately worded documents. In so doing, he equipped the students with a reading strategy that they can use over and over again in college; students Learn How to Learn through this Teaching and Learning Activity (TLA) of Frank's. Whether he was aware of it or not, Frank’s course design and pedagogical decision-making processes led him to include the six taxa of Significant Learning in his course. In this way, the reality of his practice included the theory of lasting learning strategies.

How Barbara, Dallas, Frank, and Sarah navigated the processes of planning and teaching their English 102 courses was made evident and knowable through my research. I found out that
the moves that these college educators made to facilitate lasting learning matched the theory of ICD in multiple ways. Sarah’s 102 course design encompassed all six of Fink's taxa, as Frank's did.

In an interview, Sarah described her course design by saying:

I want them to learn to generate ideas. Because I don’t give them topics. And so that forces them into being able to generate ideas. Um, I want them to learn how to read their papers, and sometimes, when I…do workshop, those of their classmates with a constructive, critical eye. And, I want them to research and use sources effectively. And be prepared to use those skills in their other courses and in non-academic writing tasks, and beyond, out into the workplace and after they graduate.

In Sarah’s course, the students wrote and submitted five papers. Each paper included the use of Foundational Knowledge such as grammar, usage, and mechanics rules, and Application of those rules to compose the paper. Sarah’s insistence that students be ready to use what they learn in her course in other aspects of their lives was her Big Dream. It was also an example of Integration, since Fink (2013) defined this taxon as "when students are able to see and understand the connections between different things" (p.36). Allowing students to choose their own topics and guiding them through critiques of their own writing and that of their peers brought the Human Dimension into Sarah’s course, because this part of Significant Learning occurs when "students learn something important about themselves or about others" (Fink, 2013, p. 36) such as how they and their peers are navigating the path to become self-directed, effective academic writers. Also, having students choose their own topics afforded them opportunities to develop new interests and values, which exemplified Caring. Learning How to Learn took place when students practiced researching their topics and incorporating source material. Sarah’s
pedagogical decision to require students to choose their own topics for essays made it possible for the six taxa to be evidenced within her course.

During an observation of Barbara’s English 102 class, I witnessed all six taxa through the TLAs that she chose. That day, Barbara asked her students to write letters to younger students in an orphanage in Sudan who were learning to read and write English. I saw Foundational Knowledge evidenced when Barbara’s students read her written directions about letter writing. Each student Applied the knowledge they gained from the directions sheet by writing an age-appropriate letter to a student learning English in another country. Barbara's students wrote about their own lives as college students and asked questions in their letters about life at the orphans’ school. They reminded each other to refer to soccer as football and decorated their letters with original artwork and scriptural passages. This TLA allowed the 102 students to Integrate different aspects of their lives into letters intended to encourage younger students who had lost their parents and were living through a civil war. During the class, Barbara taught her students about the living conditions in Sudan. This prompted her students to think aloud about their own privilege in contrast to the Sudanese students. This was an example of Human Dimension learning. I observed Caring as the 102 students considered and discussed the role, audience, format, and tone of what they wrote. They were careful to make the words they used as well as their printed writing easy to read and understand. They made their letters visually appealing to younger people. They shared their feelings and their interest in the orphans verbally in the class and in written form in their letters. Learning How to Learn was evidenced as Barbara’s students actively worked to use what they had learned up to that point as students and as young adults to help someone else practice reading English and be encouraged in their personal lives. Through Barbara’s use of this TLA, students in her English 102 course assessed their abilities to read,
write, think, share their thoughts, draw, and examine their privilege as someone who can already communicate in English and who is a college student in the United States. Barbara’s letter-writing TLA showed all six taxa of Significant Learning.

Chapter Summary

Full-time English department faculty members who had taught 102 at their institution in the last calendar year were eligible to participate in this study. I enrolled everyone who was eligible and willing to participate. Four faculty members, two females and two males, at two small, private liberal arts colleges participated. All of these instructors were teaching English 102 during data collection. Each participant’s course design and pedagogical decision-making processes involved elements of ICD according to the qualitative data that I collected, coded, and analyzed. Three of the participants exhibited all six taxa for Significant Learning in their teaching practices.

Some questions that I had after writing the literature review were about how the planning and teaching of a required course at a small college compared to or contrasted with the best practices articulated in the theories, such as: What does the reality of planning and teaching a higher education course look like? Does real practice match the theories? In what ways? How does the reality differ? And, to what extent is evidence of theory seen in practice? Answers to these questions guided my writing of this chapter. In the next chapter, I will discuss the findings and an emergent theme which resulted from my data collection and analysis. The emergent theme answers one remaining question that I had: What practices have faculty members found to be effective that do not yet appear in the literature? In Chapter V, I also will present the conclusions that I have drawn from my study, and make recommendations for practice and future research.
CHAPTER V:
DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE, AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

This research study sought to explore the course design and pedagogical decision-making moves of faculty members at small liberal arts colleges in an attempt to highlight these processes for the benefit of academe and to juxtapose the findings at four-year liberal arts colleges to the findings at two-year community colleges (Ward, 2012). I believed that examining the moves that faculty members made to plan and teach courses was important and timely because course design and pedagogical decision-making processes were not often articulated, but rather, occurred as a manner of course, without being documented and shared (Shulman, 2004). Also, analyzing internal and external aspects of the teaching process on college campuses and disseminating those findings for the benefit of others was still a relatively new practice in much of the academy (Bain, 2004; Shulman, 2004; Svinicki & McKeachie, 2011). This study, which was inspired by Creating Significant Learning Experiences: An Integrated Approach to Designing College Courses, by L. Dee Fink (2013), followed the traditions of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. I chose the traditional, five-chapter dissertation format because of the academy’s familiarity with this design. I hoped that this accustomed format might facilitate others’ use of information contained within the dissertation, which would be in keeping with SoTL principles.

The core of the study dealt with how faculty members made course design and pedagogical decisions and how the realities of these processes compared to the principles of the
Integrated Course Design (ICD) model as explained by Fink (2013). Additionally, findings from this study were contrasted with to the findings of Ward (2012). Ward (2012) and this study differ in the type of institution from which participants were recruited. I held other aspects of the research design as constant as possible in order to render research findings which could be juxtaposed.

I used theory-based, documented methods of qualitative inquiry to conduct field research to capture the authentic, lived experiences of research participants in their work environments. I included contextual details, representations of the voices of the participants, and thick, rich descriptions in the report of findings to allow readers to perceive the constructed realities and lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2009; Stake, 2010). All study data, including interview transcriptions, observation notes, course syllabi, and other course-related documents were analyzed and lean coded for evidence of the principles of ICD which functioned as a theoretical framework for the study. Lean codes came from The Taxonomy of Significant Learning (Fink, 2013, p. 35; see also, Figure 1 on p. 95) and from other principles of ICD, namely: Educative Assessment, goals for Significant Learning, Reflection, consideration of Situational Factors, and the six taxa of Significant Learning. In the next section, I reiterate the Research Questions that guided my study and summarize what I learned about each one.

Research Questions

This study was guided by four research questions:

At small, private, not-for-profit, four-year liberal arts colleges…

Research Question 1

how do instructors go about developing a course, including learning goals, teaching and learning activities, and assessments?
At the small, private, not-for-profit, four-year liberal arts college research sites in this study, instructors went about developing their English 102 courses, including learning goals, teaching and learning activities, and assessments in comparable but individual ways which aligned with ICD principles. The participants all took specifics of their teaching contexts into account, including institutional/departmental directives, student characteristics, their own characteristics as educators, and the resources on their campuses when developing their courses. In Barbara's case, the learning goals for her course were mandated by the institution. Dallas, Frank, and Sarah's learning goals came partially from their institution and partially from themselves.

**Research Question 2**

*how do instructors go about delivering instruction?*

The participating instructors delivered instruction using strategies geared toward lasting learning for the students in their classes. Barbara chose Teaching and Learning Activities (TLAs) that emphasized the acquisition of Foundational Knowledge. Dallas described active learning strategies that he created to encourage students to take risks in their writing. Frank's classes included small-group and whole-group discussions of Supreme Court cases, while Sarah chose to use whole group instruction and lecture a fair bit in the classes that I observed. All four participants used essay-writing as their major assessments.

**Research Question 3**

*to what degree do elements of English 102 courses reflect the over-arching qualities and components of Fink’s Integrated Course Design model (Fink 2013)?*

The over-arching qualities and components of Fink’s Integrated Course Design (ICD) model (Fink 2013) as I see them are that responsible instructors plan and teach their courses
within a constantly-evolving matrix of context, instructor, and students in such a way that students are able to learn and retain new information and skills in ways meaningful to them. Some of the tools proven to be effective in this type of teaching are: Backward Design, Educative Assessment, Goals for Significant Learning, Use of Reflection, Consideration of Situational Factors, and the six taxa of Significant Learning. During my study, I did not reveal to the participants that I would code and analyze the data I collected for evidence of ICD. I withheld this information because I did not want to influence what the participants might share with me. I was not surprised, therefore, that participants did not use ICD terminology. Although the terms were not used, the participants did describe consideration of situational factors in their interviews. They set goals for significant learning for their students, reflected upon what worked and did not work and made adjustments to their course plans based upon the Big Dreams they had for their students. Frank and Barbara's classes included student reflective writing. Data collected about Barbara, Frank, and Sarah's classes revealed all six taxa from Fink's Taxonomy for Significant Learning. Dallas' course incorporated novel forms of immediate feedback. I concluded that participants' courses reflected elements of ICD to a degree greater than chance could have brought about. I am left with the belief that ICD is a way to describe the moves that good instructors make, and these particular instructors made those moves for the benefit of their students.

Research Question 4

*How do the findings of this study compare or contrast with the findings of Ward (2012)?*

The findings of this study contrast with the findings of Ward (2012), because that study did not find convincing evidence of elements of ICD in two-year colleges while this study did find convincing evidence of elements of ICD in four-year liberal arts colleges.
Like Ward (2012), participants in this study took Situational Factors into account as they planned and taught their courses. However, while Ward (2012) found that participants planned and taught their courses without giving much consideration to learning goals, participants in this study were found to have specific as well as overarching goals for the learners in their classes that guided their day to day decision-making. Teaching and learning activities, such as research paper writing and letter writing were planned in advance, aligned with learning goals, and contained integrated assessments. Findings from this study suggest that participants spent time planning integrated courses which contained multiple elements of ICD, although Fink’s specific terminology was not articulated. The participants' course design decisions and pedagogical decision-making processes reflected the tenets of Fink's Integrated Course Design Model.

**Emergent Theme: One-on-one Instruction**

I used Integrated Course Design (ICD) elements as a prefigured coding scheme. As I coded the qualitative data obtained, an unexpected theme emerged (Creswell, 2013, p. 185). Each faculty research participant mentioned working with students one-on-one as an important pedagogical tool for teaching English 102. Barbara and Sarah mostly used one-on-one interaction as a way to work through something with a student. Dallas counted it as an effective way to provide feedback on student writing. Frank used it to give feedback and also as a time to work through ideas with students.

In one of her interviews, Barbara shared, “I’m a much better tutor than I am a teacher, really. I really enjoy working with the students one on one”. Barbara also mentioned that her favorite way to help a student with a paper was to find an area where they could spread out their materials and then work through the paper together, one-on-one.
Dallas met students in person one-on-one as much as possible but also did video conferences with students. He stated that talking with students one-on-one was among his most useful strategies: “That’s for sure the most effective. It’s not even close. When they come into my office and we talk about stuff for thirty minutes. That’s by far the most effective”. Dallas also used video commenting and emails to provide feedback to each student on his/her work.

Frank used one-on-one conferences in his office for hashing through ideas with students and also as opportunity to provide feedback. He shared in his second interview:

My main goal there is to set this environment as important for their learning. Uh, I’ll bring them in individually for scheduled conferences at least a couple more times, and again…going from the group conference to the individual conference is meant to make them feel comfortable coming in here…*I’m not calling you on the carpet. I’m not going to lecture to you. I just want to talk about ideas, right?*

Once students felt comfortable with the one-on-one conversations with Frank, he also uses the time to give feedback on essay drafts. He stated:

We do laugh, right? We, we talk to one another like human beings and we laugh and there’s an ability uh, to communicate face-to-face that a little marginal note doesn’t allow. …if I could get away with just the verbal interaction, I would do that.

One-on-one interaction was also counted as an important tool by Sarah. She reported that small class size allowed her to meet with students one-on-one, and she made herself available for that. Sarah said:

I have one required…conference scheduled in my syllabus …but…I also do others, just kind of…ad hoc, I’ll talk to the student privately after class, and I’ll say, “You know, you did so great…and now you’ve kinda hit a brick wall with this argument. If you feel like
it, drop on by my office and we’ll talk about it” you know. Um, and so, after they’ve handed in the rough draft…I go over ‘em and then we meet…we have a required meeting…. I go over it with them, and you know, give them pointers.

It is perhaps interesting to note that one-on-one teaching and learning was not expected to emerge as a teaching tool. However, each participant, when asked about how they plan and teach, organically discussed this strategy as a vital tool in their English 102 course.

**Discussion of Findings**

Ward (2012) sought to examine the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English department faculty members at community colleges. This study sought to examine the same research phenomenon at small, private, not-for-profit, four-year liberal arts colleges. Theories about course design iterated by Fink (2013) through the ICD model provided a framework for this study and I attempted to determine if and to what degree instructors’ courses reflected the elements of ICD. While Ward (2012) found that the “participants’ course design decisions and pedagogical practices only partially reflect” those outlined in the ICD model, (p. 271), I found multiple examples of ICD elements in my study. However, the process of making these decisions was found to be complex. Additionally, all participants indicated that they had rarely articulated their decision-making processes to others in depth.

Specifically, the data collected indicated that the faculty research participants’ course design and pedagogical decision-making practices did include Educative Assessment, goals for Significant Learning, Reflection, consideration of Situational Factors, and the six taxa of Significant Learning. Although no explicit examples of intentional ICD Backward Design were uncovered, the data did show that participants made plans and decisions pertaining to their
courses with student learning goals in mind and manipulated course designs they were given accordingly.

The history and composition of modern liberal arts colleges contextualized this research. What is meant by the term liberal arts college has changed over time, due in part to how the liberal arts college came into existence and to its history, which did not follow a straight trajectory. Elements from the past which were highly influential on the liberal arts college were the classical curriculum, local influences, and religious beliefs (Leslie, 1992, Schmidt, 1957). The predominance of the liberal arts college ended with the ascension of the university model.

The liberal arts colleges of today evolved from the early liberal arts college model, but in unique ways (Leslie, 1992; Schmidt, 1957; Wegener, 1978), therefore, liberal arts colleges were difficult to describe all-inclusively. Because of the ways in which it evolved and the changes it has undergone since its beginning, even experts in the field disagree as to how to define the liberal arts college. For the purposes of this study, liberal arts college was used to mean a small, private, not-for-profit, four-year, primarily undergraduate, largely residential institution of higher learning. Two colleges fitting this description, Appelbaum College and Boadicea College, were chosen as research sites.

Faculty research participants’ teaching practices at both colleges were found to be influenced by Situational Factors including expectations of external groups, specific contexts of participants, and characteristics of instructors. Another Situational Factor, characteristics of the learners, including attendance and readiness, was found to be especially influential upon the Boadicea participant’s course plans and pedagogical decisions, but was not identified as significant at Appelbaum. Interviewing and observing English department faculty members at comparable institutions and analyzing their course documents through qualitative inquiry offered
me a glimpse into their work lives and decision-making processes as they related to course
design and pedagogy.

It was not particularly startling to find that the Boadicea participant's course design and
pedagogical decision-making processes were influenced by characteristics of learners but the
Appelbaum participants' were not. Research indicated that Boadicean faculty might have
contextual influences on their course design and pedagogical decision-making processes that
Appelbaum faculty might not, because Boadicea College was comparable to the other college in
some ways - small, liberal arts, not-for-profit, religiously-affiliated, highly residential - but was
also an historically Black liberal arts college. It was anticipated that due to the purpose of the
college, students at Boadicea might be more academically challenged than students at
Appelbaum. Based on the data collected, this was the case. Boadicean students were described
by the faculty participant there as having pronounced readiness challenges, due to the college’s
open enrollment policy. This affected her course design and pedagogical decision-making
processes. The Appelbaum faculty participants did not mention and were not observed making
course design and pedagogical decisions based on student readiness.

Due to its status as an invisible college, it was also thought that faculty at Boadicea might
be influenced by moral considerations for students to a greater extent than faculty at Appelbaum,
even though both colleges have religious affiliations. Such elements could have affected course
design and pedagogical decisions at Boadicea. One might say that this was evidenced when
Boadicean students shared Bible scriptures through in-class letter-writing. However, students did
this of their own accord, without prompting from the instructor, therefore I did not see the
inclusion of scriptural references as evidence of faculty course design or pedagogical decision-
making. While sociocultural and sociopsychological factors were not unearthed by this study,
Appelbaum’s faculty were observed to have more extensive teaching resources than were seen at Boadicea, perhaps due to less financial capital at Boadicea, perhaps due to another reason which was not discovered through this research. Any relationship between the sociocultural and sociopsychological factor of teaching resources or the lack thereof and course design and pedagogical decision-making processes might make an interesting topic for another research study.

**Implications for Practice and Recommendations for Further Research**

While Ward (2012) looked at the correlations between ICD and the course design and pedagogical decision-making processes of English faculty at two-year colleges, this study adds to the literature on course design and pedagogical decision-making processes because it asked similar questions within a different setting. Specifically, the four-year liberal arts college offered a unique and varied context within which to do research.

It might be of interest to academe if this study were replicated at a different type of higher education institution, such as research universities, in order to see if institutional setting impacts course design and pedagogical decision-making processes. This could help to explain the difference in findings between Ward (2012) and this study.

This research found teaching options that some faculty members might not have considered before, such as utilization of one-on-one teaching situations or video commenting on student work. These findings could inform the thought processes of present and future members of higher education with regard to course design and pedagogical decision-making and how these activities can be explored though SoTL research.

This research allows practitioners to see how course design and pedagogical decision-making processes on their campuses compare with those on other campuses and with what books
on pedagogy suggest one should do. One way to explore this topic from a different angle could be to study effects of instructor course design and pedagogical decision-making from a student perspective. Finally, this study contributes to knowledge about faculty decisions and practices and how they influence teaching and learning, because the realities of all of the participants’ course design and pedagogical decision-making processes included elements of ICD. This knowledge could guide future decisions regarding faculty development opportunities; training on ICD could go down especially well if practitioners are already using elements of it in their practices.

Conclusions

One of the primary goals of the ICD model is the facilitation of lasting learning experiences which students can retain and use after the course ends (Fink, 2016). The attributes of ICD used as a theoretical framework in this study were: Backward Design, Educative Assessment, goals for Significant Learning, Reflection, consideration of Situational Factors, and the six taxa of Significant Learning. Time was spent with faculty members in their work environments, talking with them about how they designed their courses and how they selected and used pedagogical strategies within their classes. Classroom observations and document analysis were also utilized as qualitative data collection methods. These methods were chosen to allow for detailed study of the research phenomenon.

By observing faculty research participants in their work environments, as they taught their classes, by engaging them in dialog through personal interviews, and by examining their course documents, I was able to ascertain that faculty members teaching freshman English at two small, private liberal arts colleges operated within their work contexts to plan and teach their courses using elements of ICD. I used principles of the ICD method as explicated by Fink (2013)
as a framework for interpreting the data collected in order to specify the nature of the relationship between a faculty course designer and evidence of his/her course design processes for the purpose of increasing understanding of the research phenomenon.

When I found that ICD elements did appear in the participants' teaching practices, I juxtaposed that finding with the findings of Ward (2012), which looked at the same research phenomenon, faculty course design and decision-making processes, within a different context, i.e., two-year colleges as opposed to four-year colleges. While Ward (2012) found limited evidence of ICD, this study found multiple examples of ICD within each participant's teaching practice. Furthermore, three of the participants exhibited all six taxa for Significant Learning in their teaching practices. I concluded from this study that the theory of ICD describes moves that faculty members make when teaching their courses. Perhaps Ward (2012) was too harsh in its analysis of data, or perhaps the liberal arts college setting elicits the use of ICD and two-year colleges do not.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS
Introduction: Thank you for participating in this study and for allowing me to conduct an interview with you today. As we have previously discussed, I am a doctoral student pursuing a degree in Higher Education Administration at the University of Alabama. My dissertation topic focuses on the ways in which English instructors at liberal arts colleges make decisions about teaching. You were recommended as an ideal candidate for this research and chosen from a pool of participants. The information garnered from this interview will be used to complete the study. You will remain anonymous and the information you provide will remain confidential. This interview will take approximately one hour to complete.

General Information and Demographics:

1. How many years of experience do you have in the field of education?

2. The highest degree you hold is in what field?
   a. Where did you earn that degree?
   b. When did you earn that degree?

3. What is the highest degree you hold in English or language arts?
   a. Where did you earn the degree?
   b. When did you earn the degree?

4. How long have you been at this institution?

5. How long have you been in your present position?

6. Please briefly explain your philosophy of teaching.
   
   Probe: Has your teaching philosophy changed throughout your career? How?

7. What led you to teach English at the college level?

8. How long have you been teaching English courses?
Situational Factors

1. What factors do you take into consideration as you prepare to teach a 100-level English course?

   Probe: Specifics of the teaching and learning situation?
   - Number of students in class?
   - Length and frequency of class meetings?
   - Main delivery method for instruction?
   - Physical elements of the learning environment?

   Probe: Expectations of External Groups?
   - Society’s needs and/or expectations?
   - State or professional society’s requirements that affect learning goals?
   - Institutional, departmental, or program curricular goals and/or requirements?

   Probe: Nature of the subject?
   - Primarily cognitive or includes the learning of significant physical skills?
   - Stability of field of study?
   - Controversies in the field?

   Probe: Characteristics of the learner?
   - Students’ life situations?
   - Students’ professional goals related to learning experiences?
   - Students’ reasons for enrolling?
   - Students’ prior experiences, knowledge and skill levels, and attitudes?
   - Students’ learning goals, expectations, and preferred learning styles?

   Probe: Characteristics of the teacher?
   - Attitude toward the subject?
   - Attitude toward the students?
   - Level of knowledge or familiarity with the subject?
   - Strengths in teaching?

2. How do you determine which instructional methods to use?

3. Describe a typical student in your English 102 course.

   Probe: What are their reasons for enrolling?
   Probe: What are their learning goals, expectations, and preferred learning styles?
   Probe: What prior experiences, knowledge, skills, and attitudes do the students have regarding the subject matter and course?

4. What aspects of teaching at your college do you find most appealing?

5. What, if any, major problems do your students face in meeting the learning goals of your 100-level English classes?
6. Describe the greatest challenges you face teaching English at a college.

Learning Goals

1. What do you hope your students learn by taking your English 102 course?

2. From your 102 class, what key information or ideas are important for the student to understand and remember in the future? *(foundational knowledge)*

3. What will students be able to do intellectually, physically or emotionally as a result of taking your course? *(application)*

4. What connections might students recognize and make between the information, ideas, and perspectives in your English 102 course and those in other courses or areas? *(integration)*

5. How might students use information gained in an English 102 course in their own personal, social, and work life? *(integration)*

6. By taking your 102 course, what might students learn about themselves and their interactions with others? *(human dimension)*

7. How might taking your course change students’ feelings, interests, or values? *(caring)*

8. What would you like students in your 102 course to learn about becoming lifelong and self-directed learners? *(learning how to learn)*

Closing: At the close of the interview, the researcher will ask the participant to schedule a future interview and two class observations. Additionally, the researcher will ask the participant to provide a copy of the course syllabus.
Introduction: Thank you for meeting with me for this second interview. Today, I’d like to discuss the recent classroom observations and ask you some questions related to feedback and assessment, teaching and learning, course management, and integration.

Feedback and Assessment

1. What types of assessments do you use to measure student learning?

2. How do you determine which methods to use to measure student learning?

3. What kind of assessments best enhance the learning process?

4. How do you use the results of the assessments?

5. How often do you provide feedback to your students?

6. Describe how you provide feedback to your students.

7. What kind of feedback best enhances the learning process?

Teaching and Learning Activities

1. What are your primary teaching methods?

2. How do you decide on the teaching and learning activities to use in your English 102 classes?

3. What instructional strategies have you found to be the most successful in teaching your students?

4. How do you address the range of student abilities and learning styles in your 102 class?
5. Typically, how do you develop a lesson or series of lessons focused on a literary work?

6. What do you do that is intended to help and encourage your students to learn beyond the basic delivery of your course content?

Course Management

1. Generally, how is the conduct of the students in your 102 classes?

2. How do you motivate students to learn?

3. Please explain your attendance policy, including any related awards or consequences.

4. How do you decide which literary works to include in your English 102 course?

5. What textbook(s) do you require for the course?

6. What, if any, supplementary text(s) or media do you use with your 102 class?

Course Integration

1. When you look at the learning goals that you have set for the course, do you see any that you feel are not assessed very well in the course as it currently is constructed? Which one(s)?

2. Which assessment(s) that you use in the course do you see as being particularly good at measuring whether or not your students have met specific learning goals that you have set for the course?

3. When you think about learning goals for the course, are there any that you feel do not have adequate in-class or out-of-class learning activities for the student to reach the goal(s)? Which one(s)?

4. When you look over all of the learning activities that you have set for the course, do you see any that are not directly tied to at least one of your learning goals?
5. When you think about the assessments that you conduct in this course, do you find that there are any which are measuring learning goals or skills that have not been practiced or developed through the learning activities that the students have done in the course?

6. Would you show me, using the syllabus, which learning goals are measured using which assessment activities that will be used in the course?

Follow-up/Reflection

1. When a course is over, how do you know that you’ve done a good job?

2. How do you evaluate your efforts as an English instructor?

3. How do you know when you need to make changes to your teaching practices?

4. Could you share an example of a method or instructional approach that you modified because you determined it was ineffective?

Closing: Thank you for your participation in this research study. This concludes the interview.
APPENDIX B
OBSERVATIONAL PROTOCOL
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**Summary:**
APPENDIX D
IRB APPROVAL
December 5, 2016

Jeanine Irons
ELPTS
College of Education
The University of Alabama
Box 870302

Re: IRB # EX-16-CM-139 “A Qualitative Study of American Literature Instructors’ Course Design and Pedagogical Decision-Making Processes at Private Liberal Arts Colleges”

Dear Ms. Irons:

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board has granted approval for your proposed research. Your protocol has been given exempt approval according to 45 CFR part 46.101(b)(1) as outlined below:

(1) Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.

Your application will expire on December 4, 2017. If your research will continue beyond this date, complete the relevant portions of Continuing Review and Closure Form. If you wish to modify the application, complete the Modification of an Approved Protocol Form. When the study closes, complete the appropriate portions of FORM: Continuing Review and Closure.

Please provide the ORC with a copy of the documentation received from Birmingham Southern College, Miles College, and Samford University regarding permission to conduct research and/or IRB review at those sites. Please provide this documentation for the IRB file prior to beginning any research at the individual sites.

Should you need to submit any further correspondence regarding this proposal, please include the assigned IRB application number.

Good luck with your research.

Sincerely,

Carpentaro T. Myles, MSM, CIM, CIP
Director & Research Compliance Officer
Office of Research Compliance
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA
HUMAN RESEARCH PROTECTION PROGRAM

CONSENT FORM FOR NONMEDICAL INTERVIEW STUDY

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

Individual's Consent to be in a Research Study

You are being asked to be in a research study. This study is called "A Qualitative Study of American Literature Instructors' Course Design and Pedagogical Decision-Making Processes at Private Liberal Arts Colleges". This study is being done by Jeanine Irons and Dr. David Hardy. Jeanine is a doctoral candidate in the College of Education at the University of Alabama. Dr. Hardy is Associate Dean for Research and Service in the College of Education at the University of Alabama.

The study is not supported by any grant or funding.

What is this study about?
College teachers make many decisions when they teach a class. We want to find out how those decisions are made. We believe that you can help us by telling us how you plan and teach your English 102 course. We want to learn what people who teach English 102 think about and do when they plan a course and when they teach a class. We want to understand what goes on during that process, and whether the process is like what is described in a textbook. This knowledge might help us to learn better ways to educate students.

Why is this study important—What good will the results do?
The findings will help researchers find out more about how college teachers plan and teach English 102, which is a course taught on many campuses.

Why have I been asked to take part in this study?
You are being invited to take part in this research because your experience as a college teacher can contribute much to the knowledge and understanding of course design and pedagogical decision-making processes.

How many other people will be in this study?
The investigators hope to interview and observe 10 faculty members from Central Alabama within the next four months.

What will I be asked to do in this study?
If you agree to be in this study, Jeanine will interview you twice, in your office or a place of your own choosing about your experiences planning and teaching English 102. The interviewer would like to audiotape the interview to be sure that all your words are captured accurately. However, if you do not want to be taped, simply tell the interviewer, who will then take handwritten notes only. You will also be observed teaching English 102 twice.

How much time will I spend being in this study?
Each interview will last for about one hour. During the classroom observations, you will be observed from the beginning of a class period until the end of the class period.

Will being in this study cost me anything?
The only cost to you from this study is your time.

Will I be compensated for being in this study?
There is no compensation for participation in this study.

What are the risks (problems or dangers) from being this study?
The chief risk to you is that you may find the discussion of your experiences to be sad or stressful. You can control this possibility by not being in the study, by refusing to answer a particular question, or by not telling us things you find to be sad or stressful.

What are the benefits of being in this study?
There are no direct benefits to you unless you find it pleasant or helpful to describe your teaching experiences. You may also feel good about knowing that you have helped a new researcher learn how to help faculty members better.

How will my privacy be protected?
You are free to decide where we will visit you so we can talk without being overheard. We will visit you in the privacy of your office or in another place that is convenient for you.

How will my confidentiality be protected?
The only place where your name appears in connection with this study is on this informed consent. The consent forms will be kept in a locked file drawer in Dr. Hardy’s office, which is locked when he is not there. We are not using a name-number list so there is no way to link a consent form to an interview. When we audiotape the interview, we will not use your name, so no one will know who you are on the tape. Once back in our office, Jeanine will type out the interview. When the interviews have been typed, the audiotapes will be destroyed. This should occur within one month of the interview. You may also refuse to be audiotaped, in which case the interviewer will take handwritten notes only.

We will write research articles on this study but participants will be identified only as “persons from 3 liberal arts colleges in Central Alabama”. No one will be able to recognize you.

What are the alternatives to being in this study?
The only alternative is not to participate.

What are my rights as a participant?
Being in this study is totally voluntary. It is your free choice. You may choose not to be in it at all. If you start the study, you can stop at any time. Not participating or stopping participation will have no effect on your relationships with your college and the University of Alabama.

The University of Alabama Institutional Review Board is a committee that looks out for the ethical treatment of people in research studies. They may review the study records if they wish. This is to be sure that people in research studies are being treated fairly and that the study is being carried out as planned.
Who do I call if I have questions or problems?
If you have questions about this study right now, please ask them. If you have questions later on, please call Jeanine at 205-348-1192. You may also contact my UA faculty advisor, Dr. David Hardy at (205) 348-6874 if you have any questions.

If you have questions about your rights as a person taking part in a research study, want to make suggestions or file complaints and concerns, you may call Ms. Tanta Myles, the University of Alabama Research Compliance Officer at (205)-348-8461 or toll-free at 1-877-820-3066.

You may also ask questions, make suggestions, or file complaints and concerns through the IRB Outreach Website at http://osp.ua.edu/site/PRCO_Welcome.html. You may email us at participantoutreach@bama.ua.edu.

I have read this consent form. I have had a chance to ask questions.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Audio Taping Consent

As mentioned above, the individual qualitative interview will be audio recorded for research purposes. These tapes will be stored in a locked file cabinet in a locked room and only available to research staff. We will only keep these tapes for no more than 30 days and will destroy them after they have been transcribed.

I understand that part of my participation in this research study will be audiotaped and I give my permission to the research team to record the interview.

☐ Yes, my participation in 2 interviews can be audiotaped.

☐ No, I do not want my participation in 2 interviews to be audiotaped.