

"The Journey"—Examining Multiple Modes of Composition and Process at the College Level

There's a student who sits patiently at their desk. A pencil is meticulously placed to the left hand side of their SAT workbook. You can hear their labored breath, shaking like a bird taking flight, struggling to compose itself. If they could articulate the millions of thoughts, emotions, and feelings coursing through their mind, what would they look like? The student looks around the room for comfort, looking for even a hint about what the writing prompts will contain, scrounging for the lost memories of "incorporating evidence", what does a thesis statement look like? There's so many kinds, which ones will the exam reviewers like? Which one will they grade as "the best"? A world of unknowns framed by the time limit they will have to write under. The fluorescent lights of the classroom pierce unforgivingly, relentlessly reflecting off of the surface of the desk and the pallid, pre-provided scratch paper. The teacher at the front of the classroom is clicking away at the computer, stealing glances at the clock. In a flurry they shuffle the various straggling pages at their desk to unearth the exam proctor instructions. Clearing their throat to command attention of the sterile, somber, silent classroom, they begin reciting the exam instructions. Papers crackle and pencils sizzle.

For the students in this hypothetical room, now an exam room, this was a date they had anticipated, or dreaded, thought nothing of, or simply just showed up for. What is there for us, the observer, to gather? Perhaps nothing on the surface. For many that have entered that room today, perhaps they had to shed a layer of their humanity in order to fulfill the function of "taking an exam". By the process of removing their metaphorical heart and soul from themselves, the

brain can best “command” the body through objective reasoning, no? That leads us to the research question of this study: How do students experience text-based composing versus multimodal approaches to composing? Furthermore—with so many options of engaging people today, what is the value of an essay in comparison to the variety of modes available to us today? By answering this research question, I hope to also better understand what behaviors students employ in these writing environments, and for what purposes they employ them. Furthermore, I hope to learn about the relationships students have with their embodied writing processes, and when given the choice, whether students choose to compose using a text-based, essay-like structure, or a multimodal approach. Most importantly, I hope to learn which modes students *do enjoy* composing in and how we as educators can make writing meaningful for students who have only hated writing for its difficulty. The implications of this study may help us understand educational writing and its role as a potential tool for social justice, critical thinking, metacognition, and creativity.

Through a qualitative writing study that simulates a standardized testing environment, I seek to analyze and break down how college writers perceive and approach the writing process, standardized writing, and take into account their own identities and their relationships to their writing. Students were given 30 minutes to answer an argumentative based composing prompt utilizing two different approaches, including a text-based response and a multimodal response. Participants chose the order in which they completed each prompt, then answered questions about their experience in a semi-structured interview. Using this information, I developed major themes that offer conclusions and implications of the meaning of their data. In a world that is increasingly embracing the multimodal, multilingual, and more pluralistic approaches to written

and spoken communication, we must examine how education should reflect the needs and communication styles of our population.

This honors thesis includes a literature review, methods section, case studies presentation, and discussion and conclusion. I decided to frame this project as a journey that I am attempting to map out, echoing the literal process of this research, but also inviting the reader to explore with me. The literature review, where I *navigate with a blindfold and telescope*, is a section that provides a reader with the shape and flow of the research on a specific topic. I imagine myself as an explorer, desperately searching for a river of research to share with my reader. The methods section is the *estuary*, a place of transition from fresh to saltwater, or in my case, from the available research on the topics to my own data. My case studies presentation, my three *muses*, follows the estuary, and my *telegraph* section provides my discussion of the data through the five themes developed from my qualitative coding process. Finally, my conclusion brings us *home* from the journey.

NAVIGATING WITH A BLINDFOLD AND A TELESCOPE

The Literature Review

ORIGIN (0,0)—Where to begin?

The crinkled paper rustles in my hands, in the wavering dusk I take one final look. The protruding ridges and valleys of the map-to-be glow orange from the remaining light. Its blankness only puzzles me. I remember the words from my guide, allow it to flow on its own, like a river— and just like that, the water begins to flow from where I stand. Stumbling around, I feel the rush of the cold, running water intruding my boots. The water sloshes furiously as I attempt to divert its path away from me. Yet, the water keeps flowing indiscriminately. Surely I must be doomed. I'll allow myself to drown here and now. To let future others discover my drowned

corpse when the river dries up. Let them discern my demise. I deserve it. Though I expected my downfall to come sooner, the water steadies itself. Some things take time and this literature review was no exception. Gradually, I adjust to the cool temperature of the water. I wade into the shallow waves and walk towards the waning sunlight. I let the river guide me through its bends in the cover of night.

Throughout K-12, I had been conditioned to think that creative spaces and academic spaces do not mix. Rarely do they meet, and rarely should you dare to include something creative in your essay, like an image or a poem, unless the instructor requires it. As the irony of most things go, it turns out that creativity is desperately needed in any field (Carr, 2010). Especially as we encounter the myriad of genres that have sprouted since the onset of the internet’s popularity. Businesses are seeking to connect to their customers where they spend the most time, families want to stay connected, and audiences gather through the click of a button. There’s so many ways to engage others today! We don’t have to rely on the printing press, we just have to keep the lights on. This leads me to the question—with so many options of engaging people today, what is the value of an essay in comparison to the variety of modes available to us today? Moreover, why continue to require postsecondary students to continue to use modes they will rarely encounter in their “real worlds”? Most importantly, how do students experience text-based composing versus multimodal approaches to composing?

Alidade ; Seeking Direction: Theoretical Frameworks

My interest in this subject stemmed from studying the texts of Paulo Freire, bell hooks, and Gloria Anzaldúa. These authors challenge dominant frameworks of language, writing, and

education that impose knowledge upon students. In the following paragraphs, I will attempt to give brief explanations of their ideas that frame this research. This will include Paulo Freire’s banking modes of education versus “problem-posed” pedagogy, which leads into the basis of bell hooks’ framework of Engaged Pedagogy. Finally, we will end with Gloria Anzaldúa’s practice of multimodality and human experience as a theory of liberation.

In his text *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire describes the inherent oppressive nature of the classroom. Stating that within a model of “banking pedagogy”, teachers act as the all-knowing, knowledge bestower upon “empty minded”, non experienced students. This model is inherently oppressive because it ignores the previous experiences, voices, and perspectives of students, and places the educational labor solely on the teacher as said keeper of knowledge (Freire, 2005). In the refusal of the student as an active participant in their learning, the student also unintentionally applies this thinking to their role in life in general. This has the potential to lead to educational stagnation and the refusal to learn beyond the classroom. In other words, the atrophy of the spirit of learning, as well as the dehumanization of students themselves. All students deserve better, “[w]hereas banking education anesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the submersion of consciousness; the latter strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality” (Freire, 2005, p.81). This model of problem-posed pedagogy is a critical one if we wish to instill in the minds of students that they have the ability to change their realities. Especially in a country such as the United States where education has been subjected to the whims of its funding, homogenized standards of learning, the shadow of America’s history of oppression, as well as the failure of state and local governments to support students when they need it most—changes must be made. bell hooks speaks directly with and

repeats Freire in her proclamation of “Education as the practice of freedom”. Humanity, and especially students are not isolated from the world, and that world is not separate from the realities of students and educators—all of which are human. The practice of educating can be one of liberation, and doesn’t have to repeat the mistakes of the past.

The most salient details of hooks’ groundbreaking book *Teaching to Transgress* is the notion that education is a practice of freedom, the value of our voices, and the humanization of everyone involved in the learning process. In order for education to be exciting, interest in hearing one another’s voices is paramount, as well as the ability to be flexible in communicating with a variety of audiences. hooks continues, “To teach in varied communities not only our paradigms must shift but also the way we think, write, speak. The engaged voice must never be fixed and absolute but always changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself”(hooks, 1994, p.11). hooks directly confronts the ever present changes in communication within the classroom and beyond. This is not only a call to flexibility in thought, but a literal call to shift communication to change with the way the world evolves its dialogue. In this context, this can involve the spoken, written, and enacted composition. Embracing a varied approach not only invites the voices of students, but also values the ways in which they express themselves. In this valuing of voices, there is an excitement to engage and be an active participant in learning. However, “The idea that learning should be exciting, sometimes even ‘fun’, was the subject of critical discussion by educators writing about pedagogical practices in grade schools, and sometimes even high schools. But there seemed to be no interest among either traditional or radical educators in discussing the role of excitement in higher education” (hooks, 1994, p.7). The notion that “fun” is a largely ignored subject in postsecondary education is laughable. Our first introductions to education in preschool and primary education often involved the infusion of

“fun” into tasks in order to engage students in their learning. Moreover, this concept of engagement through “fun” tasks is lost as students grow older. The assumption that “fun” tasks have no place in postsecondary education, therefore they should be ignored, is also an oppressive stance. It negates students’ desires to connect to their work outside of an academic context. In denying students the right to experience having “fun” with their academics, their humanity is also denied. To have fun is to be human, but alas the stale, ivory tower only desires intellectualism and perfection. Speaking of the denying of humanity, in the refusal of fun is also the connection to self, much like the requirement to compose monolingually and stick to a singular, textual mode. Anzaldúa breaks the assumption that “intellectual” writing is monomodal and monolingual in her text *Borderlands*, which serves as a literal praxis of the exact theoretical framework she introduces.

Gloria Anzaldúa engages in the praxis of multimodal and multilingual writing as the vehicle for theoretical framework. Both of her texts, *Borderlands* as well as *Light in the Dark / Luz en lo Oscuro* blend personal narrative essay, poetry, art, Chicana feminist, and queer theoretical texts into singular solid books. These intimate discussions surrounding identity, ethnicity, race, immigration, gender, and sexuality could not have taken place in a monolingual or mono textual way. The blending of genre and medium is the direct application of her *Borderlands* theory. *En sus palabras*, “[e]l choque de un alma atrapado entre el mundo del espíritu y el mundo de la técnica a veces la deja entullada. Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, *la mestiza* undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war” (Anzaldúa, 2012, p.100). Through the various clashes of culture, text, and language, the ambiguity of these collisions guides us towards the embracing of *mestiza* consciousness. The acknowledgement of this cosmic blend within

writing is also the recognition of the variety of human perspectives in educational settings and spaces of social justice. This struggle of borders and inner war is also an exterior one present in our geopolitical landscapes and educational institutions. Addressing these divides should not be an act of division, rather an act of healing that honors each part of our humanity, uniting them whole to create a new one.

Anzaldúa has also placed special attention to writing as an embodied process—A Sensuous Act in her words. She details her writing process within *Borderlands* as writing in red ink. Recalling, “Intimately knowing the smooth touch of paper, its speechlessness before I spill myself on the insides of trees. Daily, I battle the silence and the red. Daily, I take my throat in my hands and squeeze until the cries pour out, my larynx and soul sore from the constant struggle” (Anzaldúa, 2012, pp 93-94). Anzaldúa details the visceral, literal, embodied process of her theoretical writing. Her act of writing about herself, her life experiences and soul struggles is a painful one. This is a singular vignette about her own experience within the creation of these deeply rich texts. Note that its presentation as a flash narrative also prompts the reader to engage and recall what their senses do during an act of writing. In reckoning with these rich, complex emotions, and learning through experiences, Anzaldúa claims that others can hopefully become free from their own pain. In summation, through the evaluation of personal experiences through writing, Anzaldúa frees herself and creates Chicana, lesbian, feminist theory. Both *Borderlands* and *Light in the Dark/Luz en lo Oscuro* excite the reader through shifting modes, and keep them engaged in narrative.

Charting the River of Research

When it came to research for the Literature Review, I tried to keep everything as contemporary as possible. I would typically squint if the date was not from at least 5-10 years

ago. The oldest study I have here is from 2010, the most recent is from 2022. It was extremely difficult to find more studies on what I was doing **exactly**, but in the end I’m proud of what I was able to glean and learn.

My search terms included: ”writing study, multimodal research writing studies, argumentative writing and standardized testing, standardized testing writing, qualitative writing study, perceptions of writing among college students, “qualitative study” standardized test, effects of standardized testing on college students” I conducted searches using the NSC Library Database, and Google Scholar.

Some emerging themes I have come across in my research on text-based and multimodal based writing include L2 learners, collaboration, multi-modality, accessibility, accommodation, digital literacy, writing process and play, genre awareness. In the following Literature Review, they are grouped by their relevance to standardized testing, multi-modality within college students & L2 Learners, and embodied process and critical pedagogy.

Standardized Testing

Klebanov, Ramineni, Kaufer, Yeoh, and Ishizaki’s (2017) study "Advancing the Validity Argument for Standardized Writing Tests Using Quantitative Rhetorical Analysis," evaluated writing samples from a variety of college students, “62 were male and 102 female. Of the 164 students, 23 were non-native speakers of English, with 13 different L1s.” (Klebanov et al, 2017, p. 132). The study’s aim was to determine what types of sentence structure and rhetorical choices support academic writing in “real world” settings. The “real world” settings in this study mainly apply to college education and graduate school, which does not encompass the non-academic connotations of the term “real world”. A major drawback of this study is that the writing samples

do not involve people with trade certifications or established careers. In addition to this oversight, collection of the data was very broad in its application. For example, the “real world” writing sample that they evaluated was the op-ed genre, which the researchers defined as “writing in a civic context” (Klebanov et al., 2017, p. 129). The issue with choosing an op-ed article as the genre for civic engagement is that it is too broad of an application for the context of what civic engagement entails. Moreover, civic engagement has taken on many forms thanks to the internet. There’s no right or wrong way to be civically engaged, in fact there is so much more depth to the application of it that doesn’t involve print media or a traditional article. Klebanov et al.’s (2017) analysis of writing samples found that standardized testing does actually help students write for their college courses. Which is good news! Standardized testing is helping in preparing students for higher education. In other words, if students know how to play the game, they will win the game. Genre awareness is a key aspect to student success, and has been consistently proven in the other research I have found. As far as the implications for my study, I will have to take into consideration the ways students have found standardized testing to be helpful in their lives. I will also have to be aware that I am asking students to self-report their feelings and experiences with standardized testing, which may or may not include biases.

Lovett et. al.’s (2010) study, "Effects of Response Mode and Time Allotment on College Students' Writing," evaluated the differences between accommodation of using word processors versus handwriting in terms of scoring. In their literature review, there is mention of the effects of varying time allotments. The time allotment study compared students who completed a timed writing in 30 minutes versus 3 days. It found that the 5th grade students had more effort put into their projects in the 3 days they were given, rather than the 8th grade students who were given the same amount of time. Therefore, time allotments yielded no significant statistical difference

in the quality of the students’ work. This means that for my research, time will be conceptualized differently by each student. In the response mode study, students who wrote their essays in a word processor were subject to higher scoring than students who hand wrote their essays, since students who typed their essays were more prone to going back and editing their paper than their counterparts. To avoid rater bias, the essays that were handwritten were put into a word processor and given to raters, and there was still a difference between the scoring of handwritten versus word processed texts. The takeaway here is that text that is typed often scores higher than handwritten text. This can be due to either the ease of editing and/or composition. However, students that benefit from the physical act of writing may feel constricted by typing, and it would be interesting to examine which embodied act of writing students may gravitate toward.

In Parfitt and Shane’s (2016) study, "Working within the System: The Effects of Standardized Testing on Education Outreach and Community Writing," trained graduate students tutored high school students in the specific genre of standardized test writing. This was in preparation for the 10th grade state standardized test, the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). This study confirms the findings that genre awareness helps students as well as digital literacy. We *can* use standardized testing as a genre to inform students of the imbalance of power, and to better equip them to tackle this genre. Overall, the tutoring helped the cohort score much higher. 95% of the students scored proficient compared to previous cohorts.

I would like to conclude this section on standardized testing with a passage from Parfitt and Shane’s (2016) section on Future Implications. This quote is meant to frame the findings of the study and adds a layer of self-awareness that is key. The authors conclude:

Knowledge of a genre can give a student access to power and opportunity in an imbalanced educational system. As Lisa Delpit wrote, ‘Tell [students] that their language and cultural style is unique and wonderful but that there is a political power game that is also being played, and if they want to be in on that game there are certain games that they too must play” (Parfitt & Shane, 2016, p.123).

By becoming self-aware of what their study performed, Parfitt and Shane (2016) addressed that if students know how to play the game, they will win it. At the same time, this passage acknowledges the political power play that standardized testing engages in, and does not shy away from the direct confrontation of calling said system of testing a game as well. The knowledge of the genre of standardized testing as an unfair game that gatekeeps the less-than-prepared from success says all that we need to know. This genre is one that necessitates change in its application through the thorough review of its intentions. This study acknowledges the need to shift education so that every student is prepared to pass a standardized test.

Multi-Modality Within College Students & L2 Learners

Lim and Polio’s (2020) study “Multimodal Assignments in Higher Education: Implications for Multimodal Writing Tasks for L2 Writers,” did: This report is an overview that compares individual versus collaborative work, the rubrics, aims, and instructions of multimodal writing, as well as the analysis of linguistic mode in multimodal texts, both spoken and written. Based on the results, Lim and Polio discuss pedagogical implications of said research.

According to Lim and Polio (2020). Genre awareness is important and a lack of it can make multimodal writing tasks more challenging:

Professionals using such disciplinary multimodal tasks expect their students to be accustomed to academic conventions of multimodal texts. Given the value of identifying

genre-specific linguistic patterns by text-oriented ESP research (i.e., Swalesian genre research), disciplinary multimodal texts also merit various lenses of genre analysis to offer suggestions for material developers. (p. 6)

Students must have a solid awareness of the multimodal genre in order to apply it with ease. L2 learners may also encounter difficulties in the learning, understanding, and applying of multi-modal genres if not provided sufficient scaffolding.

This study found that multimodal composition is a layered process that involves monomodal writing as a required pre-multimodal step. Monomodal writing, in this case being text-based. Multimodal projects are not necessarily less rigorous, but they perhaps contain multiple layers. Text-based writing is often the first step in a multi-modal production, which contradicts the notion that multi-modal tasks aren't challenging enough and don't allow for "acquisition". As far as my research goes, I may have to give more explanations about multimodal writing and composition. However, multimodal composition can be an opportunity for students to experiment and explore their options. Multimodal composition is also a genre that does not lend itself easily to standardized testing. Providing a checklist to the students will aid them in the successful completion of multimodal tasks.

Li & Pham's (2022) study “Three Heads are Better Than One? Digital Multimodal Composition Completed Collaboratively Versus Individually” examined the scores of Vietnamese English Foreign Language Students on Digital Multimodal Compositions via the genre of infographics. This study found that the infographic task was successfully implemented in the course, however it did not happen without some obstacles in the way. Students may have some difficulty learning new multimodal genres, and conceptualizing them well enough to apply it in an assignment. A statistical difference also exists between collaborative versus individual

multimodal assignments. Collaborative projects tended to have scored higher than projects completed individually. There is also the aforementioned confusion, fear, and unfamiliarity with both genre and software with regard to multimodal assignments.

In the context of this study—students may need more scaffolding, introductions, and accessible software that is easy to use when engaging in digital multimodal production. It may be beneficial to invite the student to use materials and knowledge they are familiar with, in addition to providing both physical and digital mediums for the student to compose in. It would perhaps be beneficial to be available to answer any questions the student may have, rather than leaving the room for the student to figure things out on their own.

This study also raises concerns about how to address the increasing presence of technology in education, especially post-pandemic. What does this mean going forward? How will we address the need to teach students about technology, beyond a simple computer class on how to type and use Microsoft Office? Given that there is an increasing presence of Digital Multimodal Composition in our everyday world, should this be an intentional addition to the writing curriculum? In summary, this study presents a breadth and depth on the benefits and drawbacks of digital multimodal composition.

Embodied Process & Critical Pedagogy

Zapata & Van Hoen’s (2017) study, “‘Because I’m Smooth.’ Material Intra-actions and Text Productions among Young Latino Picture Book Makers” is most similar to what I want to accomplish in my study. Through the analysis of previously produced picture books, this research argues that materials and children “intra-act” across a classroom time and space. To engage in “intra-action”, is cross dimensional interaction between human and nonhuman materials. In this case, a writer connects metaphysically with the tools of their composition.

Within the process of picture-book making, lived realities are produced. The authors capture the complexity of multimodal composing through citing other scholarship:

Through strategic sketches (Leander & Boldt, 2013), we argue for the complexity and the cultural significance of the multimodal processes and products that emerge when classroom expectations of a proficient writer include the ability to improvise and become with diverse materials and meanings, not just to command “standard written English” (Orzulak, 2015). (Zapata & Van Hoen, 2017).

In other words, the complexity of productions that allow for layered, multilingual and pluralistic processes that allow for a writer to gain a multitude of rich experiences and competences.

To summarize the findings of this study, Zapata & Van Hoen (2017) found that the materials that students intra-act with are deeply personal and involved in the process. Whether students are aware of it or not, the materials that they use directly inform their experiences in composition. The authors drive home their point that the materials, and knowledge of the materials, matter, in their conclusion:

In this becoming, or intra-action (Barad, 2003), between human and nonhuman materials, we are reminded that materials do indeed matter and have real consequences for the moment-by-moment multimodal, material processes and products that unfold and come to be in classrooms. (Zapata & Van Hoen, 2017, p. 291)

What this means is that students must be well-equipped with the knowledge of knowing how to utilize their mediums. With the increasing presence of technology, digital literacy becomes imperative to the work that students do. How does the experience of learning how to use a computer to compose digitally affect a student’s writing? Only time will tell us what students’ experiences with technology and writing will reveal.

With relation to my study, the relationship between students and their writing is what I’m most interested in. This study implies that multimodal productions will allow writers to give me a glimpse into their experiences and identities that a text-based production may not offer. Additionally, I may witness students not only constructing multimodal pieces, but also engaging in a layered experience that connects their identities, memories, and physical realities. This study’s findings “remind us of the infinite openings and inquiries that are possible when teachers and students alike envision and live out multimodal composition as a material process of emergence and emotion, of doing and being who they are in their everyday worlds” (Zapata & Van Hoen, 2017, p. 312). Materials do matter in writing classrooms, because they affect the way students engage in the “social, cultural, and material realities”. Whether the materials are digital or tangible, and even if that does or does not matter, students DO engage in their experiences with them.

Zurcher & Stefanski’s (2022) study, “Valuing and Supporting the Complex Writing Processes of Emergent Writers,” put preschoolers in a workshop style environment where they created writing through illustrations, play-acting, and socialization. Then, this study evaluated the behaviors and writing processes that these emergent writers experience. By allowing preschoolers to take ownership of their writing through the production of said works and the socialization of the students via writing workshops, the preschoolers were able to form identities as authors. The authors assert the value of playful composing in their abstract:

All of these themes underscore how students were writing ‘in the moment’ and creating a multimodal production. By valuing this entire production rather than only the finished written product, young students can view themselves as authors and take on that role. (Zurcher & Stefanski, 2022, p. 1)

In encouraging preschoolers to compose mutli-modally, though they lack writing skills or certain aspects of language, they still demonstrate “high-level” writing practices.”High-level” in this context meaning the production of a “cohesive” product as they considered the delivery to their audience—which signals a rudimentary understanding of genre.

Gaps in the Research

Some of the gaps of knowledge in the research include scarcity of recent information on standardized testing and writing anxiety. Perhaps this information exists in print or in areas outside of the scope of Writing Studies and Secondary Education, but it is also possible that the pandemic has eclipsed other recent information that could be obtained on this subject. There was also very little recent research on college students’ perception of writing. In fact, a lot of studies surrounding multimodal composition involved young children, not necessarily college students. Which may suggest that multimodal productions are reserved for students in K-12, and may not be a suitable genre convention at the college level. Or, this may suggest that multimodal assignments have yet to establish their place outside of the humanities within a college setting. Additionally, a significant portion of this research is already geared toward second language learners and collaboration. This may suggest that researchers may perceive multimodal assignments as an alternative way for second language learners to demonstrate their knowledge. Clearly, my research aims to help fill in some of these research gaps.

THE ESTUARY—METHODS

Following the river that began sputtering from beneath where I stood, the cool water begins to slow. The moonlight guides me to the place where it will carve its estuary. Carefully, I take a telescope and map out a course that the muses will travel through, and that I will observe. Crossing my legs, I lay my notebook across my lap and lay my pen within the binding.

This is an undergraduate qualitative case study study that took place in the Fall semester of 2022. The data collection period spanned about 1 month. To recruit participants (aka, muses), I advertised my study within English classes and the Nevada State College Writing Center through word of mouth, fliers, class visits to at least 2 in-person classes, as well as the distribution of both fliers and a recruitment script to online courses. Information about the study was disseminated via NSC English Faculty sharing the info within their courses.

Case Study Method

I chose the format of a qualitative case study because collecting and analyzing multiple kinds of data would give me a richer understanding of the issue of modality and composing for college students. I also wanted to be able to interview participants and discuss their compositions on a more individual basis, rather than just collecting quantitative data from them through a survey and synthesizing it. Therefore, the qualitative approach worked best for this research study, since its main goal is to evaluate content over numbers: “One can open and close with vignettes to draw the reader into the case” (Creswell, 1998). This is especially principal in a study that seeks to examine the connections between embodied process and students’ identities.

Each of the participants interviewed is a valuable piece to the narrative of this data and analysis. Furthermore the genre blending that I am prone to embark on is bolstered by the wide variety of applications for Case Studies: “Unquestionably. Some case studies generate theory, some are simply descriptions of cases, and others are more analytical in nature and display cross-case or inter-site comparisons” (Creswell, 1998). I further selected comparative case study methodology because it would allow me to collect multiple kinds of data on each participant, analyze that data, and then compare the cases to better understand student experiences with writing and modality. The Case Study approach was most appropriate for this cross-case analysis.

Research Question

My research question arose from the perceptions of standardized tests, students’ choices and preferences in dictating their learning, as well as comfort, ease, and play within writing. My research asks, how do students experience text-based composing versus multimodal approaches to composing? In this context, “text-based” refers to both digital and handwritten forms of composition that rely primarily on verbal elements, including words and sentences.

“Multi-modal” composition refers to the blending of text, images, genre, audio, verbal, and non-verbal elements in writing.

Participants, Site, and Setting of Study

To gather participants for the study, I sent the English faculty at NSC the following materials to offer their students for recruitment: a personal letter to students (Appendix A) and a flier with a link to an interest form (Appendix B). Faculty were asked to post announcements about the study to their classes. After monitoring the interest form and gaining only a couple of responses, the campaign continued. Seeking to balance my data, I put up more fliers at the NSC

Writing Center and invited Writing Specialists to take part. I recorded a video with the same script for professors to send to their asynchronous classes, and made more class visits to spread the word. Students filled out an interest form verifying that they would like to participate in the writing study, they were at least 18 years of age, currently enrolled at NSC for the Fall 2022 semester, and were comfortable having their post composing interview audio recorded.

These participants were selected because they were first year students at an institution that claims a mission of supporting first generation college students, and I was interested in gaining the perspectives from students who were in college but who were liminal. I had hoped to open up the study to Writing Specialists from the Writing Center as well, so as to include a mix of first year students and students with more writing experiences, to examine how different students approached the writing process depending on their post-secondary experiences. However, while I was able to collect the data from one Writing Specialist, I did not have time to code that data, so their data is not included in this study. Additionally, if I were to repeat this study, I would probably seek participants who weren't students and who self-reported to “hate writing” to gain further comparative perspectives.

The setting of the study was NSC, a small state college in the Southwest with a mission of serving the “new majority” and of advancing education in a manner that is both socially responsible and equitable. This includes a culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse student body, the majority of which are also first generation students. This offers my study the opportunity to collect a variety of perspectives. Both students and professors are human beings that merit the acknowledgment of their identities in the classroom. Ignoring these multitudinous identities has only caused more conflict, *rajaduras*, and ignorance. Furthermore, as I will explain

in my research, a critical classroom could bring many benefits to processing these overlapping problems. The way we think about education is the foundation of social change.

Data Collection

Data collection in this study included a pre-composing survey that provided demographic information, two composing tasks on the same prompt, and a post-composing interview. There was an estimated participation time of an hour and forty-five minutes for participants. That particular length of time was necessary because under the simulated test conditions, participants were required to complete each part of the argumentative composing prompt in 30 minutes per portion. Given this makes up one hour, the other 45 minutes was reserved for completing the pre-composing survey and post-composing semi-structured interview, as well as reading the consent form to the participant and obtaining their consent. There was also time blocked out at the end of the interview for the student to ask me questions. Data was collected in two conference rooms on the NSC campus at separate times and dates.

The pre-composition survey (Appendix D) also relied a lot on students’ own self-reporting. For the composing tasks, I asked participants to compose with two approaches, one text-based, the other mutli-modal, that answer the same prompt (Appendix E). Participants were given a variety of options when choosing their preferred method of composition. Previous research on multimodal composing supports both the usage of word processors and craft items like pen and paper. This is why I thought it would be appropriate to lay all kinds of materials out for the participants, aka my “muses”. Participants were also given a variety of materials to compose with, which included a laptop with an internet connection that allowed them access to Google Docs, Jamboard, and Canva. Within their reach there were a variety of writing and craft tools provided such as pens, pencils, 3 types of paper, washi tape, scissors, stamps, and ink pads.

Participants were free to compose with whichever supplies they felt most comfortable with, be it physical or digital. I also used a tool called “Classroom Screen” to offer participants a clock and a timer, to ensure that they had access to the prompt so they could reread the requirements, since this is typical of most standardized test environments.

Then, in a post-composing semi-structured interview (Appendix F), participants were asked about their thinking during their composition, as well as which materials—physical or digital—they preferred. The semi-structured interview happened directly after the participant finished both of their compositions while their experience was still fresh in their mind. For ease of transcription and to make sure I had participants’ words verbatim, this interview was audio recorded and only I reviewed the audio, transcribed in a private folder through Yuja. I thanked the participants for their time. The post composition interview was my favorite, since I actually got to know the participant a lot more as a person and get to be familiar with their compositions. This semi-structured interview functioned more as a conversation than data collection, and I hope that this helped put the participant at ease and feel willing to share about their writing experience during the study.

Consent, Confidentiality, and Anonymity

As the IRB was approved in August, the Consent Form (Appendix C) was ready to be printed and prepared for interviews in October. Participants were also invited to indicate their interest first via a Google Form. This Google Form confirmed whether participants fulfilled the requirements, as well as offered appointment dates. There was no persuasion or coercion involved beyond the invitation, if a participant chose not to confirm their appointment date or withdraw their interest, they were free to do so. I emailed the eligible participants to confirm that they had been chosen, and they had to email back a firm yes confirming that they would like to

meet. Once we met for the interview, I guided the participant through the informed consent process. I highlighted key aspects of their participation and reiterated their ability to withdraw their data, and who to contact in case they have concerns about their rights as a participant. Each of my muses also had my NSC email that they could contact me through, as well as the email of my advisor and the NSC IRB. Each participant was given a copy of the Consent Form, either physically or digitally. Once they had signed, we were free to begin.

All survey, interview, and composing data is tied to a two digit participant ID, and pseudonyms are used throughout this paper. Using an *interest* form instead of a direct sign up also ensured that even if there was a leak/breach, it is not certain that students listed were actually part of the study, they only indicated interest. I also safeguarded the conference rooms, which included clearing the room of OWLs (used as a conference/video call tool) and putting away what I used to record audio, be it a phone or a microphone, to reassure participants that they would not be secretly recorded. Professors had no access to knowing who exactly was in the study. Even though one professor did enter an interview one time, there was no posted signage, or direct verbal indication of a student’s participation. If necessary, I occasionally used a Jedi mind trick to bamboozle or confuse any faculty member that may have discovered information they weren’t supposed to know about. There is also a disclosure within the Consent and Interest Forms that states participation would not be tied to class grades or performance. Should there be any problems or concerns, the participants were given information on contacting the Nevada State College Interval Review Board directly. They were also given my email and Dr. Laura Decker’s contact information should they have any questions, concerns, or if they wished to withdraw their participation at any time. After the completion of the interview, all the materials

that were created by the participant were scanned by me and saved securely into a folder that contained only the participant’s interview data.

As an aside, I am aware from the previous research (Li & Pham, 2022) that a student’s technological knowhow may impact their multimodal or text-based production based on what they can or can’t do on a computer. This study also centers mainly around college students and standardized writing, and I am aware of the negative feelings a timed writing prompt may provoke in some students. Perhaps their opinions, perceptions, or compositions may have been impacted by the academic setting of NSC or the nature of the simulated environment.

All participants had the right to withdraw their participation at any time. Privacy was ensured to the best of my ability. Keep in mind, I am an undergraduate researcher with limited resources/access to private spaces on campus. Research materials, consent forms and compositions were kept in a locked drawer on the NSC campus. All data collected in this research including responses, survey results, and post-composing interview audio are password protected and will be deleted after 3 years.

Data Analysis

Analyzing my data happened in several phases. The first phase involved learning about types of qualitative coding I could apply in my research, as well as the myriad of ways to group codes together. In this context, “Coding is the transitional process between data collection and more extensive data analysis” (Saldaña, 2016). The codes I gathered for my research are the bricks that paved the way for the analysis of my data and collecting information to answer my research question. The qualitative coding methods I used involve Descriptive coding, Subcoding, “In Vivo” Coding, Process Coding, Concept Coding, and Emotion Coding. Descriptive coding merely describes what is happening. Subcoding was mainly used with the post-composing

interviews, when data was unique but also fell into a similar category created previously. “In Vivo” Coding is the capturing of language and terminology used by participants through codes. For example: The usage of “I Am/Not”. Process Coding delineates gerunds in the data, typically words that end in “-ing”. According to Saldaña, Concept Coding is “The method bypasses the detail and nuance of other coding methods to transcend the particular participants of you field work and to progress toward the *ideas* suggested by the study” (Saldaña, 2016). This was the method I used to create themes when initially processing my interview data. Saldaña (2016) continues with Emotion Coding, “Since emotions are a universal human experience, our acknowledgement of them in our research provides deep insight into the participants’ perspectives, worldviews, and life conditions” Emotion coding is vital in this study, which seeks to summarize experiences with writing in two modalities. To ignore the emotions of discomfort or confusion of the participants is to also ignore their experiences as students, which we are attempting to analyze. At the core of my research question also exists the desire to know where negative emotions about standardized testing and/or writing exist for each student. Finally, knowing about these emotions and what excites students leads us to possible methods of making writing education even more engaging for students.

Similarities in concepts that participants discussed or gravitated towards encompassed the codes that I created. The application of concepts that I learned from the research I conducted also helped inform these annotations and aided in finding themes.

After completing the interviews and transcribing them, I had gone through and ascribed concepts to the common types of answers I received from participants. Given that each participant had unique responses, I developed seven secondary codes to organize my initial codes from the post-composing semi-structured interview, which include family, self-actualization,

compulsory able-bodiedness, misinterpretation, experimentation, and life-path. After gathering these concepts, I found four common themes: Writing as an Embodied Process, “I Am/Not,” Experience as Evidence, and Genre Awareness.

Positionality

As the student researcher, I co-wrote the IRB application with my research advisor, but I solely created the data collection instruments, consented participants, conducted the interviews, transcribed and analyzed the data. Additionally, throughout the study, since I was the only researcher who had contact with the participants, I sought to maintain confidentiality on all levels.

For the past two years at NSC I have worked as a Course Assistant, and a joint role as a Writing Intensive Course Leader and Writing Specialist. Given that I work in peer support roles with first and second year students, there could be a perceived imbalance of power when inviting students to participate in my research study. However, I frequently attempt to shut down any attempts of students calling me “Ms. Liz” or placing me in a position of authority. For the most part, I had minimal contact with at least two participants. The two other participants I had interacted with via the Writing Center or with the Writing Intensive Course I’m embedded in. The semi-structured interview also gave me a chance to directly interact with participants and get to know them better through their responses. Participants were also free to express their biases, personal worldviews, and experiences to the extent of their own comfort.

I had issues with participants misinterpreting the questions that I had written, but given that people were unfamiliar with the terms I used, having the semi-structured interview allowed me to get to know folks a whole lot better. I enjoyed getting to know more about each participant and their multimodal production through the semi-structured interview.

Limitations

As far as I’m aware, I was able to collect as much data as I needed. However, I wish I had an opportunity to collect more interviews from participants who claimed to not be “good” students. By this, I mean students with a GPA of 2.8 or lower, or who self-report to be “bad”/“terrible” students. It would be crucial to hear from a population that claims to have had gaps in their education or to be underserved by their educational institutions in order to best determine how to serve their needs. If I were to repeat this study again, I would try to seek out students who had a negative bias towards writing and evaluate why they feel that way. Another piece of data I would like to have collected, and hope to have supported by the literature review was “writing conditioning”. I wonder how many writing habits/behaviors are a result of behaviors that students inherit from previous writing experiences. From the data I had gathered, I couldn’t learn more about the experiences of students who openly struggle with writing, or people who don’t consider themselves academics. I could have recruited a wide variety of students with both negative and positive experiences with writing and school. Most students also experienced their K-12 schooling within Clark County. Had there been an opportunity to evaluate more students from outside Clark County, I would’ve jumped at the chance.

Additionally, I wish I could have evaluated more Writing Specialists. In the future, I would like to see how Writing Specialists conceptualize this exercise. Especially with regard to their processes both writing and embodied, thoughts about genre and their positionality as students and academics, as well as overall opinions regarding the study as a whole. Gathering this information in the name of writing studies scholarship will be a fascinating journey to undertake.

I retract the telescope, put my pen away, and dust the sand off my pants. Standing up, I see the moon's waning light, and know my time here is coming to a close. I have to be making my way back, and report what the muses have shown me.

THE MUSES—CASE STUDIES

After meeting with each participant and coding their data, I assigned each of them a tarot card and Mayan astrological sign that I feel best describes their data. The following case studies of Temperance, Starre, and Reed, are recounted in chronological order. I will describe the beginning of the session, some background information about the participant, how they utilized their time, information from their semi-structured post composing interview, and conclude with an overall analysis describing what insights I gained from each participant. Throughout this section, it may be helpful to reference Appendices G-M since they contain participants’ textual and multimodal responses.

Temperance in Water : The Essence of Trying from Discomfort → Comfort

Anxiously, I heard Temperance tap on the door of the conference room. I had been waiting a little bit, this was one of her first times visiting the campus, so I understood if there was some difficulty navigating towards this conference room. We greeted one another, shook hands, and settled in. This was it, it was showtime. To be completely honest, this was my first case study interview, and I had been a little nervous, but I tried my best to reassure myself that it was only the beginning, and that there were no right or wrong answers. I guess this was the common thread between Temperance and I, both anxious about where to begin, what to do, how to do it *correctly*. The process of reassuring Temperance was also an indirect way of reassuring myself that everything will go smoothly. And it did! I read aloud the Consent Form verbatim, Temperance made jokes along the way which broke the tension beautifully. Once she signed to indicate her consent and understanding, I had her fill out the pre-composition survey, then she dove into her writing.

Temperance is a student who took a gap from her studies to focus more on her small business, build a life, and overall make an effort to come back to school to focus on her passions the most. In the pre-composing survey, Temperance disclosed that she is currently a Junior also pursuing her degree in English with a minor in Creative Writing. Temperance had completed most of her K-12 education in the Clark County School District. Her decision to take a gap had not had a negative effect on her GPA , as she self-reported to have a GPA between 3.5-4.0. However, this can also be attributed to the fact she already has an Associates in English Literature, which means that she values education and continuing a path of lifelong learning. This is further bolstered by her general attitude towards school as well as writing, which she indicated as “Completely Positive” for both. She also indicated that she “Sometimes” writes creatively in her free time, which makes sense given her decision to pursue the Creative Writing minor. On the contrary, she rarely sketches, draws, or creates visual art in any medium. Her favorite genre to write is science fiction. Where this differed was her general feelings towards standardized testing, which she indicated as “Somewhat Negative”. When asked if she ties her self-worth to her grades and/or test scores, she indicated that she “Somewhat agrees” with the statement. When asked if she was given the choice for an assignment Temperance indicated that she would “Somewhat agree” with the preference to write a formal essay with citations to primary and secondary sources. Temperance also gave the same response when asked if she would prefer to construct her own multi-modal project that fulfills the learning objectives of the course. Furthermore, this is also supported by her complete agreement to the phrase “I like to experiment and try new things”.

Temperance fosters animals, and is a proud co-owner of a vegan food truck. In addition to this, her hobbies include Video Games, reading, and tennis. She had also disclosed she is

bilingual in English and Spanish and has a hispanic background. Temperance did list “N/A” when asked if she wished to disclose any disabilities. In the time we spent together I really enjoyed talking to her before, during, and after the case study. Before she began each of the composing activities, she asked many questions about what she could and could not do. One of them being, “Do I have to choose one over the other?” in regard to the question about printed versus electronic books. I let her know that she could discuss the prompt in whatever way feels best to her, so long as she has a clear thesis statement, 3 main points, and fulfills the word count. Then, Temperance started her text-based portion.

Her text-based response (see Appendix G) contained a balanced review of her opinions regarding both the physical and technological modes of reading. Temperance did not take a stance that was for or against printed or electronic books, rather she acknowledged the strengths of both to begin with. However, in the end Temperance chose electronic copies instead. Temperance did acknowledge and honor the personal, tactile, and nostalgic aspects of owning physical books. Something that surprised me was that Temperance finished the text response with 13:07 minutes left! I had not anticipated anyone to finish early by any means. She fulfilled the word count by typing 301 words.

Now was the time to begin the multimodal response. Temperance asked if she should use the same points as before, or if she can add more info. I reassured her that she was free to do whatever she felt like doing. After all, the whole process is exploratory. In a follow-up interview, Temperance described her multimodal piece as more of a drawing that juxtaposed both physical books and electronic copies. Temperance details, “Putting them right next to each other to me shows the contrasts between typing and handwriting”. (See Appendix H) Temperance finished her multi-modal response with 15:07 minutes left!

The moments between putting away all of the participant’s materials and preparing the space for the interview is awkward to say the least. A strategy that I implemented in these disjointed moments was self-narrating the process to reassure the participant that every moment was purposeful, though I felt doubt in my own actions’ purpose. For Temperance’s interview, we were lucky to have a USB microphone to plug into the laptop and obtain a recording directly. However, the spirit of experimentation in every second of every interview remained the same. Temperance set the tone in the post-composing interview with her own admission of trying to experiment more, and the transition from discomfort to comfort. Other subjects that stood out in her interview included Educational Niches, Experience as Evidence, the “tactile” & talks about Life Path, and the infusion of humanity within a genre. While we eventually spoke about standardized testing and the role it has had in her life path, a more in-depth analysis will be addressed in the discussion section.

Temperance wanted to try experiencing discomfort in this setting, which is what stood out to me the most after reviewing all other participant data. Though Temperance admits a need for ease and convenience as well, she elaborates, “I keep hearing this quote where in order to be more successful, you have to be uncomfortable, think outside of the box. So I thought to myself, You know what? Let’s try it. Let’s see what I come up with and I was pretty happy with what I did, so I’m glad I did it.” The satisfaction with having experimented with the craft items for the multimodal response paid off. She expressed this movement from confusion and hesitation to confidence in the process of her multimodal response.

“I was-at the very beginning, asked ‘What am I going to do?’ I was not comfortable at all. Like I said, I’m a terrible artist, so I had to look up a picture of a book because it can really draw it out. So that was a little bit uncomfortable. But once I was able to put the

drawings down and then add the color and the stamps and the tape. It kinda got more fun and I was able to enjoy it a little bit more. Yeah.”

This quote represents the material intra-action between Temperance and the materials chosen for her multi-modal production. Through the experience of first drawing the book, asking questions about the genre requirements of the multimodal response, then settling into the completion of the piece, this journey of the embodied process best represents the movement from discomfort to comfort.

A common thread between subjects was the notion of educational niches brought on by their own life experiences within education and beyond. For Temperance, this included the idea of being a “terrible artist”, but a good student in the humanities. She explains, “I would say I’m—I’m a good student for the most part, just because I do take seriously all the assignments and then the time restraints that are put upon myself. And so I definitely try to get everything done and try my best work. So I would say I’m a fairly good student, especially in literature, when it comes to math and sciences, not as much. Unfortunately, I just don’t tend to understand it, but, but overall, I would say I try my best”. This justification of her strengths is a huge reason why they chose to study their major, stating that they have changed my major about six or seven times now. Following what interests her the most, Temperance reflects, “...like if I’m going to go back and make it worth it, I need to do something that I enjoy, even if I kept thinking about what job I wanted or so. In the end I thought to myself, I really enjoy reading, I really enjoy writing. So that kinda is what took me towards my English literature degree, but I’m working towards right now and I’m glad that I did. I’m enjoying all the classes now that all the core classes are over, I’m really enjoying school, so yeah” This imperative to follow her own passions is an

important one, because it’s what keeps Temperance on the track to excelling in her degree path, moving through the discomfort, and chasing that self-actualization.

In addition to the usage of experience as evidence in describing her academic journey, a concept that was introduced in this interview was the concept of the Life Path. To be more specific, Temperance points out the modern necessity of a Bachelor’s degree in order to obtain more opportunities. Though they were satisfied with the direction their small business was headed, she recognized the overwhelming effort needed to stay afloat. She continues,

“It definitely takes a lot of effort and not to say that I wouldn't give that effort. But it was a lot of effort for something that I wasn't really enjoying. So I think that is kind of what drove me to go back to school. And I was—I work at a library and I was seeing the positions that were becoming available. But it required a bachelor's degree And I thought to myself I would have loved to get that full-time position with the full medical included and everything, but I didn't have my bachelors, only my associates. So that's when I really started to realize, like I think this is important. I should probably go back and get my degree.”

Enjoyment is a powerful motivator, as well as the need to obtain gainful opportunities with a bachelor’s degree. This need to enjoy what you do is a notion felt from the heart, one that does not shy away from admitting that at our core, we are human. Temperance reflects on the inclusion of one’s own personal experiences in their writing, “I think one of the—my most favorite books are from authors’ personal experiences because it's so raw, it's so real and you really do get to be put into someone else's shoes. So I think it's important to be honest to your reader. I mean, it's definitely great to have a fictitious mind and be creative, but, which is also important. But to always pour a little bit of yourself in your writing. Or I always think it's a little,

it's special. It creates a connection between the reader and the author”. This connection between reader and author is felt even in an academic context. In learning about each of these participants, we can see our own stories and struggles in their writing experiences. We have all felt a level of discomfort when writing, and the movement to comfort was a journey each of us undertake with each new composition.

Temperance both confirmed previous research from the literature review, and even added some more insights about time and authorial authority that I had not anticipated. Firstly, multimodal tasks are a layered process, and confusion about their completion and requirements still exist. This is covered in Lovett et. al, Lim & Polio’s (2020) study "Multimodal Assignments in Higher Education: Implications for Multimodal Writing Tasks for L2 Writers," as well as both Zurcher & Stefanski’s (2022) study and Zapata & Van Hoen’s (2017) study. Something I had not anticipated was that different participants would conceptualize time differently. I had foolishly thought that each participant would take the full amount of time for both compositions. Though she finished early, in a follow-up question, she indicated, “I felt a very slight pressure from the clock so I think I might’ve taken more time to revise if it were not for that.” As covered previously, Temperance met and exceeded requirements for both responses, so she did not feel the need to utilize the full time that she was given. A fascinating takeaway from this case study is the move from discomfort to comfort, and the deeply human journey is doing so. In fact, Temperance spoke a lot about the discomfort felt in completing the composition, and the shift from trying something new and experiencing discomfort, to finding her way and settling into the completion of her composition. I would classify this as a metacognitive analysis of how Temperance coped with unfamiliar conditions.

Home Among the Stars: Make my Parents Proud

The room and I patiently await our next interviewee, all the materials have been carefully placed throughout, the lights are beaming brightly upon the conference room’s long, white table. I monitor my email and calendar, anxious to begin. Then, the door opens, and all of the anticipation finally pays off. Starre is a first year student majoring in accounting with a self-reported GPA between 2.5-2.9. He also completed a majority of his education in Clark County, which is common for most students at NSC. Starre holds a certification in Construction Technology, and his hobbies include playing soccer, basketball, and video games. Starre self-disclosed his ethnicity as Hispanic, but also self-identified himself as Latino in the post-composing interview. He did not choose to comment on his language background or disclose any disabilities he may or may not have.

When asked about whether he writes creatively in his free time, Starre disclosed that he “Rarely” does. He also indicated that he “Never” draws, sketches, or creates visual art in any medium. Starre also indicated that he had “Somewhat Positive” feelings towards writing, which lines up with his tendency to write creatively. His outlook on school was “Completely Positive”, which contrasts with his feelings towards standardized testing, which he listed as “Somewhat Negative”. Starre also stated he somewhat disagreed with the statement, “I tie my self-worth to my grades and/or test scores”. When presented with the statement, “If given the choice for an assignment, I would prefer to write a formal essay with citations to primary and secondary sources”, Starre indicated that he would “Somewhat Disagree” with this statement. Starre also somewhat disagreed with the second version of the statement, “I would prefer to construct my own multi-modal project that fulfills the learning objectives of the course”. Which is interesting, and given the chance I would ask him what other option he would consider in this scenario.

Finally, Starre indicated that he completely agreed with the statement that he likes to experiment and try new things. This answer is conflicting, since it may provide context to the previous statement of denying both a text-based project and a multi-modal one. However, it also begs the question, what does Starre consider as experimentation? What is Starre excited to try out next? It could also indicate that he would rather not do an assignment to begin with. With all of that being speculated, my task now is to get to know Starre a bit better through his writing process, multimodal composition, and post-composing interview.

Starre’s text-based response (see Appendix I) was straightforward, focused, and fulfilled the word count with 192 words. His response took a hard stance in favor of printed books, utilizing his own physical experiences with both mediums in his examples. Starre cites the literal eye strain or headaches that may occur with using electronic copies of books, and the attachment that a reader may feel to a physical copy. These responses stem from the lived experiences of the participant, as he disclosed that in the post-composing interview. However, in his text-based response, he assumes that the reader shares these as well given the usage of second person “you” throughout. Starre chose to type his text-based response first, and finished with 19:41 minutes left. Initially, he had asked questions about which medium is meant for which prompt. To which I had responded that both the physical materials as well as the computer are for his usage in either argumentative composing prompt. Starre then made plans to use the computer for both. However he decided to change his mind and reach for the physical stamps, pens, paper, and markers. Although Starre was given specific tools like Google Jamboard and Canva to aid in a digital multimodal composition, he still gravitated towards the familiarity of pen and paper to compose multimodally.

Starre described his multimodal production (see Appendix J) as a comic that echoes the points that he made in his text-based response. There were no changes, revisions, or additions to the ideas that he presented in his text-based response. In fact, this is where the second person “you” is able to shine the most, as the reader can envision themselves as the stick figure person. Through using sequential art, Starre was also able to demonstrate, compare, and contrast the reading process of a person, in this case a student, who is reading off of his phone in comparison to a physical book. At first, Starre asked—“So even if I draw or attach one picture, that still counts?”, referencing similar beginner-friendly multimodal assignment requirements from a course he took. This question is significant because Starre attempted to assess how much work he should be doing in order to fulfill requirements. Even if he did not feel pressure to develop a “correct” response, Starre was still probing for information about the genre conventions of this multimodal assignment.

This post-composing interview was so effective in its spoken, semi-structured nature. A lot of information isn’t easily obtainable through merely observing the participant. Asking him about his personal history gives us so much more context to their experiences and perceptions of education. Starre is a student who initially did not see himself in college. However, through the motivation of his family as an inspiration to go to college and fuel his drive to succeed, Starre is able to embark on his own academic journey. In addition to this deeply personal motivation, Starre also recounts his experiences with migraines that put further obstacles in his pathway to education. As if imposter syndrome was not enough, the conversation about the compulsion to give 100% of your effort 100% of the time, even when suffering from a migraine, is an urgent conversation to have. This presents a variety of potential barriers that students feel that they are unable to confess to their teachers.

Starre did not see himself in college, until he was poked to go by his parents. Family is a strong motivator along with his environment, and the need to make his family proud. However, this does not come easily to Starre, as he confesses to feeling imposter syndrome at an early age.

“Well, I never really wanted to go to school. I've always told myself since probably sixth grade, that I'm not going to college after high school. I'm just going to work. Since the beginning of my senior year in high school I always said ‘I'm not going to college’ That. I just—I don't know if there's something inside, that thinks, It will be fun to go to college and get a degree. Make my parents proud and help my dad out in his business. So I just started to go to school one day.”

Based on this reflection, we can clearly see the manifestation of imposter syndrome within Starre. From an early age, he already limited his potential in coming to college by simply stating he was flat out not going to go, and instead choosing to work. However, he was able to somewhat overcome this by merely just engaging with the possibility. Another reasoning presented itself as well, the desire to make his parents proud and help his dad. When asking Starre about whether he considers himself a “good” student, he responds:

“I think I would consider myself a good student? Because although I do procrastinate a lot on my homework, I still end up doing it somehow, and I still end up passing with at least C's or higher. I left that in high school. So I don't know, but this, like this semester with my first semester, so I still got to see how I did this semester.”

Self-labels within this case study most often had to do with self-deprecation. For example, Temperance claimed she wasn't a good artist. Starre also clings to this label of a bad artist, as well as calling his own handwriting ugly, and even introduces the term “procrastinator”. This could be some combination of self-awareness or self-deprecation, but the overwhelming

negativity of these statements from participants suggests the latter. There always exists a risk of this self-deprecation becoming a student’s reality if they let themselves be limited by it. In this case, Starre references his past as a procrastinator. The logical progression I witnessed in this interview was: I got C’s, therefore, I don’t belong in college. Be that as it may, Starre boldly stated, “I left that in high school”, embracing a growth mindset in his decision to go to college in spite of his earlier decision to just go straight to work. During this interview, Starre also stated he is the first in his family to go to college, and I believe was not aware that he qualified as a first generation student.

The following paragraph is about the relationship between requirements as genre awareness, as well as the connection to the more “human” elements of personal narrative. Not only is it seen as a convenience in the face of increasingly difficult requirements, but it is also a way to emphasize the humanity of the composition. Starre recounts,

“I feel like it's more, it's better because you have more to write. So you can reach the requirements faster. Because right here like for this, the about getting sick or their headache, I get a lot of migraines with the bright light sometimes especially at night and they really kick in badly sometimes like I can have a mean headache, or nauseous, sometimes really bad. So that's why I just thought bringing your personal life sometimes helps you write something more meaningful or just more in general.”

Starre reinforces that personal experiences are meaningful to writing because of the humanization of the author. In addition to this reflection on the genre conventions of including personal experiences, Starre also references his own composition as an example. The literal representation of the eye strain and headaches in the comic is deeply resonant because Starre himself is also prone to migraines. Although Starre claims that this does not affect him in his

academics, this still exists as a possibility that migraines have affected other students in their academics. This speaks briefly to the compulsion for students to be infallible beings that don’t take sick days or suffer from problems with focus or lack of time due to a variety of factors. Through this depiction of a student suffering from a headache because they were looking at a screen for a long time, we were given an insight to another barrier that students may encounter.

Starre followed a lot of patterns established by the other participants, including the choosing based on “ease” and “convenience”. Starre also self-labeled themselves as a “procrastinator”, however it should be noted that Starre spoke about his own experiences with migraines. This begs the question, how much of his procrastination is migraine related, or not? What is or is not a deterrent to his success, and do professors empathize with this experience and are willing to work with this information? Starre also discovered he was a first generation college student in this post-composing interview. Starre also briefly utilized the questioning of requirements and prompt fulfillment as a method of genre awareness, which is consistent across all participants. The main proclamation from this post-composing interview is the need to help Starre *belong*. In what ways can we as educators invite students like Starre, who don’t see themselves as academics to belong, feel safe, and confident in crafting their academic voices? I argue that by allowing students to feel human in expressing their fears, setbacks, and motivations, we are able to invite more students to belong in academic environments.

Reeds of the Hierophant: I Am Who I Am

The lights in LAS127 are less bright than the ones in KAB. They cover the small room in a warm, gold glow. I’m aware that many NSC students like to ascribe gothy, dingy characteristics to LAS. Yet, hark! This conference room is like a page from a book of 18th century Romantic poetry. While its papery texture and crinkled tea stains may provide a

comfortable atmosphere, it won't address contemporary needs within its contents. This conference room in particular confuses me, be it for its lack of feng shui within the focal points of the whiteboard, the conference table, and the TV screen in the room. Perhaps it's the empty cabinets and minimal decor. Nonetheless, I'm able to set up the room's TV screen with the prompts and timer, then prepare the laptop for use. As I ponder what else needs to be set up—Reed appears at the door with a knock. Greeting him through my mask with a smile, I invite him to sit at the table with materials, chargers, and cables askew. Hastily rearranging its contents, I spread the remaining craft items on the table, and invited Reed to sit wherever he pleased. Although I was also nervous for this interview, my second one with a stranger. I tried my best to conceal it and move through the process as calmly as I possibly can. Like Temperance, I have to move from my discomfort to a place of comfort. Yet, I still am not used to this fish-out-of-water feeling. Perhaps, like Starre, I don't believe myself to be a researcher, or a “true scholar” yet. Nonetheless, this journey is about pressing on from the difficult moments, and finding our footing when we're given the chance. Hence the goal of taking risks, trailblazing, and transforming through education.

Reed is also a first generation student of Freshman status who disclosed his Hispanic and Latino background. Both Hispanic and Latino are terms I have seen used interchangeably among participants. Up until kindergarten, Reed spoke Latin American Spanish, afterwards English became his dominant language. Reed disclosed that he now uses Spanish exclusively with his parents, which is fairly common among fellow Spanish speakers in my personal experience. In addition to the disclosure of his bilingual history, Reed also self-reported his current GPA to be between 3.0-3.4. He also disclosed that he is near-sighted and wears glasses, and he is pursuing Biology as his major. Reed also completed a majority of his education in CCSD.

In terms of the usage of his free time, Reed indicated that he “Rarely” writes creatively and “Often” draws, sketches, or creates visual art in any medium. As far as hobbies, he enjoys investigating political parties and city planning is something Reed describes as “fun”. His general attitude towards school is “Completely Positive” and Reed’s general feelings surrounding writing also lean towards “Somewhat Positive”. This is consistent with his feelings towards standardized tests, which Reed discloses as being “Somewhat Positive” as well. In addition to this information, Reed somewhat disagrees with the statement “I tie my self-worth to my grades/test scores”, and indicated his Complete Agreement with the statement “I like to experiment and try new things”. When presented with the choice for an assignment, Reed would prefer to construct his own multi-modal project that fulfills the learning objectives of the course, having chosen the “Completely Agree” option for this statement. On the opposite end, he Completely Disagreed with preferring to compose a formal essay with primary and secondary sources.

While Reed also chose to complete his text-based response (see Appendix K) first, what was unique was that he used the entirety of the 30 minutes, and completed 411 words. This breaks the trend among participants to use less than the allotted time and only aim for completion of the requirements. In fact, this participant indicated that he wished to use as much time as he had as possible, and did not feel the pressure to finish earlier. Occasionally, I heard him whisper his paper aloud in order and use his hands as if speaking to another person about his topic in order to review his response. Reed also asked whether his multimodal response (see Appendix L) had to mimic his text-based one, and if he was required to use citations. As I had reiterated to all participants, Reed was free to do whatever he pleased with his responses! There were no

requirements for citing sources or consistency of content, only for having a thesis statement and main arguments.

Reed’s text-based response was a persuasive essay that used logic-based arguments written in the third person. Reed mainly wrote about the benefits of utilizing electronic copies of books for his ease of access, improvement upon student’s learning, and positive impact in reducing the usage of paper and cardboard. His ideas centered around the technological benefits of electronic textbooks. His thesis was, “Printed textbooks are a thing of the past. Electrical copies would not only improve modularity of student learning experiences, connect students into different paths no printed textbook could ever, and even save the environment. These 3 main reasons are worth expanding upon and could eventually lead to bigger human discoveries down the line.” Not only is the usage of the word “modularity” in the thesis impressive on its own, but the expanding of the argument from a convenience-based one, to one that argues for its application in enhancing the learning experience, and the benefits of electronic books on the environment is a deeply rich and complex one. This is important because Reed not only relied on the basic knowledge of what they know, but they also built an effective rhetorical triangle. Reed emphasized the logical, ethical, and emotion-based implications of embracing digital books for the benefits of students and humanity. Not only did he construct an extremely solid argument, he excelled beyond the bare minimum, used the entirety of his time, and quadrupled the word count, even though he did not need to.

Reed’s multimodal production also focused mainly on the current applications used on a students’ phone or tablet. While his text-based response was rooted in the benefits of embracing technology, Reed’s multimodal production was *the* literal example. Through the depiction of a phone/tablet, titled “Inside The pocket of a Student”, Reed illustrated various apps, their icons,

and how each of them are used on a daily basis. Not only does this demonstrate the technological benefits that the student described, but through drawing each app he used, he drew from his personal experiences. One can see how Reed hand drew each icon, including the name of the app, plus a description of how he used it (See Appendix J). The physical piece is two pieces of paper taped together, so the paper doesn’t rip and the ink doesn’t bleed. Initially, Reed meant to make the icons pop up in 3D, like he did for a previous English project. However, given the time constraints, he thought it would be best to keep the product 2D. Reed also used the entire 30 minutes for his multimodal product.

While Reed’s post-composing interview was mostly an opportunity to ask him about his writing process, I also found it as another opportunity to understand his relationship to education as well as his self-perception as a student. What is most intriguing from his data is his writing process, and the fact he did not simply fulfill requirements and finish his composing time. Reed was able to expand on his argument using research and evidence. When asking him about his process, Reed referred to the text-based response,

“Oh yeah for the typing part, especially 'cause I was still trying to like more closer to the time minute mark. I knew I needed to start writing out the ideas and expanding on them. So I kinda like it took a few details like the main points. And that's when I started creating the paragraphs. I just kinda like put bullet points and then I just added like a lot more to those bullet points and then I just kinda like organized them to progress. But they could sound like an essay.”

I believe Reed was the only subject who fully outlined a longer essay. Temperance did some outlining as well, but only really got to about the maximum 300 word count. The demonstration of a full bodied argument plus an extra 100 words give or take, made Reed’s textual response

stand out. Instead of just being satisfied with answering the prompt, Reed wanted to fully realize the full essay.

Now that we’ve addressed Reed’s writing process, another unique aspect I wanted to point out was Reed’s body language and “script-making”. Starre did some “script-making” within his speech as well, for example when he was describing his journey through the writing process. In Reed’s interview, I noticed a couple of points where he would act out little scenarios as examples. This is best shown when he states his reasoning for choosing Biology as his major.

“Well, I've always wanted to become a doctor in the end, You know, like my end goal was to become a Doctor. Later on I want it to be specifically cardiologist. And it kinda like stemmed from like all the movie genres and stuff. So I always kinda liked seeing blood and guts. I just want to like learn how everything works inside the human body. I think it's cool. It's like interesting, like if something breaks, ‘oh my gosh, that's your tibia!’ [gestures and points to wrist, mimicking the "emergency" situation] Well, you know? Just like things that you never really see until you're in that profession is kinda what intrigued me to continue on.”

This “acting out” of an example is significant because it ties back to Zurcher & Stefanski’s (2022) study, “Valuing and Supporting the Complex Writing Processes of Emergent Writers”. I consider this an example in which a student is actively being allowed to compose with their actions within the semi-structured post composition interview. Through the usage of body language and the speech style of script making, participants are able to express the full breadth of their experiences. This is another method of humanizing their student experiences via play-acting their actions. A literal, embodied illustration of the reality they want to represent to others.

Given the complexity of both responses, I was curious to see how Reed saw himself as a student. Reed goes on to confess,

“Well, sometimes I don't turn in older work because I got like behind and overwhelmed. So I'm like, Oh, just do the bare minimum and then the next assignment, I'll do better. So bad or good? More in the middle I guess. More. I don't want to say realistic because I know there's a lot of students alike are punctual and like pinpoint.”

This response is similar to Temperance and Starre, who both humbly admitted their own setbacks and successes as students. This aspect of educational labor becoming overwhelming and taking up students' time is one that is all too real. I am grateful for each participants' honesty in this regard, since the piling on of layers of classwork can not be healthy for any student. A common grievance in this regard was the lack of time that a student can dedicate to learning and creating their assignments. Once again, a deeply human analysis acquired from a singular, reflective question.

Reed's post-composing interview reinforced themes from other participants and clarified his process a lot more. However, what is most interesting from his data is his compositions. Reed also reinforced the theory that students utilize time differently. Some will focus solely on completing the task, some will just do their own thing, some students will use as much time as they have to do as much as they can. Another takeaway we can ascertain from Reed is that body language factors into composition. Writing is also a physical process for this participant, whether they notice it or not. Although, I wonder if his body language and behavior was more noticeable because we were in a smaller conference room? This also leads me to the question of what other behaviors did I fail to notice in other participants? Just as the literature declared, multimodal tasks require more context, specific explanations, and flexibility on both the student and

instructor. This notion is consistent across all three interviews, regardless if the participant had or had not encountered a multimodal task before. Every multimodal assignment must have the opportunity to be practiced successfully by the student. A final observation I noted is that there is lots of jargon we use throughout this study. For example: “linguaging” and “multimodal” seem to be the top two, even if they are encountered everyday.

TELEGRAPH: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

After viewing all the data from Temperance, Starre, and Reed, five themes emerged that help answer the research questions for this study. As a reminder, those questions are: How do students experience text-based composing versus multimodal approaches to composing? Furthermore—with so many options of engaging people today, what is the value of an essay in comparison to the variety of modes available to us today? The five themes are Embodied Process, “I Am/Not”, Metacognition, Experience as Evidence, and Genre Awareness. To ensure that my themes were well-supported, I made sure to add follow-up questions as interviews progressed, as research started popping up, and I tried to reframe and ask more specific questions.

Embodied Process

Even though participants were reassured time and time again that they could use whichever materials for whichever prompt, they still followed a general pattern. All participants gravitated towards the text-based prompt first, and used the computer to complete it. Then, participants would gravitate towards the physical craft items to construct their multimodal composition piece. I would take notes during this process to document which items they used, what questions I had, and what time they finished.

All three participants talked about their bodily experiences with writing through their emotions, the “acting out” or “scripting” of their speech, or the physical experience of typing or writing with pen and paper. In addition to expressing emotions of “ease” and “convenience” when it came to choosing a mode, participants overall were able to identify and connect with their own unique methods of composing.

In addition to examining the writing process of various college students, I think this study may also broadly examine the level of effort that students put into their work. If students need to just survive and put in the bare minimum to do so, they will still be able to fulfill requirements. On the other hand, the students that take the extra time to put in elbow grease to supersede the bare minimum—stand out. Their efforts speak for themselves.

I Am/Not

In each post-composing interview, participants were prone to using self-identifying terms to answer questions that prompted them to do so. The common pattern I found was that participants were prone to self-deprecate when given the opportunity to give themselves a fair chance. More frequently there would be responses that described participants themselves as not being good artists, having ugly handwriting, being “procrastinators”, or quite simply feeling like they weren’t cut out to be “good” students. On the opposite end, the usage of “I am/Not” also encompassed their feelings and humanity within their thoughts about writing and experiences being students. I found this theme to express how students view themselves as complex individuals.

A repeated word in this category would involve “Time”. Either the lack of time thereof to be a “good” student, lack of participation in activities, use of time while composing responses. “I am” statements are also used with speech scripting, such as in the following example from Temperance’s interview:

“Um, I guess the clock definitely gives you some little bit of anxiety. I’m like, oh man, I got to finish so. It did push me to go a little bit faster, a little bit more quick. But overall, I was pretty happy with my time. So I think it was pretty good. Yeah.”

There were a variety of applications with this useful prefix, but these were the main ones involved.

Metacognition

The words “could’ve, would’ve, and should’ve” were terms I was searching for when assessing data for metacognition. These words indicate a participant rethinking their answer, or the way they constructed their composition. All participants mentioned being thrown off by the term “linguaging”, and did not think about using any other languages or modes of speaking. If given the chance, I believe two of the three participants may go back and include multiple modes of linguaging in their response. Temperance gave a rather impressive insight on the notion that images are also a form of language. Technically, if we are conceptualizing images as a form of “linguaging”, all participants would have qualified as “linguaging” in their own way. Reed also had a different interpretation of “linguaging” as voice or style of speaking. This is not entirely wrong, but given that he had the opportunity to use Spanish, this is an insight on a new term.

Across the board, all three participants thought the practicing of multimodal composition was “fun”. In fact, I will also argue that in allowing each participant to have fun, each of them was allowed to feel human and partake in enjoying the process of composition. Additionally, each participant chose their version of composition ease and simplicity for the sake of time. This demonstrates that each participant had a strategy going into the timed writing, and each set realistic expectations for themselves.

Experience as Evidence

In one way or another, the acknowledgement of a Bachelor’s Degree being a requirement for achieving gainful employment and opportunities was agreed upon. This need for

self-actualization is further reinforced by the opportunities available to students, their desire to help their families, and the overall “no-brainer” aspect to conducting this study on a college campus. Each of these participants recognizes the importance of obtaining a Bachelor’s Degree from their own personal experiences.

What touched my heart the most was hearing participants wax poetic on how each of their families are motivators, inspiration, and allies in their education. It truly goes to show the importance of having a strong, healthy support system when undertaking a journey as difficult as postsecondary education.

Given that I had a breadth of students both first generation and non-traditional, I also wanted to gather their thoughts on the ways standardized testing has prepared them for their lives. To be completely transparent as well, I came to this topic with a huge distaste for standardized testing and a bias. I thought it to be oppressive and also stupid, because students should be learning lifelong writing skills that can be applicable beyond academia. I am a huge fan of practicality. However, the research involved in this subject has allowed me to acknowledge the necessity of having learning outcomes and standards for the benefit of students. It has also pointed out how alarming it is that standardized testing is required for many to access gainful opportunities, yet students still have such negative perceptions and experiences of these kinds of exams. Furthermore, this fuels my desire to discover why students may feel this way, and work towards examining the rhetoric of gatekeeping that these tests may put out to the students that take them. The following answers are copied and pasted from a follow-up email or post-composing interview audio transcript, and are included sans prose between each piece for the sake of posterity.

Liz: How do you think of the way standardized testing has prepared you for college and your personal life?

Temperance: To be completely honest, I don't think it's prepared me for much. I've always been a terrible tester. I've always been a great student, good grades, but testing I always seem to lack a little bit of, so I am not very fond of them. I think that a lot of the things that I'm tested on, I don't necessarily grasp and I don't keep with me. It's just kinda I studied for the test and then my mind goes blank. So I don't necessarily like testing, but I do see the purposes of it. I know that some people are better at it than others, but personally from my experience, it's not really something I'm a big fan of. I think it's more about personal experiences. Everyone's very different on, everyone learns a different way. So I definitely think there are different ways to test your knowledge other than just the regular standardized testing method.

Liz: Considering your professional background in Construction Technology, would you say that standardized testing has prepared you for what you currently work in? Why or why not?

Starre: I don't believe that standardized testing helps me in my current job because testing is just remembering what you learn while in my line of work there is a lot problem solving to do.

Liz: That's awesome. And then I have one last question for you. Consider the academic or career path that you're currently taking. In what ways has standardized testing prepared you? or not prepared you?

Reed: It has definitely helped me with more controlled things like math. You mostly only have one answer. Social studies as well. Like "what happened in this year.? Oh, this happened in this year," you know. But more towards like English where you're kinda like forced to like expand your own ideas and go your own way. Those standardized testing really helped me, you know, especially like in the ACT in high school. Like when they would like make you write about your own ideas and your own experiences. Like I had no experience with that whatsoever. Because many of the things we're just kind of like, "oh, read this textbook or this book and write about why this character feels this way." And then you just cite the experiences of that character and whatnot. You know. I wouldn't ever really like how to think in writing. I just kinda had to like find it, right? Yeah. Yeah.

Given these responses, I think it's fair to say that the jury's still out on the effectiveness of standardized tests and student perceptions. While standardized tests do prepare students for postsecondary education, some of them do not perceive the value that tests have. Furthermore, it can be said these tests often do not serve students for more practical situations like paying their taxes or obtaining a job out of high school. If employers do not look at SAT or proficiency exam scores, it's safe to say that it's not an absolute requirement to excel at these types of standardized tests.

Genre Awareness

Across the board, all three participants did not shy away from acknowledging personal experiences as an aspect to consider in their compositions and post-composing interviews. In fact, all three described the inclusion of personal experiences to be more “human-like”. It should

also come as no surprise that each student perceived time, place, and context to be an effective determinant of whether personal experience belongs within the genre.

From each interview, there was always one or more questions asked about the requirements of the composition. I decided to subcategorize this under Genre Awareness as “Requirements as Genre”. This further reinforces the need for multi-modal tasks to be scaffolded and practiced before assigned to students who are not familiar with it. Especially when teaching new programs or tools of composition to students.

Given the prompt that participants composed with, a convention of the collective genre they created was tactile descriptions. Participants connected deeply with the physical or digital descriptions of the mode they chose.

DESTINATION: HOME—CONCLUSION

To answer the question—how do students experience text-based composing versus multimodal approaches to composing, I look at the interview data discussed. Participants gravitate more towards typing their text-based response and then using craft materials to create their multimodal production. In each participants’ embodied process, each student “intra-acts” with the materials they chose, recognizing the layered process involved in multimodal composition. Through this engagement, students professed that they had fun. They had also unintentionally revealed some insecurities with the usage of an “I am/Not” label. In the acknowledgement of this humanity, each student was also able to utilize their own experiences as evidence for their composition as well as serve as literal evidence within this study. Thereby, continuing the tradition of being human as praxis, shoutout to Sylvia Wynter. Questions were asked in order to ascertain what is required of both genres, which is an overall “good” student practice, even if participants did not perceive themselves to be “good students”.

While this study is not meant to provide a straightforward answer on what to do to heal our cultural woes and clashes, I hope it can do its best in just merely beginning to help us embark on that long, long journey.

Pencils down, books close. Stars open and close their eyes in the moments that exhale the cool night. Who looks at these scores anyway? Are they merely data sets that justify the means to the end? The test proctor weighs each of these questions with gravity. Their role is merely to collect and hold each exam, for each future is worth its weight in gold. For now, we wait for each answer to mean something greater.

REFERENCES

- Anzaldúa G. (2012). *Borderlands = la frontera: The New Mestiza*. Aunt Lute Books.
- Beigman Klebanov, B., Ramineni, C., Kaufer, D., Yeoh, P., & Ishizaki, S. (2019). Advancing the validity argument for standardized writing tests using quantitative rhetorical analysis. *Language Testing*, 36(1), 125-144.
- Carr, A. (2010). The most important leadership quality for CEOs? Creativity - Fast Company. Fast Company. Retrieved November 27, 2022, from <https://www.fastcompany.com/1648943/most-important-leadership-quality-ceos-creativity>
- Creswell, J. W. (1997). *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Five Traditions*. SAGE Publications Ltd.
- Freire, P. (2005). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (M. Bergman Ramos, Trans.). Continuum.
- Gonzales, L., & Butler, J. (2020, June). Working toward social justice through multilingualism, multimodality, and accessibility in writing classrooms. *Composition Forum*, 44, 1-23.
- hooks, bell. (1994). *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*. Routledge.
- Li, M., & Pham, Q. N. (2022). Three heads are better than one? Digital multimodal composition completed collaboratively versus individually. *Language Teaching Research*, 13621688221102536.
- Lim, J., & Polio, C. (2020). Multimodal assignments in higher education: Implications for multimodal writing tasks for L2 writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 47, 1-8.
- Lovett, B. J., Lewandowski, L. J., Berger, C., & Gathje, R. A. (2010). Effects of response mode

and time allotment on college students' writing. *Journal of College Reading and Learning*, 40(2), 64-79.

Parfitt, E., & Shane, S. (2016). Working within the system: The effects of standardized testing on education outreach and community writing. *Community Literacy Journal*, 11(1), 118-126.

Saldaña, J. (2015). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications Ltd.

Zapata, A., & Van Horn, S. (2017). "Because I'm Smooth": Material Intra-actions and Text Productions among Young Latino Picture Book Makers. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 290-316.

Zurcher, M., & Stefanski, A. (2022). Valuing and supporting the complex writing processes of emergent writers. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 0(0), 1-31.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Recruitment Script

Hey everyone, I’m excited to share an opportunity with you all today. I have the honor this semester to be working on a research study surrounding writers at the college level. My research aims to better understand student experiences with two different instructional approaches to composing (aka writing) at a social justice oriented institution.

If you want to participate in this study, please complete this interest form: <https://tinyurl.com/gform22>. In addition to asking for your name, email, and an appointment date, the interest form is also used to gauge whether or not you may be an ideal candidate for this study. Don’t worry if you’re not chosen! I appreciate you expressing interest in participating regardless. To be an ideal candidate, you must be at least 18 years old, be enrolled at NSC for the Fall 2022 semester, and consent to having your post-composing interview audio recorded. This recording will not be shared publicly with anyone.

After I receive your interest form, I will reach out to you individually via my email (liz.galvez@nsc.edu) to confirm your appointment. If you have any questions about the interest form, please email me at the same email, liz.galvez@nsc.edu. If you don’t receive an email from me by October 31st, it’s safe to assume that you will not be contacted about participation in the study.

If you choose to participate in my study, you’ll be asked to make an individual appointment with me for one hour and 45 minutes. This will include five minutes for me to present information about the study, five minutes for you to take a pre-composing survey, up to one hour for you to compose an argument that answers a prompt, and up to thirty minutes for an interview. Additionally, there will be five minutes at the end for you to ask me questions. **Note: This study is not tied to your grade or class performance in any way. Your instructor(s) will not be informed or aware of your participation, prompt, and/or interview instructions.**

Thank you for your time and attention!

Appendix B: Recruitment Flier

*****Volunteer based, no financial compensation available*****

Are you...

- At least 18 years of age or older?
- Have at least 1 hour and 45 minutes of free time on campus?
- Open to answering questions about your own experiences surrounding writing?
- Okay with having your voice recorded?
 - Note: this recording will NOT be publicly shared per privacy standards
 - **This study is not tied to your grade in any way. In fact, your instructor will not be informed of or aware of your participation.**

You might be the perfect candidate!

Feel free to scan the QR Code or use the link to fill out an Interest Form



<https://tinyurl.com/gform22>

Appendix C: Consent Form



INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE OF STUDY: Student Experiences with Argumentation Across Two Instructional Approaches

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Laura Decker, NSC

STUDENT INVESTIGATOR: Liz Galvez, NSC

For questions or concerns about this study, you may contact Laura Decker at 702-992-2674 .

For questions regarding your rights as a research subject, complaints, or comments regarding the manner in which the study is being conducted, contact Nevada State College at 702-992-2645 or IRB@nsc.edu.

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. To participate, you must be at least 18 years old, enrolled at NSC in the Fall 2022 semester, and consent to having your post-composing interview audio recorded. This audio recording will not be shared publicly. Taking part in this research project is voluntary.

What Is the Study About and Why Are We Doing It?

The purpose of the study is to analyze what students' experiences are across two different approaches to writing for the classroom. Our study seeks to better understand student experiences with both text-based and multimodal approaches to composing at a social justice oriented institution.

What Will Happen If You Take Part in This Study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to complete a Pre-composing Survey, two components of an Argumentative Composing Prompt, and one audio-recorded follow-up interview. Your audio recording will not be shared publicly. We expect this to take about 90-120 minutes during one scheduled session.

How Could You Benefit from Taking Part in This Study?

You might benefit from being in this study because this study includes the reflection on two different writing experiences, which can improve your understanding of yourself as a writer and could be a good learning tool to those who are open to it.

What Risks Might Result from Being in This Study?

We don’t believe there are any risks from participating in this research. But, potential risks include slight discomfort caused by being asked to compose two components of a prompt under a time limit and reflect on the writing experience. There may be discomfort with being audio recorded, which is why the study requires that participants be comfortable with their post-composing interview being audio recorded. This audio recording will not be publicly shared with anyone.

How Will We Protect Your Information?

The study will take place in a classroom on the NSC campus and there will be no signage announcing the study site so no one will know you are participating in the study unless you choose to self-identify. Additionally, you are participating in the study (pre-survey, writing prompt, and interview) at separate, pre-scheduled times indicated on the interest form, so you will not know who other participants are unless they choose to self-disclose, which is not in our control. The only person who will know that you are participating in this study is the Student Investigator, Elizabeth Galvez. No NSC Faculty will know about your participation, and your participation is not tied to any course grades or performance.

We plan to present or publish the results of this study. To protect your privacy, we will not include any information that could directly identify you.

Your data will be kept confidential in a few ways. First, your data will be attached to a unique two digit participant ID, so that only your participant ID will be attached to your data. Second, in the research report, we will use pseudonyms when discussing the participants’ data so that readers of the report will not have access to participants’ real names. Finally, when writing the report, we will use our best judgment to make choices about what demographic data to include. This includes critically evaluating what demographic data to disclose and what data to keep private, for the sake of your privacy.

It’s possible that other people may need to see the information we collect about you. These people work for Nevada State College departments that are responsible for making sure research is done safely and properly.

What Will Happen to the Information We Collect about You after the Study Is Over?

Your name and other information that can directly identify you will be kept secure and stored separately from the research data collected as part of the project. Federal law requires us to keep all records for a minimum of three years after the end of the study. Your data will be destroyed after the required three years. Survey data will be deleted from Qualtrics and students artifacts, participants IDs, and interview data will be deleted from the password protected computer.

How Will We Compensate You for Being Part of the Study? / What Are the Costs to You to Be Part of the Study?

There is no financial cost for you to participate in this study. Because most of the information will be collected through your program materials, overall this study will take no more than two hours of your time. You will not be compensated for your time.

Who Can Profit from Study Results?

There is no expected profit from this study from any party involved.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary

It is totally up to you to decide to be in this research study. Participating in the study is voluntary. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You don't have to answer any questions you don't want to answer. If you decide to withdraw before this study is completed, we will delete any of your data that you submitted, which includes your interest application, study components, and post-composing interview data. We may terminate your participation without your consent if you verbally and/or physically threaten us (the researchers), other participants, or otherwise present an aggressive demeanor.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

If you have questions about this research, you may contact **Laura Decker**, **Laura.Decker@nsc.edu**, 702-992-2674.

Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, or wish to get information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the following:

Nevada State College Institutional Review Board
Phone: (702) 992-2645
Email: irb@nsc.edu

Your Consent

By signing this document, you are agreeing to be in this study. Make sure you understand what the study is about before you sign. We will give you a copy of this document for your records. We will keep a copy with the study records. If you have any questions about the study after you sign this document, you can contact the study team using the contact information above.

I understand what the study is about and my questions so far have been answered. I agree to take part in this study.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Consent to Audio Taping

As per the requirements of participation in this study, I agree to be audio recorded for this research study. I understand that this recording will not be publicly shared and promptly deleted after 3 years.

Printed Name

Signature

Date

Appendix D: Pre-Composing Survey

PRE-COMPOSING SURVEY

<https://tinyurl.com/precompsurvey>

Thank you for participating in this study. This survey will collect demographic information that will be used to frame discussions about your experience with writing. You can choose not to answer any demographic question that you are not comfortable answering, but this information will be helpful to draw connections and make critical and nuanced conclusions about writing across the two contexts.

What is your participant ID (the two digit number given to you at the beginning of this study)?

Demographics

1. If you would like to, please describe your race and ethnicity (Optional)
2. If you would like to, please describe your language background (Optional)
3. What is your academic rank?
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore
 - c. Junior
 - d. Senior
4. What is your GPA at NSC? (If you're a first year student, use your high school GPA)
 - a. 3.5-4.0
 - b. 3.0-3.4

- c. 2.5-2.9
 - d. 2.0-2.4
 - e. 1.5-1.9
5. If you would like to, please describe your gender identity. (Optional)
6. If you would like to, please describe any disabilities you would like to disclose.
(Optional)
7. What is your major or intended area of study?
8. Do you have a minor or secondary area of study?
9. Which school district did you complete the majority of your K-12 education in?
10. Do you currently hold any certifications? (e.g., trade school, beauty school, culinary school)

Hobbies/interests

11. Do you write creatively in your free time?
- a. Often
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Rarely
 - d. Never
12. Do you draw, sketch, or create visual art in any medium?
- a. Often
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Rarely
 - d. Never
13. Do you have any other hobbies?

Feelings Toward Education

14. What is your general attitude towards school?
 - a. Completely Negative
 - b. Somewhat Negative
 - c. Somewhat Positive
 - d. Completely Positive
15. What are your general feelings toward writing?
 - a. Completely Negative
 - b. Somewhat Negative
 - c. Somewhat Positive
 - d. Completely Positive
16. What are your general feelings surrounding standardized testing? (Proficiency exams, SAT/ACT, Praxis CORE, TEAS, etc)
 - a. Completely Negative
 - b. Somewhat Negative
 - c. Somewhat Positive
 - d. Completely Positive
17. I tie my self-worth to my grades and/or test scores.
 - a. Completely Disagree
 - b. Somewhat Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Agree
 - d. Completely Agree
18. I like to experiment and try new things.

- a. Completely Disagree
 - b. Somewhat Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Agree
 - d. Completely Agree
19. If given the choice for an assignment, I would prefer to write a formal essay with citations to primary and secondary sources.
- a. Completely Disagree
 - b. Somewhat Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Agree
 - d. Completely Agree
20. If given the choice for an assignment, I would prefer to construct my own multi-modal project that fulfills the learning objectives of the course.
- a. Completely Disagree
 - b. Somewhat Disagree
 - c. Somewhat Agree
 - d. Completely Agree

Appendix E: Composing Prompt

For this study, we are asking you to draft two different responses to the following question: Are printed books better than electronic copies? Or, are electronic copies better than printed books?

For one response, we would like your response to be text-based and include a clear thesis statement, at least 3 main points, and a conclusion. Aim for at least 150-300 words.

For the other response, we would like for you to use words, images, different languages, and/or other modes of conveying your idea in whatever way you choose. Use at least 1 page to demonstrate your response, there is no word count requirement. You may choose to complete the responses in whichever order you prefer.

Appendix F: Post-Composing Interview Protocol

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Which prompt did you choose to draft first? Why?
2. Which prompt did you enjoy drafting the most? Why?
3. Who did you have in mind as your audience? What was your intent in each prompt?
4. Did the order in which you completed the prompts affect the way you approached the second prompt? Why or why not?
5. Did you incorporate other ways of “languageing” within your response? If so, how did you feel about using your own modes of language in your response?
6. Do you consider yourself to be a good or bad student? Why or why not?
7. What communities or social/affinity groups do you consider yourself to be a part of?
8. Why did you choose to study your major?
 - a. Have your personal experiences influenced your academic pathway? Why or why not?
9. What do you think about bringing your personal experiences to your writing?
 - a. How comfortable are you in doing so? What informs your boundaries?

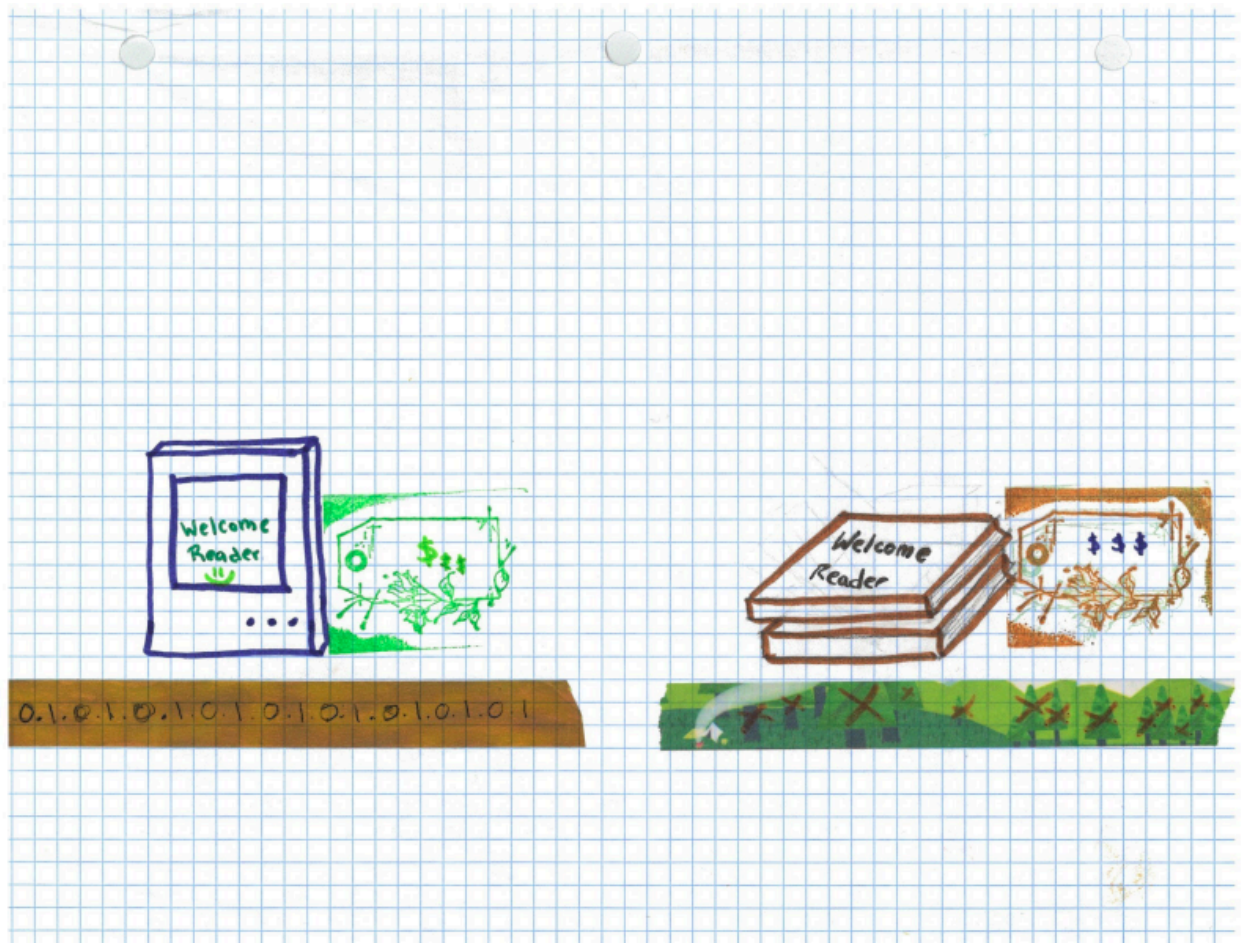
Appendix G: Temperance’s Text-Based Composition

Printed books or electronic books? Considering I am a lover of all forms of literature this is a tough question but in this day in age with the modern technology coming out it's very difficult to not embrace the new specs of literature. Though I love the smell, feel, and nostalgia of printed books I can't help but lean more towards electronic books. There are several perks that unfortunately you just cannot replicate with a tangible book.

There are several things to like about electronic books, the ability to annotate without a pen, saving your favorite quotes, the sleekness and availability of the electronic book throughout several tech products (ie. computer, phone, kindle), the amount of storage it contains and the easy accessibility of several books, and though a printed book can also do this I believe the mobility within electronic books is a lot better in regards to weight and space.

I'm not calling for all people to throw out their hardcover and softcover books, there is a sentimental attachment towards printed books, at least I know I have a small collection that I will never get rid of because of what those books mean to me. However as you go on in life big priority becomes convenience and I do believe that electronic books are more convenient than any other literature format. The ability to buy a two-dollar book with a click and immediately start reading it within your digital library gives a sense of pleasure to the reader. Personally I will still use both formats of literature throughout my life but if I were stuck in an airport several hours before my flight I would be a lot happier pulling out my kindle than a potentially heavy hardback, but as I like to say, whatever floats your boat!

Appendix H: Temperance's Multimodal Composition

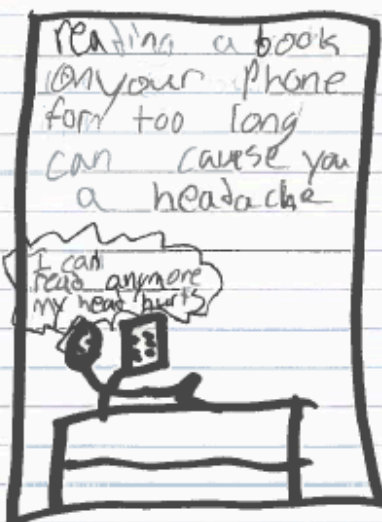
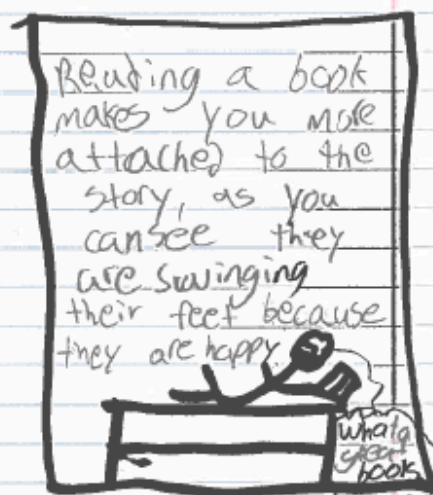
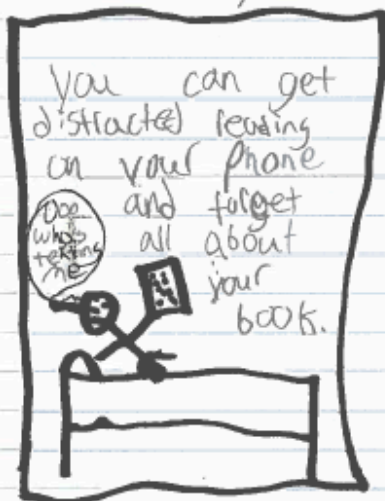


Appendix I: Starre’s Text-Based Composition

Printed books are better than electronic copies and let me tell you why. You are least likely to get distracted by reading printed books. Whenever you are on your phone or even computer you tend to get distracted. If you are reading it on your phone and someone texts you, you will end up reading that text and probably forget about the book you are reading. You are able to get attached to the story more. Reading off your phone is normal so it just feels like anything else, while reading a book you can feel more attached to it because it will feel like you are in the story. Lastly, staring at paper for a long period of time will not cause you any harm compared to an electronic. Staring at a phone or even a computer can give you a headache or make you nauseous. While reading a book as long as it is not in the dark you will be completely fine. In conclusion, reading printed books is better than reading electronic copies since you wont get distracted, feel sick, and you will feel more attached to the story.

Appendix J: Starre's Multimodal Composition

Reading printed books is better
than reading electronic copies and let
me show you why.



Appendix K: Reed’s Text-Based Composition

Printed textbooks are a thing of the past. Electrical copies would not only improve modularity of student learning experiences, connect students into different paths no

printed textbook could ever, and even save the environment. These 3 main reasons are worth expanding upon and could eventually lead to bigger human discoveries down the line.

Electrical copies of textbooks have too many limitations that a 21st century student shouldn’t have to deal with in this day and age. First, electrical copies expand learning by consistently being updated virtually with no need of wait times for new printed textbooks to be delivered to the school. Students can simply log into their school programs and receive the text book right then and there. Adding further, the weight of textbooks would no longer be an issue for students since all their textbooks are in their smart devices. Adding flexibility and being stress free of carrying multiple textbooks

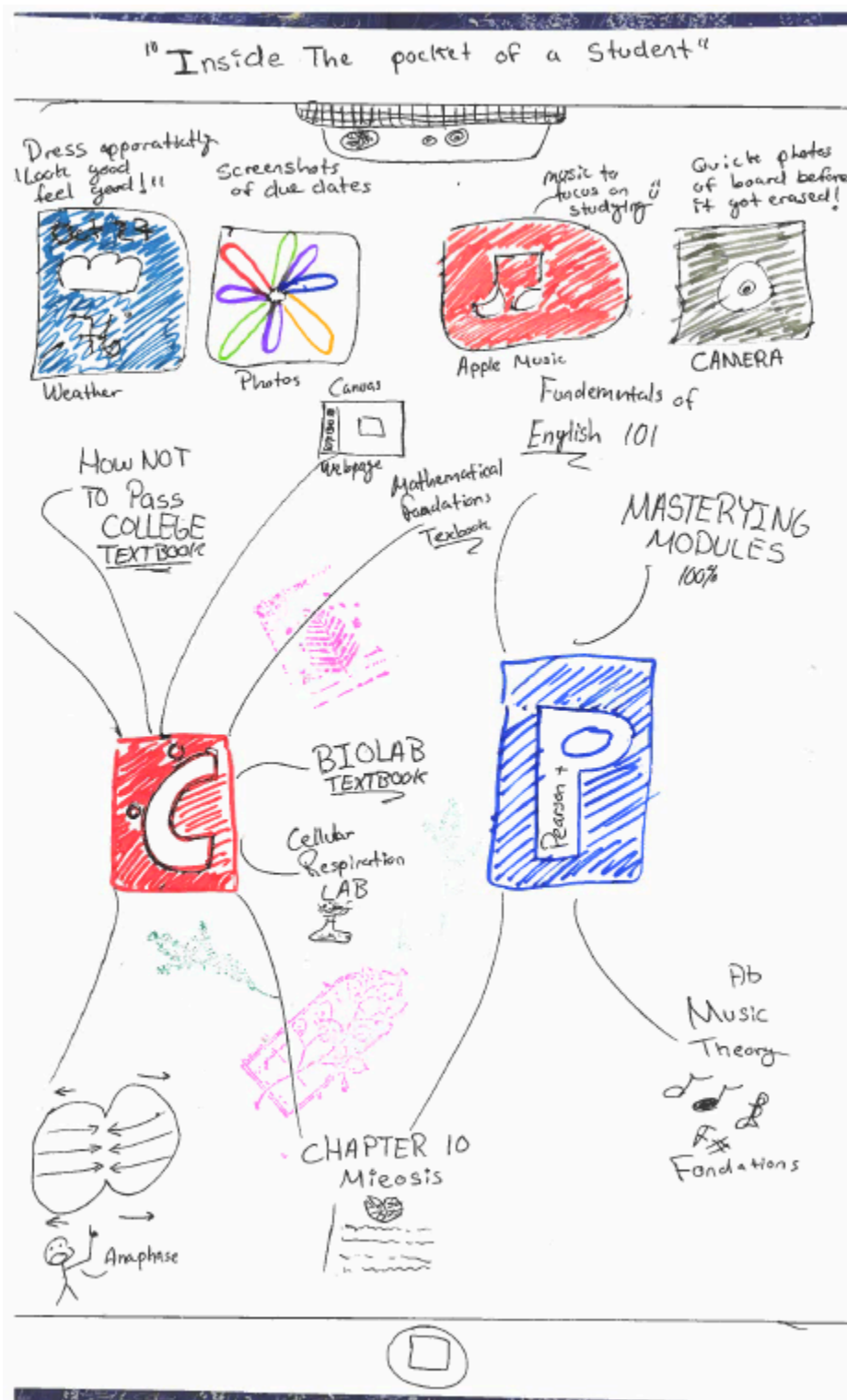
Secondly, online textbooks have the ability to connect with students virtually adding flexibility and enabling group discussion at any time. Additionally, online textbooks always have extra videos embedded into the textbook. Giving extra insight that no printed textbook could produce. Video. Pictures are amazing but what's more amazing about an electronic copy of a textbook is that of adding videos that any student can access right then and there. No need to write down the video URL! Saving time and saving class time.

Last but not least, quite possibly the biggest one, saving our planet. “Reading about the ever growing destruction of forests across the globe while simultaneously reading the paper that the forest grew leaves no future for further human growth.”- DR. Printed textbooks cost alot to make because of the material it's made from. Cardboard covers with hundreds of paper stitch together by glue, repeated several times per class destroys more forests than a simple

smart device containing all the necessary textbooks needed and more. There won't be a need to purchase more paper when it can be sent straight to your device by the push of a button. For example, “Pearson e+texts,” have done an extraordinary job by offering the electronic copy of their textbooks at a reduced cost. No ink or paper means less deforestation for our planet.

In conclusion, the ever changing world of the 21st century leaps in many ways but one thing for sure is that printed books will be left behind. The need to transition to this is ever important.

Appendix L: Reed's Multimodal Composition

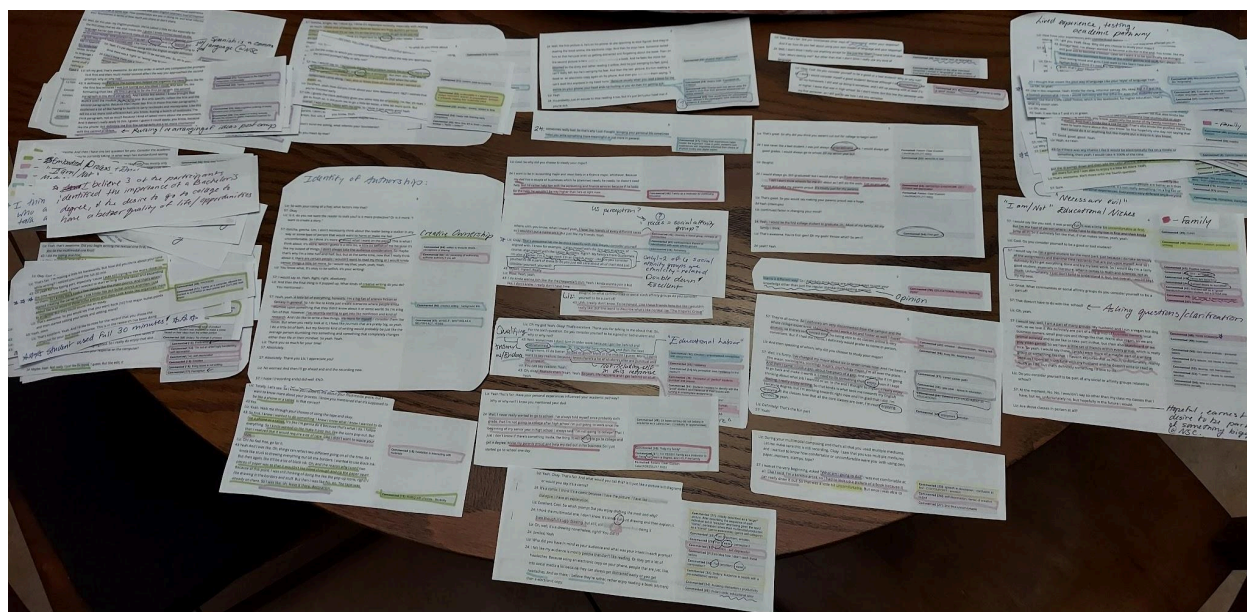
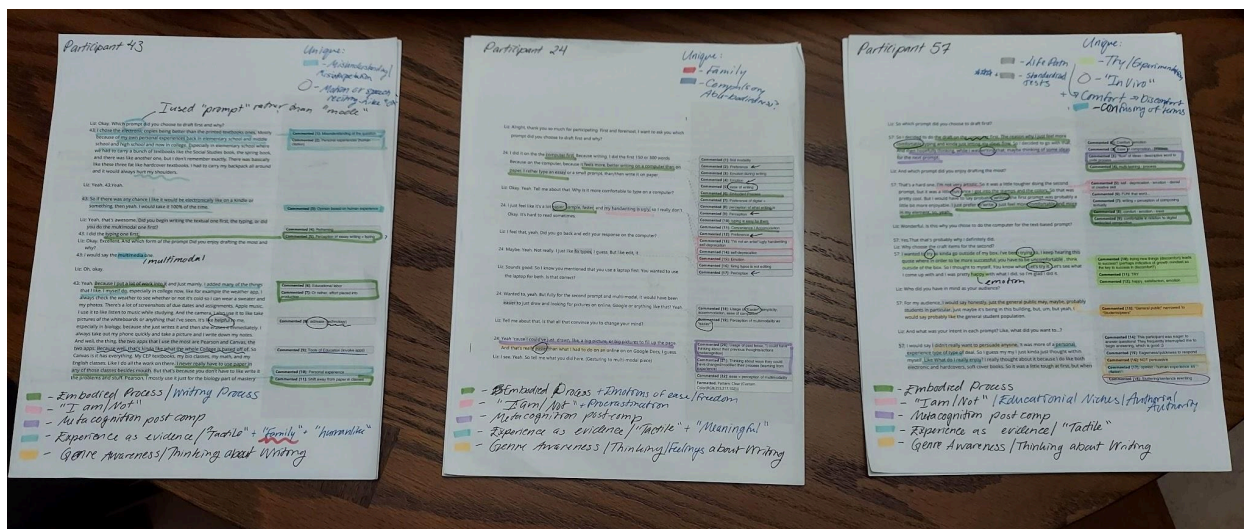


Appendix M: Pre-Composing Survey Data Table

 **1st Round precomp survey results.pdf**

Appendix N: Coding Audit

The first round involved annotations based on 5 themes gathered from comments on the transcripts.



The second phase involved grouping the data together and synthesizing most relevant information together for the discussion section.