MULTIMODAL COMPOSING PRACTICES OF FIRST-YEAR WRITING STUDENTS

By

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ABSTRACT

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This project investigated the composing practices of students in a first-year writingcourse when they were asked to create multimodal, nontraditional pieces of writing. This investigation tracked the individual processes of three students through the use of activity logs, screen capturing software, interviews, observations, and textual analysis. Using a case study approach, this paper traces the composing practices of these students in order to make student processes more visible to teachers and researchers. This project considers the tools, strategies, and resources that students utilized, the ways students reflected on their own processes, and the learning goals that students identified throughout their composing processes. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the results from the project and speculation about implications for research and teaching.

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INTRODUCTION

As increasing numbers of writing classrooms are including digital and multimodal projects as part of their curriculum, there is a need for teachers to better understand the ways that students navigate these projects. This investigation focused on the composing practices of students in a first-year writingcourse when they were asked to create multimodal, nontraditional pieces of writing. This study employed the help of three students in a first-year writing class at Michigan State University to track their individual processes through the utilization of activity logs, screen capturing software, interviews, observations, and textual analysis. This paper traces students composing practices within and outside of the classroom to address the following set of questions:

1) (a)What tools and strategies do students use as they create digital or multimodal compositions? (b)When and how often do students seek out resources, both within and outside of the classroom?

2) (a)When a first-year writing instructor tries to make visible students' processes through written reflections, what shows up? (b)What parts might still be difficult to see?

3) (a) What parts of the digital or multimodal composing process do students identify as the "learning" moments that they can apply in the future? (b) How visible are the student-identified learning outcomes to instructors?

This thesis is broken into several sections that work toward answering these questions. It begins with a description of my background and the story of how I came to this project. This section is important for situating the research and placing it within the larger context of my research and teaching practices. From there, this thesis moves into an overview of the conceptual and methodological frames that situate this work. It connects this project to other scholarship in

the field that deals with digital and multimodal composition, teacher-research, student agency, student-researcher collaboration, and feminist research perspectives. The next section translates these methodological frames into a set of distinct methods that were employed throughout the project. Next, data from three students is presented in a qualitative, case-study approach with one section devoted to each of the students. This project uses a case-study approach in order to highlight the work of students as individuals and to tell the story of their composition processes from beginning to end. This thesis concludes with a discussion of the results from the project and speculation about implications for research and teaching.

CHAPTER 1: Researcher Background

In order for me introduce this project and how it began, I first need to share some of my own experiences and identities as a researcher, specifically a community-based researcher. According to Jeff Grabill, "the key difference between community-based research and related methodologies resides in...a research stance. A stance should be understood as a position or set of beliefs and obligations that shape how one acts as a researcher" (73%). Jacqueline Royster and Gesa Kirsch add that "paramount in our professional obligations in research, teaching, and scholarship is recognizing the need to construct consciously a role and place for ourselves in the work and to understand our specific professional and personal relationships to it" (44%). Because my primary obligations and commitments as a researcher have been formed within a writing center community, it is important to reflect on how this has shaped my stance and perspective.

1.1 Writing Center Perspectives

Writing centers have taught me to value student perspectives and embrace my simultaneous roles of teacher and learner. In any given writing center session, I begin with the assumption that the student is the expert. He or she knows more about the assignment, the expectations, and the context of the writing than I do. This means that I am always learning, listening, reacting, and responding to the student as we work together. As a writing consultant, I consciously place authority and agency over the writing with the student; after all, the writing belongs to the student, not me.

This may be different from how students typically understand writing in academia; it is also likely different from how many teachers view writing and power in academic spaces. This is why writing centers are unique and important places within the world of higher education. For

students, writing centers can be safe places to talk about writing, writing processes, communication practices, and academic goals. Writing centers allow undergraduate and graduate students to seek feedback without being graded or evaluated, and writing centers are often playful and creative in their approaches to writing and communication. Writing centers, as sites of academic support, can and should inform our practices as teachers and researchers.

Though it may be easier to play with power dynamics and switch from teacher to learner in a one-on-one writing center context, focusing on student writers as experts in their own right is a valuable pedagogical strategy. Acknowledging that students have skills and abilities that they have developed and used outside of the classroom is a step in the right direction. It can serve educators to go a step further and ask students to actively participate in classroom research and help produce knowledge surrounding their experiences.

1.2 Applying Writing Center Perspectives to New Contexts

My drive to understand student experiences and learn how to be a better educator from my students was developed in a writing center, but it is also something that I carry with me into all of my experiences. My work as a teacher and researcher are not exceptions. As I enter the classroom as a research site, I am bringing writing center theory and pedagogy with me.

I am not the first researcher to apply writing center perspectives to new research sites. One researcher, Elizabeth Boquet, explains that writing centers allowed her to develop her "first genuine research questions, questions that were not just academic calisthenics but were instead grounded in real and seemingly (even still) intractable problems" (24). Like Boquet, writing centers were the places where I developed questions based on what I saw and experienced around me. I learned how to ask questions and look critically at my own practices and beliefs in order to best serve the students that I worked with on a daily basis.

Additionally, I identify with to Neal Learner's discussion of how writing centers shaped his perspectives. When discussing his position as a researcher and teacher, Lerner proclaims that "tutoring gave [him] a powerful vantage point from which to view what it meant for students to write in college" (63). Similarly, writing center work allowed me to see student writing on a broad scale and at many stages. Students would bring with them their expectations, frustrations, confusion, excitement, and anxiety. I was able to relate to students on a personal level and learn from experiences of academic writing that were different from my own. This perspective helped me enter the composition classroom as an instructor with an open and curious mind. I drew from my beliefs about student writers that developed in the writing center in order to treat students in my classroom as individual learners. I aimed to acknowledge that each student had their own, often complicated, relationship to writing that was sometimes difficult to observe or understand .

1.3 Teaching Philosophy

Like Boquet and Lerner, I am a teacher and researcher molded by my writing center roots. The following is a statement of my teaching philosophy which grew directly from my writing center experiences:

> I believe student writers thrive when they can take risks without the fear of failure. This belief is rooted in my experience as a writing center tutor, and it continues to shape my pedagogical values and practices as a teacher. Specifically, I aim to create an active classroom environment that promotes learning and empowers students to be thoughtful and productive classroom citizens. Through the strategic use of class time, the students in my course get to know themselves and their peers as learners and producers of knowledge.

In order to create a student-centered classroom, I place a high value on student voices. Each student in my class has the opportunity to lead class discussions and teach their peers about something that is important to them. Class time is also devoted to the production and analysis of student writing. For example, one of the assignments that my students have completed in the past is a "remix" project, in which they are asked to transform one of their previous papers into a digital or multimodal product. After the project was introduced, my students worked in small groups to translate the written assignment description into different genres (info-graphics, posters, comics, advertisements, etc.). By asking students to practice the concept of remix in this low-stakes, interactive way, I hoped to demystify multimodal composition and encourage students to think critically about the assignment.

I use activities like this to create a process-oriented writing classroom. I teach writing as a series of revisions and reflections, which leads students to produce, share, revise, turn in, and analyze more writing than a typical class might. However, each project is graded as a portfolio, resulting in many pieces of low-stakes writing. For example, one project may include a written proposal, a project management plan, a "half draft" (rough draft), a revision plan, a "full draft " (final), and a reflective author's memo. This method of portfolio grading allows students to take chances without the fear and anxiety of a daunting grade deduction. It allows students to think about their own writing processes, about their ability to

develop their writing skills over time, and about the labor and worth of their own rhetorical production.

This pattern of scaffolding and revision is taken up with each project in my class, whether the end product is traditionally textual or not. I view writing and composition in broad terms, and I encourage students to do the same. Throughout the course of a semester, we write narratives, produce inductive, inquiry based pieces, conduct primary and secondary research, craft rhetorical analyses and arguments, and create digital and multimodal compositions. Within this wide array of writing tasks, students are able to meet departmental learning goals and make connections to their own lives.

By encouraging students to articulate their own needs for understanding and using rhetoric and writing, my classes benefit from students "buying-in" to the course learning goals and objectives. We create rubrics together, and I have one-on-one conferences with my students to talk about grading and make connections to their existing goals and interests. Making the course salient and valuable for each group of students requires me to revisit, rethink, and strategically shape my classroom practices throughout each semester.

While my core values of active learning, student-centered classrooms, and process-oriented writing education remain stable, my day-to-day teaching needs to be flexible in order to meet the needs of my students. I need to consciously draw from my own experiences as a learner,

a writing center tutor, and a scholar of pedagogy and learning along with

the knowledges and literacies of my students to create a collaborative and

productive learning environment.

My own writing center work has led me to a student-centered approach to teaching and

learning as well as research. In terms of this project, my work in the writing center has had a

clear impact on *what* I am asking, but also on *how* I am asking. My questions involve student

perspectives, and I am turning to students for potential answers.

1.4 Coming to this Project

This project began for me before I entered graduate school, when I started working in

The Writing Center at Michigan State University. As a consultant, I had the opportunity to work

with many students on many kinds of projects. When I think about specific sessions, it is the

students who were working on digital and multimodal compositions that come to my mind first.

At the time, it seemed that these students would come to the center more frustrated, more

confused, and less sure of themselves than the students I saw working on more conventional

types of writing. I remember one girl who I worked with saying that the assignment was too

ambiguous, and I remember thinking that she had been pushed out of her comfort zone. She and

I talked about the class, the project, the skills she already had that would help her, and where she

could go for more support. By the end of the hour-long session, she had cried, we both had

laughed, and I felt emotionally drained. I never saw her again.

Though this one student stands out in my mind, the experience was not isolated. With

each student, I approached the situation differently, even though I often directed students to

online resources, helped to calm fears, or interpreted teacher expectations. I saw these students

for a brief moment in their composition process, sometimes for only 30 minutes. I wondered

what the students did when they left the center and how they made it from the point I saw them at to the end of the project.

It wasn't until years later that I was given the opportunity to teach a section of first-year writing at the same institution where I worked in The Writing Center. As an instructor, I found myself in the position of teaching a version of the "remix" project that was part of the department's shared curriculum (a version of this assignment is included in Appendix A). In this position, I was asking my students to do the same kind of work that had sent students to me for help in the writing center.

I saw this as an opportunity to see more of the work that students do on these projects, so I aimed to highlight process and see how students navigated the project. I asked students to brainstorm, write proposals, work together to peer review their works-in-progress, present their projects to each other, and write a reflection about their processes and the rhetorical decisions they made.

This allowed me to see another facet of the work students do on digital and multimodal projects, but it was still only part of the picture. In my role as a teacher rather than peer, students were not as willing to disclose their fears or worries, to tell me what went wrong, or to share the resources and tools that they used along the way.

I could see what students did in the classroom, the way they interacted with me as their instructor, the products they created, and the ways they justified and defended their work in writing. But all of the work they did apart from these spaces was still hidden to me, and I wondered what students did outside of the classroom and outside of the center.

This question led me to collaborate with another instructor of first-year writing who agreed to let me work with her students, talk to them, pull them into my research project as

active participants and collaborators, look over her shoulder during class times, conferences, planning, and meetings, and try to understand how students navigate this remix project. This research is my attempt to articulate the questions that arose from my writing center work and, later, from teaching first-year writing and develop a model of student-teacher/researcher collaboration that could begin to answer those questions. In the following sections, I present a conceptual and methodological frame that place this project in conversation with other scholarship in the field. These guiding frames have shaped the ways that I asked and looked for answers to these questions that arose from my everyday practice.

CHAPTER 2: Conceptual frame

2.1 Digital and Multimodal Writing

Many writing classrooms are integrating digital and multimodal projects, and teachers are making this transition in thoughtful and generative ways. One teacher in particular, Jody Shipka, writes about the value that can be found in exploring digital and multimodal writing. She encourages teachers and scholar in the field to consider "other ways of imagining the work students might produce for the composition course" (278).

Shipka presents a "task-based multimodal framework for composing grounded in theories of multiple media and goal formation" (277). As a composition instructor, Shipka asks her students to create a variety of products which may be digital or not. The only requirement is that they be created purposefully in ways that do not resemble traditional writing. She describes her approach of asking students to name their own goals for a project, create a list of steps that will help them accomplish those goals, do the project, and reflect on the process. According to Shipka, this approach increases "students' rhetorical, material, and methodological flexibility by requiring them to determine the purposes and contexts of the work they produce" (285-286).

Within this framework, it seems that there is a focus on both process and product, and students are asked to reflect (in writing) on the work that they do as part of the project. According to Shipka, "the statements [or reflections]allow instructors to frame their response to students' work in increasingly efficient, purposeful, and constructive ways by focusing on the specific goals and choices students have selected and shared with the instructor" (290).

However, Shipka writes that, for students, "this way of working can be time-consuming and frustrating" (291). She acknowledges that this kind of project requires more from students than they might be used to. Instead of giving students a prescriptive set of guidelines, she

believes that more can be gained by asking students to think about and account for their own goals and expectations about what they make and write. Though nearly all of her students found the work more difficult than they had initially expected, they were also able to complete the project and develop a new set of skills.

Beyond the pedagogical implications for teaching multimodal composition, Shipka offers some advice for researchers. She writes that "the rhetorical, material, methodological, and technical choices students make while engineering these complex rhetorical events merit serious and sustained interest" (282), which she has begun to explore as a teacher-researcher. She talks about production as a place for this research to start, highlighting the importance of "materiality, delivery, reception, and circulation of texts, objects, and events " (301). According to Shipka, this kind of project can help students see these factors as relevant to their own compositions.

2.2 Process and Production

This focus on materiality and production in digital and multimodal composition is also present in writing center scholarship. David Sheridan writes about the "material processes involved in rhetorical production" (272), which involve the division of time and work and the shift from composer to producer in digital writing tasks. Sheridan raises questions about how and when writing centers should provide technical versus conceptual help, and argues that both are part of the composition task. He proposes that "if we accept...that rhetoric is a material practice as well as a sociosymbolic one, these extensions of our work may seem less strange. Indeed, they may seem essential" (286).

It seems that the focus on process and production is just as (if not more) important in the case of digital and multimodal composition. Much of that production likely happens outside the physical spaces of the classroom and the writing center, which raises questions about what

happens and how we might see it. I believe that teachers and tutors can begin to answer these questions by collaborating with students.

2.3 Teacher Research

It is important to take into consideration what students want and need in addition to what the curriculum expects them to want and need. For Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, this is the difference between what they call the "learning curriculum" and the "teaching curriculum" in education. The learning curriculum is situated, and it does not always match the teaching curriculum, or the stated goals of the educational institution or instructor. This helps explain the active role that students can play in their education. Students learn from each other as much as they learn from their teacher, and we must defer to students as the experts of their own learning curricula. This student-driven learning curriculum is the place this project begins.

When I started working on this project, it was not my goal to add to the knowledge of the field or build on the scholarly work that was happening around me. Instead, this project arose from a place of interested observation of the students around me and a desire to improve my own practice and help students work toward their own goals. For this reason, I view this inquiry primarily as a teacher-research project. Though I did not focus on students within my own classroom, I did work with students completing a project that I teach and work with in a writing center.

I call this project teacher-research for three reasons, which I have articulated through the lenses of teacher-research presented by Mary Nickoson and Ruth Ray: my position as a researcher, the role of students in the research, and anticipated goals and outcomes.

My position as a researcher: Nickoson names teacher-researchers as those who are involved "individually or collaboratively in self-motivated and self-generated systematic and

informed inquiry" (9) that aims to improve their own practice. Similarly, Ray calls teacher-research "systematic and intentional inquiry carried out by teachers" (173). I view this project as an extension of my own reflective practice. It was a way for me to connect the work that I do in multiple contexts and try to answer my own questions in order to improve my practice. This project is the first step in a line of inquiry that is ongoing and recursive.

The role of students in the research: For Ray, students are " co-researchers, sources of knowledge" (175-176), and Nickoson writes that "students are, in fact, active participants rather than distanced subjects" (9). The role of students in this project is one of the main reasons that I argue this project is rooted in teacher-research. It was my goal to collaborate with students and invite them to become actively involved in the project. This project was dependent on students' willingness to record and share their practices with me. These students chose what to share and what to conceal, and I counted on them to help me understand what they chose to make visible.

Anticipated goals and outcomes: Ray explains that "the revolutionary nature of teacher research has to do with its emphasis on change from the inside out" (173) and Nickoson adds that "teacher research is a recursive, collaborative, and explicitly change-based scholarly endeavor" (9). My goal with this project was first to change myself and my practices. By sharing this project and the impact it has on me, I hope that others will help me develop and continue this project on a larger or more long-term scale.

2.4 Research Questions

I planned this project with these values of teacher-research in mind, though I had not yet articulated them. I started planning with this broad question, or statement of interest: I want to learn more about how students navigate complex composition tasks. More specifically, I hope to better understand the tools and strategies students use in order to make digital and multimodal

compositions within a first-year writing curriculum. From this starting place, I focused my inquiry project with a set of guiding questions:

1) What tools and strategies do students use as they create digital or multimodal compositions? When and how often do students seek out resources, both within and outside of the classroom?

2) When a first-year writing instructor tries to make visible students' processes through written reflections, what shows up? What parts might still be difficult to see?

3) What parts of the digital or multimodal composing process do students identify as the "learning" moments that they can apply in the future? How visible are the student-identified learning outcomes to instructors?

Again, I would like to emphasize my own investment in these questions. I want to know how my own students navigate digital/multimodal composition tasks. More importantly, I want to understand how to acknowledge, value, and learn from the work that students do, even knowing that the work is sometimes difficult to see within a classroom setting. This project has allowed me to begin *finding* answers to these questions, and has also allowed me to explore *ways* to answer these questions as a collaborative project with my own students.

CHAPTER 3: Methodological Frame

3.1 Student Agency

Susan Hilligoss and Steve Williams highlight the importance of context when they introduce the concept of the "citizen designer" to discuss the importance of student agency and the need to validate the convictions and passions of students. Hilligoss and Williams write that "as we set out to equip citizen designers, these questions of process seem fundamental" (244). We can learn from what students produce and the processes they use to produce texts. As Hilligoss and Williams argue, student perspectives are important and deserve consideration.

This project attempts to extend the theoretical framework presented by Hilligoss and Williams. It explores how technology can help students work collaboratively with teachers to understand writing processes. In order to apply a collaborative method of classroom inquiry, this project draws from both writing center and feminist methodologies.

3.2 Feminist Methodologies

Royster and Kirsch present some interesting ways to think about feminist research methodologies. They describe a contemplative approach to research which asks researchers to "linger deliberately" (47%) in both their questions and their practices. Royster and Kirsch also ask how the features of self, or research stance and identity, "inform the topic the researcher studies, the research questions she asks (and does not ask), the data she collects (and does not collect), and the interpretations she offers (and does not offer)" (54%).

Royster and Kirsch present a methodology that is thoughtful and concerned with ethics and fair representation of research populations. They explain their goals to look past the assumptions of the field and to consider not only what they can see but also what remains

hidden. They urge researchers to be critical of their own blind spots and be aware of how those shape their work.

By framing my research as a feminist project that draws from Royster and Kirsch, I made a "commitment to look and look again, listen and listen again, think and think again recursively" (43%). I also committed to treat classrooms and students with care and concern. In order to fairly represent my research participants/collaborators, I did this research *with* them rather than *on* them. I invited all community members to contribute to this project, and I was transparent about the methodological choices I made throughout each step of this project. In addition, I did not hide or minimize the role of my own perspectives and positions in the framing and completion of the project.

While there is value in understanding generalities of learning and writing, finding patterns in how people communicate, and extrapolating teaching strategies from quantified student experiences, that was not the goal of this project. Instead this project treated students primarily as individual learners rather than members of a class.

3.3 Student-Researcher Collaboration

In this project, it was important for me to work *with* students. I wanted students to be active participants in the research process and have the opportunity to record and share their own practices. As I began looking for ways to operationalize this value, I drew from the methodological model presented by Bump Halbritter and Julie Lindquist. These scholars describe a project in which they worked with students to find and tell stories about literacy. They also wrote about the importance of working with students, arguing that they "would need to go find those stories—together, researcher and students" (173). They further wrote about the importance of learning together with their students. Like Halbritter and Lindquist, I wanted to

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make choices that *asked* rather than *assumed* and allowed students to speak for and interpret their own compositions.

These framing methodologies impacted the choices that I made while planning this project, from the kinds of data that I wanted to collect to the ways that I would interpret that data. In the following section, I explain these choices in an effort to be as transparent as possible in my own research practices.

CHAPTER 4: Methods

This project implemented a collaborative research approach that involves various methods of process tracking. For this project, I worked with several students in a first-year writing classroom and tracked their writing processes through observations of classes and conferences, interviews with each student to discuss the work they did outside of class, collection of activity logs that recorded how and when students worked on the various pieces of this project, and collection of video screen captures that recorded the work that each student completed on their computers. Later in this chapter, I'll further explore these methods and situate them to reveal how they were informed by my methodological framework.

This project utilized many free digital tools, such as Google Forms for activity logs, Camtasia for screen capturing, and email and Dropbox for file sharing. Throughout this process, I found that students were surprisingly willing to participate in this voluntary research experience. By positioning students as knowledgeable experts regarding their own compositing practices, I was able to help students see themselves as collaborators with the knowledge and agency needed to contribute in meaningful ways. The students that I worked with produced vast amounts of data, and their willingness to collaborate in this project was crucial to its success.

4.1 Classroom Context

This research took place in a single first-year writing classroom at Michigan State University with one graduate instructor and 27 students. Michigan State University is a large public university with approximately 38,000 undergraduate and 11,000 graduate students. Of those students, less than 17% are students of color, and approximately 15% are international students ("MSU Facts"). This classroom had a similar demographic, including a large number of white students, a few students of color, and several international students.

First-year writing is a university requirement, so many students take this course early in their college career. In this class, all of the students could be considered the "traditional" age for undergraduates, ranging from approximately 18 to 20 years old. This class took place in a university residence hall near the campus athletic facilities at 8:00 am and met for one hour and fifty minutes twice per week. Several of the students in this class were student athletes; as a result, they were sometimes travelling during scheduled class meeting times.

Though my research focused on only one of the projects for this class, the instructor taught a series of five projects that are part of a shared curriculum for first-year writing classes. For the first project, students were asked to write a learning memoir that investigated their own learning and literacy. In the second project, students completed a cultural artifact analysis: this project asked students to question and make arguments about how cultural meaning can be found in an everyday object. The third project in this sequence is a disciplinary literacies paper that uses primary and secondary research to explore the communication and literacy practices of a given field or career. The fourth project, the remix project, is the focus of this investigation: in this project, students are asked to transform one of their previous projects into a new and different genre or media. This project is followed by the fifth and final project of the semester, which is a reflective piece regarding students' work and learning throughout the semester.

I began working with this class midway through the fall semester of 2013 when the instructor first introduced the remix project. I started by introducing myself to this class and telling them about the project that I was hoping to complete. I told them about my background, my interest in student writing, and my hope that I could work with some of them to better understand how they completed one of their class projects. After talking to the class for about 10

minutes, I asked students who were interested to leave contact information so I could email them about the project and what their involvement might look like.

To my surprise, 11 of the 27 students expressed interest in learning more about the project. After discussing the consent form and time requirements of collaborating on the project, 7 of those 11 decided to take part in the project and 5 completed all of the project components. For the purposes of this paper, I will focus my discussion on 3 of those 5 students. I selected these students because they were the first three students to complete and share their work from every stage of this project.

As will be discussed further in the following sections, these students tracked their processes throughout a four-week period while they were working on the remix project (see Appendix A for a full project description). Below is a brief description of the project from this first-year writing class, as provided by the instructor:

> What is this project about? So far, you've written about literacy in these ways: as a narrative related to learning , as a practice that carries cultural meanings and value, and as a professional practice. In doing so, you've developed your own repertoire of, understandings of, and ways of participating in, various literacies. This next project will give you an opportunity to continue to develop these understandings and practices by learning more about the relationships between various kinds of texts and their communicative effects. This is the project that will make your rhetorical choices as an author more obvious. We will let the rhetoric "all hang out".

How should I write this project? For this project you will transform one of your previous essays into another form. Starting with the same topic as the original, you'll transform the message to respond to a new rhetorical situation, a different purpose, a new audience, etc. You might choose to create a video, a photo essay, a web, Facebook, or Twitter page, an infographic, a painting, an advertisement or brochure, a poster, a basket, jewelry, etc.

Why am I writing this project? Learning goals for this project: The purpose of the assignment is to make rhetorical purposes, moves, and effects more visible by asking you to do something that helps you to be very aware of the rhetorical choices you make. In other words, this project is meant to help you see how rhetoric works. Rhetorical Purpose: To remix one of your previous papers into a different, usually more visually interesting form (Cozzaglio).

4.2 Data Collection

Throughout this project, students filled out activity logs every time they worked on the project, recorded videos of their screens when their work was done on their computers, completed a 30-minute interview with me wherein we discussed the information they provided, allowed me to observe them in class and during teacher-student conferences, and shared their digital and written products with me at the end of the process.

According to Bill Hart-Davidson, activity logs, also called time-use diaries, provide researchers with a "window into composing practices" (153) and the "ongoing work and technology-mediated activities of writers" (153). According to Hart-Davidson, time-use diaries

are a "minimally obtrusive way to glimpse how users select, use, struggle, and succeed with...technologies" (156). However, he notes that they provide only a partial view and work best when combined with other methods such as recall interviews and observation.

For the purposes of this project, I created a Google form to distribute the logs and user tested the form to ensure it took less than 5 minutes to complete. In order to increase the response rate, I reminded students regularly by email to log their work. I asked participants to fill out the form every time they worked on the project, but I only reminded them twice per week, on the days they met for their writing class.

By using activity logs, I asked students to play an active and collaborative role in the research process. Instead of simply watching students or asking them about what they did, this project asked students to take initiative and log their own experiences. In this way, students were asked to consider their own agency and role in the research process. They were able to choose what they wanted to share, how much they wanted to share, and to what degree they wanted to record their experiences.

In addition to activity logs, screen capturing can be a valuable method of process tracking. Cheryl Geisler and Sean Slattery argue that "video capture technologies provide...a detailed record of digital writing processes and of the artifacts produced in a digital writing environment" (185) but also have several problems, including lack of researcher access, effects of writer surveillance, and inconsistent level of detail. Video capturing can provide a detailed account of writing processes outside of the classroom. However, it fails to capture work that is not mediated by a computer, specifically conversations with other people and work done on other devices like cell phones (which do not currently support free screen capture software).

For this project, I asked students to run the recordings while working on their personal computers and asked them to log everything so I was not inadvertently privileging work that is being done on computers. Along with time-use diaries, screen capturing acted as a guide to shape interviews with students. They were also a tool used to focus on the process and production of students' compositions. These videos were able to capture the labor and work that students did, even if that work eventually disappeared from the final product. As a result, this method of data collection explicitly valued the material production of student writing.

I also collected data through observation. By paying attention to the interactions between the instructors and the students, I hoped to understand more about the classroom context. It also helped me build relationships with the students involved in this project because I was able to see and talk to them more frequently. In addition to observing class time, I observed the teacher-student conferences that took place near the end of the project. During these 10-minute meetings, students had the opportunity to discuss progress and concerns with their instructor.

Observations were an important research tool in this project because they helped ground this project in teacher-research. My presence in the classroom allowed me to see students in another context, to better understand their relationship to their instructor and daily work, and to build an understanding of the context in which students were working.

Interviews were also used throughout this project. Interviews are generally classified as structured, semi-structured, or unstructured, based on the researcher's desired level of flexibility. Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher describe interviewing as a research strategy and describe "the importance of paying close attention not only to participants' direct responses to...targeted protocol questions but also to the small stories (15%). For this project, I prepared interview

questions based on the information obtained from activity logs and observations, and also asked a basic set of questions to each participant to start the conversation (see Appendix B for a list of interview questions). In other words, I prepared talking points and general questions, then allowed for unscripted follow-up conversation, making my interviews semi-structured.

Instead of relying on my interpretation of the materials that I collected, these interviews allowed me to ask students for their interpretations. This made the interviews one of the most important research methods employed in this project. In order to ground this project in feminist methodologies, I aimed to ask rather than assume, to look beyond my own expectations and understandings, and to be aware of what I saw and did not see as I worked with the rest of the data provided by students. At the interview stage of the project, I was able to collaborate with students to interpret and understand the story they had been telling me with their process tracking throughout the project.

Stuart Blythe notes that each method for researching digital projects has benefits and challenges and argues that "rather than privilege the use of interviews and observation as somehow more honest, direct, or unfiltered than forms of text analysis, we should acknowledge what each method of data gathering is likely to reveal" (222). This research project focuses more on processes than products, but products do not need to be ignored. I collected written reflections from students that discussed their products (a required part of the class project) in order to compare those reflections to the other data that I collected.

Through textual analysis, I attempted to "look and look again" (Royster and Kirsch, 40%) at the work that students were doing. After tracking student processes and talking to them about their experiences, I turned again to their written reflections in order to confirm and challenge my beliefs about what the students did and the choices they made throughout their processes.

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Every research project is impacted by the researcher's biases, perspectives, and choices. In order to avoid relying on my interpretations of a single type of data, this project employs multiple methods and collects data from multiple sources. This approach is known as triangulation, which Kevin DePew describes as a "methodological process for studying multiple features of a rhetorical situation" (49). This project incorporates multiple methods, including observations, interviews, activity logs, screen captures, and textual analysis. The data that result from these methods highlight both writers' processes and products. By triangulating methods and data, I worked with students to create a more complex picture of the research situation.

CHAPTER 5: Results

The following three sections trace the processes of individual students in the form of case studies. Each case study begins with a description of the student and the project she completed for her first-year writing class. The section then addresses the data provided by these students in relation to each of the research questions that guided this inquiry project. As a result, each of the following case studies is divided into four sections: Project Description, Question 1, Question 2, and Question 3.

5.1 Case Study 1: Casey

5.1.1 Project Description

Casey (a pseudonym chosen by this student) is in a first-year writing class at Michigan State University. She is a 19-year-old woman whose first language is English. When I first met Casey, she introduced herself to me as an "ok writer" who was "not really creative." Casey expressed interest in research, and she agreed to participate in this project over a four-week period. When asked to describe her project, Casey provided the following description:

> I took the cultural artifacts paper which was about Ugg boots, and decided to remix my writing into three separate posters, made to look like advertisements that you may see in a public location. I also sort of remixed the ideas that I presented in the cultural artifacts paper as well. In the paper my main focus was to exploit the idea that teenage girls tend to fall into peer pressure and always feel the need to fit in, however that may be...In this project I decided to mainly focus on footwear as well to keep that idea constant throughout both projects but one thing that I did that

was different was create a visual message, asking girls if these labels and brands really make them "cool."

5.1.2 Question 1

This section addresses the following research questions: (a)What tools and strategies do students use as they create digital or multimodal compositions? (b) When and how often do students seek out resources, both within and outside of the classroom? One of the ways that Casey and I tried to monitor the tools and strategies she used was through the use of activity logs. The following table displays information from the activity logs that Casey completed throughout the course of this project.

Table 1: Casey's Activity Logs

Work Session	Student Goals	Resources/Tools Used	Did the student accomplish the goal? Scale response: 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely)
1	During this time period my goal was to create my proposal. I wanted to complete the entire assignment in one sitting.	Social Media	5
2	During this time what I hoped to get done was the rough draft for my project. I needed to get the whole thing done.	Social Media, Assignment Sheet, Teacher, Friend	5
3	During this time my goal was to write my revision plan that I need for conferences on Wednesday.	Assignment Sheet	5
4	During this time period I wanted to complete my Authors memo.	Social Media, Assignment Sheet	5
5	During this time I wanted to get all of the pictures that I needed for my poster printed.	Social Media	5
6	During this time period I hoped to complete my entire project.	Social Media, Assignment Sheet, Friend	5

As the table shows, Casey spent the first four of six work sessions doing two things: planning for the project and working on its written components. Casey also provided a written description of what she did during each work session, making it clear that she was working toward multiple goals simultaneously. For her first session, she wrote the following:

> During this time period, I printed off the assignment sheet, read through it and started working on my proposal. I already had an idea of where I wanted to go with this project. When it came to the example part of the proposal I did some researching on the internet of sample Facebook pages, and examples of some brochures that sort of matched the ideas that I had for my project.

In Casey's description of her second work session, she highlights clearly how she turned to different people and places for support as she became frustrated and decided to start over with the planning phase of her project.

> During this time, I started off with what I thought was going to be my project which was a facebook page. When I started doing that I noticed that it was actually a lot harder than what I thought it was going to be. While this was going on I was watching Law and Order and that is why there are such long pauses in the videos of me not doing anything. Also with the video I would do some of the project then I would get frustrated and stop and work on other homework in the mean times. Then I made a call to my mom and my best friend.

In the descriptions of the next two sessions, Casey writes mostly about the written components of the project, stating that she wanted to "get it out of the way" so she would

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be able to "mainly focus on the visual aspect of my project." Rather than drawing from outside sources as she did previously in the planning stage, Casey referred directly to class documents, including the assignment sheet and previous papers, for help with this part of the project.

For the last two sessions, Casey writes more about creating the visual component of the project. She started working on a set of posters only after she met with her teacher for a conference to make sure that her idea fit within the guidelines of the assignment. For her fifth work session, Casey wrote that "during this time I did a little more research to see what shoes were popular in the 80's then I printed off pictures of the shoes from the 80's and then I printed off a picture of what those shoes look like now, and if they're still popular." Finally, she wrote about finishing the project during her sixth recorded work session, stating that "I did planning ahead by getting all of my stuff together and laying out my project before I glued anything down. I was very happy that I was able to get the project finished."

Based on the information that Casey provided, it seems that she sought out the most help and resources in the planning stages of this project. She used the internet to search for examples and models of the kind of project she wanted to complete. She also talked to friends, her mom, and others in her class before she began working on the visual component of her remix project. Many of these resources were not specifically connected to her course, with the exception of her conference with her teacher. Instead, she looked for resources that extended beyond those provided in the classroom in order to decide if she felt comfortable with her plan. She explored multiple options and sought feedback

from people she trusted before she felt comfortable with her ability to complete the "remix" part of the project.

Casey also used several tools and resources on the written components of her project. Rather than looking outside of the class for help, Casey referred to course documents--such as the assignment sheet and previous papers--to assure that she was doing the work that was expected of her.

It seems that Casey cast a wide net looking for resources and tools to help her in the beginning, exploratory stage of the project. As she came closer to the end and had developed some confidence in her ability to complete it, she focused on resources more explicitly connected with the class.

5.1.3 Questions 2

This section addresses the following research questions: (a) When a first-year writing instructor tries to make visible students' processes through written reflections, what shows up? (b) What parts are still difficult to see? Casey was able to write about her process as part of her reflection essay/author's memo for her teacher. This specific class uses a RAIDS acronym that asks students to think about their rhetorical decision in terms of the following factors: revision, audience, invention, delivery, and style. For this reason, Casey wrote about these factors in her reflection and explained her process through these terms.

For example, Casey wrote that "the arrangement for this assignment was quite scattered at first because I didn't really know where I wanted to go with the project" and "the invention for this project was much more difficult than the invention that was required in the projects before this one. I believe this is because I was so used to just sitting down and preparing an essay that there wasn't much creativity in the assignment besides creating the writing. Like I said earlier, it

was hard for me to find somewhere to start because I didn't really have any good ideas, and the ideas that I did have fell through."

Casey also wrote about her process in terms of what went well and what went wrong. She wrote that "for this assignment one thing that went well was the project and the posters themselves. Once I had the ideas and had a layout of what I wanted to do on the actual posters it was pretty easy for me to get the pictures I wanted to use and actually create the posters."

She also highlights some of the struggles she encountered along the way. She wrote the following description of her challenges:

> What I found to be most difficult for this assignment had to be the actual
> invention of what I wanted to do. I really struggled with coming up with
> an idea and getting a start on what I wanted to do. At first I wanted to do a
> Facebook page because I thought that was both a good idea and it would
> be easy. Come to find out, it isn't nearly as easy as I thought it was going
> to be...The one thing that I did not see coming was the difficulty of
> creating a Facebook page, I thought that was such a great idea and was
> going to be an easy like twenty minute thing, boy was I wrong.

Finally, Casey writes about how this project fit into the rest of her life and time commitments. She wrote that "one thing that I had originally proposed that changed during the course of this assignment would have to be the timeline that I came up with. My actual timeline that I followed had a lot more procrastination, not that I didn't want to do the project or was just being lazy, but because I was so concerned about my two exams on the Monday the week that this project was due as well."

This written reflection gives the instructor a glimpse into what Casey did and the choices she made along the way. To me, it seems like Casey discounted some of the exploratory work she did in the beginning of the project. Instead of counting her brainstorming and seeking help and ideas from friends and family as work, Casey names those activities as procrastination. It took Casey longer to start composing this project and more time planning, but much of the initial work disappears from her written reflection, possibly because Casey does not consider these activities "work" or "productive" in the same way that I did when we discussed her process.

It seems that, for Casey, work that did not go toward making or producing a visible product disappeared to a certain extent from the written reflection. Though Casey was willing to record and talk about this part of her process with me, she chose not to write about it in the "official" reflection on her process that was directed to her instructor.

5.1.4 Question 3

This section addresses the following research questions: (a) What parts of the digital or multimodal composing process do students identify as the "learning" moments that they can apply in the future? (b) How visible are the student-identified learning outcomes to instructors? In an attempt to answer these questions, Casey and I talked about her project. The interview took place during the last week of the project, two days before her final presentation. I started by asking her how the project was going and if there was anything she was worried about. She said that, in the beginning, "there was a lot of worry because I'm not creative and don't take art classes, and I thought it would be hard to do this project." When asked which parts she thought would be hard, she said that the actual execution of making the visual worried her more than coming up with an idea or successfully creating a message for a viewer.

Casey and I then talked about how she moved past those worries and the things that helped her along the way. She told me that, "I started with facebook, but when I started, it was a lot harder than I thought it would be. Then I talked to my best friend who was creative, then I called my mom for some reassurance because I was feeling really stressed." She told me that "it was a lot longer process to figure out what I was doing than I thought it would be, but figuring out how to make a hard situation work was really useful."

According to Casey, she spent most of her time thinking about what she was going to do, a step that she called the "invention" stage. She said that going through the process first for her original idea, the Facebook page, made the process easier when she decided to start over midway through the project. She said that "the other [class projects] were more structured, and this was whatever we want, and I struggle with that. It's different which sets it apart from a paper, and it helped me learn how to plan my time better. I'm not very tech savvy, so I didn't want to try a new skill to make something. I think I'm taking away something different instead."

In addition to this interview, I was able to observe a one-on-one conference between Casey and her instructor. During this conference, they talked about the project and how Casey was progressing. Her instructor asked questions like "what do you want the advertisements to express?" and "what would an advertisement on a college campus look like?" These questions prompted Casey to talk about her intentions and plan how to revise the project. Though they discussed the work Casey would do after she left the conference, there was not much discussion about what she had done or learned up to that point. Instead, both Casey and her instructor were focused on making sure she would be able to finish the project in the remaining time.

In addition to questions asked by her teacher, Casey also came prepared with a list of questions. She asked things like "it doesn't need to be exactly like my paper, right?" and "does

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the main question of the advertisements and the paper make sense to you?" Casey used this meeting with her instructor to verify expectations and ensure that her work would meet the requirements of the class project. Though the conversation between Casey and her teacher focused almost exclusively on the class expectations and comparing Casey's project to the rubric, there was time for Casey to direct the conversation. Casey was able to make it clear what she hoped to get out of that 10-minute conference, even though she did not talk about what she wanted to learn or take away from the larger project.

5.2 Case Study 2: Joy

5.2.1 Project Description

Joy (a pseudonym chosen by this student) is also a student in a first-year writing class at Michigan State University. Joy is an 18-year old woman who identifies as bilingual, speaking both Spanish and English fluently. When I first met Joy, I thought that she was nervous or shy because she spoke in a quiet voice and looked at her hands while we talked. However, each time I spoke with Joy she seemed less reserved and more comfortable. By the end of this project, Joy smiled, laughed, and directed most of our conversation. She told me she was interested in the project because she wanted to be more actively involved in her classes, and this seemed like a good place to start. When asked to describe her project, Joy provided the following description:

> The purpose of my original paper was to relate chocolate chip cookies to the American culture. The purpose of my webpage was just to share the stories that explained how chocolate chip cookies related to the American culture in my paper. The two definitely have different focuses. The stories are the main part of my webpage. Without them, the page would not have a purpose. The stories in my original paper were useful, but if I didn't

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have them I would just have to explain my point in a different way. I could

not take the stories out of my webpage if I wanted it to make sense!

5.2.2 Question 1

This section addresses the following research questions: (a) What tools and strategies do students use as they create digital or multimodal compositions? (b) When and how often do students seek out resources, both within and outside of the classroom? Like Casey, Joy recorded the tools and strategies she used through the use of activity logs. The following table displays information from the activity logs that Joy completed throughout the course of this project.

Table 2: Joy's Activity Logs

Work Session	Student Goals	Resources/Tools Used	Did the student accomplish the goal? Scale response: 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely)
1	Finish my proposal.	YouTube, Assignment Sheet	5
2	Make a rough draft of my website.	Assignment Sheet, Notebook	3
3	Complete more on my webpage	Assignment Sheet, Websites	4
4	Finish my webpage and my authors memo	Assignment Sheet, Teacher, Google	5

Based on the information Joy has shared, her process seems less recursive than Casey's. In our interview, Joy explained that she divided this project into four phases and spent one work session completing each phase: planning/proposal, making a draft, revising, finishing remix/writing reflection. Once Joy completed a stage, she saw it as done and did not want to go back. Because Joy wrote less in her activity logs, most of the following information about her process came from the interview we had at the end of the project. We looked back over the

activity logs and Joy was able to tell me more about what she did during each phase of her project.

In her first session, Joy produced the following written description of how she spent her time: "I planned out my project, and wrote the proposal for it. Which included a timeline, and examples." Joy brainstormed, used YouTube and Google to look for examples--first of cookbooks, then of websites. She used those examples to decide that she wanted to create a website. Joy then used the assignment sheet to help her write the required proposal to let her instructor know what she planned to do for the project.

For her second work session, Joy started working on her website. She started by laying out the page in her notebook before she started working on the computer. Joy is also in a computer science class, and she is learning to write code and lay out websites in that class. She was able to apply that knowledge to this stage in her process. She was also able to consult her notes from the other class to help her when she ran into technical problems.

For her third work session, Joy applied the feedback she got during her peer review as she continued to write code and create her webpage. At this point, she also started to think about aesthetic choices like fonts and colors in addition to what information she wanted to include. She told me that getting feedback on her draft from her classmates was one of the most useful resources as she was revising and adding to her webpage.

During her fourth and final work session, Joy explained that "I wrote HTML code for a webpage, adding pictures, text and borders. Also, I wrote an essay explaining how the entire project went and any difficulties I had during my time working on it." This work session directly followed a conference with her teacher, and Joy was working on integrating changes that her teacher recommended. She used digital resources like help forums to figure out how to add a

comment feature to her site. After a few hours of running into trouble, Joy quit trying to add the new features; instead, she returned to her original plan to make a webpage that was more informative than interactive.

Like Casey, Joy relied on both in-class and outside resources as she was working on this project. Joy chose to complete a webpage because she knew she had access to help and resources outside of her writing class that would help her be successful in the project. She fell back on those resources and that knowledge when she had trouble implementing changes recommended by her teacher, even though she was not able to make all of the changes that she wanted to. For Joy, these outside resources acted as a form of technical support throughout the process.

Joy also relied on class documents, a meeting with her teacher, and peer review with her classmates to make sure that she was meeting the expectations of the class. She compared her work with the written project description and asked her teacher to verbally assess how she was doing in terms of a class grade. Joy used class resources to assess how well she accomplished the goal or purpose of the project.

5.2.3 Question 2

This section addresses the following questions: (a) When a first-year writing instructor tries to make visible student's processes through written reflections, what shows up? (b) What parts are still difficult to see? Like Casey, Joy relied heavily on the RAIDS framework to talk about her process in her written reflection. She provided the following written reflection:

> R- I added more pictures and stories.
>
> A- I introduced the history of the cookie, then put the stories after.
>
> I- I invented the format of the page, and, basically, the page itself.
>
> D- First person stories from different people

S- Like a website where different people actually share their real stories.

Joy started the rest of her reflection by talking about how she planned the project. She wrote the following:

> When I was creating this project, I first was planning on making like a cookbook sort of thing, but when I sat down to start it, I realized I didn't have a lot of the materials needed to make it. For example: glue, colored paper, colored pencils/markers/crayons. I didn't want to buy any of those so I just changed my project to doing a webpage. I really enjoyed creating it a lot. I had recently learned HTML formatting in another class of mine, so practicing it for this project seemed like a good idea.

She also writes about her process step by step: first she wrote stories in first person, then she laid out her page, next she chose happy colors because her stories were happy, then she interviewed people and added more stories, and finally she added pictures.

When explaining the good and bad parts of the project, Joy wrote that "I would say most of the project went well. The creating of the page went relatively smoothly, and I found cool pictures to go with my stories. It was also pretty easy to find another story that wasn't in my paper for it." She adds that "the difficult thing was when something on my page didn't turn out how I was expecting, finding where in the code I made a mistake was challenging. I pretty much saw everything coming. There weren't any surprises."

This written description lines up fairly well with the Joy's description during our interview, but it leaves out the specific trouble Joy ran into and how she dealt with it. Joy tried to implement changes recommended by her teacher, was unable to find resources

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that would help her with the technical aspects of the revision, became frustrated, and returned to her original plan. This work is not visible in her remix because the webpage did not change, and it also disappears from her written description.

5.2.4 Question 3

This section addresses the following research questions: (a) What parts of the digital or multimodal composing process do students identify as the "learning" moments that they can apply in the future? (b) How visible are the student-identified learning outcomes to instructors? I learned more about Joy's composing practices and what she hoped to get out of the project from the interview we did during the last week of the project. Joy told me that she was not worried about the project and she had a really good time working on it. Joy told me that she relied on her teacher and students from her computer science class throughout the whole process. She was practicing a skill that she learned there already, so that is where she went for help.

Joy spent most of her time writing the actual code for her webpage, and she told me that this project required "less planning what to write and more putting it together in an interesting way. I anticipated it from the beginning, and that's what I wanted to focus on." She knew that this was a skill she would need to use again in her computer science classes, which are required for her finance major. Joy told me that she was more focused on this project than previous ones because she believed it related directly to things she would need to do in the future.

Even though she focused mostly on the technical aspects of creating the webpage, she did consider other factors as well. She told me that she thinks "the audience of someone who looks at a website is different from someone who reads a paper," and that she wanted students her age to be able to relate to the page that she was making. She told me that it would "be cool if it's a link people could share on Facebook or Twitter."

I also observed the one-on-one conference between Joy and her instructor. The conference was mostly directive, as her instructor offered Joy some feedback and advice on her website draft. She recommended that Joy hyperlink out to other sites in order to make her page more interactive. She also recommended adding a comment or discussion section and offered to connect Joy with other students in the class so she could ask them to add or contribute to the site. They also talked about visual choices like colors, font, text, and readability.

During the conference, Joy did not ask any questions of her teacher and did not mention that she wanted to use this project to practice a skill (HTML) that she would need to use in the future. There was time at the end for Joy to direct the conversation, but she chose to leave early rather than talk more about her project. Even though learning more about coding seemed to be Joy's main goal with this project, the information only shows up in one line of her written reflection and did not come up at all in her conference. This made it difficult for the instructor to recognize and encourage Joy's learning goals for the project.

5.3 Case Study 3: Amy

5.3.1 Project Description

Amy (a pseudonym chosen by this student) is also in a first-year writing class at Michigan State University. Amy is an 19-year old woman whose first language is English. Amy jumped into this research project with a lot of enthusiasm. She told me that she is a psychology major, and she wants to do research herself. She believes that being a participant/collaborator in this project would be a valuable experience because she hopes to do research as an undergraduate. When asked to describe her remix project, Amy provided the following description:

In this project, I hoped to revise the way my audience feels and to make

something that is relevant to me ...In the end, I decided to go with a prezi

presentation. It was a fun way to get the important ideas across and made

it very simple to do. I truly enjoyed working on such a different project for

this subject and I hope the fun and creativity are shown in the project.

5.3.2 Question 1

This section addresses the following research questions: (a) What tools and strategies do

students use as they create digital or multimodal compositions? (b) When and how often do

students seek out resources, both within and outside of the classroom? Amy recorded the tools

and strategies she used by filling out activity logs each time she worked on the project. The

following table displays information from those logs.

Table 3: Amy's Activity Logs

Work Session	Student Goals	Resources/Tools Used	Did the student accomplish the goal? Scale response: 1 (not at all) to 5 (completely)
1	Write proposal/plan	Assignment sheet	4
2	Create a rough draft of my book and create an outline.	Social Media, Teacher, Friend, goanimate.com	3
3	Work on my video	Social Media, Friend	3
4	Finish my video.	Social Media	1
5	Begin working on my new idea that Corinne helped me with.	Teacher, Friend	4
6	Write my revision plan and work on my project more.	Social Media, Assignment Sheet	4
7	Finish my project	YouTube, Assignment Sheet, Friend	5
8	I wanted to watch my project one more time and make sure it looked and worked well.	Assignment Sheet	5

Of the students who participated in this project, Amy logged the most work sessions. This is likely the result of the complications that arose as she worked on the project. During the first work session, Amy describes an easy start to her process. In her description of what she did during her first session, Amy recorded the following: "I wrote my proposal/plan. I decided my idea of what I am going to do for my project and started thinking about how I am going to create my project." At this time, Amy used only her assignment sheet to plan and propose her remix.

During the next work session, Amy made some changes to her plan, consulting her teacher, friends, social media, and various websites in order to figure out what she actually wanted to do. Amy submitted the following description of this second work session:

> I started to plan out the story I would write by jotting down ideas, then I changed my mind from creating a book to using an online animation website to make a little movie instead. I started to work and play with the animations, but I found out I cannot save progress on the website unless I buy the monthly plan. So I am testing to see if I can leave the video open and continue to work on it if I put my computer to sleep or let it sit for periods of time, if it doesn't end up working I will switch back to making a book.

Amy found a tool that she was interested in using, and she took a risk by leaving her work unsaved. She continued to work on this animation during her third work session the next day, writing that "I worked on my video, I was pretty productive for the time I worked on it in the Smith Center, but I was also distracted at times by friends sitting near me."

It was during the next work session that Amy needed to alter her plan once again. Her goal was to finish her video, but she went back to the drawing board and assignment sheet when a mini-disaster struck. Amy explains what happened in the following paragraph:

> I began to work on my video then my computer froze and I could not save any of my progress so I lost all of my video. I started to brainstorm another option, and decided to take a picture of myself and use magazine words to paste around me that would be adjectives describing myself, since my paper is about how one of my better qualities is being comfortable with myself. I was also doing my homework in my living room at my house, where my brother and sister would distract me at times.

It was at this point that Amy had a conference with her teacher to talk about her project. During this conference, Amy's teacher recommended using Prezi to put together Amy's idea about adjectives and descriptions of herself. In the work session following this conference, Amy began exploring Prezi with a friend so she could decide if she wanted to use it in her project. She wrote that "I sat in my dorm room and began to play with Prezi, since I had never used it before. I found a picture to use of myself then started thinking of adjectives."

After determining that she would use Prezi, Amy spent her sixth work session adding content to her Prezi and working on the written components of her project. She referred to the assignment sheet and her teacher once again at this time. It was important for Amy to check in with her teacher because she had requested extra time for her draft and revision plan. In her

explanation, Amy wrote that "I added more adjectives and finished my revision plan and sent it to Corinne. I stopped for dinner and to talk to my parents at some point."

Amy explained her seventh work session to me as "crunch time." She wanted to finish the project, and she was working simultaneously on the Prezi and the written reflection. Amy told me that she needed to be conscious of how she could get as much work as possible done in two days without burning out. Throughout this intense work period, Amy consulted examples of Prezis on YouTube, watched several tutorials to figure out the program, reread the assignment sheet and rubric, and she asked friends to view and read her work several times as she finished various pieces. She wrote the following explanation:

> I worked on finishing my project at the Smith center again, I actually was
>
> on task majority of the time there. At 10:30, I walked back to my dorm to
>
> shower and take a break so I could "rest my brain" because I felt like I
>
> could not think any more. At 11:30 I started working again and finished
>
> my project and author's memo.

Thinking that she was finished, Amy spent her last work session, "proofing" her Prezi. However, she decided to continue working on it after rereading her original project and the assignment description. Amy explained that "I actually changed my project. I watched my presentation and wanted to make it more relatable to my Learning Memoir's theme."

Throughout this process, Amy pulled in resources and tools from inside and outside her class. It is important to note that, as a student athlete, Amy had access to the Smith Center (a learning center for student athletes) as a place to work with her friends and get help when needed. She utilized this resource throughout the project, and contacted her teacher at multiple points along the way. As Amy ran into challenges, she sought out more resources that would

help her complete her task on time. Amy was able to find resources on her own, even when they did not always work the way she hoped. She was also comfortable asking her instructor to direct her to further resources.

5.3.3 Question 2

This section addresses the following research questions: (a) When a first-year writing instructor tries to make visible students' processes through written reflections, what shows up? (b) What parts are still difficult to see? Like the other students who participated in this project, Amy used RAIDS as a heuristic for talking about her process. She wrote that "My arrangement is chronological, so I start off telling my audience about my experiences. Through remixing I hope to instill more emotions into my learning experiences. The delivery and style of this project is informal and hopefully informational." In this description, Amy is talking only about her final version of the project, the Prezi that she ended up making.

When sharing the parts of the project she liked, Amy wrote that "The easier part of this project was deciding how I would remix a previous written project and then, finding sources for the remix. I really enjoyed trying to find pictures and video clips to use in my project."

In the next section, Amy glosses over the challenges she faced and how she dealt with them. She wrote that "On the other hand, I faced very few difficulties, one being I didn't have a reliable camera so one of my remix ideas would not have been able to work and the second was my animation idea went a little haywire. However, that didn't stop me and I found a pretty good way to still get my message across."

Amy did talk to her teacher about running into problems and requested extra time for the draft, but those major problems and adjustments she had to make throughout the project are largely absent from her written reflection. This means that most of the planning, revising, and

problem solving that Amy did as a part of this remix project disappear from the classroom and the teacher.

5.3.4 Question 3

This section addresses the following research questions: (a) What parts of the digital or multimodal composing process do students identify as the "learning" moments that they can apply in the future? (b) How visible are the student-identified learning outcomes to instructors? During my interview with Amy, she told me what she learned from the project was very different than what she expected. She walked me through her process, telling me that it had been a journey. At several points, she laughed at herself and the issues that popped up during the remix project. She told me that, at the time, she was really worried about "starting over with two days to make a really big project." But she also told me that she was excited to learn Prezi because it would let her do something with the same purpose that she imagined from the beginning: making something that was relevant to her life.

Amy told me that there had been a lot of surprises, but that she learned from them. She said that she figured out how helpful people can be if you ask them and talked about relying on her friends and teacher for help when she needed to start over.

She also said that she spent most of her time working on an idea (the animation) that didn't work out. Then she needed to spend most of her time on re-planning her project and finding an idea that she could manage in her limited time frame. She told me that this project helped her learn what she could do if she didn't have a choice; she named those skills as creativity, bouncing back, and flexibility. She told me that "all of the skills I used during this project came because things went wrong, so I guess it worked out for the best."

During Amy's conference with her teacher, she mentioned that the program she was using crashed and she needed to start over. She asked for more time making a draft and writing her revision plan, and her teacher gave her an extra day. As a result, the majority of the conference was a walk-through of Prezi. Amy's teacher wanted to direct her to resources that would help her finish the project, and Amy said that she was interested in learning the program. Because they spent so much time looking at Prezi, the conference was over before they could talk about her process or what she had learned already.

Though Amy told her teacher that she faced some challenges with the project, she never shared what she learned by dealing with those challenges. The written reflection would have been the most likely place for this information to be visible to the teacher, but Amy chose not to write about it. Instead, she chose to write about her process only after she started working on the product that she actually presented as her final. As a result, these intangible learning outcomes were difficult for the instructor to see.

CHAPTER 6: Conclusions

Moving through this research process with Casey, Joy, and Amy has helped me view students' digital and multimodal writing from a new perspective. It has verified my suspicion that students' composing practices are complicated and varied, and that most of what students do happens outside of classroom and writing center spaces. I knew going into this project that I would not find answers to my questions. Instead, this was my attempt to start exploring possibilities.

6.1 Tools, Strategies, and Resources

This project has allowed me to see some of the tools, strategies, and resources that students use as they navigate a multimodal composition project. I found that students use many different resources and tools throughout their composing processes, some that are connected to the classroom/curriculum and some that are not. For example, each student reported using the assignment sheet as well as internet resources like social media and YouTube. In addition, each student reported using multiple resources during their work sessions, and they were often strategic about what resources to use when. For example, Casey reported turning to friends and family rather than her teacher when she experienced stress, but turned to her teacher when she experienced confusion about project expectations.

It also seems that students seek out resources at all (or nearly all) stages of the writing process, though the function of those resources might be different for each student. Some students might use many outside sources during the initial planning stages and start using more classroom resources as they revise and refine their ideas: this is similar to the strategy employed by Casey. Other students may plan a project using only course resources like the assignment sheet, then need to seek outside resources that will help them execute that plan successfully: this

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seems to be the path that Joy followed. Though each of these students was almost constantly

utilizing resources and employing strategies about how to manage the project, much of this work

that happened outside the classroom seemed difficult for the instructor to see.

6.2 Visibility of Student Processes

Because teaching and evaluating writing as a *process* can be challenging, many

instructors rely on written reflections to make visible that work that is done outside the

classroom. For Casey, Joy, and Amy, some of their process showed up in these written

reflections. However, these documents also seemed to function as a performance of what the

students thought the teacher wanted to see. As a result, some of the students' challenges,

problems, and re-doing was not present in these written reflections.

More often, students demonstrated their ability to apply course terms, show what they did

well, and assure the teacher that they enjoyed the project. This raises questions about the

function that these reflections serve and how attaching a grade to them might affect their content.

They do seem to provide some information about students' composing practices, but that

information might be censored or incomplete. While it is outside the scope of this project, it

would be interesting to explore further how students decide what to include and exclude from

these written reflections.

6.3 Learning Goals and Outcomes

I found that each student wanted to learn different things from this project. Furthermore,

these learning goals did not always align with those named in the project description. Casey, Joy,

and Amy each talked about different learning outcomes for the same project. While Casey talked

about learning to feel comfortable and navigate ambiguity and open-endedness in a creative

project, Joy was more interested in learning how to code a website, and Amy learned how to

make the best of a difficult situation and problem-solve when unexpected challenges arose. Interestingly, none of these students seemed willing to discuss those learning outcomes with their instructor even though they were willing to talk about them during our interview.

It is my intuition that teachers would be happy to hear about things their students learn (intentional or not) by working on class projects. I'm not sure if the students I worked with did not want to share this information (actively) or if they just did not think about it (passively). It isn't clear whether or not the students thought that these outcomes "counted" as learning in the classroom. It is also unclear how comfortable students felt naming learning goals that differed from those listed on the official project description. Though this question falls outside the scope of this project, it would be interesting to explore whether or not these learning outcomes would become more visible if we as teachers asked about them more explicitly and more often within our classrooms.

6.4 Implications

As I worked through this project, I have attempted to ground my research efforts in the experiences that have shaped my interests and position. I have also attempted to develop a methodological framework of student-teacher/researcher collaboration that will become a part of my own classroom practice, using this project as a starting place. However, I am left with some questions about how to move forward and continue to engage in this kind of research. Student perspectives add value to the writing classroom, but what do we as instructors do with this information once we have it? How can it, or should it, affect the way we teach and what we do during our class time? Is this information interesting or useful beyond our classrooms? What are the affordances and challenges of this model of student engagement?

This project is the first step in what I hope will be my ongoing efforts to collaborate with my students. This model of collaborative research with students is my attempt to encourage students to speak for themselves and help me understand all of work they do during the composing process, whether or not it results in a tangible product. This is particularly important as I continue to explicitly value process within my classroom. If I hope to understand the classrooms that we share, I need to invite students to actively engage in classroom inquiry.

This is also a project that I hope has implications for other teachers and scholars of writing. Though my primary obligation in this project was to my own classroom and my own practice, I would also like to encourage others to participate in collaborative student-teacher research. I would ask other teachers to consider several questions: what do you want to know about your students' writing? What do your students want to know about their own writing? How might you go about finding answers together?

APPRENDICES

Remix

What is this project about? So far, you've written about literacy in these ways: as a narrative related to learning, as a practice that carries cultural meanings and value, and as a disciplinary or professional practice. In doing so, you've developed your own repertoire of understandings of, and ways of participating in, various literacies. This next project will give you an opportunity to continue to develop these understandings and practices by learning more about the relationships between various kinds of texts and their communicative effects. This is the project that will make your rhetorical choices as an author more obvious. We will let the rhetoric "all hang out".

How should I write this project? For this project you will transform one of your previous essays into another form. Starting with the same topic as the original, you'll transform the message to respond to a new rhetorical situation, a different purpose, a new audience, etc. You might choose to create a video, a photo essay, a web/Facebook page, an infographic, a painting, a brochure, a poster, a basket, jewelry, etc.

Proposal: For this project, we will have a more intense proposal process. This time, your proposal should do the following:
- What project will you remix? Why?
- What will you remix it into? Why?
- Offer at least 2 examples/models of the thing you'd like to make.
- Will you need technology for this project? If so, what technology?
- What do you already have (knowledge, technology, etc.) that prepares you for this project? And, what do you need (both in terms of materials and what you'll need to learn) in order to do this project?
- Make a timeline of when you will do things by in order to get this done.

Author's Memo: Your final project should be accompanied by a 2-3 page memo that explains:
- Your process of creating your project (including invention, arrangement, style, delivery, and revision)
- What went well, what was difficult, and what you did not see coming
- How your original purpose, focus, or timeline changed as a result of its 'translation' into a new form

Learning goals for this project: The purpose of the assignment is to make rhetorical purposes, moves, and effects more visible by asking you to do something that helps you to be very aware of the rhetorical choices you make. In other words, this is a project designed to help you see how rhetoric works. **Rhetorical Purpose:** To remix one of your previous papers into a different, usually more visually interesting form.

APPENDIX B: Interview Questions

How's the project going?

When you first heard about the project, what did you think?

How did you figure out what you were going to do for the project?

Have there been any surprises along the way?

What resources have been the most useful for you?

What have you spent most of your time doing?

Has your process for this project been different than it was for the previous class project?

What skills do you think you might use again?

Do you think tracking your process has influenced your work on the project?

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