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DEWEY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: EXPERIENTIAL COMPOSITION AND
REFLECTION AS TRANSFORMATION

by

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DEWEY IN THE DIGITAL AGE: EXPERIENTIAL COMPOSITION AND REFLECTION AS TRANSFORMATION

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University of Nebraska, 2022

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This thesis explores the act of composing as a transformational, ongoing event and offers digital reflection as a tool for first-year writing students to evaluate their own writing practices. I analyze student vlogs produced in response to an assignment that asked students to produce digital reflections on their work as writers across the process of completing a final course project. My findings suggest that adapting experiential learning principles, digital and non-digital, into composition classroom design creates and facilitates writing experiences that are immersive and transformational. Crucial to designing learning occasions is the process of active reflection upon what the writer experiences, a quality that is explored in some depth in this thesis. I outline the habits of mind to cultivate within the writing classroom through the practice of reflection-in-action, and I propose that digital reflection allows writers to fully immerse themselves in the experience of multimodal composition, enacting the senses and engaging the whole person.

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I dedicate this piece to my students, who inspired and challenged me during my first semester of teaching. I am grateful for my husband, Scott, who supports my dreams and encourages me to be the best educator I can be for *solī deo gloria*, and for my committee, who have shaped my view of the classroom to be a site of communal care, change, and agency for students. Dr. Debbie Minter, Dr. Rachael Shah, and Dr. Robert Brooke's guidance, insight, and support throughout this process has been invaluable, and I am thankful for their commitment to student-based pedagogy. I also wish to thank the members of my cohort for their friendship and accountability as we worked together to complete our studies during the last two years full of "unprecedented times."

Introduction

“Creating reflection vlogs was different than anything else I’ve done just because...you actually had to sit down, talk to myself basically in a camera and think about why I’m doing what I’m doing, the decisions I’m making, I have to think about what I’m gonna do in the future. I had to figure out a way to explain it all. And it really made me think deeper about the project and what I’m supposed to be doing. Because you know, you do a regular homework assignment and you might just sit there and just go through the motions, but with this, it’s...actually making me sit back and reflect” – Zach

It is through careful, diligent thought that we fully develop our sense of selves. As a teacher, I strive to instill in my students a hunger for reflection—to deeply consider who they are, the choices they make in their writing, and how this writing can impact their communities and their own individual lives. This reflection molds students’ thought processes to view their learning as an active experience—one that can transform their whole person and bring about radical change to the world around them. If we, as writing educators, desire our students to see the power of their words and compositions, then we must actively challenge students to develop reflective thought into their composing process, enabling our students to self-reflexively evaluate their thinking and decision making when they engage in the experience of writing. The question then becomes: “How do we best offer these opportunities to students?”

Primarily, this study seeks to explore the effects of digital reflection on first year writing students’ writing process and reflective habits to discover best pedagogical practices, challenges, and benefits related to its implementation in the classroom, and integrate student feedback and learning to improve reflective curriculum in the first-year writing classroom. Previous scholarship suggests that digitizing reflective thinking and writing improves students’ metacognition around their own writing process (Yancey 2020, Silver 2016). Additionally, digital reflection brings about opportunities for students

to become more engaged in their own writing process and reflection, opening up the possibilities of collaboration, public visibility of work, and data collection for future research (Silver 2016). Working directly with student writing reveals if and how reflective cognition is affected when asked to engage in the work within a digital format and the implications digital reflection holds for student learning. This research's aim is to showcase the best possible outcome of a pedagogical assignment, and by studying students' responses, my hope is to further develop current pedagogical practices that are designed to create opportunities for reflection that engender active, transformative learning experiences within first-year composition students.

Literature Review

Writing is experiential. From the moment we begin the act of composing, we transform our individualistic thoughts into a shared social encounter, inviting others into an environment that seeks to nurture curiosity and growth. Our senses are moved to enactment. We see the cursor blinking in anticipation, we feel the pen's ink glide across the page, and we hear our own voices emerging as we articulate abstract thought into written word. In his article, "Risk and Event-Based Pedagogy," Ben Harley defines writing as "neither a process nor a product; it is an event that transforms those who engage in it." For Harley, composition is an event with uncontrollable factors that has potential for evolving the whole person. This potential is dependent upon teachers and writers alike recognizing that artful facilitation is necessary to achieve this transformation within the writer. As Paul Lynch notes in "After Pedagogy: The Experience of Teaching," "Education is the art of intentionally creating situations with an eye toward students' growth. Education is in fact "occasion design" (qtd in. Ceraso, et al.

Introduction). In the composition classroom, this means that students who engage with writing must be immersed in a “high quality, educational experience,” which is “essential to facilitating growth and learning in subsequent experiences” (Ceraso 105, 106). These high-quality experiences, or as John Dewey coined, “esthetic experiences” are ones that enact the senses and invite the whole person into learning. As instructors, we can actively seek to design our curriculum to curate these esthetic and embodied practices in the increasingly digitized writing classroom. I offer that adapting experiential learning principles, digital and non-digital, into composition classroom design creates and facilitates writing events that are immersive and transformational. In this literature review, I outline the role of reflection in curating esthetic learning experiences, offering Dewey’s three habits of mind to cultivate within the writing classroom that are necessary for effective reflection. Finally, I propose that digital reflection allows writers to fully immerse themselves in the experience of multimodal composition, enacting the senses and engaging the whole person.

Whether typing on an empty Word document, or composing with multimodal elements, students often view the act of writing as a disembodied and isolated event. Steph Ceraso, in her article, “(Re)Educating the Senses,” however, sees both asking students to engage in multimodal composition and teaching students how to listen to multimodal texts as ways to cultivate these esthetic experiences in the writing classroom and build students’ own sense of composing as an embodied practice. Ceraso asserts that “listening is a multisensory act” (102) that fully engages the person in the experience of a text and offers multimodal listening “as a means of preparing students to become sensitive, reflective participants in and designers of sonic experiences, both digital and

nondigital” (105). Composing multimodally, then, creates a heightened sense of awareness in a learning event, one that challenges students to listen closely to their surroundings as an integral, formative component to their compositions, and themselves as facilitators of a learning experience. If instructors are interested in developing students’ capacities to experience a learning event, we must “retrain our bodies to be more aware, alert, and attuned to sonic events in all of their complexity” (103). In order to retrain our bodies, Ceraso points out that “a crucial aspect of multimodal listening instruction, then, is helping students unlearn the listening habits they have developed over time” (110). When consistently exposed to dull, “unesthetic” experiences, the body’s senses are numbed, and the student cannot experience a learning event to its full capacity. Learning, and the composing process, is left to stagnate, and our body remembers this pattern and associates new experiences with this memory. The term “Bodily Memory” is used to define the reinforcement of this pattern “during every single sensory encounter one experiences. After enough sensory experiences, bodies acquire knowledge about how these encounters affect them, which informs how they will respond to new sensory experiences” (110). To retrain our bodies to experience our learning, we should adopt the philosophy that “the very act of living—of being a body interacting with the world—is an ongoing series of educational events” (110). Therefore, when we endeavor to design esthetic reflection opportunities for students, we must challenge students to reinvigorate their senses and train them to fully immerse themselves in the experience of interacting with their bodies and their surroundings through the multimodal composition opportunities we offer. Practicing multimodal listening will raise in students a heightened sense of awareness to the process in which they compose and to both create and reflect

upon embodied or “esthetic” experiences that enhance learning and future embodied experiences.

Indeed, Ceraso and Pavesich in their exploration of experiential learning in design-based classes found that experience-based learning both compel students to undergo “becoming,” leading them to become better at “stitch[ing] together new experiences and knowledge with prior tacit knowledge,” and *immerse* students in significant learning experiences that transform thinking and learning (Ceraso, et al, Conclusion). To accomplish these goals, the authors offer four key characteristics that, when transferred to the composition classroom, can cultivate the kind of experiences, digital or non-digital, necessary for transforming the writer. First, experience-based learning must have high impact, meaning that the learning event must have an “authentic audience” or “varying degrees of public-ness” (Ceraso, et al, High Impact) to ensure that the classroom merges with life experience. By developing a sense of agency and need within writing and composing events, students can practically see their roles as writers and thinkers. They embody their words and actions as they create for a specific audience. Public writing for a multimodal composition event is therefore both doable and highly advantageous. Though we compose behind screens, seemingly isolated, the work we produce has the potential to reach physical bodies and affectively produce responses based on our work. Second, the learning experience must have an element of collaboration to prevent a linear transfer of knowledge from instructor to student (Ceraso, et al, Collaboration). The event of writing cannot be an isolated process. Instead, their writing takes shape based on the people, places, and things they interact with and influence. To create a holistic experience, the composition process must be rooted in the

social exchange of knowledge and understanding, where experiences are felt and understood with one another. Students, therefore, need to be challenged to see their writing as connected and interactive with an audience to increase their awareness of their own bodily senses.

While the learning experience must be purposeful and collaborative, it also must be, as Ceraso, et al. termed, “DIY,” allowing students to take ownership of their learning and experience both success and failure through ongoing experimentation. DIY learning “depends on the knowledge students have accumulated from lived experiences and encourages them to leverage or articulate that knowledge—to put it into practice” and it is “an embodied practice in which students tinker with materials—in both digital and analog contexts—in order to try out different possibilities for their projects” (Ceraso, et al, DIY). Independent learning and incorporating their personal experiences into their work is essential for the learning event to be an esthetic experience for the individual undergoing it. Finally, experiential learning rests on an ecological view of experience. By developing a “heightened and sustained attention to physical learning spaces and embodied interactions with material things,” (Ceraso, et al, Ecological) the student’s learning experience is enhanced through full and thorough immersion of the space they inhabit. Physical learning spaces “foster particular kinds of practices and habits of mind, such as observation, exploration, collaboration, and a sense of personal responsibility for learning” (Ceraso, et al, Ecological) and create an embodied learning experience. When composing multimodally, it is especially necessary to develop an ecological view of the digital spaces students inhabit. In her discussion of digital, embodied participation in the writing classroom, Gen Critel notes that “we still have bodies, even if we are composing

and communicating via technology” (qtd. in Banaji, et al, *Introduction*), describing digital composition to be a situated, embodied experience. Challenging students to view the digital space as an ecological, embodied physical learning environment can help students foster the kind of practices and habits, such as exploration and collaboration, that are necessary to create esthetic learning experiences for themselves. When students see that the digital sphere is made up of physical bodies, composing, living, and occupying a virtual space, they grow in their awareness that the choices they make and the texts they compose are situated in their bodies. By viewing the composition process through the lens of experience-based learning, the acts of learning and composing become a sensory based, embodied, and holistic experience that can transform the writer.

Because writing is an embodied occasion with the potential for transforming the writer, then it is necessary for the writing teacher to equip students with the *tools* to engage in writing as a transformational experience for themselves, both in digital and non-digital spaces. As Ceraso and Pavesich conclude, “Each learning experience should be seen as cumulative and future-oriented—as an opportunity to exercise and strengthen habits of mind and body that enable us to better respond to and account for later experiences” (Ceraso, et al, Conclusion). John Dewey’s foundational work, *How We Think* scaffolds this reasoning, asserting that experiencing an event is not enough for effective learning. Instead, experiences must be diligently considered. We must, in short, reflect on our experiences. In learning, reflective thought is necessary to “know what we are about when we act. It converts into action that [which] is merely appetitive, blind, and impulsive into intelligent action” (17). To immerse an experience with reflection is the catalyst for true transformation of the learner and writer. Therefore, reflection is a vital

tool to employ in the composition classroom where we view writing as an experience within itself. For Dewey, “experience includes both the raw data of everyday living as well as the reflection on the experience that shapes our understanding of the future and (re)shapes our understanding of the past” (qtd. in Ceraso, et al, *Introduction*) The writer must understand their own process in order to be transformed by the act of writing, and the classroom must be a place where students develop reflective habits that allow them to better understand their learning experiences and transform their writing from impulsive thinking to engaged action.

To develop reflective thinking, and therefore create esthetic learning experiences, Dewey offers three attitudes (habits of mind) to foster in education: open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility. These traits create a “readiness to consider in a thoughtful way the subjects that do come within the range of experience” (34) in the thinker. Open-mindedness is the “hospitality to new themes, facts, ideas, questions” that “includes an active desire to listen to more sides than one; to give heed to facts from whatever source they come; to give full attention to alternative possibilities; to recognize possibility of error even in the beliefs that are dearest to us” (30). By fostering the ability to entertain other perspectives and imagine alternative possibilities, students can begin reflecting upon their learning experiences, (re)evaluating their beliefs and fully considering new ideas introduced to them. Without open-minded inquiry, the writer will be unable or unwilling to reflect upon potentially transformative learning experiences, leaving their learning to stagnate. Whole-heartedness, or the ability to “throw himself into it...with a whole heart” (31) leads to deeper inquiry and a greater sense of curiosity for subject material. Cultivating this enthusiasm will ultimately lead to reflective thinking as

students consider what is absorbing their interests and thought processes. This trait is vital to instill in the writing classroom. As bell hooks declares, the classroom should never be boring; excitement can “co-exist with and even stimulate serious intellectual and/or academic engagement” (hooks 7). The intellectual commitment of whole-heartedness opens up the possibility of a holistic learning experience, challenging students to engage in transformative reflection.

Finally, intellectual responsibility, for Dewey, means “to consider the consequences of a projected step; it means to be willing to adopt these consequences when they follow reasonably from any position already taken” (32). By fostering a sense of intellectual responsibility, students will consider “the meaning of what they learn” (32) rather than blindly accept what is taught to them. This quality is necessary to facilitate effective and purposeful reflection—connecting theory to practice and transforming the learning event into an esthetic experience. Dewey’s urgency to develop in students a sense of responsibility for their own learning isn’t an individualistic act. Instead, students must be given the “time and opportunity to weigh their [subjects’] meaning.” In the classroom, then, composition instructors should create and facilitate opportunities for reflection to take place in order to instill these habits of mind. Not only that, developing these traits must simultaneously occur with reflection in order to best cultivate reflective thinking in the composition classroom. Designing reflection opportunities that cultivate Dewey’s habits of mind in the composition classroom is an essential way to promote student growth and transformation as they experience the occasion of writing.

Developing these Deweyan traits is even more vital in the contemporary writing classroom where technology shapes the way we experience the composing process. I

propose that utilizing multimodal practices for reflection offers students a way to transform their learning into esthetic experiences. To better understand the ways in which these reflective opportunities can be offered, Kathleen Blake Yancey describes reflection in three primary forms: reflection-in-action, constructive reflection, and reflection-in-presentation. The first, reflection-in-action, cuts to the core of the Deweyan learning process, where students actively experience and reflect throughout the process of a learning event. Defined, reflection-in action is the “process reviewing and projecting and revising, which takes place within a composing event and the associated texts” (8) and enables students to convert their thinking into “intelligent action” (Dewey 17). Through reflecting in-action, “we can circle back, return to earlier notes, to earlier understandings and observations, to re-think them from time present (as opposed to time past), to think how things will look to time future. Reflection asks that we explain to others...so that in explaining to others, we explain to ourselves” (“Reflection in Action, 24). If writing is an event that must be experienced, then challenging students to participate in reflection-in-action activities throughout the composing process will enable them to esthetically experience the composing event as it occurs because “reflection-in-action is thus recursive and generative. It's not either a process/or a product, but both processes and products” (Reflection in Action, 24). The act of reflecting and composing becomes inextricably linked and solidifies in the student's mind that composing and reflecting cohesively create an esthetic, holistic learning experience.

To further facilitate transformative, reflective thought, recent scholarship has explored the potential in digital reflection as a way for students to solidify the writing experience as a fully embodied, esthetic event. Naomi Silver notes that studies in which

students were asked to experiment with different forms of modality for their reflections “altered these students’ own sense of their writing processes and of the generative role of reflective work in these processes” and concludes that “the availability and use of these [digital] tools can change students’ and instructors’ expectations of what is possible to reflect upon, the kinds of insights and meanings that may be achieved through reflection, and of skills and competencies that may be acquired by engaging in reflection (170-171). From ePortfolios to Google Doc version histories, utilizing digital tools in reflection can heighten students’ awareness of their own writing process and challenge them to consider their own experiences of learning more deeply. If we are to design esthetic experiences for our students, we must “must design assignments that encourage the kind of heightened awareness that enables students to learn and grow with every new sonic experience” (Ceraso 11). The act of composing digital reflection pieces can challenge students to evaluate their own writing practices with a stronger sense of their own environments and physical bodies, immersing the writer’s senses and engaging the whole person within the composition process. Therefore, for the occasion of writing to be truly transformational for the writer, the composition instructor must consider the experience of writing and engage students in immersive reflective opportunities. To develop current pedagogical practices on the implementation of experiential composition and reflection in the first-year writing classroom, I conducted a study that outlines the affordances and limitations of an assignment I designed through analyzing student voices who completed digital reflection tasks through “rhetorical reflection vlogs.”

Methodology

My IRB-approved study was conducted using two sections of a first-year writing classroom with a total of twenty-two students in each section. Out of these forty-four students who were enrolled in my sections, thirty-four consented to participate in this study. These classes took place at a Midwestern R1 institution with an enrollment of approximately 20,000 undergraduates. First-year writing classes at this institution are rhetorically based and enrollment is restricted to students who have earned less than 65 credit hours. This course focuses on writing as a means of inquiry and argument, where students learn to put their own ideas in conversation with those of others and shape their arguments for multiple purposes and audiences. Because of this, I challenged my students to create social media campaigns to advocate for a social cause that had personal meaning to them and asked them to consider how their composing changed for various audiences, purposes, and genres. Reflection is also identified as a key learning outcome to instill in first-year writing students, and as the instructor of these sections, I was deeply invested in uncovering the benefits and limitations of assigning digital reflection in the first-year writing classroom. I began designing their final project, and this study, in hopes of helping my students build rhetorical and reflective frameworks for reading, writing and communicating.

Throughout the three-week project, I asked students to engage in digital reflection by assigning “Rhetorical Reflection Vlogs,” where students were challenged to consider the compositional choices they made and would go on to make. I assigned five videos, from three to eight minutes in length, asking students to articulate their thought processes around rhetorical themes such as genre, purpose, audience, and aesthetics, as well as a concluding vlog asking them to reflect on the project overall, which included the creation

of the video entries throughout the composing process. (You can find the final project description and assignment guidelines in Appendix A). Because I was particularly interested in the way students viewed, valued, and engaged in reflection, both digitally and non-digitally, I informed students that I would be studying their reflection vlogs for the purposes of this study. Additionally, I prefaced the assignment with the understanding that students were welcome to write out key talking points or scripts for their vlogs, but it was not necessary; students were aware that the vlogs were informal in nature and graded mostly for completion.

To uncover the challenges and benefits of implementing digital reflection in the first-year writing classroom, I adopted a reflexive thematic analysis method. As Maja van der Velden writes, “The aim of reflexive TA is to provide a consistent and convincing analysis of the data” and the researcher should be viewed “as a storyteller, using the data to give voice to a group of people or to an agenda of social critique or change” (6). I began by familiarizing myself with the data, watching all 34 consenting participants’ vlogs and taking reflective notes. These notes included key words and phrases that ultimately emerged as patterns across the data. For example, many students articulated that the vlogs were fun, motivating, and functioned as a way to hold themselves accountable to their own work. In order to further narrow the framework for assessing the reflection my students produced, as well as highlight the best possible outcomes of this assignment in my study, I consulted David Kember, et al.’s four category scheme for assessing reflection. Through their study, they defined various outcomes of students’ reflection: habitual action/non-reflection, understanding, reflection, and critical reflection (372). In order to limit my data set, I combed through participating students’ reflections

and eliminated those vlogs that displayed what Kember, et al. describes as “habitual action or non-reflection,” which “occurs when a student responds to an academic task by providing an answer without attempting to reach an understanding of the concept or theory that underpins the topic” (373). In other words, non-reflection shows little critical thought; it is a known response duplicated or hastily made. The next category, understanding, is found when students’ reflections reveal that “concepts are understood as theory without being related to personal experiences or real-life applications” (373). Vlogs that did not express how digital reflection affected both how they viewed their composing processes and the way the act of reflecting shaped their project were considered non-reflection or understanding and removed from the data set.

The final two schemes were used to evaluate which participants would be selected for the purposes of this study. To distinguish between understanding and reflection, Kember et al. explains: “In writing, the reflection category goes beyond the understanding category by showing the application of theory. Concepts will be interpreted in relationship to personal experiences. Situations encountered in practice will be considered and successfully discussed in relationship to what has been taught. There will be personal insights that go beyond book theory” (374). Therefore, students’ vlogs that displayed understanding of rhetorical concepts and the purpose of reflection in connection to their own writing processes were ideal participants to uncover the challenges and benefits of implementing digital reflection in the first-year writing classroom. As I narrowed down the videos that would ultimately be used and transcribed, I kept a keen ear and watchful eye for students who displayed what Kember et al. define as “critical reflection, which provides “evidence of a change in perspective over a

fundamental belief” (374). Admittedly, this is “an unlikely outcome;” however, there were indications of this practice when students articulated their change of perspective around the concepts of reflection as a vital and necessary role in the composing process.

Ultimately, I found that the most insightful moments and the ones that would be most useful to this study were found in the final reflection video that students created. The prompt for the fifth and final vlog asked students to reflect explicitly upon the process of composing reflection vlogs and how this process shaped their project. Because of this, I chose to focus on the final reflection vlogs of each participant and further narrowed the number of participants through a second round of coding (from thirty-four to twenty-two). Because I was searching for students who interpreted reflection, reflective thought, and/or digital reflection in relationship to their own personal experiences in their vlogs, I selected fifteen participants out of these twenty-two videos who demonstrated Kember et al.’s definition of reflection and/or critical reflection and who best expounded upon and revealed valuable insights related to the generated codes named after the initial review of all consenting participants.

When transcribing these fifteen videos for further analysis, I chose to transcribe their vlogs as close to word for word as possible, only eliminating minor words and adding bracketed words for the sake of clarity for the reader experiencing this text. As I transcribed these fifteen vlogs, I began grouping students’ reflections together under four broad themes and the codes that fell under them:

- Embodiment/ “Seeing” – “stream of consciousness,” “see myself thinking”, in the moment, interactive, “look back”

- Purpose – “helped me see my why,” think rhetorically, value, awareness, intentions
- Engagement – not busy work, fun, motivating, genuine, different, new, more involved, easier,
- “On Track” - focused, ongoing, checkpoints, journey, parameters, process, track progress, brainstorming, planning, make changes/revise

These initial themes captured what students believed to be the benefits of digital reflecting, even if students expressed their dislike for creating reflection vlogs. Below, I articulate the two themes, reflection-in-action and multimodal listening, that emerged from students’ rhetorical reflection vlogs.

Thematic Analysis: Reflection-In-Action

Throughout the final reflection vlogs, students commented on the benefits of the ongoing nature of the video reflections. They often found the reflection-in-action process as a way to “stay on track” and generate new material for their projects. Dan explains in his vlog, “It was a good way to keep me on track for the project, um, I, I there wasn’t a point in time where I didn’t know what I wanted to do next, like what was the direct flow that I wanted to go with, and I really feel like these helped me stay on track” (Dan). For Dan, the vlogs served as a way to continually check in with assignment expectations and his own vision for what he wanted to compose for his social media campaign. Reflecting upon his decisions as the project unfolded allowed Dan to generate new ideas and establish his plans for future composing. Many students echoed his sentiments, stating that the vlogs were a way to “brainstorm” and formulate thoughts about what they might want to do in their project as they thought through the vlogs’ reflection questions. Zach

named the reflection vlogs as a “different” way to experience his project that allowed him to ask himself what he was going to “do in the future” (Zach). Rather than meeting with a professor halfway through an extensive project to discuss his progress, the vlogs asked him “to sit down alone” by himself and simply “critically think about the project.” He explains, “It’s not like I’m doing action for the project. I’m just thinking about it, brainstorming in a way” (Zach). While Zach considers the vlogs, and brainstorming, as separate from creating his project, he expresses that creating reflection vlogs created a generative space that enabled him to think deeper about his project. In other words, as he progressed throughout the project, the vlogs challenged him to consider new ideas to include in his work. In Macy’s final reflection video, she explains that articulating her vision in the vlogs led to tangible action for her Instagram project: “Like saying I was going to post images and post informational facts, I thought that in the reflection so I actually did that” (Macy). Macy used the reflection vlogs as an opportunity to project her future actions for her composition. Not only did the vlogs serve as a way to generate new material, but they also helped students speak future actions into existence. Emory, too, found that reflecting throughout the vlogs assisted her in planning for future compositional choices, saying, “It made me think about what I was going to post for the next post or story or what I was going to say, if it was informational or if it related to ethos, pathos, and logos” (Emory). Both Macy and Emory articulate that the reflection vlogs served as a way to brainstorm for what compositional choices they would make in the future, and then carry out that newly found vision. Ideas generated within the vlogs were less likely to be spoken and then forgotten about. Instead, speaking their ideas out loud as they created their projects developed a projection of what should be done after

their reflection is complete. Asking students to reflect-in-action allowed students to reimagine the brainstorming and invention process as continual and necessary, which led to greater accountability to follow through on what they said in their reflection vlogs. This projection indicates that students grew in awareness of their choices and assignment expectations.

While brainstorming and projecting their ideas, students also found that the reflection vlogs could be a tool to help them consider their past compositional choices within the project and ensure that they were following through with the ideas they spoke of during their previous vlogs. Students voiced that they valued the ability to re-watch their videos to “stay on track” and execute their vision for their project. Skylar elaborates, “I really liked that I could go back and watch the first vlog even and be like ‘Okay, am I staying on topic with my original view for the campaign?’ and like making sure I’m sticking with the overall goal.” (Skylar). Jodie also found that the vlogs gave her a sense of accountability. “The vlogs were a nice way to express my ideas and plans verbally. It made me feel more accountable to stay with my goals that I set. It’s like giving myself a pep talk; it’s giving you a pep talk, like what to expect. So that made me feel a lot more accountable to what I should be able to do with my goals and my campaign” (Jodie). Not only was practicing reflection-in-action a way for her to stay on track, it also seems to be a way to sustain her motivation for her vision for the project. Jodie’s reflection suggests that the continual nature of creating vlogs served as a way for her to rally her enthusiasm to create her project in the ways she had planned. Creating ongoing reflection opportunities within a compositional event both imbues value into previous reflections students have completed and allows them to consider their past actions that in turn affect

the choices students make in the present. Consistently, students found that reflecting-in-action brought about self-accountability to their ideas and goals of their project. Giving students the opportunity to practice reflection in action allows them to formulate new ideas, project their vision for their composition, and consider past actions and their subsequent implications.

Interestingly, Dan also credits the process of creating reflection vlogs throughout the project for shaping the *experience* of creating his social media campaign, saying, “I don’t think I would have had the same experience without them. There was a good chance I would have gotten lost. Um, because, during these vlogs, I came up with some of my ideas as I was doing the vlogs, um, so these really helped me in just establishing my project and figuring out exactly what I wanted to do” (Dan). Without the vlogs, his reflection suggests, he may have become lost on how to best execute his vision for the project. Continually reflecting throughout the composing process allowed him to consider his project as an experience that was ongoing and evolving.

Likewise, students commented on the value of the reflection-in-action nature of the assignment for the way in which it framed the social media campaign as a “process” and even a “journey.” For Zoe, the reflection vlogs were valuable for the way they framed her social media campaign as an experience that was unfolding and continuous. She describes her previous experiences with reflection, saying, “Usually, when we did projects, we would reflect at like the end, just over the whole project, but I like how in these reflection vlogs how we got to reflect during the *process* so we could make changes to our project” (Zoe). By creating reflection opportunities that challenge students to view their writing and composing as a process, they utilize reflection as an opportunity to

brainstorm, reinvent, and revise their work throughout the duration of their project.

Indeed, Zoe notes the difference between the composing she did in earlier stages of the project and the composing she did after multiple reflection vlogs: “I also think there’s a noticeable difference between my earlier posts and my later posts just because I was able to think about all my rhetorical choices throughout my vlogs which was really helpful, too” (Zoe). By participating in reflection-in-action opportunities within her compositional experience, Zoe recognized how her project evolved and changed throughout the process of creating it. For Zoe, the reflection vlogs were a space to revise and reinvent their project as she progressed throughout the composition process. Similarly, Christopher views the vlogs as “more of a journey of creating the presentation through vlogs.” He states that the vlogs served as a “warm up” for his TedTalk style advocacy project, where he could prepare to be in character and progress throughout the project, saying, “So it was like, do all the vlogs, do the presentation, and now I’m here doing the final vlog” (Christopher). For Christopher, reflection was a valuable part of the process of his experience allowing him to reflect on his goals for the project as it unfolded and prepare for the final, cumulative event effectively. Ultimately, integrating reflection within the composing event allowed students to see the generative possibilities that meaningful reflection can offer to writers and helped them stay “on track” for their goals for their projects.

While students articulated that reflecting-in-action was valuable to their writing process, some students offered insight into the possible limitations of designing reflection opportunities in this way. Like any reflection, some students viewed the vlogs as “busy work,” and “a pain to do.” Though many students better recognized their compositions as

a process and a journey by creating the reflection vlogs, some students may have perceived five required reflections in addition to crafting a multimodal project as extra steps to complete rather than an integrated, necessary, and beneficial practice as the project unfolded. For Mark, the reflection vlogs seemed to be the latter: “I don't know...I almost kind of saw these as ‘Alright, I gotta do this vlog. I gotta slap some stuff together for it. Try to answer these questions’” (Mark). Students, then, may view ongoing reflection as burdensome and simply “slap something together” to fulfill the project’s requirements rather than wholeheartedly engage in reflection-in-action opportunities. While Mark expresses that his vlogs’ content was perhaps non-reflection, he also follows up, saying, “I think I probably did them in the wrong way. But I don’t think it really added to anything I thought about my project. I think it was more just, ‘Alright, what do I have to do for this vlog?’” rather than *truly* reflecting on what I thought ...[and] what you were looking for, probably” (Mark). While he critiques the nature of the vlogs, he also recognizes his own agency in creating them, noting that he did not take advantage of these reflection opportunities or “truly reflect” as he created them. When given the chance to reflect on his own practices, Mark admits that reflection does not have to be viewed as “busy work” or a “pain,” but that it is up to the thinker to view and approach reflection “the right way.” Mark's ambivalence toward his earlier view of the vlogs as "busy work" demonstrates how engagement with reflection-in-action can prompt learning.

Thematic Analysis: Multimodal Listening

Many students noted that creating reflection vlogs were “different” than other kinds of reflection they experienced. Natalie notes that digitally reflecting is “not something that I typically do, so it’s nice to be able to just like talk about it and just like

let me ideas like flow through my words, so I thought it was kind of a cool concept to try something new and do something I haven't done before" (Natalie). Digital reflection for students was a novel experience, one that challenged students, by its very nature, reconsider the purposes, benefits, and limitations of reflection. While Violet did not enjoy the change of modality, she does admit that "it's probably good that we did these. It helped me think about my project and myself and my practices in a different light" (Violet). Students were able to re-evaluate their reflection and composing processes because they were challenged to enact their auditory and visual senses as they reflected. Students also often expressed that their previous experiences with reflection were unengaging and seemingly purposeless. Zoe describes the stifling silence of the environment she was asked to reflect in during high school: "They would just sit us down in a silent room and say 'reflect on your life,' and then we'd just sit there for a little while writing and we'd turn it in and then our teacher would say oh, 'I'm not going to look at this, I'm just going to make sure you did it' (Zoe). Zoe expresses that the reflection vlogs served as a way to enact her bodily senses and recalibrate her bodily memory to be immersed in the experience of learning and composing.

Students' vlogs also revealed that creating reflection vlogs allowed them to consider what kind of compositional choices they made more deeply and how these choices aligned with their overall goals for their campaign. This heightened sense of awareness indicates that the vlogs aided in students' development of their own sense of purpose and the kind of experiences they were crafting for their audiences. For Emory, the vlogs gave her the opportunity to both reflect-in-action and explore her reasoning for the choices she was making: "It just made me think about what I was going to do next

and *why* I did that” (Emory). Typical comments remarked that the reflection vlogs were a space to reflect on their reasoning and thought process behind the choices they were making, creating more purposeful and intentional rhetorical moves within their social media campaign. Henry notes that the vlogs “kept reminding me about the purpose of my project, why I was doing it, who I’m aiming for” (Henry), which directly influenced the compositional choices he made throughout his Twitter campaign. Students also found that their reflections “reminded” them of their project’s purpose. Because students were challenged to reflect-in-action, then, they were continually challenged to (re)immerse themselves in their multimodal compositions. This act of (re)immersion in the experience of reflecting and composing reminded students of their purposes. While Violet would have preferred to write her reflections, she still found that the vlogs immersed her thinking in essential questions about her project’s purpose. Violet stated that the prompts “always helped me think about my project in a more mindful way, and to actually think ‘What is the purpose of this? What should I be doing with this? Why am I doing this?’ which was really helpful for me” (Violet). By immersing herself in reflection throughout the project, Violet made more mindful, intentional choices as she crafted images and captions for her Instagram page.

Similarly, students articulated that the vlogs aided them in their understanding of the project itself and the decisions they were making. Emory found that while making her reflection vlogs, she analyzed her decisions more closely: “I liked dissecting the whole project and each post and exactly why I did each thing...It was just nice to know what I was just making my campaign about and actually focusing on what I’m doing instead of just posting just random posts that are all over the place” (Emory). When asked to

reflect on how the vlogs shaped how he viewed his project, Dan also responded that the reflection vlogs gave him “a deeper understanding of it [the project]” (Dan). John also emphasizes vlogs as a tool that built awareness of the decisions he was making: “I think that these vlogs were just beneficial to my project. They made me understand what I was doing a little bit better...[they] made me *more aware* of what I was doing” (John). John articulates that the vlogs developed a sense of awareness for his own compositional choices. Whether he was articulating that he better understood assignment expectations or the reasoning behind the decisions he was making, John still sheds light on how students might consider digital reflection as a way to immerse themselves in their own decision-making and create a greater sense of awareness around their own writerly choices for themselves. The words he strung together, the images he selected, and the format of his tweet were not thoughtlessly thrown together, but instead were carefully considered and crafted to fulfill his project’s purpose. Completing reflection vlogs opened a heightened sense of awareness, perhaps reinvigorating his senses and causing him to consider the compositional choices John was making.

Many students articulated that engaging in reflective thought in a digital context made them more alert to the value they placed in their compositions and increased their engagement with course material. In other words, their “bodily memory” became increasingly stimulated, and their senses were being retrained through the act of digitally reflecting. Natalie describes her increase engagement with reflection in this way: “I felt more involved because I was making videos about it and talking about it myself rather than just kind of putting things like into words on paper that’s not as meaningful. So, I feel like I was more involved and interested in my project by having to like make videos

about [it], which I thought was good” (Natalie). For Natalie, the reflection vlogs enacted her senses and body, challenging her to view reflection as a fully embodied learning experience. Rather than “putting words on paper,” she was fully present in the video she was creating. Her mouth physically moved, bringing her thoughts into reality in the immediate present. Skylar voiced similar affirmations, saying, “While I was saying the vlog, I was able to reflect on the process in my head and be like, ‘Oh, maybe I do want to change that...it was just another form of *rethinking my thoughts out loud*” (Skylar). Creating reflection vlogs allowed Skylar to engage with her thoughts even further; by hearing her own words out loud, she was able to consider her compositional choices, and in turn, transform into a more thoughtful composer of her multimodal project. While Zach, he expressed his dislike for social media advocacy and creating digital content in his reflection vlog, he expressed similar sentiments as Skylar. The vlogs did aid him in “critically thinking” about his project and the “why” behind his rhetorical decision making. He elaborates:

“You actually had to sit down, talk to myself basically in a camera and think about why I’m doing what I’m doing, the decisions I’m making, I have to think about what I’m gonna do in the future. I had to figure out a way to explain it all. And it really made me think deeper about the project and what I’m supposed to be doing. Because you know, you do a regular homework assignment and you might just sit there and just go through the motions, but with this, it’s um, actually making me sit back and reflect, which obviously is the point.”

Zach utilized the vlogs as a way to explain his thinking and give more attention and thought to his project. Compared to “regular homework” assignments, the vlogs

required him to “think harder” about his project and “come up for reasons why I'm doing things” (Zach), allowing him to generate more purposeful, reflective compositions. Interestingly, Zach also notes a deeper awareness of the purpose behind assigning reflection vlogs in the classroom. While perhaps written reflection opportunities would have allowed Zach to “go through the motions,” videoing himself caused him to “actually...sit back and reflect,” which he identifies as the purpose of the reflection vlogs as a whole. The act of recording himself, perhaps being fully present in the moment that he finds himself in, encourages him to engage in deeper reflective thought. His reflection also indicates that students who engage in digital reflection may find a new sense of awareness toward the pedagogical purposes of reflection, therefore valuing and participating in reflection opportunities wholeheartedly; in turn, they may engage in deeper reflective thought since the role of reflection as an integral part of the composition process becomes more evident to students.

Some participants found that completing reflection vlogs became an integral part of crafting their multimodal compositions and vice versa; the choices they were making for their social media accounts became opportunities for reflecting in their vlogs. In other words, reflecting and composing merged into a singular act, each piece affecting the way they created their project as a whole. Students, therefore, esthetically experience reflection and composition as an ongoing, continuous event. For Skylar, her reflection process began by ruminating on the vlogs’ prompts and finding how her Instagram account reflected her project’s purpose: “Before each reflection vlog, I would kind of make an outline in the questions in the prompt and then I would kind of match it up with how I wanted it to relate back to my project” (Skylar). This act of “matching up” content

with reflection questions indicates that Skylar valued the reflection vlogs for the way they shaped her thinking and allowed her to continuously reflect on her decision making, whether she was composing for her account or for the next reflection vlog. Howard, too, found that being asked to reflect on his decision-making process directly shaped the way he made these decisions and transformed his thinking into a more intentional, reflective state of mind. He describes his own thought process around creating his Twitter page, saying, “When I was creating the account, when I was using the hashtags, when I was using the visuals, when I was making a tweet, whenever I was doing anything in relation to the project, I was just constantly thinking, ‘Alright, which vlog am I going to talk about this in? How will I incorporate this into my vlogs?’ And then, obviously, when I’m doing the vlogs and just going ‘alright, what in my campaign relates to this vlog’” (Howard). Throughout the project, reflection and composing became inextricably linked for Howard. While creating material, he was engaging in reflective thinking so that he could be ready for the time he would be asked to reflect directly about the choices he was making. The reflection process is then circular. The more students reflect on the choices they are making, the more aware and reflective their thinking is in their decision-making process. For many students, the reflection vlogs engendered a greater sense of value and purpose to their course projects and heightened their sense of awareness around their compositional decision making. Reflective opportunities, then, should encourage students to view reflection as vital, inextricable part of the experience of learning—a process that pushes them to deeply consider themselves as composers and creators of fully immersive compositional events.

While many students found creating the vlogs aided them in determining their purpose and bringing awareness to their own writing processes, some students felt that the vlogs' limited their ability to determine their own purpose and goals for their projects. Sadie explains: "So, honestly, the vlogs didn't do a lot for me because it's just me, speaking out into the open and I feel like I wasn't able to get my vision and stuff. Like, I'm a very 'make a mood board' for something or make a 'PowerPoint' for something. So like, just this, like, speaking like, I don't do very well with audio things" (Sadie). According to Sadie's reflection, the vlogs were not a tool that aided her in generating the kind of reflective thinking that best benefitted her learning style, determining her purpose, or growing in metacognitive skills. "Speaking out into the open" did not translate into practical application for her social media campaign, nor did it aid in bringing awareness to her rhetorical decision making. Sadie also credits this disconnect particularly to the aural nature of the vlogs, saying, "I'm going to be honest, I did not like the reflection vlogs. *laughs* Um, for me, I think I'm such a... 'I have to write it down and see it' kind of person, like I'm so visual" (Sadie). Because the vlogs heavily rely on aural reflection, students may find that they cannot determine their purposes and goals as clearly as when they are free to perhaps determine their own methods for reflecting on their learning experiences. Fascinatingly, Sadie's reflection does reveal that she views the vlogs as a way someone could "get their vision" for their composition projects, though the vlogs were an ineffective way for her to do so. Instead, Sadie advocates for a multitude of tools, particularly visual, multimodal tools, such as creating mood boards or PowerPoint slides, to be utilized in order to achieve the kind of self-awareness and reflective thought that the vlogs can accomplish for other students. This kind of flexibility

may better serve the unique needs of each individual thinker and learner as they develop reflective thinking and grow in metacognition.

Students' vlogs indicated that they viewed digital reflection as a way to authentically represent themselves as composers. When creating reflection vlogs, many students found that their digital reflections were more "genuine" than written reflection opportunities. Henry explains, "Creating reflection vlogs, um, is very different than creating like written out reflections because written out reflections, I can take my time and really flesh it out, polish it, and make it look nice. But for reflection vlogs, I might rely on little to no notes or anything, so while reflection vlogs that are written down might be polished, as messy as these video logs can be, um, they can be a little more genuine, too, because that way you're basing it entirely off your memory and therefore, excuse me, therefore you're making it a lot more genuine" (Henry). Henry acknowledges that though the vlogs may be "messier," they enabled his reflection to be more authentic. Interestingly, throughout his vlogs, Henry adopted a more professional tone and ethos throughout his reflections than other participants, seemingly treating the reflection vlogs as short presentations, but in his final reflection, he articulates that he approached the vlogs differently than written reflections. Henry did not feel the need to prepare notes, polish, or "flesh out" his thinking for his reflection videos, which seems to have granted Henry the space to represent his thinking and decision-making process more authentically. Sadie, who expressed that she dislikes how informal the vlogs seemed to be admitted that "I guess I could have written something down for these reflection vlogs, but I really wanted it to be like me, like my actual thoughts, I guess" (Sadie). Similarly, Christopher noted that the vlogs were an opportunity to "immediately transcribe your

thoughts into words.” He expounds: “You can hear someone’s pure thoughts in video versus when someone has to write them down. Your thoughts slow down, your train of thought gets slowed down, because you have to write down one idea at a time, and then you might forget your train of thought, you forget where you are, so just like doing it like this is a lot more direct, you get a lot more back by reflecting with a video vlog”

(Christopher). Here, Christopher notes that the aural nature of the vlogs allow the audience to physically “hear someone’s pure thoughts,” allowing them direct access to the composer’s thoughts. Reflection vlogs also offer the composer the ability to formulate and articulate their thoughts simultaneously, or as Christopher phrases it, “transcribe thoughts into words.” Combined, this act of audience as listener and composer as transcriber creates a shared, embodied experience that has the potential to transform each person who interacts with the text.

Many students shared similar sentiments, connecting “genuine” expression with the vlog’s informal nature. Since students articulated that the vlogs as a way to convey their meaning as composers to their audience, they found that the vlogs were a more accessible way to “express their emotion.” Skylar’s vlog reveals that she found creating reflection videos more “interactive,” saying, “It was different than creating other reflection processes I have done just because usually, like, I have a reflection paper, reflection paragraph, that I usually write, which this [creating vlogs] is a lot more interactive. It allows me to express my emotion, kind of go off the formal aspect of writing like a paper about your reflection process, so I did really like this. It kind of gives you another chance to express yourself even more in this project” (Skylar). For Skylar, digitally reflecting allowed her to compose her reflections informally and express her

emotions, and herself, more authentically. Skylar's vlog suggests that students value digital reflection for its seemingly informal nature, which in turn may make reflection more genuine, purposeful, and meaningful to students because they can "express themselves" to their audience. Other students' reflections also indicate how this self-expression within digital reflection was valuable to them for the way it created a sense of "interaction. While Mark disliked creating vlogs, he does identify that they could be valuable for the way they open up a better understanding of writerly intent between the vlogger and the audience: "I also think that with videoing yourself doing it, you can, whoever's watching it can probably figure out what you're thinking more than just if you're writing because then how you're actually talking about something rather than figuring out the emotional aspect out of it, or like smaller things out of it that you can't really get out of writing or interpret from writing. I found it unique in that way" (Mark). Dan also found that reflecting orally and digitally made his intent more evident to those viewing the vlogs, saying, "It was a lot more interactive because it's different than writing because I can say whatever I want for this. I can get all my ideas out there. It's a lot easier to tell my actual feelings for what I'm saying and how I actually believe in it and like what my intentions are with what I say. It's still possible but it's a lot harder to do when it comes to a writing reflection" (Dan). Students are aware of the limitations of writing and moments of lost or missed lines of thinking between composer and audience; from students' perspectives, reflection vlogs have the potential to bridge this gap and create a more authentic connection between composer and audience, revealing to potential viewers students' emotions and intentions behind their compositional choices with more ease.

Many students articulated that viewing or seeing themselves through the vlogs played a role in this developed sense of interactivity. Macy's reflection named these occurrences, saying, "In general, you can have a better review of yourself because I feel like when you're talking to someone or when you're talking about it you get a better look at what you were trying to reflect on" (Macy). Macy confirms that for students, the vlogs served as creating a conversational reflection, where the composer exchanges their thought to a perceived audience, but her reflection also suggests that the visual component of the vlog strengthens or even reinvents the reflection process for students. The vlogs gave Macy a better "review of" herself and allowed her to gain a "better look" at what she was attempting to convey to her intended audience. In other words, the video reflections were an embodied experience, one where composer and audience both could gain a better understanding and awareness of the composer's intention and thought process. Because Macy was aware of herself as the composer, she was able to enter a more reflective, conversational, cognizant state. Additionally, Sadie disclosed that she was a visual learner. For this reason, the auditory nature of the vlogs frustrated her, and she articulated that would have rather seen the words she was composing on the page; however, her reflection revealed that she did find the visual components of the vlogs valuable after all: "I do think though that it has been really cool to like have this stream of consciousness. And also to be able to see like my face reactions...So that way I'm not covering up how I feel. I think like it was really cool to have this kind of interaction and for me to *see the way I'm phrasing stuff*" (Sadie). Though she could not see the words that made up her reflection, Sadie could see herself thinking, and therefore "see" her reflection. She describes reflection as a more embodied, experiential process, where her

reflection is more authentic (“I’m not covering up how I feel”) and she can physically visualize herself thinking.

Interestingly, embodied language emerged from the reflection vlogs when students considered the act of revisiting their previous reflection videos. Seeing themselves thinking about their projects in the past influenced their decision-making process in the present and as they reviewed their projects once it was completed. For Mark, “I could say one valuable thing about it [the vlogs] was that I could go back and watch these vlogs again and like maybe try and figure out what I was thinking about at the time” (Mark). His digital reflections enabled better access to understanding his previous compositional choices. Similarly, Emory found that her reflection vlogs were a tool for reviewing her choices and reflect even further on her past decisions, saying, “Now after making my vlogs, I like look back and see that I would do certain things differently” (Emory). Both Mark and Emory’s reflections suggest that digital reflection allows students to (re)view their compositions and bring about a stronger sense of awareness of themselves as writers. Zach’s reflection expounds on this idea further, saying, “I think it was also valuable for me to go back and see...cause you know when you don’t work on things for a couple of days you might kind of lose your path, but I can go back and watch the reflection vlogs and kind of see where I was at, and you know just get right back on track” (Zach). While this comment may seem more related to the reflection-in-action component of the vlog’s design, Zach’s reflection suggests that seeing his thoughts in the past gave validity to his thought process and presented a more focused path for composition. He could “see” this path that he laid out for himself and could continue it with seemingly more ease than reviewing text-based compositions.

Zach also attributes this (re)viewing as a tool for building his own sense of motivation, focus, and compositional awareness: “Like I wasn’t distracted at all, which I think was pretty valuable. I don’t know, it’s kind of cool to look back and see where like, like where I am right now and see where I was. It was pretty cool to watch that... It definitely made me think about it (my project) a lot harder. I’m just saying, like, usually with projects that I obviously don’t have the deepest amount of interest in...I mean, I don’t really put too much thought into it. I just kind of do the guidelines, make sure I get the grade and go, but this really made me sit down and reflect” (Zach). Students who considered the digital nature of their reflection concluded that seeing themselves and their bodies imbued a sense of authenticity and interaction between their audiences and themselves and pushed them as writers to (re)view themselves within their reflections in ways that written reflection seemingly lacks.

While many students sung the praises of digital reflection, some students noted the limitations of digitally reflecting and bringing awareness to their own bodies. While speaking out loud was a positive experience for some students, others found the idea of talking to themselves “uncomfortable” and “awkward.” While Mark admits that creating reflection vlogs wasn’t the “worst experience ever,” he did find that he felt “kind of awkward doing these vlogs. Like I just go sit in a room and hope other people don’t listen to me and talk about what I thought for these vlogs and for the project. It was definitely different. I never really videoed myself, just talking about what I thought about a process, or what I thought about anything, really. Normally, I don’t like doing videos of myself” (Mark). Mark’s vlog reveals that the physical environment that the composer occupies affects the way they reflect. Reflection vlogs, then, may increase students’ awareness of

the spaces their bodies occupy, though this may be an unfavorable result for students. Similarly, Skylar found that earlier in the reflection process, she felt “a little uncomfortable because usually, I don’t like go in front of the camera and like record myself and talk. So I kind of felt weird doing it. But now, it’s just kind of like how I would do it typing it out. But now it’s saying it, so it’s a lot easier” (Skylar). Skylar’s reflections reveal that students who are not used to “seeing themselves think” may be uncomfortable with the visibility of their own thoughts, whether through seeing themselves or being conscious of those around them.

Other students articulated that the pressure to “perform” inhibited them in enjoying the reflection process. Violet explains, “I’m kind of better at writing than I’m speaking. It kind of brought me back to when I did speech in high school because I was always a really good writer. I could write my speeches really well, but my performance was always the part that was lacking. So, it kind of brought me back to that like ‘Ugh, now I have to speak in front of someone again,’ which I enjoyed in high school but it was a whole other thing, you know. It was a lot of work” (Violet). While some students articulated that the embodied nature of the reflection allowed them to be more authentic and genuine, the performative nature of presenting in front of a perceived audience affected the way some students interacted with their reflections. Like Violet, Sadie also felt the need to present a “professional” image for her audience. She explains, “I don’t like how I’m really fidgety and you can tell it in the screen. I think it comes off not as professional and I like my writings to be professional. So that has been really weird for me” (Sadie). Howard also notes that he was conscious of his image as he created his vlogs. “A valuable thing about keeping a reflection vlog was that since I didn’t have to sit

down and write something, I had to like think of everything I had to say right then and there. Which as I'm sure you've noticed, I blundered a few times" (Howard). In another instance, he describes that the instantaneous and embodied nature of the vlogs encouraged him to think deeper about his project: "But I think having the vlogs there and having that 3-5 minutes that I will for sure have to fill up with me talking makes me want to do more within my actual project, if that makes sense. Like it makes me want to do more so that I don't look dumb in my vlog when there's two minutes left and I just have to ramble, you know?" The pressure of performing well for his audience to ensure that he "didn't look dumb" led Howard to produce deeper reflection. While Howard does not seem ashamed or embarrassed by his embodied performance, his reflection indicates that this is a possibility for students who are particularly self-conscious or struggle with performance-based anxiety. Students may struggle with creating genuine, purposeful reflection with the constraints of a time requirement and the visibility of their own bodies.

Findings & Implications for the First Year Writing Classroom

Reflection-in-Action

As I analyzed the consenting participants' vlogs, I found that many students had never experienced reflection as an ongoing, formative learning experience. Students articulated that they viewed past reflection as busy work, or an extra step exclusively completed at the end of their projects. Challenging students to complete reflection throughout the composing process allowed students to see the generative role that reflection can play as they write, as well as serve as accountability to their own goals and vision for the project. This finding aligns with previously established reflective practices that the field advocates for. As Yancey asserts, "reflection-in-action is the place where the different languages of writing and reflection come together, the place where reflective writers develop. In the language of rhetoric, reflection requires that students invent practice, and in so doing, they invent selves" (Reflection in Action 46). Instructors should continue to practice and develop strategies for implementing reflection-in-action opportunities for students to grow in their awareness of their own writing processes. Students expressed that they viewed the vlogs as "checkpoints" that offered opportunities to brainstorm and revise their multimodal compositions. This articulation of accountability and checkpoints indicates to me that students were growing in awareness of what's expected of them and what they wanted from themselves as composers—learning to be more sensitive and thoughtful composers. This shift in thinking allows students to consider their learning as an event that is meaningful, purposeful, intentional, and continual. Essentially, composing reflection videos allowed their compositions to transform into a significant learning occasions. Students articulated for themselves that

composing rhetorical reflection vlogs throughout their project allowed them to see their composition process as an experience or journey. They also expressed that reflecting in action unified reflection and composing as one singular act, creating a learning experience, rather than completing separate writing tasks for the purpose of completing a final project. The reflection they completed in the past influenced the choices they made in the present. In turn, their reflections impacted the choices they were to make in the future. As Silver notes, “the dialectical practices of projecting and reviewing enact...an ongoing and recursive metacognitive cycle of planning, monitoring, and evaluation around the range of writing tasks students encounter” (168). By creating reflection vlogs that challenge students to project, review, and reflect, students deepen their thinking and re-see reflection as an integral element to the experience of learning. As instructors, then, we should make room within our unit curriculum that challenges students to pause and reflect before, during, and after their compositions so that they might esthetically experience the learning that they are continually undergoing. Implementing reflection-in-action brings students’ awareness to their learning as an active, ongoing experience—one that is immersive, evolving, and transformative for their thinking and composing.

In order to create these esthetic learning experiences, then, first year composition instructors should offer students intentional, framed reflection opportunities that are ongoing throughout their composing process, ones that challenge students to consider specific topics that align with their values as composers and their goals for the project explicitly. I designed the reflection vlog prompts based on core rhetorical concepts that may impact the way students view their own writing and pushed them to consider their own compositional choices. When students articulate that framed prompts help them

consider their projects more deeply, then we should strive to scaffold the kind of reflective thought we want them to engage in through the questions we ask them to meditate on. These opportunities should give students the opportunity to practice reflection in action—in the formulation of new ideas, in the projection of their vision for their composition, and in the the consideration of past actions and their subsequent implications.

While students found that the ongoing nature of the reflection vlogs led to a deeper understanding of their project, some students still expressed that the vlogs were a “pain to do.” When students hesitate to take advantage of one reflection assignment, it is no wonder that they might balk at teachers assigning five separate reflection events. As Mark’s reflection revealed however, students need to wholeheartedly engage in reflection for themselves, cultivating their enthusiasm and curiosity for their compositions and the reflection they produce in light of their choices. To best cultivate wholeheartedness within the classroom and instill this value as a habit of mind necessary for their students’ learning, instructors should discuss the purpose of the reflection opportunities we offer in the classroom, particularly when completing “reflection-in-action” assignments. Students may find that they more naturally engage in reflection “wholeheartedly” when explicitly challenged to consider their learning in this manner. This finding has led me to dedicate a day in my current classroom to explicitly outline the purpose of reflection within a composing event. In addition to including Dewey’s three habits of mind in my syllabus as “guiding classroom values,” I also outline their definitions in class and ask students to discuss what these habits of mind might look like as they create their reflection vlogs for their writing projects. Students are often eager to contribute to this conversation, and it

offers students the ability to express their concerns about reflecting, both digitally and non-digitally, as well as answer for themselves the always circulating question in students' minds: "Why?" After completing initial reflection vlogs for their first writing assignment, I ask students to compare the reflection vlogs with other kinds of reflection they have conducted in the past, much like the final reflection vlog I assigned for this project. In a large class discussion, we then compare and contrast written and digital reflection together, working through the affordances and limitations of each approach. Students have articulated to me that, while at first they were unsure about reflecting digitally, they left the conversation with a better understanding of the purpose of reflection and what digital reflection offers them: an opportunity to fully immerse themselves in the experience of composing.

Multimodal Listening

By reflecting digitally, students engaged in the practice of multimodal listening, retraining their bodies to experience the act of reflection and learning through their senses. Students articulated that previous reflection experiences desensitized them to the potential reflection offers them as composers. As Ceraso notes, when consistently exposed to dull, "unesthetic" experiences, the body's senses are numbed, and the student cannot experience a learning event to its fullest potential. Their learning stagnates, and their body remembers this pattern and associates new experiences with this memory. Creating reflection vlogs brought a keener awareness to themselves as embodied composers, speaking their multimodal compositions into existence and thoughtfully listening to themselves and their own composing process. This retraining of the senses helped students reinvent the reflection process for themselves as a learning event that is

both continuous and fully immersive. Reflection requires the full person to be present and engaged in the experience of reflection. Students' sense of the spaces their bodies occupied while reflecting increased as well. First, students saw the vlogs as a digital, generative space where they could generate new material and brainstorm for their projects. The digital space where they could view their recordings became a physical environment that they occupied to enter a more reflective state and challenged them to esthetically experience their own compositions. Second, students had a heightened sense of awareness of the physical spaces they occupied as they recorded. While recording, their senses were engaged to consider what places they are inhabiting. Students chose to record in a variety of spaces from study rooms to dorm rooms to common spaces, and the environments they chose to occupy affected the way they composed and reflected. By creating reflection vlogs, students' reflections became an embodied, sensory process, where the environments they occupy affected the experience of reflecting.

Because the reflection vlogs are deeply rooted in the ecology the student inhabits, the embodied reflection assignment may not always be favorable. For example, I have seen students in odd, perhaps even embarrassing, environments. Students have recorded their vlogs everywhere from their sorority house's bathroom as they curl their hair for a formal event to their darkened kitchen table, where they have apologetically explained that they just got off work and their family is asleep in the rooms nearby. I'm also reminded of students' who hesitated to engage with digital reflection, but as they grew in familiarity with the mode of reflection, they found creating reflection vlogs drove them to consider their choices fully and deepened their understanding of their project; however, students articulated that the pressure to perform sometimes inhibited their ability to

engage with digital reflection fully, but after time, they found the reflection process became easier. For others, the embodied nature of the reflection vlogs may be problematic, for a variety of reasons, and may not engender the kind of reflection that trains students to be thoughtful composers and consumers of texts, both digital and non-digital. As Sadie points out, students have various learning styles that we as instructors should encourage our students to utilize when we design assignments. Specifically, students may find that written reflection allows them to articulate their thoughts clearly, transforming their thinking into intelligent action more effectively than being asked to present themselves and speak them out loud in a digital format. There were limitations to digital reflection. Students who struggled with staying focused and fleshing out their thoughts fully in oral form may have found that written reflection challenged them to focus and explicate their thinking more precisely. Because of these instances, I have adapted my classroom practices to first invite students to participate in digital reflection-in-action opportunities early on in the semester. Once they have completed initial vlogs, we then discuss digital reflection as described above, and I give students the choice to complete digital or written reflection from that point forward. Giving students this choice in how they choose to engage in reflection enhances their own agency and helps them practice listening to themselves as writers and composers. With this choice, students can better grow in rhetorical awareness of how to wholeheartedly engage with reflection and produce aware, alert, and cognizant reflection that better suits their individual learning needs. This approach also lends itself nicely to those students who have limited access to technology and/or have not acquired well-rounded digital literacy skills.

Students also articulated a heightened sense of awareness around the compositional choices they were making and the purposes of their projects. As they progressed throughout the project, they found themselves continually (re)immersed in their compositions, consistently reflecting upon the project and its purposes. Students grew as reflective thinkers, anticipating audiences' needs and questioning their compositional choices for themselves. I'm reminded of Howard and Skylar's reflections, who began to see their reflection and composition process as deeply connected, each piece working together to make up the experience of their project. By engaging in digital reflection, students' thinking was immersed in the practice of multimodal listening, creating a conversation between reflection opportunities and their projects and listening attentively to each component to create an esthetic and more complete learning experience. The reflection vlogs became a tool for transforming their composing process as an esthetic learning experience, one that reminded them of why they were creating their campaign as it unfolded. Based on these findings, one of the goals of implementing digital reflection in the first-year writing classroom should be to help students see that the act of reflecting and the act of composing can and should be inseparable events within the experience of learning. Reflection can serve as a way for students to listen to themselves and gain a greater sense of their values and purposes as thoughtful composers. For many students, the reflection vlogs engendered a greater sense of value and purpose to their course projects and heightened their sense of awareness around their compositional decision making. Reflective opportunities, then, should encourage students to view reflection as vital, inextricable part of the experience of learning—a process that pushes

them to deeply consider themselves as composers and creators of fully immersive compositional events.

This process of (re)immersion retrains students to be more attentive to the learning events that they are experiencing through their bodily senses. Students who demonstrated the best possible outcome of this assignment articulated that their level of engagement, both with the vlogs and the project in themselves, increased significantly when reflecting digitally. As Natalie's vlog suggests, the visual and auditory components of the vlogs seem to influence how students view reflection as an act itself. Rather than compose "words on a paper," they must physically present their thoughts, showcasing themselves as the creators of a digital text to an embodied audience. As Zach points out, this perceived interactivity of a digital, embodied exchange between composer and audience also affects the way students viewed the informal nature of the vlogs assigned to them. Many students viewed their reflections as more authentic and genuine because the audience could experience the composer as fully embodied creators who represented their thinking "messily" or "directly" through a spoken word. They could "transcribe their thoughts into words" to portray their intentions and emotions more accurately to their audiences and represent themselves as the composers of their multimodal texts. Students who considered the digital nature of their reflection concluded that seeing themselves and their bodies imbued a sense of authenticity and interaction between their audiences and themselves and pushed them as writers to (re)view themselves within their reflections in ways that written reflection seemingly lacks.

Furthermore, students found that the reflection vlogs gave themselves a better re(view) of themselves as thoughtful and reflective composers of their multimodal texts.

By seeing themselves reflect and think, reflection opportunities can be transformed into a vital practice that has the power to shape their compositions and themselves as writers and composers. Their bodily sense of sight immersed themselves in the conversation they were having with their own selves, the texts they were producing, and their perceived audience. By practicing multimodal listening, students were more likely to (re)view the reflections they previously created and listen to themselves as they currently experienced their composing and decision-making process. Hearing their own processes and goals served as a way to reorient their bodily memory; students' bodies were being retrained to hear their own words and revise, continue, or expand upon their previous thoughts. This act of (re)viewing asked students to consider what they would do in the future, aurally and visually crafting a path forward to bring their vision for their compositions to a reality. Additionally, seeing themselves in their reflection videos aided students in viewing themselves as composers with clear, conveyable, and conversational intentions behind their rhetorical decision making. As Sadie said, students can see themselves thinking and authentically represent their thinking and composing. Creating reflection vlogs and practicing digital, esthetic, and embodied reflection, then, can be a tool to retrain students' senses and develop thoughtful, reflective composers of multimodal texts, allowing them to esthetically experience their own writing.

While students appreciated and found reflection vlogs more accessible because of their informal nature, this curriculum design choices may have left more room for students to compose reflections that did not reach their full potential. Students who might have engaged in critical reflection may have only composed "reflection" because of their informal nature. As I transcribed students' vlogs, I did find moments where students lost

their train of thought, rambled, or did not explain their thinking thoroughly. Students yawned, became distracted by roommates, and trailed off, leaving their true intentions a mystery to me, and these reflections might be considered “non-reflection.” However, these distractions, these rambles or unfinished thoughts often occur regardless of mode and style of composing we assign. Physically seeing my students compose in action gave me a sense of what was going on in their writing processes. I could see the bags under their eyes as they trudged through their last few weeks of the semester, I could see the exchanges between friends that broke up their thinking, and I could see their cognitive wheels turning as they tried to place the right word they wanted to use and string their thoughts together. This context is typically lost in written form, and as Mark points out, “Whoever’s watching it [the vlog] can probably figure out what you’re thinking more than just if you’re writing” (Mark). Ultimately, the reflection vlogs implemented a sense of interactivity between composer and audience that was invaluable to me as an instructor, often giving me a better sense of students’ intended meaning while also giving students the opportunity to immerse themselves in their own reflections and transform a learning event to an esthetic experience.

By completing reflection vlogs, students articulated a heightened sense of awareness of themselves in a multitude of ways and grew in multimodal listening skills. As they engaged in embodied, holistic reflection opportunities, they found that they were questioning their own writing processes, transforming into more thoughtful, reflective composers and curators of esthetic learning experiences.

Conclusion

As the writing classroom becomes increasingly digitized, writing instructors are deeply considering how to design reflection opportunities that have the potential to transform students' perception of their learning and composing as an ongoing, immersive experience. These "esthetic" experiences must fully enact the composer's bodily senses in order to curate these transformational learning events. If we desire for students to see that writing and composing are vital, necessary practices with the potential to develop the whole person, then we must take up the idea that "the very act of living—of being a body interacting with the world—is an ongoing series of educational events" (Ceraso 110) in our curriculum design. To accomplish this immersion, reflection that is purposeful, meaningful, and engaging to students must be implemented in order to fortify the learning they are undergoing. To uncover the challenges and benefits of implementing digital reflection in the first-year writing classroom, I designed multimodal, rhetorically based reflection pieces for my students to complete throughout the course of their three-week project, challenging them to both view the composing and reflective process as recursive and generative and engage in reflective practices that engage the whole person – their bodily senses, their emotions and identities, and their spatial environments—through practicing multimodal listening. By analyzing fifteen students who were highly engaged in their reflection vlogs, I discovered that students' senses were retrained to become more alert and aware of the opportunities reflection offered, and through experiencing reflection as an immersive, holistic practice, their habits of mind and practice became more reflective and they transform into embodied thinkers and composers. As instructors, our aim as we develop our pedagogical practices are to design opportunities for digital reflection that engender these active, transformative learning

experiences within our students. When considering my digital, reflective assignment design, I found that one of the most common challenges of curriculum design still rang true: reflection vlogs could not serve every student in the way they need. I therefore advocate for a flexible model of curriculum design, one that promotes student choice and agency in the modality of the way they create their reflections and takes into account the role of accessibility and learning styles in the classroom. By designing embodied, sensory based reflection vlogs, I hope to equip students to see the potential in their own selves as thinkers and composers as they embark into an increasingly complex and digitally connected world. When we challenge our students to engage in the act of reflection, we equip them to experience—deeply and fully—the educational events that have the power to transform ourselves and the world around us.

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Appendix A

Final Project – Social Media Campaign

As a digital citizen, you have the power to use social media to change your community. For your final project, you will be creating a social media campaign to raise awareness on an issue that is of personal interest to you. This project should be relevant and exciting to **you**. What do you wish people knew more about? What perspectives on an issue do you want to bring to the conversation? You can choose which online platform you want to use, but be ready to explain why you chose that particular outlet in your **Rhetorical Reflection Vlogs**.

This could be the perfect way to transform your Op-Ed into another form for a different audience. Your campaign can be a Twitter account, a series of short videos that highlight different facets of your topic, a carefully designed Instagram story series and account, or something else that you can pitch to me.

Whatever you choose, your project must reflect diligent rhetorical thought, meaning it must be aware of its target audience and genre and it must use the principles that we've covered in class, such as logos, pathos, and ethos. Successful projects will be mindful of the necessary conventions that come with their chosen platform, i.e., if you choose Instagram, your campaign should strive to be visually engaging as it is informational.

Part 1: Rhetorical Reflection Vlogs (50 Points)

As you design your campaign, you will be actively reflecting on the process. To do this, you should create a virtual bulletin board on [Padlet](#) for your project with at least the five following vlog entries.

Entry 1: Online Audiences and Engagement: November 12th by midnight

This entry should analyze your target audience, what methods you are using to reach that audience, and what sort of online engagement you hope to have on your posts in a 3-5 minute video. What kind of people are likely to be interested in your campaign? What tools are you using that your platform offers that will allow you to reach more people? How have you established your ethos?

Entry 2: Discussion of Genre: November 17th by midnight

This entry should be a 3-5 minute video of why you chose a certain social media outlet. Why do you think your project fits the platform? What features does the site offer that will enhance your campaign (hashtags, likes, stories, etc.)?

Entry 3: Thinking About Visuals: November 22nd by midnight

This entry should be a 5-8 minute video that evaluates the visuals/features that similar campaigns have used on your chosen platform. What tactics work? What aren't as effective? What will you borrow from them for your own purposes or what have you learned NOT to do?

In 2-3 minutes of your vlog entry, discuss how you will ethically create effective images for your campaign. Are there any stereotypes or harmful images that you could unintentionally perpetuate in the community that you are representing? **Please include 3 links to similar campaigns on your Padlet page that served as a helpful guide or inspiration for your project.**

Entry 4: Your Project's Purpose: November 29th by midnight

This entry should explain your project's purpose in 5-8 minutes. Why is this project important? What is the project's purpose/goal? If your project has multiple elements/posts, what is your overarching message that is always communicated in each post you make? How are you communicating that message so that it's understandable to your audience? What appeals to logos and pathos are you making? **Please include 3-5 links to sources you've used to craft your argument on your Padlet page.**

Entry 5: The Overall Experience: December 10th by midnight

This entry should be a place to reflect on the experience of creating a social media campaign in words in 5-8 minutes. What did you learn from this process? About yourself? What does it mean to be a digital citizen? What is the future of your project? Of your interest in the topic you researched?

In 2-3 minutes of your entry, please describe your reflection process. How was creating reflection vlogs different from other kinds of reflection you've done? What was valuable about keeping a reflection vlog? How did it shape the way you thought about your project?

Part 2: The Campaign (100 Points)

Your social media campaign can be private or public, and you can set up a new account for the class to see, or you can use an existing account. It's up to you! Your campaign should have at least **four** posts or its equivalent. Since social media is heavily centered around images, one of your posts should include a visual that you have created using a site like Canva or an app like PicMonkey. This part of the project will look different depending on the platform that you use. You could create a blog and write four entries with a correlating graphic for one post, you could create 2 Instagram posts and 2 Instagram infographic stories, you could create four Facebook posts, or four Twitter streams with some sort of media attached to them. You can always pitch me other ideas or inquire whether something you want to do fulfills the requirement of 4 posts.

Examples of Social Media Campaigns:

Instagram

@thatgoodgrief
@periodmovement
@outdooradvocacy

@Move the World

#RealFoodSunday - @TillamookDairy
#ALSIceBucketChallenge

Twitter

Blogs/Vlogs

www.elladawson.com

www.fightthenewdrug.org/blog

[Uplift- Online Communities Against Sexual Violence](#)

Part 3: Presentation Guidelines (25 Points)

In 5-10 minutes, you will present your projects to the class. First, introduce the issue that you decided to write about. What's the problem and why did you choose to write about it? Then, you will show us your project. If you have longer content, such as a video series or podcast, you should choose a five-minute portion for us that gives us a good idea about what your project was about. For shorter content, we should see your profile and get an overview of your posts. Choose one post to fully explain your rhetorical choices.

Please note: selecting earlier Presentation Days does not mean that your project must be complete. Your project in full is due by December 10th at 11:59PM regardless of the time of your presentation.

Part 4: Presentation Attendance (25 Points)

For each presentation you attend, you will earn 1 point toward this category. If there are only 22 students in the class, then you have 3 presentation points that are free to you, meaning you can miss 3 without penalty. The Golden Rule applies here: be the audience you want to have for your presentation. Being present, engaged, and respectful to your peers as they present is critical. Any disruptive behavior such as cell phone use, talking, or leaving in the middle of a presentation may result in losing the points you would have earned for attending.