MULTIMODALITY IN FOCUS: EXPLICIT TEACHING, TRANSFER, AND

FIRST-YEAR COMPOSITION

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ABSTRACT

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This project investigates how multimodality is taught and learned in the context of two sections of accelerated first-year composition (English 104) at Humboldt State University. The project sought to ascertain whether multimodality should be included as a learning outcome for the Composition and Rhetoric program by examining the reflective writing of students in both class sections and interviewing both instructors. The reflective writing and interview responses were then coded with responses being sorted into categories corresponding to the writing knowledge concepts that the students and teachers discussed. Those categories included genre, rhetoric, discourse, literacy, and multimodality. Once sorted, the coded excerpts were qualitatively analyzed and the following qualitative correlations were found: that students in Humboldt State's English 104 classes come to the university with a considerable amount of prior knowledge about writing concepts, including multimodality, that this prior knowledge is tacit, and students lack a vocabulary to describe it, that instructors explicitly teach the other four concepts of genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy, that multimodality was not explicitly taught in these two sections of English 104, that students' tacit knowledge of genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy become explicit, nameable knowledge through their participation

in English 104, and that multimodality does not. Continued qualitative analysis of teacher interview responses yields reasons as to why multimodality is not explicitly taught and learned in English 104 at HSU and generates suggestions as to how this could be changed so that students leave English 104 with a scholarly, conceptual, and transferable knowledge of multimodality.

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INTRODUCTION

The past year has provided us with an interesting opportunity to observe the implications of moving as much of our lives online as we possibly could. The coronavirus pandemic has had far-reaching implications for politics, sports, business, personal relationships, and of course education. As I write this introduction, I am concluding the first year that I have spent receiving education in a purely online context, and I am one of millions of students at all levels who have recently concluded a similar experience. In my case, the pandemic and ensuing necessary safety measures had a drastic effect on the research I had planned for my master's project. Originally, this project was intended to pilot a test curriculum incorporating multimodal assignments into an accelerated first-year composition course (English 104) at Humboldt State University (HSU). While the body of scholarly work that defines and analyzes multimodality is large and interdisciplinary, there is significantly less pedagogical research into how multimodality can be applied in the classroom. My intention in designing the original project was to contribute to the small but growing body of scholarly work that examines the intersection of writing pedagogy with multimodality. This research would have taken place in a section of English 104 that I would have instructed as a Graduate Teaching Assistant, and the relevance of its findings would have been limited to that context. However, they might still have provided ideas, examples, and points for discussion among HSU faculty and other writing instructors. In designing this project, I had hoped to contribute an answer to the call made by Santosh Khadka and J.C. Lee in the

introduction to *Bridging the Multimodal Gap*, a collection of essays that "bring scholarly

frameworks and practices of multimodality together and offer theoretically grounded

strategies, suggestions, and best practices for teachers and scholars" (8). In their

"Introduction," Khadka and Lee note that "the theoretical conversations around

multimodal composing are already quite sophisticated in some respects, but the

pedagogical translation of those conversations has not reached the same level," and that

"implementation of multimodal instruction has remained nominal in many writing

programs." (3,5). Inspired by some of the examples I read in *Bridging the Multimodal

Gap*, I began designing a research project to implement and analyze the pedagogical

efficiency of assigning students multimodal work while also teaching students to

conceptualize multimodality as they are taught to do with existing course concepts like

genre, rhetoric, or literacy. Unfortunately, low enrollment due to the health concerns of

the pandemic, reluctance to participate in online education, and financial uncertainty due

to widespread loss of employment caused my section of English 104 to be cancelled.

In order to continue my research into multimodality and complete my master's

project, I was placed in an instructional aid within two sections of first year

composition taught by experienced instructors. I modified my original research plan to

explore these instructors' approaches to teaching multimodality by interviewing them and

reading their students' reflective writing. While this came at the expense of control over

if, when, and how multimodality was discussed in these classes, it still provided me with

a compelling sample of data on how multimodality is taught, learned, and applied in

HSU's accelerated first-year writing course. I obtained consent to gather data from the

reflective writing of students in these sections and to interview the instructors after the semester. Because I was not creating the course curriculum, I lost the ability to gather data on the specific multimodal assignment designs I had planned for the course I would have taught. Being out of a teaching position, I found myself unable to apply any of the pedagogical techniques for teaching multimodality that I had learned through reading the scholars whose work was collected in *Bridging the Multimodal Gap*. During the COVID-19 pandemic, while living and studying under stay-at-home orders, the connections between multimodality and digitality became urgently apparent. The need for not only multimodal instruction, but pedagogies to teach multimodality conceptually, was visible during the online semester. Accordingly, my investigation became more general, and I explored how multimodality was being addressed in the class sections I observed, what students had to say about multimodality, and what instructors thought about teaching multimodal composition.

Through my observations, I was able to determine that multimodality is an area of prior knowledge that most of HSU's incoming freshmen bring to the classroom in the form of experiential, participatory know-how, which they have primarily attained through extra-curricular participation in online discourse. Identifying multimodality as an area of prior knowledge is important in connecting multimodality focused scholarship to pedagogy, because it indicates that multimodality comprises a body of composition knowledge with the potential to transfer beyond the composition classroom. It follows that making the most of students' prior knowledge of multimodal composition should be part of first-year composition pedagogy because prior knowledge is so important to

transfer and transfer is the goal of the HSU composition program. This and other findings regarding how multimodality is and can further be incorporated into HSU's first-year composition pedagogy are explained thoroughly in the Results and Discussion sections of this project. Before proceeding to review the literature, where I trace the development of scholarly perspectives on multimodality through the history of computer use in the humanities, I will first provide the definitions of "multimodality" and "transfer" that have informed my research and analysis. I will then review relevant work by other scholars in the related fields of Digital Humanities and Composition and Rhetoric, then provide a description of my research methods, thoroughly present their results, and finally discuss what conclusions I have drawn from my research.

This project uses a definition for multimodality aligned to the broad and nuanced conceptualization presented in Santosh Khadka and J.C. Lee's introduction to *Bridging the Multimodal Gap*, a collection of essays on multimodal pedagogy which they co-edited. Khadka and Lee offer a broad and simple definition of multimodality as "meaning-making practices in visual, auditory, behavioral and spatial modes" (3). This definition, though brief, is rich with meaning. Firstly, it tells us multimodality is rhetorical; it deals with "meaning-making practices." Secondly, this definition lists modes of communication rather than sensory inputs, as indicated by the inclusion of behavioral and spatial modes. Behavioral modes might be theorized to include aspects of communication such as gesture and posture, while spatial modes include elements of design such as placement, access, and grouping. Thirdly, this definition of multimodality is not restricted to digital tools or what we traditionally think of as "multimedia"

technologies. Khadka and Lee's definition recognizes the fact that all composition is in truth multimodal and leaves open the possibility of discussing multimodality in non-digital contexts. For the purposes of this project, however, multimodality is examined in an exclusively online and digital setting because of the necessity of conducting all class activities virtually due to the pandemic. While scholarly consensus tells us that multimodality and digitality are not the same, and in fact that all texts are to some degree multimodal, the extent to which multimodality can be incorporated into composition through digital platforms, the ubiquitous engagement of ourselves and our students in online activities, and the necessity of using online tools even more than normal due to the COVID-19 lockdown have all lead me to focus this project around multimodality only as it exists in digital spaces. Khadka and Lee are aware of this, pointing out that "the field of digital rhetorics in general has framed multimodal writing as composing with digital technologies. However, they also acknowledge the work of scholars such as Jody Shipka who are "cautious about not conflating multimodal with digital" (Khadka and Lee, 6). Therefore, while I have focused this project on multimodality that occurs through digital technology, I have done so understanding that scholars have already demonstrated how multimodality is not exclusive to digital tools, and I have not assumed that to be the case when analyzing the classroom artifacts that provided my data.

The definition of "transfer" that informs this project is drawn from the National Research Council's 2000 publication *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School: Expanded Edition.* This definition is simple and widespread; transfer is defined as "the ability to extend what has been learned in one context to new contexts" (National

Research Council, 51). However, the National Research Council gives several explanatory notes that focus their concept of transfer in ways that are useful to this project. Specifically, they tell us that "Transfer is best viewed as an active, dynamic process rather than a passive end-product of a particular set of learning experiences," and that "All new learning involves transfer based on previous learning, and this fact has important implications for the design of instruction that helps students learn" (53). This concept of transfer was crucial to both my original project design and the current design I reimagined to meet the challenge of completing my work in lockdown. Transfer as an active process rather than a passive result provided a rationale for my original design which would have asked students to create multimodally in response to the curriculum I had envisioned. My goal was that students would transfer out of my first-year composition class with both practical and theoretical knowledge about multimodality that had been facilitated by their creating multimodal responses to assignments, reflecting on their composition processes, and engaging scholarly perspectives to develop transferable, conceptual knowledge of multimodality. Once the pandemic occurred I kept the connections between multimodality and transfer in mind as I redesigned the project. Without the authority to design the curriculum, I found myself stepping back from my original research questions, which focused their inquiry on podcasting, to conduct a more general investigation into multimodality in HSU's first-year composition program.

I wanted to get a picture of whether and how HSU students conceive of multimodality, and also how it is presented and taught by HSU instructors. I recognized that my original project design was based on the assumption that students in English 104

would come to class with significant experience in multimodal composition, and this

assumption should be interrogated before it is used to develop curricula. Therefore, I

decided to gather data on multimodality as it occurs in English 104 without being

explicitly taught. Gathering this data would help make the argument for including

multimodality as a stated learning objective for the composition program, or not, as the

case might have been. What I discovered was that for HSU students multimodality is a

familiar but unnamed concept. Even by the end of their courses, though they understand

and discuss multimodal rhetoric, they do not identify it using scholarly terminology or

seem to recognize it as knowledge that can be categorized and analyzed. This was an

encouraging finding for instructors who want to incorporate more multimodal work and

scholarly ideas about multimodality into their classes, because it implies that students

have prior knowledge of multimodality much as they do of other course concepts such as

genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy. While students cannot identify and discuss these

areas of writing knowledge when they first arrive at HSU, they gain the vocabulary and

conceptual understandings to do so by the end of their first semester. This is because

these concepts are named and taught explicitly with readings, assignments, reflective

writing, and class discussions. Multimodality, were it taught in a similar way, would

become transferable writing knowledge that students could apply in their future college

courses and professional lives.

> After gathering and analyzing this data, I have come to believe that multimodality

should be added to the HSU first-year composition program's learning outcomes, with

teachers being given the freedom to decide how and to what extent it should be included

in their curricula. Along with Khadka and Lee, I believe that it is imperative for composition instructors to teach multimodal composition and for students to acquire skills in creating and understanding multimodal work. However, I also recognize that this places an additional burden on composition faculty, and advocate a flexible approach of experimentation and peer collaboration as the best way to keep pace with the swiftly changing digital technology landscape and the possibilities for multimodal expression it offers. My own perspective in designing and carrying out this research has been informed by scholars who have broadly investigated the role of computers in college humanities classrooms, including first-year composition, throughout the past three decades. In order to situate my research and provide frameworks that ground both my methodology and findings in theory, I will proceed to reviewing the literature these scholars produced.

Review of the Literature

Whether called "digital humanities," "new media studies," "humanities computing," or something else, the study of how writing and rhetorical knowledge intersects with computers and digital technology is an emerging and evolving field. As the last sentence implies, the terms and descriptors of this academic endeavor are still in the process of being refined and standardized. What scholars who study this material call themselves, and what areas of the vast potential field of study they focus on, has varied, evolving into a general consensus over the past two decades but still exhibiting variety

among publications and institutions. Multimodality, as an aspect of digital communication, has become ubiquitous to the extent that talking about digital technologies and writing at all seems impossible without either addressing or pointing to it on some level. However, the diversity of research interests within the field means that scholars may sometimes write about multimodality without describing it as such or choosing to centralize it in their work. For that reason, the literature which follows has selected texts of historical significance to digital humanities scholarship as well as those which specifically focus on multimodal rhetoric, first-year composition, or ideally both. They have been organized chronologically, to provide a sense of how the scholarship on these topics has grown, changed, and refocused over the past two decades.

In 2004, the Conference on College Composition and Communication of the National Council of Teachers of English (the same organization who published Multiliteracies for a Digital Age) appointed a committee whose purpose was "to create a position statement governing the teaching, learning, and assessing of writing in digital environments" (Sidler, 15). This committee produced a statement that has provided guidelines for writing teachers and program administrators trying to adapt their pedagogy, curricula, and assessment practices to account for the new and changing realities of digital communication technologies and their rhetorical implications. This statement recognizes that the expanding focus of writing instruction must "include not one but two literacies: a literacy of print and a literacy of the screen. In addition, work in one medium is used to enhance learning in the other" (CCCC, 16). Since the statement is essentially instructions, the committee does not engage in reflection on these points, but

clearly, they believe that print and digital literacies are mutually beneficial and share many learnable aspects of knowledge and practice. This attitude towards digital literacy has been taken up and expanded by the scholars named below, as well as others in digital humanities and related fields.

The transition from scholarly consensus to pedagogical reality, however, has been slower, and research and experimentation continues to adapt and re-imagine how to teach multiple literacies in various real-life institutional contexts. Though every word of the CCCC Statement is significant, the following excerpt is particularly relevant to this project. "The foundation for teaching writing digitally must be university, college, department, program, and course learning goals or outcomes. These outcomes should reflect current knowledge in the field (such as those articulated in the "WPA Outcomes Statement"), as well as the needs of students" (16). These sentences are particularly important to my research since this project asks whether knowledge of multimodality should be added to the Humboldt State Composition and Rhetoric Program's learning outcomes. As I will show, such an outcome would indeed meet the needs of students while aligning closely with cutting-edge scholarly recommendations.

In 2004, the same year that the CCCC Statement was issued, Stuart Selber published *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* - a key text for scholars of digital humanities. It is a significant milestone in scholarship on computers in the teaching of writing, because Selber was the first to take what he terms a "postcritical approach," applying data and theory not to the question of whether computers belong in the composition classroom, but to how best to use them and why. Selber begins by inviting us to

reimagine computer literacy not simply as the technical skills necessary to operate

hardware and software (though that is certainly part of it), but as a complex concept that

acknowledges computers' significance as cultural artifacts and their communicative role

as multimodal platforms, or what Selber calls "hypertextual media." Selber names these

three domains of knowledge as functional, critical, and rhetorical literacy, respectively

(24). By adding critical and rhetorical literacy to the concept of computer literacy, Selber

places computer literacies within the domain of humanities education, with the goal of

providing writing and communication instructors with guidance and some adaptable

structures that they can use to develop the multiple literacies their students need to

interpret and produce digital texts (29). Selber maintains a focus on literacy, and

therefore treats students more as navigators of the online rhetorical landscape than as

producers. Additionally, Selber does not engage in much if any explicit reflection on

multimodality. In fact, the word "multimodality" is not used in Multiliteracies for a

Digital Age, though multimodality is present conceptually in, for example, Selber's

thorough discussion of hypertext. More importantly, Selber's book situates the writing

instructor and student as individuals who are capable of working towards systemic

changes in their institutions and in society at large, and Selber's insistence on viewing

computers as objects of rhetorical significance that must be considered from a humanistic

perspective provides a foundation for the discussion of multimodal communication

technologies through a rhetorical lens. Indeed, Stuart Selber is frequently cited by many

of the other authors whose work frames and guides this project.

A few years later, in 2008, scholars from the related discipline of digital humanities and writing studies collaborated on Computers in the Composition Classroom, another edited collection that examined the ever-growing place for computers in composition instruction. This collection includes articles that historicize the role of computers in composition, interrogate issues of literacy and access, explore how computer networks facilitate and shape writers' identities, affect writers' processes, and provide rhetorical options that pen-and-paper writing do not. It also contains several case studies in computer-based composition pedagogy. Of particular interest for this research are John M. Slatin's "Reading Hypertext," Patricia Webb Peterson's "The Debate About Online Learning," and Janet M. Eldred's "Pedagogy in the Computer-networked Classroom." Slatin explores and defines the differences between traditional print and hypertext, pointing out that hypertext is sufficiently different from plain text as to be a new media altogether. A new media requires a new rhetoric, and describing that rhetoric is Slatin's task in "Reading Hypertext." Slating ties the history of how text and hypertext are read to the technologies that bring them into existence.

Pointing out that rhetoric has historically been concerned with the content of texts rather than the technologies of their production, Slatin posits "one reason for this indifference is that the technology is so mature that it's simply taken for granted, that it is essentially invisible *as* technology" (168). Reminding us that at one point writing "itself was a radically innovative technology and was regarded as such," Slatin calls attention to the emergent nature of computer technologies. "All indications," he writes "are that accelerating change is an inherent characteristic of this technology. It may *never* stabilize.

Thus, rhetoric for hypertext cannot afford to disregard the technological substrate upon which composition and reading depend" (168, emph. original). On this point, Slatin shows himself to be in agreement with Selber. Regarding hypertext, technical and rhetorical computer literacy are inherently tied due to the constantly emergent nature of communications software and hardware. Therefore, writing teachers should address computer literacy, which this project and a growing consensus among scholarly researchers suggest may be assisted by including multimodal assignments in their curricula and, very importantly, teaching multimodality explicitly.

Since explicit teaching is so important for the comprehension of complex subjects like multimodality, online learning spaces present unique problems in knowledge transfer. This was expressed by both teachers and students who participated in my research, and has already been observed by scholars and instructors working in online settings. Peterson's "The Debate About Online Learning" examines the question of what we lose and what we gain by moving writing classes online, arguing that writing teachers need to be vocal in these debates since they are the ones who will do the teaching, whether in-person or through distance learning. This debate has of course become all the more pressing in the era of the coronavirus. Peterson identifies three key issues in the debate about online education: teachers' roles, educational goals, and student learning. Regarding teachers' roles, Peterson first contrasts an "unbundling" model, in which "content experts" create courses that are delivered to students by facilitating faculty using standardized teaching methods, with a model in which teachers design and facilitate their own courses and are in always in contact with their students (374-5). Peterson points out

that many university faculty fear the first model's vulnerability to capitalistic exploitation, and can therefore be resistant to online learning. The second model, however, requires teachers to learn new methods and familiarize themselves with teaching in new (virtual) environments.

On the issue of educational goals, Peterson brings up the concept of lifelong learning, which "has become the buzz phrase of the newly re-engineered higher-education system" (377). While pointing out that online education has often been touted as a solution to providing people who have historically been unable to access higher education with lifelong learning, Peterson also troubles this point by raising the questions of "who will get to define what counts as education in this new lifelong-learning framework and what will the primary goals be?" (378). In response, she once again recommends rejecting a "dualistic response to distance-learning technologies" and advocates a critical engagement with technology that depends on continual instructor education. Finally, on the issue of student learning Peterson again sets up and then rejects a dichotomy between the position that distance-learning benefits students and the opposite perspective, that it makes learning harder (380-1). A consistent aspect of Peterson' argument is that "divisive positions...simplify complex issues about teaching and learning" (382). In conclusion, she once again invites writing teachers to take a critical stance on the issues impacting distance learning, and to position ourselves "at the heart of the debate about if, how, and when to use distance-learning technologies in higher education" (382). Taking up such a position requires teachers to continually educate themselves about new communication technologies and the rhetorical potential

they offer. As an (erstwhile) teacher-led inquiry into the potential of multimodal work in first-year writing classrooms, this project is an example of the kind of work necessary to take such a position in the debate about online education, and therefore to preserve agency for writing teachers and their students.

"Pedagogy in the Computer-networked Classroom" discusses how best to integrate technology with composition pedagogy. Eldred presents computer networks as a powerful means for achieving the goal of teaching composition as a public act. Eldred notes that this has become a widespread goal of writing classes but argues that the potential of public writing can only be fulfilled if we are aware of its strengths and weaknesses and plan our courses accordingly. In order to tap the full potential of networking, Eldred tells us, instructors need to carefully attend to four areas in their curriculum planning: "(1) Choice of Technology, (2) Ease of Use, (3) Participation, and (4) Audience Awareness" (240). Regarding choice of technology, Eldred discusses email, file-sharing, and bulletin boards, technologies which are all now ubiquitous in education. Eldred also writes that "*synchronous conferencing* (conferencing between individuals all logged on at once) is a promising technology for the writing classroom," presciently anticipating the Zoom era we are now living through.

Much of what Eldred covers regarding ease of use relates to software that was available in 2008, the year "Pedagogy" was written, and is no longer very relevant other than as a historical reference, but his observations on participation are more closely connected to student dispositions than technical possibilities, and have held up better. Eldred recognizes the difficulty of encouraging participation in online classrooms, where

"many students who are simply more accustomed to listening than to speaking will participate quietly." He offers some guidelines to increase student participation, such as setting minimum lengths for responses, integrating networked peer responses, and building participation into assessment (245). These principles remain as useful to teachers now as they were when Eldred wrote "Pedagogy," as do his suggestions for promoting audience awareness. Eldred draws on scholarship that claims networks can hinder communication among users to caution us that networking alone is not a wonder drug for enhancing rhetorical awareness (246). He again provides some guidelines to help teachers use networking to develop rather than limit audience awareness, such as making students introduce themselves to each other, requiring peer-to-peer responses, and first modeling then having students step into the role of discussion moderator (247). Eldred made points about pedagogy in online settings that are still accurate thirteen years later, showing us that there are sound teaching principles which can provide us with reference points for lesson planning and curriculum design even as technology continues to change around us at an accelerating rate.

Also writing in 2008, Daniel Anderson gave us some perspectives on how to tap into the potential of both public writing and multimodality in writing classrooms. "The Low Bridge to High Benefits: Entry-Level Multimedia, Literacies, and Motivation" appeared in volume 25, number 1 of Computers and Composition. In this article, Anderson shares observations on "low-bridge approaches to multimedia in the writing classroom," which he defined as methods which "rely on familiar literacies, free consumer-level software, and remix uses of materials to facilitate student production of

new media compositions" (40). Anderson describes a "studio-based" model of text production in which students work together in their classroom to "develop technical skills and multiple literacies," through technologies that can be accessed at home as well (60). This article thus addresses a key problem of access that often plagues digital humanities pedagogy, particularly pedagogies that ask students to interpret or produce multimodal texts. Simply put, not everyone has access to multimodal composing tools, and all such tools are not created equal. By using free software available to the general public, Anderson's model puts students on an equal playing field, increases the likelihood of access at home, and at least promises access in the classroom or "studio." However, this model, which emphasizes "hands-on time in class for students to work together" can be troubled by moves to online contexts such as that precipitated by the recent coronavirus pandemic (60).

Before moving on to the scholarship of the 2010s, which incorporates scholarly perspectives on transfer as well as computers in composition, I would like to return to the National Research Council and the definition of transfer I have adopted for this project. Chapter 3 of *How People* Learn provides us with some useful guiding principles about transfer that we can use to frame multimodality as an area of transferable knowledge. One of the principles derived by the National Research Council is that "all new learning involves transfer based on previous learning, and this fact has important implications for the design of instruction that helps students learn" (53). Some of these important implications begin to take shape when we consider the presence of multimodal compositions in students' pre-college lives. Since most incoming students have

considerable experience as consumers, if not also as producers, of multimodal texts, it stands to reason that designing instruction around multimodality would facilitate transfer well. The council also tells us that the extent of mastery of a subject in a previous context is predictive of the degree of success a student will have in ensuing situations which draw on that skillset (53-4). This principle has guided changes in education in the past. For example, the advent of word processing at home through the proliferation of the personal computer in the 1990s led to an expectation that students turn in typed texts, and a subsequent move towards grade-school instruction in typing rather than the previously dominant production practice of handwriting. Similarly, the advent of internet technologies, social media, and comparatively widespread access to broadband allows today's students to familiarize themselves with consuming and in some cases producing multimodal texts at home throughout their primary and secondary school education. It is therefore reasonable to speculate that pedagogies which include multimodal instruction, ask students to produce multimodal work, and teach multimodality as a scholarly concept would fit present-day college students well and presumably aid in transfer.

In the early 2010s, scholars continued to engage directly with multimodal pedagogies and produce research from their efforts. Two such scholars are Olin Bjork and Moe Folk, who both wrote articles on multimodal pedagogy in edited collections that were published in 2012 and 2013, respectively. Bjork's "Digital Humanities and the First-Year Writing Course," appearing in Digital Humanities Pedagogy, Bjork first outlines a history of the digital humanities and the related field of the use of computers in composition, making a distinction that focuses on whether computers are used by

students primarily for text discovery and analysis (such as text mining) or text production (Bjork, 99-109). He then presents an example of multimodal pedagogy that he applied in his first-year writing course at Georgia Tech in 2010.

Bjork had the students in this course perform both qualitative and quantitative research projects that asked them to engage with both consumption and production of multimodal texts. The qualitative project involved selecting a humanities text and developing a "multimedia edition with annotations, images, and audio or video." For the quantitative project "students assembled a corpus of humanities texts, which they then mined with electronic text-analysis tools to find patterns or anomalies" (Bjork, 110). Bjork's multimodal assignments asked students to not only show multiple literacies by analyzing a text using digital tools, they also asked for multimodal rhetorical awareness by requiring students to present a print text using digital platforms that engage visual and aural modes of communication. While Bjork's is by no means the only model for creating multimodal assignments, his description of the projects and their results are thorough, and he relates an interesting finding from his admittedly experimental pedagogy. "Of the two projects," he writes, "the qualitative was less successful from a technical standpoint due to the limitations of" the design platform that he had his students use. However, he also observed that "The qualitative project did...deliver on some of its pedagogical objectives. Students learned to apply the principles of intellectual property, the fair use doctrine, and the public domain. They also developed rough and ready distinctions between an edition, a text, and a work" (Bjork, 111). These findings tell us that the pedagogical value of incorporating multimodal work into first-year writing curriculum comes from process and

reflection rather than the texts that students ultimately produce, a finding that aligns with the perspectives of the Humboldt State first-year composition instructors who were interviewed for this project.

Moe Folk of Kutztown University is another scholar who has written a deep analysis of multimodality through the lens of style. In 2013, Moe Folk wrote "Multimodal Style and the Evolution of Digital Writing Pedagogy," which appeared as a chapter in the edited collection The Centrality of Style, edited by Mike Duncan and Star A. Vanguri. Folk describes style as "a composer making choices, ultimately revealing patterns and providing style in the sense of a distinct manner of composing something," and uses this definition as platform from which to posit that multimodal composing is nearly infinitely more complex than traditional composition in print, and therefore offers an extremely rich field for stylistic interpretation and analysis (213). After all, as Folk points out, there are many more possible choices available to multimodal composers, and therefore a greater variety of possible styles. This wide-open range of possibilities, writes Folk, points "to the necessity of instructor expertise in digital production and analysis." However, Folk also observes that instructor expertise in these areas is not easy to develop in "an area that covers a broad range of meaning-making elements and evolves daily" (233-4). This is noted by the HSU first-year composition instructors in their interview responses, and possibilities for addressing this difficulty have been explored by scholars conducting programmatic research at HSU, which will be briefly described later in this review of relevant literature.

Another scholar with a pertinent perspective to share on multimodal pedagogy is Kristine L. Blair of Bowling Green State University, who wrote the chapter "Teaching Multimodal Assignments in OWI Contexts" for the edited collection Foundational Practices of Online Writing Instruction, edited by Beth L. Hewett et al. Blair's insights into multimodal teaching in OWI (online writing instruction) situations are of particular relevance to this project because of the necessity of moving all instruction online for the Fall 2020 semester because of the coronavirus pandemic. In her chapter, Blair discusses principles to guide multimodal pedagogy in online contexts, and then provides multiple example assignments that instructors could adapt to their courses. In her conclusions, Blair reminds us that it is very important to consider "the whys of multimodal composing," and to ask students to do the same. These considerations help us move beyond a view of multimodal literacy as a passive, interpretive skill we want students to have as critically thinking citizens, and "allows students to deploy multimodal genres to critically and rhetorically explore identity and the role that various tools play in shaping and representing that identity through a broadened definition of writing" (Blair, 488). Similarly, Blair reflects earlier in the chapter that "it is clearly important to focus on writing genres that will ensure success in both academic and non-academic venues, thus mandating that instructors balance more text-centric assignments with those that allow a broader range of modalities with which students are familiar" (478, emph. added).

Here Blair concisely states two points that are highly relevant to my project. Firstly, that multimodal pedagogies allow us to teach students through genres that will be more applicable in their futures, at least when compared with many traditional text-based

academic genres. Secondly, Blair affirms that students enter universities with prior

knowledge of and generally positive dispositions towards online multimodal genres,

which is supported by both the interview and artifact data I collected for this project.

However, there are certain aspects to teaching multimodal composition that may be easier

in real-world classrooms. Think back to the studio model proposed by Anderson in 2008,

with its emphasis on collaboration and direct contact between students, their peers, and

instructors. Teaching and learning in digital contexts distances teachers and students and

complicates multimodal work. Teachers are not present to demonstrate the use of digital

composing tools, and students can feel uncomfortable asking questions through email that

they would ask readily in person.

Also in the early 2010s, we encounter scholars continuing to experiment with

computers and their pedagogies, and to publish reflections on the implications of

students' use of computers in the classroom, but also in their wider lives and even before

college. Additionally, scholarly work was and is continually investigating the broader

writing concept of transfer. Throughout the 2010s the subject of transfer was receiving a

tremendous amount of attention from scholars of writing studies. At the same time,

scholarship was equally engaged in investigating the role of computers in composition.

Returning to the definition of transfer that informs this project, which is "the ability to

extend what has been learned in one context to new contexts," and "an active, dynamic

process rather than a passive end-product," we can observe that this definition has stood

the test of time. Though the proliferation of scholarship on transfer has added context and

nuance to this definition, its core principles have remained intact. I suspect this is due to

its broad applicability, which makes it a suitable definition with which to approach the novel subject of how to include multimodality in composition pedagogy. The findings of scholars who researched transfer in the 2010s added context and nuance to the definition of transfer by applying or observing it in their research sites. One such publication from this time period is Jessie Moore's "Mapping the Questions," appearing in volume 26 of *Composition Forum* in the Fall of 2012. In this article Moore maps "the questions, methods, contexts, and theories presented in published scholarship on writing-related transfer," both providing numerous scholarly perspectives to help define and ground transfer as a pedagogical concept and observing gaps in existing scholarship and how researchers can add to the picture through efforts in their local context (1). Moore uses the metaphor of mapping to describe scholars' attempts to chart the vast territory of knowledge that is represented by the word transfer, opening by describing the incomplete nature of early maps of the American West and how small acts of local cartography added up over time to create a more complete picture of the landscape.

Similarly, Moore tells us that writing transfer research reveals detail in small localized pockets, much like the maps of early settlers in the West. "They typically reveal one moment in one "season" of a writing program," Moore writes, "or the path of only a few students in their writing lives, or an assessment of a unique situation that might not be replicable at other institutions" (1). However, Moore does not take this to be disheartening, but insists that the large gaps in the landscape can only be filled in through more local investigations of writing-related transfer. The accumulation of ever more such reports, Moore writes, begins to offer a "lay-of-the-land to understand where the

discipline's understanding of transfer is and where it might go" (1). In the last three

sections of her article Moore calls on teachers and scholars to continue mapping the

landscape of how transfer occurs in their local context and sharing it with peers so that as

much information is generated and made available as possible. This call to action is one

of two important implications of Moore's work in this article for this project. Both in its

original form, and in the new design made necessary by COVID-19, this project responds

to Moore's call for ongoing research in the field of transfer, specifically examining

transfer's intersections with multimodality and the potential of multimodality to provide a

transferable domain of composition knowledge. Regarding research like this, Moore

writes that "none of these studies are able to examine the holistic system...yet scholars

can continue to add detail to sections of the map," by, among other things, researching

the tools that facilitate knowledge transfer and analyzing the similarities and differences

among the activity systems students move through (9). This project does both of these

things by looking at multimodality through the limitations of student work with digital

tools and by examining the ways in which students drew upon their participation in

discourse communities other than the classroom in their reflective writings. The second

important implication I draw from Moore is that "once students acquire specific types of

knowledge as an achieved outcome, they can reshape the activity system" (9). That is to

say, students are researchers and participants in the activity systems of their classrooms

and universities. This project situates students as researchers encountering a new

discourse community and acquiring the knowledge needed to navigate it, and considers

their reflective writing as data. While this research alone does not represent a basis for

policy, it can glean some information about the kinds of prior knowledge related to multimodality HSU's freshmen arrive with, and therefore whether and how to include multimodality as an explicit learning goal of composition pedagogy. While not intended to answer any such questions absolutely, this project contributes what information it can given the circumstances and in full awareness of the localized context of its findings. Thus, it is aligned with the solution Moore proposes to address the gaps in the existing scholarly literature on transfer.

Also appearing in volume 26 of *Composition Forum* was Liane Robertson, Kara Taczak, and Kathleen Blake Yancey's "Notes toward A Theory of Prior Knowledge and Its Role in College Composers' Transfer of Knowledge and Practice." In "Notes," Robertson et al. analyze case studies that investigated the relationship between prior knowledge and transfer. Through their observations on these studies, they illustrate "what transfer in composition as an 'active, dynamic process' looks like": "students working with prior knowledge in order to respond to new situations and create their own new models of writing" (www.compositionforum.com). This finding is significant to this project for two reasons. Firstly, it reiterates the significance of prior knowledge to transfer, while I make the argument that multimodality represents a realm of prior knowledge that could be accessed beneficially in a transfer-oriented writing program. Secondly, it affirms students' agency as new members of academic discourse communities by pointing out their capability to blend, mesh, and even create genres in response to academic tasks, which aligns with my perception of students as scholars and researchers who actively engage with and change academic discourses.

Writing in the same volume of Composition Forum, Dana Lynn Driscoll and Jennifer Wells considered transfer through the lens of dispositional research. At first, this may not seem closely connected to multimodality or even digital literacies. However, this project takes guidance from these scholars writing by attending to two of the "questions for further inquiry" they pose at the conclusion of their article "Beyond Knowledge and Skills: Writing Transfer and the Role of Student Dispositions": 1) "Can we teach students in a way that encourages transfer-oriented, generative dispositions?" and 2) "How are dispositions shaped by the activity system that a learner inhabits?" (www.compositionforum.com). Looking back to Robertson et al., I would argue that we can answer question 1 with a yes if we draw on students' prior knowledge, specifically their knowledge of multimodality. Regarding question 2, I would answer that students tend to have a positive disposition towards the literate activities they engage in recreationally. Drawing on the prior knowledge they have built through these activities can therefore help us to continue finding positive answers to question 1. While my research does not investigate dispositions, these questions have provided a reflective backdrop to the design of this project and the questions that I ask in turn.

More recent years have seen a continued abundance of scholarly interest and activity in the areas of multimodality and composition pedagogy. One such scholar is North Carolina State University's Chris M. Anson. Anson wrote the concluding chapter of the 2017 edited collection Social Writing/Social Media: Publics, Presentations, and Pedagogies, which offers one of the first ever thoroughgoing scholarly analyses of the

effects of social media on both extra-curricular and academic writing. In this chapter, Anson "argues that self-sponsored, digitally mediated literate activities can provide forms of tacit learning—especially about discourse—that mirror the learning encouraged and expected in school" (310). This is an important argument for my own research because it acknowledges the value of the various digital literacies that students bring to college with them while also pointing out the tacit nature of much of the knowledge they gain through extra-curricular participation in online discourse. Returning to the definition of transfer that informs this project, That students possess this prior knowledge and that it is tacit are both findings supported by the data in this project.

Like Anson, I believe that, despite resistance on the part of both teachers and students to bringing personal writing and technology use into the classroom, "intentionally and carefully bridging the two domains, both in foundational writing courses and in courses across the curriculum, may strengthen students' learning, foster more conscious rhetorical awareness, teach them skills of reasonable civic participation, and facilitate the transfer of discursive ability across diverse communities of practice" (310). To find support for this idea, Anson engaged in a deep study of diverse internet and social media sites, analyzing the discourse there for "rhetorical and linguistic principles and practices, as well as various kinds of reasoning, problem-solving, and idea-sharing, that should be of interest to teachers" (316). This study was interpretive in nature, and Anson calls for "more formal case studies, data-mining, and quantitative descriptive research...to extend, refine,or counter the conclusions" he drew from his survey of online discourse (316). My project provides a narrow, localized response to this

call for further inquiry, and contributes to answering some of the questions Anson raises

near the conclusion of this chapter, such as "Can we study and document in more than an

impressionistic way what deep-structure intellectual, rhetorical, and informational

capacities are learned or practiced through self-sponsored online writing?" and, "Does

bridging students' self-sponsored online writing activities and their academic work bring

tacit experience and learning into consciousness, and with what effect?" (325). This

second question is very closely related to my research, which identifies knowledge of

multimodality as a domain of tacit writing knowledge students develop through self-

sponsored online writing. Anson acknowledges that this self-sponsored online writing

occurs in publicly shared contexts, but his analysis remains focused on demonstrating

that students use this experience to build tacit writing knowledge. However, other

scholars have in recent years undertaken deep studies of the effect that writing for public

audiences has on student dispositions and learning.

For an example of one such analysis, I turn to the work of Stephanie Anne

Schmier, Elisabeth Johnson, and Sarah Lohnes Wataluk, who co-authored "Going Public:

Exploring the Possibilities for Publishing Student Interest-Driven Writing beyond the

Classroom" for the Australian Journal of Language and Literacy in 2018. Although this

article presents a case drawn from research in secondary school settings, the conclusions

Schmier and her colleagues reach about the benefits of "publishing student interest-

driven writing for audiences beyond the classroom" (57). The article specifically

examines the case of a student who wrote an article critical of her school's PE instruction

practices which her instructor published through the school newspaper's website, making

the text available to students, teachers, and parents. Although other students' articles were published as well, the article critical of PE instruction drew the most attention, and therefore provided the richest source of analysis for Schmier et al.

The writers observed both positive dispositional effects and potentially downsides to taking student writing public, particularly critical writing. "Online" they wrote, "two PE teachers' rebuttals preceded Annie's text and lived above the fold, thus making their texts more accessible to readers" (65). This is an example of how public writing can be risky for students, and online platforms invite the risk of reproducing discursive power dynamics" (65). However, the researchers "remain hopeful in the possibilities of reimagining the secondary school writing classroom as a place for students to go public with the texts they design and share beyond the classroom" (66). Schmier et al. inform this project by providing both a case study that shows the pedagogical effectiveness of having students write for public audiences as well as a note of caution reminding us to choose the audiences, publishing platforms, and subjects of such assignments carefully.

Also writing in 2018, Dan Frazier has provided further insights into transfer that are relevant to the design of this project. Frazier's work does not "intend to explain definitively" what transfer is, but instead "to create a model of inquiry that engaged students in active reflection on their values, assumptions, and processes before, during, and after completing an advanced writing project," and then "to engage faculty members in discussions of what they do or do not want to see students transfer from their past writing experiences" (www.compositionforum.com). To achieve this, Frazier had students in multiple classes (studying different subjects) write in response to reflective

prompts before, during, and after they worked on writing assignments for their respective

classes. He then asked faculty members to review these reflections and write their own

reflections discussing what was "interesting, surprising, or predictable" about what their

students had written (www.compositionforum.com). Frazier's research model is similar

to the model of my project in that both focus on reflective writing as a primary source for

information about whether writing transferable writing knowledge is being learned by

first-year composition students. It is also similar in the respect of putting student

reflective writing into conversation with instructor perspectives, although the methods of

doing this differ. "Student reflections," Frazier writes, "enabled faculty to learn from and

adapt to student strengths and needs. Instructors adjusted the way they assigned and

taught writing in ways that made sense to them based on what they learned from this

process" (www.compositionforum.com) Similarly, my research positions student

reflective writing as a resource for faculty development, though my model does not

include steps for faculty reflection. Nevertheless, I believe that the data gathered for this

project could provide a resource for similar faculty development work related to

multimodal pedagogy at HSU, and furthermore that Frazier's model could easily be

adapted to investigate multimodality in our first-year composition classes.

Another case study examining context-specific aspects of multimodality comes

from Janine Butler, who authored "Embodied Captions in Multimodal Pedagogies" for

Composition Forum volume 39 in the summer of 2018. Butler, a deaf instructor,

developed a sequence of assignments that asked students to compose multimodal texts

that included captions, but to do so in ways that differed from traditional captioning that

scrolled or flashed at the bottom of the screen during a video

(www.compositionforum.com). These assignments included design, reflection, and

rhetorical analysis. Butler's students "created their own group videos in a group video

captioning activity, rhetorically analyzed lyric videos for a six-page paper and wrote

separate reflective letters on both their designs and on their analytical papers." Like other

multimodal pedagogies developed by scholars reviewed here, Butler foregrounds

reflection in her assignment design. Through reflective and analytical writing, Butler's

students explored and grappled with the rhetorical implications of captions not simply as

blocks of textual information, but as design elements of multimodal texts. Butler

encourages "instructors to adapt this assignment sequence for their needs and apply it to

other teaching contexts," using captioning as a tool to teach rhetorical skills. However, I

would say that the design can be adapted further, even into contexts where captioning is

not being studied, simply by being focused around any one of the elements of a

multimodal text. This harkens back to Moe Folk's analysis of multimodality through the

lens of style and offers the possibility of teaching multimodality through stylistic analysis

that focuses on specific elements of multimodal compositions, one of which may be

captioning.

2019 saw the publication of *Bridging the Multimodal Gap,* an edited collection of

articles by scholars who, like Butler, provide examples and models of multimodal

assignment designs that can be incorporated into writing classroom curricula. Through

this collection of essays, these scholars seek to bridge the gap between scholarship on

multimodality and the reality of what is taught in most college composition classes.

Khadka and the other contributors to *Bridging the Multimodal Gap* offer examples, suggestions, and rich pedagogical discussions of how to create, scaffold students through, and assess multimodal assignments. My project draws on this volume's introduction as well as two chapters. The first chapter this project converses with is Khadka and Lee's "Introduction." The introduction provides a detailed account of how multimodality has been defined by leading composition scholars and why multimodality has recently received so much attention as a research topic. There is notable variety in how scholars have defined multimodality, and this introduction gives an overview of scholarly opinion on the subject. Ultimately, Khadka and Lee's introduction is important to this project because it provides the definition of multimodality which informs my research and which I will restate here: "meaning-making practices in visual, auditory, behavioral, and spatial modes" (3). This is a broad definition of multimodality which I believe to be correct even though I, like the Khadka, Lee, and the other scholars represented in Bridging the Multimodal Gap, focus specifically on multimodal composition using digital technologies.

The next chapter I have drawn on for this project is "Dissipating Hesitation," by Jessie C. Borgman, which examines why instructors, particularly in online writing classes, can be reluctant to assign multimodal work. Borgman describes common fears that writing instructors experience when considering assigning multimodal work in online settings (49). Some of these fears are voiced by the HSU instructors I interviewed for this project, and they are all legitimate. Online writing instruction contexts make direct supervision of students' multimodal work difficult. Instructors are not present to answer

questions and provide guidance. There can also be fears that multimodal assignments will

not be taken seriously by faculty peers. However, Borgman concludes that "the benefits

outweigh the struggles, and by using multimodal assignments in an already multimodal

environment, instructors reinforce what students already engage on a daily basis" (62).

What are the benefits? "Multimodal assignments," Borgman writes, "help students

acquire the tools and language to articulate how the texts are functioning and working as

pieces of knowledge in our daily lives. This rhetorical knowledge gives students the

ability to consider their best options for how to communicate their message to an

intended audience" (62, emph. added). Borgman's emphasis on the language students

will acquire through participating in multimodal work is also a key point for my research,

which concentrates on the transition from tacit to explicit writing knowledge that students

experience in first-year composition. It is through the provision of a language to describe

one's activities that knowledge moves from tacit to explicit and becomes more likely to

transfer into new contexts.

The third chapter of Bridging the Multimodal Gap that I draw on in this project is

"Multimodality, Transfer, and Rhetorical Awareness," by Stephen Ferruci and Susan

DeRosa, which describes in detail how multimodal work can enhance the development of

transferable rhetorical knowledge. Drawing on their own students' writing, Ferruci and

DeRosa "examine how writers' rhetorical awareness and their abilities to articulate their

choices for design, content, and medium are affected when they are asked to engage with

different modes" (201). By analyzing students' print-based texts, videos, and reflective

writing, Ferruci and DeRosa concluded that multimodal work improves students' ability

to "both articulate and address complex audiences in ways that surpass their ability to do so when asked to write more traditional, alphabetic texts" (220-21). Thus, Ferruci and DeRosa's research suggests that multimodal composition offers a rich avenue of development for students' rhetorical awareness.

Their research specifically examined student compositions and reflections in response to an assignment that first asked them to compose a discourse community ethnography, and then transform that alphabetic text into a "new multimodal genre of their choice appropriate to a particular rhetorical situation they would define" (217). Some interesting elements of this assignment design are the transformative nature of the work, which put traditional and multimodal composition into conversation with each other, and the element of genre choice, which frees students to drawn on the prior knowledge they are most familiar with. Furthermore, Ferruci and DeRosa did not simply ask their students to recast their discourse community ethnographies multimodally, but to "choose an issue addressed by the DC, or produce a multimodal text relevant to the work of the DC, and analyze the new rhetorical situation to determine which modes might make sense to work with" (217). This focused re-iteration of the previous assignment requires a deep level of discourse community knowledge and rhetorical awareness and asks students to consider rhetorical modes in comparison to each other, rather than thinking of "text vs. multimodality" as an all-or-nothing proposition.

Ferruci and DeRosa found evidence in students' multimodal compositions and their reflective writing of "deepening awareness of their audiences and the larger rhetorical situations surrounding their compositions" (221). In their conclusion, they state

that "such awareness, made clear in students' choices in their compositions, seems like the kind of 'transferability' of a threshold concept – the situatedness of writing – current research on transfer (Adler-Kassner, Majewski, and Koshnick 2012) argues is crucial to writers' development" (221). In other words, their research has added to the growing body of data which demonstrates how multimodal composition, especially when paired with explicit teaching and student reflection, can be a powerful tool for teaching writing knowledge which transfers between contexts. This kind of knowledge, argue Ferruci and DeRosa, is more important than students' understanding of specific genres or disciplinary practices, because it empowers them to enter new rhetorical contexts, asses these novel situations, and begin participating within them effectively and purposefully (221-2).

Finally, Michelle Pacansky-Brock, Michael Smedshammer, and Kim Vincent-Layton have written about humanizing education in online contexts. Their article "Shaping the Futures of Learning in the Digital Age: Humanizing Online Teaching to Equitize Higher Education," appearing in volume 21, issue 2 of Current Issues in Education, offers guidance for instructors who wish to "facilitate inclusive online learning experiences that more effectively support the needs of all learners" (1). Pacansky-Brock and her colleagues' work is informed by the facts that online education is providing access to individuals who previously may not have had opportunities to attend college or university, but that White and Asian students succeed disproportionately in online learning environments when compared their non-White, non-Asian peers. These facts being stated, evidence gathered for this project supports the importance of humanizing the online writing classroom for students of all demographic backgrounds, as

most students who participated in this study expressed gratitude for the humanizing practices of their instructors.

HSU's first-year writing instructors previously participated in a programmatic research project titled "Possibilities and Pathways," appearing in the forthcoming edited collection *Multimodal Composition: Faculty Development Programs and Institutional Change* (Routledge), which examined connections between multimodality and equity in FYC. In that project researchers focused on instructor uptake of multimodal curricular possibilities, framing this instructor learning in terms of transfer theory (Tremain et al., 2). The researchers made a case for integrating digital media and learning, and supporting faculty development in digital literacy through collaboration with campus experts (3). In the case of HSU, this meant collaboration with the library staff through seminars focused on empowering instructors with knowledge of how to incorporate multimodality into their courses with the digital tools available through the library. This multimodal professional development program was created to address the fact that "some instructors felt under-skilled at using—and teaching students how to use—various (and ever-evolving) digital tools that could support multimodal composing" (4). The seminars were developed in a collaboration between the WPA, First-Year Experience Librarian, Digital Media Librarian, and Learning Librarian, and engaged faculty in designing and implementing assignments by providing support that was customized to instructors' classes and scaffolded to their level of digital know-how. Additionally, the researchers gleaned four key insights from the interview data they collected from HSU's FYC instructors.

The first of these insights was that "collegial collaboration was essential in supporting faculty to integrate multimodal teaching into the writing-intensive classroom. In this case, librarians were a rich resource for collaboration" (6). The interview data showed that HSU's FYC instructors were very grateful for the support they received from the librarians, indicating that the multimodal professional development model provided a possible pathway to overcoming one of the classic obstacles to teaching multimodality: that instructors lack confidence in their own multimodal composition skills and knowledge of the digital tools available. The second key insight the researchers found was that "faculty perceived that the processes of (but not only exclusive to) multimodal composing were more valuable than any final products that students might create. Reflection was an essential component of understanding multimodality and its links to concepts like genre and literacy" (7). This insight aligns with the previous work of scholars like Frazier, and similar perspectives from HSU instructors were obtained in interview data for this project and will be discussed in the Results section.

The third key insight from "Possibilities and Pathways" was that "faculty viewed teaching toward multimodal curricular designs as a way to study transferable concepts of writing with students, such as genre and literacy" (8). This insight strongly supports connections between multimodality and transfer, and implies that teaching multimodality explicitly aids in the transfer of other conceptual areas of writing knowledge. While this project focuses on the transferability of multimodal composition knowledge itself, "Possibilities" suggests that multimodal composition pedagogies can have the additional benefit of helping students transfer other kinds of writing knowledge into new contexts.

The fourth insight that researchers derived from the interview data collected for "Possibilities" was that "faculty viewed multimodal work as a way to disrupt discourses, including white language supremacy and systematized conceptualizations of "academic writing." They also saw the limits of multimodality as a transformative framework for equity in the writing intensive classroom" (9). While my research for this project is not focused around equity, I believe that this insight, like the one preceding it, offers additional reasons supporting the ongoing experimentation and refinement of multimodal pedagogies at HSU and all universities striving to achieve equity in higher education. Taken as a whole, "Possibilities and Pathways" provides a background for this project as well as guiding frameworks that inspired and informed my research. The discussion of the multimodal professional development model also provides an example for other WPAs and program faculty who want to teach towards multimodality but are encountering challenges in implementation. In the research context of HSU, it provided the most current and localized source of information for this project outside of my research data.

To conclude this review, I must mention that the students in the two English 104 classes at HSU that I studied used *Writing About Writing,* 4th edition, as their textbook. This is significant because many of the scholarly perspectives on writing that these students encountered during their courses came from this text. It also provided them with a succinct (though digitally focused) definition of multimodality and incorporates more texts and assignments that centralize multimodality in the curriculum. However, these

readings and definitions were not assigned and emphasized by the instructors of the two

class sections studied by my research.

METHODOLOGY

This research project began in the summer of 2020 and continued into the Spring of 2021. Beginning in Fall semester 2020, students and instructors in four sections of Humboldt State University's English 104 course were queried for consent to participate in a qualitative research project investigating multimodality in the first-year composition curriculum. After two rounds of solicitation, consent was obtained from thirteen students and two instructors. All participating students subjects agreed to participate under the condition of anonymity, therefore their identities have been randomized in the data and they will not be identified by name, nor will any distinguishing features or traits of their persons be brought up in discussions of their course work and reflections. The two instructors consented for me to observe their course curricula, and to be interviewed to provide additional data for the project.

Of the thirteen students who consented to participate in the project during Fall 2020, ten turned in final portfolios including reflective introductions. The reflective introduction and final portfolio, the culminating assignment for HSU's English 104 course, was chosen by the researcher as the primary source of data for several reasons. Firstly, this project investigates students' understanding of the course concepts, which is definitively expressed in the reflective introduction they produce at the end of the semester. Secondly, the portfolio is intended to represent what the students themselves have selected as the best of their writing in response to the major assignment prompts of the semester. The representative nature of the portfolio is important for two reasons: the

students are confident that the portfolio represents the best of their writing and the

deepest of their insights regarding the course material, and it responds to major prompts.

Furthermore, the reflective introduction invites students to write at length about their

experiences in the course, their identity as writers, and their understanding of complex

concepts such as *discourse, genre,* and *rhetoric*. With such a small sample of

participating students to work with, it was important to choose the reflective introduction

and portfolio as primary data sources in order to maximize data yield and be able to draw

the strongest conclusions possible under the limitations of the study.

The data was analyzed using qualitative language analysis through open coding.

Coding is defined by scholars Cheryl Geisler and Jason Swarts as "the analytic task of

assigning codes to non-numeric data" (113). Codes are words or phrases that are assigned

to "symbolize, summarize, or otherwise capture some attribute" of a portion or segment

of language use. To assign codes to reflective writing and interview data, I first read

through the data looking for trends in language use that could become coding categories.

Each of these categories was then given a name using a representative word or phrase, as

recommended by Geisler and Swarts. The codes I used and an example of data that I

assigned to each code are displayed in the table on the following page.

Genre: "Genres refers [*sic*] to categories or texts" "One takes on an identity to better fit the discourse and vocabulary within different genres as a reader and writer."
Rhetoric: "Something that is rhetorical is situated, motivated, and contingent." "The object is **epistemic** because it creates meaning for the rhetors involved."
Literacy: "The ability to read and interpret is one form of literacy but being able to apply interpretive skill and knowledge to a specific community is another." "Most people intentionally code switch to the more formal style of English. It's not our default state and is largely done because of the value placed on speech style."
Discourse: "Becoming part of a discourse community takes more than just 'speaking the language.' One must learn what it means to become literate in this specific community." "A prison setting is a concentrated example of enculturation through many forms of hierarchy within the systems, for which there are many costs of affiliation."

> **Multimodality:**
>
> "A typical comment section will be filled with emojis"
>
> "Utilizing the discussion boards played a huge role in concurring [*sic*] this challenge because they allowed me to analyze the content I learned in class in more depth."

Examining the quotes in the table will show that in some cases, students made explicit references to the categories of writing knowledge in question. In other cases, students made statements that showed conceptual understandings of the subjects that I used as codes. Both types of comment were included in my coding process, as the former, while showing students have learned vocabulary, do not necessarily demonstrate understanding, and the latter, while demonstrating understanding, do not connect it with vocabulary. In many cases, however, both vocabulary and conceptual understanding can be observed in the same quote. My intention in coding was not to generate numeric data, therefore little attention was paid to what Geisler and Swarts call segmenting. The numeric computation of data from a sample size as small as this one is unlikely to reveal compelling results that address the project's research questions, so segmenting and the compilation of numeric data from the codes were not practiced extensively in this project. Instead, the codes were used as an indexing method for the researcher to organize what

students and instructors said about multimodality in first-year composition around the
following questions:

1. In what ways and to what extent did students in the Fall 2020 HSU English 104
   classes studied (2) take up and/or incorporate multimodality in their responses to
   assignments?

2. To what extent do students seem aware of their own or others (including
   instructors) use of multimodality to support their rhetorical activities?

3. Does this data suggest a correlation between application and/or understanding of
   multimodal rhetoric and student uptake of the core course concepts of HSU's
   English 104 course?

While the purpose of this project is to investigate *student* engagement with
multimodality and uptake of core writing concepts from the course, the observations of
instructors are still very important here for two reasons. Firstly, these observations frame
the research in its immediate context, providing us an insight into what kind of feedback
students are likely receiving about their uses of multimodality in response to assignments.
Secondly, they constitute the other side of the iterative loop of writing instruction out of
which come the texts these students created for English 104. By investigating student
texts, I hope to uncover information that may be useful to administrators and faculty at
Humboldt State University, primarily the same first-year composition faculty whose
interview responses form part of the framework for this project. Including instructor
perspectives allows us to consider student writing holistically, within the rhetorical
ecology of the HSU English 104 class. It also enables the comparison of student and

instructor perspectives on multimodality and on course concepts, allowing us to observe whether instructors' pedagogical expectations hold true, and whether students' expressions of course concept knowledge reflect the deeper understandings of their instructors.

The instructor interviews were conducted remotely over Zoom due to the necessity of observing lockdown protocols during the pandemic. The questions used in these interviews were standardized and can be seen in this project's Appendix B. Although the questions were standardized between both interview sessions, the interviews were conducted in a conversational style, and included discussion on the part of both parties outside the purview of the interview questions themselves. Each interview was approximately twenty minutes in length, and after they had been transcribed by a captioning software, they were coded using the same categories I applied to the reflective writing I sampled from my student participants. I used the same codes in order to put instructor and student perspectives into conversation about the same topics, providing information from both sides of the pedagogical exchange.

In the following sections, the data collected from Fall 2020 English 104 students will be presented and analyzed according to the three research questions posed earlier. This analysis will be followed with a similar examination of instructor interview responses, building connections between pedagogy and knowledge transfer, and suggesting ways that multimodality could be applied more effectively in the first-year composition classroom.

RESULTS

Data collected from students of English 104 in Fall 2020 allows us to glean a sense of what they were learning and how they were talking about it. In particular, this data helps us determine whether students were appropriating and using course vocabulary and theoretical concepts, and also whether they were able to use those concepts and vocabulary to research and analyze discourse communities. The answer to both of these points of inquiry is a yes, as the data will show. All of the students who participated in the research both used course vocabulary accurately and showed conceptual understandings of theoretical concepts of *genre, rhetoric, discourse,* and *literacy* as taught in English 104. As the data will also show, students accessed prior knowledge in building these understandings, and often had considerable tacit comprehension of these concepts when they arrived on the first day of class. This was also true of multimodality, but unlike the other four concepts studied by this research, multimodality is not explicitly referenced in students' reflective writing. Instead, student reflection on multimodality tends to take the form of indirect contemplation of the rhetorical, generic, or discursive implications of multimodal texts rather than a direct examination of how those texts are built from their constituent modal elements. In other words, students in 104 likely acquired a sense of the effects of multimodal composition from their participation in discourse communities prior to arriving at HSU, but never attained a vocabulary to discuss it in scholarly conversations like they did with other writing concepts throughout the semester.

From this observation I make the case that the difference in student uptake of these concepts varies along with how explicitly they are taught during the course. To make this case, I must establish that student uptake of genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy knowledge demonstrated both vocabulary comprehension and conceptual understanding. For each of these composition concepts, I will provide examples from the reflective writing I collected from students demonstrating both types of knowledge uptake. Once I have established the relative success of writing knowledge transfer regarding genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy in HSU's English 104 courses, I will similarly present students' reflective writing on multimodality. Student writing on multimodality was scarce. When they wrote sentences that I coded for multimodality at all, they did not use scholarly vocabulary to describe it, unlike when they discussed the other four concepts I coded. Therefore, my analysis of their reflections on multimodality will be more concerned with its absence from student writing in comparison to the extent of tacit knowledge students bring into the classroom, and their lack of an academic vocabulary with which to discuss multimodality.

The reflective introductions that students wrote for their final portfolios reveal that they have taken up multiple scholarly understandings of genre. Firstly, students know that "genres refers [*sic*] to categories or texts," but they also understand that "one takes on an identity to better fit the discourse and vocabulary within different genres as a reader and writer." These two quotes were taken from the same student, showing that this student understands genre on both of these levels – as a category of text, and as a performative position of identity taken up by readers and writers in a discourse

community. Another of this semester's 104 students stated succinctly, "rhetors have different identities in different genres." While these quotes do not exactly describe genre as rhetorical action, they indicate that students are thinking of genres as repeated instances of identity performance within discourse communities. Students also showed awareness of the fact that genres come in sets that work together to reinforce the values and advance the agendas of their discourse communities. One student observed that "different discourses exemplify a wide variety of genres. To engage in meaningful discourse of a community, one must be literate of the genres, vocabulary, and attitudes." Other students expressed similar conceptual understandings of genre, and some applied that conceptual understanding to analyzing the genre sets of specific discourse communities in their research.

A student who researched the discourse community of incarcerated persons made observations about the assumed nature of the identities some genres and their associated discourse communities ask us to perform. "Inmates," that student wrote, "loved ones of inmates, and advocates alike are put in a position where they need to learn multiple genres in the related discourse in order to best advocate for themselves. Some examples of related genres include the lexicon of incarceration and the language of the legal system." The student went on to observe that criminals and incarcerated persons are not, in public perception, commonly considered knowledgeable about the law or conversant in "legalese." However, since their pathway to freedom and quality of life while incarcerated both depend on their understanding the language of the legal system, many incarcerated persons "engage in legal language, and cooperate to actualize legislative

goals." Facility with legal discourse is crucial to accused and incarcerated individuals' ability to represent and advocate for themselves both before sentencing and once imprisoned. Failure to understand the values of the discourse, language of the courtroom, or form and function of the associated textual genres could cost such people in the form of missed opportunities for acquittal, shorter sentences, or easier time. "Inmates, loved ones of inmates, and advocates alike," this student wrote, "are put in a position where they need to learn multiple genres in the related discourse in order to best advocate for themselves." For that reason, "phrases like *independent oversight* and *earned time credit* become common conversation topics" both among inmates and with those they communicate with outside of carceral facilities.

The student's choice of this example shows a thorough understanding of the discursively situated nature of genre and identity within a system that sponsors specific types of literacy related to its institutional agendas. This writing of the students quoted above is representative of the sample of student writing that was examined for this project. That students are writing reflectively about genre, thinking about it conceptually, and using the discipline-specific vocabulary of writing studies to talk about it is important, because it shows that students have taken up definitions of genre that can transfer into later writing situations. Furthermore, students are aware of this and can speculate on future writing tasks. "When approaching a new writing project," one student wrote, "past experience can either help or hurt it. It would help if the new writing piece is a genre that you have worked with before...If you have not written anything like this new project, your past experience will not help you because the model you have doesn't

apply." This student is both considering the past and projecting into the future, using genre as a flexible concept to apply to and take guidance from in the new rhetorical situations they will encounter after English 104. This is an important outcome for FYC because it means that students have acquired writing knowledge which will transfer into new contexts, which is the broad goal of the HSU composition program.

Rhetoric

In their writing for this course students also reflected substantially on rhetoric and its connections to the other transferable writing concepts they were learning. "Rhetoric and genre correlate with each other," a student wrote, illustrating those connections, "as every discourse has its own rhetoric or principles used in shaping conversation." Here we see the connection between discourse values and genre being articulated in terms of rhetoric – the principles of the community that guide generic expression. "Something that is rhetorical," this student continued, "is situated, motivated, and contingent." Furthermore, this same student learned that "there is meaning in all things that we create and communicate," through a project that asked students to consider an object in its rhetorical context. For this project, the students created maps (Appendix A) that presented everyday objects in the rhetorical ecologies that give them meaning. The student who is quoted above chose coffee as the object of their rhetorical ecology. Importantly, this student realized that it is not the physical nature of coffee itself, but its surrounding rhetorical structures, that make it an object with meaning. "As seen above in

the network of rhetorical ecology of coffee, we see the different factors that play into coffee consumption. Together these factors develop meaning and the purpose of coffee culture."

Another student chose their response to a class assignment (not for English 104) as the focus of their rhetorical ecology map, a multimodal genre that students were asked to produce for a course assignment. This student wrote, "the object I chose to analyze through my ecology was my second Self Care Reflection, which was a writing assignment...the ecology displays the way in which the object is **contingent** because it shows how the different elements are dependent on one another. It also shows the way in which the object is **epistemic** because it creates meaning for the rhetors involved." Here we can see this student applying a thorough definition of rhetoric, breaking its meaning down into two parts and performing a check to make sure that the object they chose meets the definition in both of these senses. This demonstrates that the student has taken up a flexible and conceptual definition of rhetoric, but this student also showed a very grounded and thorough understanding of the ideas underpinning that definition and expressed that the assignment had helped them attain this understanding. Regarding the contingent nature of the assignment's rhetorical significance, they wrote, "Through mapping my ecology, I was able to visualize these connections and form a deeper understanding of the way in which the different elements interacted with each other to shape the rhetorical situation as a whole." This quote shows us how the student used the mapping process process to analyze and understand the rhetorical ecology of a college assignment, which is precisely the kind of transferable knowledge about rhetoric that the

HSU Composition program seeks to provide. "I chose to focus on the epistemic element of my map," they wrote, "because it helped me to grasp the concept of a rhetorical object as a whole by showing how meaning is created through interaction." They later also wrote, "As a writer, this object created knowledge for me because it served as a form of self-reflection and discovery," further illustrating the epistemic nature of the Self Care Reflection they analyzed while recognizing that the object, already situated discursively, connected the writer to the community by helping define the writer's identity.

Through their participation in this project, students demonstrated that they had learned specific vocabulary around the writing concept of rhetoric, that they had taken up this concept in a flexible way that could be applied to various writing contexts, and that they recognized the visual nature of the assignment helped them grasp connections between rhetorical concepts. This last finding is of particular relevance to this research. It shows the assistive role that multimodal pedagogy can play in teaching writing concepts. In fact, much of these students' reflections on rhetoric involved multimodality in some way. Even when responding to more traditional assignments, such as a rhetorical analysis, students' often chose multimodal online texts to research. For example, one student chose to write a discourse analysis of TikTok, focusing on the comments section and on videos that lead to mass imitation. The following quote demonstrates both how this student went about their research and shows awareness of how the rhetorical elements of everyday expression through this platform are grounded in the identities of its users:

"A typical comment section will be filled with emojis: * * * (in that order) or

(with a word or phrase in between them). There is a certain expectation for the

comments to have these emojis in them because that is what the users of this app

find funny, but also the comfort of repetition in the comments draws users in. On

more serious videos, the comments adjust accordingly shifting from comedy. For

example, if a creator is making a video about the deaf community and doesn't

include Closed Captions on the video, they might ask if the creator could repost

with captions. Most of the time when this happens, the creator is happy to repost

to be more inclusive. By using the comment section on videos, we are able to

make a more inclusive app."

Here this student reveals the surprising richness of TikTok comments as a source

for rhetorical analysis. The quote talks about the form of common rhetorical expressions

on the platform, but also explains the reasons behind TikTok's rhetoric of emojis, which

would seem strange to the uninitiated. The student then goes on to illustrate through an

example how comments provide users with the opportunity to respond to content

producers on TikTok, and how the two-way nature of this platform can provide

opportunities for more equitable communication. This was only one of this student's

observations on how the nature of TikTok as a platform made certain genres of

communication possible within the community of users. They also discussed a common

TikTok genre of imitative parody videos, in which users make copycat videos based on

other successful clips that already achieved widespread viewership and rhetorical

significance within the community. Put simply, such videos become a referent that users invoke when making imitation or parody videos. Referring to the algorithms that direct users towards content of a similar type to what they have viewed before, the student wrote, "this is where the FYP (For You Page) comes into play. If someone liked the original video or a parody video, more parody videos will show up for them to watch." This illustrates the student's understanding of how TikTok itself expresses rhetorical agency and plays a role in how the connections between users, content, and comments are shaped.

"[TikTok] builds an esoteric realm for people to fit in," the student wrote. "There is a very specific language that happens on TikTok. Its esotericism makes it extremely difficult to understand if you are unfamiliar with it." Here we can see the value studying this platform and its plethora of everyday, sometimes inane rhetorical video expressions. This esotericism is a feature that is common to many discourse communities, quite significantly those of academic disciplines with their respective jargons, genres, and practices. That the student was not only able to analyze the rhetorical actions within the TikTok community, but to recognize how those actions create a community-defined rhetoric that distinguishes users from the rest of society and requires specific forms of literacy to understand. As I stated before, this kind of rhetorical analysis of multimodal online communication was not uncommon in the sample of student writing I examined for this project. For example, one student wrote an extended reflection on the visual rhetoric of a website, examining the rupture within the community of SCP Wiki users

which erupted over the addition of a Pride flag to the website's logo during the month of June, 2018, showing significant prior knowledge of multimodal (text and visual) rhetoric.

Discourse

Unsurprisingly, the reflective writing gathered for this project also contains numerous examples of students using scholarly vocabulary to describe conceptual understandings of discourse and how these communities are built through generified literate rhetorical action. In their reflections on discourse, students showed multiple levels of understanding. Firstly, students understand the general concept of discourse communities as communities defined by linguistic practices which both create writer identities and are constantly created and revised by their active participants. This concept of a community that both creates and is created by the identities of its members is reflected in the following pair of quotes from two 104 students. "Everyone's writing is different and situated to a specific discourse community and genre...I can be free as a writer to adapt to different genres and discourse communities" one student wrote, while another pointed out that "assimilation in a group requires an adoption of the group hierarchy." The first quote, while recognizing the need for adaptation to existing group structures, emphasizes the writer's agency and ability to enter into and change discourse communities through participation. The second quote emphasizes the need to submit to the authorities and traditions of the discourse in order to gain acceptance. Language

groups, though ultimately the product of human agency, are filtered and organized by existing institutions and their hierarchies.

"A prison setting is a concentrated example of enculturation through many forms of hierarchy within the systems, for which there are many costs of affiliation...cost of affiliation is when incorporation in one community causes you to lose credibility in another." The student who wrote this quote as part of an analysis of the discourse of incarcerated persons is here showing a nuanced understanding not only of how individuals operate within discourse communities, but between them, and how memberships in multiple discourse communities interact and overlap in ways that are sometimes not mutually reinforcing. Specifically, this student has noted how acceptance and assimilation within the discourse community of incarcerated persons can lead to a loss of credibility in whatever other discourse communities the person had been a part of, due to them now being regarded as a criminal. Similarly, involvement with some discourse communities outside of prison may be seen as undesirable inside, and bar an inmate from full assimilation into the culture of incarceration. This student's reflections expressed the complex concept of overlapping discourse communities and how these multiple influences sometimes facilitate and sometimes bar individuals' access to literacy.

Another student reflected meaningfully on the connections between literacy and discourse by analyzing the literacy sponsorship of their major, Wildlife Management. "Becoming part of a discourse community," they wrote, "takes more than just 'speaking the language.' One must learn what it means to become literate in this specific

community." The student then described how membership in the discourse community develops through shared texts, insider jargon, and common values. They describe the importance of scientific journals to the discourse, how they are "peer reviewed for credibility" and "often structured within reason of the Journal of Wildlife Management guidelines." The student has identified the processes by which the academic discipline of Wildlife Management maintains standards and sponsors newcomers in taking those standards up, as well as facilitates the conversation that takes place between scholars in the community. "Specialized vocabulary" describing "ecology, conservation, and management of wildlife species and habitat" is necessary to read and write in the genres that are published in peer reviewed scientific journals. "To engage in this group," the student writes, "one must know a reasonable amount of vocabulary and scholarship regarding he subject and participate in environmental conservation attitudes." This is a statement of the connections between genres, literacies, and values in a discourse community, which the student makes again when they write, "vocabulary specific to discourse communities no matter big nor small, reflect on logic and attitudes of the community." Clearly, this student has attained a complex and ecological view of discourse communities that unite other concepts they learned in English 104.

In fact, in their conclusion this student showed application of the theory of discourse communities they had just articulated in the discourse analysis. The following quote demonstrates metacognition of the rhetorical functions the student is carrying out in writing this research paper:

"These findings are significant as a member of the community that uses this genre because it shows that discourse within communities shape [*sic*] us and our identities just as we shape those discourse communities. As a college student trying to navigate multiple different discourses and genres, this research helps in understanding the importance of communication of meaning in all discourses within genre identities specific to discourse communities."

Here the student shows that the research they have just done is significant to them as a student of the major, but also takes up a position as a researcher, employing the vocabulary of writing studies and using it to demonstrate their initiation into that discourse as well. Fittingly, their comment is on the usefulness of discourse theory for understanding communication across different communities, disciplines, and other linguistic groups. This student has both told us and shown us the truth of their statement that "discourse communities are groups that an individual is *actively* a part of. One can not merely join a discourse community..." Another student might have disagreed, based on their findings from researching the discourse of the Assyrian immigrant community. The Assyrian community is an ethnic and religious minority community that exists in a diaspora across the Middle East and the world, tracing its cultural roots back to the Assyrian empire, one of the earliest civilizations on Earth. This student analyzed the community through a generational lens, comparing first, second, and third generation immigrants, or as they put it, children, parents, and grandparents. What they found was that one's sense of belonging and level of participation in the discourse community were

greater among the older generations. Using Gee's definition of discourse as a "saying-doing-being-valuing-believing" combination, they concluded that "the younger generation would see the Assyrian culture as a nondominant secondary discourse, because while it allows [them] to make friendship and connect with others, it is not a relevant part of all Assyrian lives and we have the choice to celebrate or avoid it." In other words, for Assyrian youth in the United States, one's participation in the discourse community of their heritage does not require that they *actively* participate. It is an identity that can be assumed to whatever degree the individual finds desirable, meaningful, or useful.

This student showed a deep understanding of Gee's discourse theory, describing the nuanced differences between primary and secondary as well as dominant and nondominant discourses. This student reflected on the white standard of assimilation in U.S. society and how that affects young people's involvement with the diaspora ethnic communities of their parents and grandparents, causing a weakening of identification over successive generations living in the States. "The resistance that immigrants face," they wrote, "will likely enforce certain changes in the household that will alter the primary discourse of their child." Drawing on Ann M. Johns, the student describes a "discoursal drift between generations that can devalue a culture." Because the original primary discourse of the immigrant culture is regarded as less conducive to success in the United States, younger generations choose to identify with it less, and to participate less in the linguistic and cultural practices of that discourse. Through interviews and social media research, the student identified Assyrian culture as a primary discourse for what

they termed the "grandparents' generation," a dominant secondary discourse for the "parents" generation, and a nondominant secondary discourse for the "children" generation with which the student identifies. The student researcher wrote that this younger generation "views being Assyrian as a transient characteristic of their personality. It can be invoked when necessary but is not an important factor in their everyday lives." Anecdotally, I can confirm a similar pattern to exist in the immigrant Persian discourse of which I am an erstwhile part. It is not my primary discourse, and my Persian parent's level of assimilation into U.S. culture meant that it was never even a dominant secondary discourse in my home. Like the student who wrote the above observations about Assyrian culture, I too feel that membership in the discourse of being Persian can be "invoked" when desired and may at times be more or less advantageous to draw upon or embody. Our participation in these discourses is "useful as a way to connect" with others who share that identification, but does not "provide social status, nor provide the basis through which we view other discourses."

Comparing this to the student who was previously discussed and who analyzed the discourse community of the academic discipline of Wildlife Management, we can see some differences in the definitions and applications of Gee and Johns' discourse theories. In one case, active participation and assimilation to the practices of the discourse are necessary for membership, while in the other hereditary status allows aspects of the discourse to be assumed or laid aside at need. These two conceptualizations of discourse need not be considered as a conflict, nor indeed a failure of English 104 pedagogy. Quite the opposite! Discourse is a complex subject that no scholar can claim to have theorized

completely, and the differences between Johns and Gee, as well as the differences in these two students' applications of their ideas, show us that discourse is being handled in a thorough and mindful way in HSU's English 104 classes. Multiple scholars with different definitions and theories are being introduced, and students are encouraged to take up those definitions and theories under their own interpretations, applying concepts to their own lives and the contexts in which they communicate. In short, 104 students are conceptualizing nuanced, complex, and transferable ideas about discourse that they are already applying to contexts outside of the writing classroom. The reflective writing that this sample of students produced on discourse reveals that they have attained a scholarly vocabulary, thoroughly understood the theoretical frameworks that vocabulary describes, and applied this new knowledge to the existing, unnamed knowledge they bring in from their participation in the communities they are already part of.

<div align="center">Literacy</div>

Literacy is one of the writing concepts that helps students give a name to some of that knowledge they bring into the classroom. Most students in English 104 already have a working definition of literacy as the ability to read and write in one or more languages. However, during the course of the semester they build upon this concept and develop an idea of multiple, discursively overlaid literacies. One student wrote that "the ability to read and interpret is one form of literacy but being able to apply interpretive skill and knowledge to a specific community is another," showing a definition of literacy that had

evolved to be *con*textual rather than exclusively text based. This same student also wrote that "the experience of being alive and navigating within the world necessitates *multiliteracy*" (emph. added). This quote tells us two things. First, it shows that the student has taken up vocabulary that was introduced during the course in order to describe a more complex concept of literacy. Secondly, it shows the student's awareness that literacies develop out of the contexts and communities that individuals move through.

One sense in which this is true is that of code-switching. People recognize that there "are indeed different sets of linguistic rules depending on their surroundings, and... people adjust their learned literacies based on those surroundings." A student similarly wrote that in school settings "most people intentionally code switch to the more formal style of English. It's not our default state and is largely done because of the value placed on speech style." Code switching can be thought of as expressing multiliteracies because of course it requires understanding of both the codes in question and the contextual clues that cue one in on what code to use. The student's choice of example in how people switch into the formal language of academic discourse at school is a common form of code switching that most people can relate to and leads naturally to a discussion of another way that literacies are contextual, namely sponsorship.

Students drew on the work of Deborah Brandt and research that they conducted into their own literacy histories as well as those of their peers in their reflections on literacy sponsorship. Students showed awareness of the breadth of literacy sponsorship "by those who encourage literacy practices whether that be a teacher, parent, professor,

librarian, etc.," but also how sponsorship norms and winnows literacies "by setting the precedence [*sic*] of authority which we all live within." Zeroing in on the way literacy is sponsored by schools and other societal institutions, one student wrote "It is clear that in most cases, our writing and reading practices are shaped by our sponsors, insofar as they provide us with the tools necessary to "read and write structurally." I find this quotation to be particularly interesting because it very concisely expresses complex connections between all four of the writing concepts discussed in this paper. Literacy sponsors give people "tools" which reproduce acceptable structural elements in writing, and condition readers to look for and evaluate by those elements. At the same time, providing these tools to outsiders makes them insiders in the discourse, empowering them to change its values and procedures. Changes of value or focus lead to novel rhetorical situations and alter the genres of the discourse. Another student reflected on the importance of our early literacy sponsors and early impressions about literacy. "The ideas, feelings, and connections we make with literature as children," they wrote, "and are taught by literacy sponsors develop an identity associated with literacy practices. The ways we are introduced into literacy persuades further learning and development of literacy throughout our lifetime." This student is expressing a fact about literacy development that has been borne out by research – that children who are read to and encouraged to read at home are more likely to have a favorable disposition towards literacy related activities like reading and writing once they attend school.

During the semester observed for this research, students researched each other's literacy histories through surveys, reflecting on these and their own literacy histories in

their writing. Some of the graphics they used to represent the results of their surveys multimodally can be seen in Appendix A. From one student's interpretation of the graphical data in Appendix A: "A closer look at figure 1 indicates that most people were influenced by their institutions, namely their lower schools and high schools." This was confirmed by another student whose chart is found in the Appendix, who wrote, "Out of a class of twenty-five students, fifteen students felt they were influenced the most by academic sponsors. The majority of the class also values literacy as a tool/highly valued skill in society. In relation, those who had family influence their literacy practices value literacy emotionally." This student cross referenced two variables and found a correlation between them connecting their dispositions towards literacy with who they considered to be their primary literacy sponsors. From the extent to which they use writing studies vocabulary, to their ability to identify multiple literacies in their own lives, to their peer research and multimodal data interpretation, the students surveyed for this project showed thorough and well-expressed understandings of literacy that were grounded in theory drawn from class readings and discussions.

As the previous four discussions have demonstrated, students in these two sections of English 104 at HSU were relatively successful in taking up writing knowledge about genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy. They were able to demonstrate accurate knowledge of the academic vocabulary of writing studies, conceptually describe these four writing concepts, and apply them in analysis of their academic and extracurricular activities. Shortly, I will make the claim that explicit teaching of these concepts and their related vocabularies is the reason students thoroughly took up these composition

concepts. I will do this by supporting that claim with statements taken from instructor

interviews. Before that, however, I would like to turn to an analysis of student reflective

writing on multimodality. This analysis will demonstrate that instructor-student

knowledge transfer varies along with explicit teaching. As genre, rhetoric, discourse, and

literacy are taken up by students in response to explicit pedagogies that name, discuss,

and apply them, so multimodality is not taken up in the same ways because, although

present in nearly every aspect of the course, it is not named, discussed, and systematically

applied.

<div align="center">Multimodality</div>

Unlike the other four writing concepts that have already been discussed,

multimodality is not a stated learning outcome of the HSU first-year composition

program. However, as I have demonstrated in preceding paragraphs, HSU students come

to English 104 with substantial tacit knowledge of multimodal rhetoric. In this respect,

students' knowledge of multimodality is similar to the other four concepts discussed in

this chapter – tacit knowledge developed through participating in various literacy

activities before college. Unlike the other four writing knowledge concepts,

multimodality is not yet an explicit part of the HSU first-year composition program's

learning outcomes. Students' tacit knowledge is not met by the ideas and vocabulary that

writing studies scholars have developed for multimodality, and therefore their reflections

on multimodality lack the depth and clarity of their observations on rhetoric, discourse,

genre, and literacy. Student reflection on multimodality was uncommon in general, did not refer to multimodality as such, and appeared in the data set in three different ways.

The first way in which these English 104 students discussed multimodality was by including sentences in their writing that called their readers' attention to their charts, graphs, and other visual aids. Visual aids such as charts and graphs included in traditional print-based texts are elements that access additional semiotic modes in addition to the written mode. Returning to the definition of multimodality that informs this project, "meaning-making practices in visual, auditory, behavioral and spatial modes," confirms that these texts, whether they are produced digitally or not, are truly multimodal. Therefore, statements in students' writing like "A closer look at figure 1 indicates that most people were influenced by their institutions, namely their lower schools and high schools," tell us that students understand the importance of accessing multiple modes of making meaning enough to want to make sure their readers are aware of all of them. Another student tells us "figure 2 depicts this concept: more than half of the participants in the study indicated that their sense for the value of reading and writing originated from their own observations of others who are successful." Statements of this kind show an understanding of the need to connect the text and non-text elements of a multimodal piece, and to make sure the visual aids are referenced at the right time by the reader. They show awareness of the effects of multimodal composition elements and direct the reader towards them, however they do not represent scholarly analysis like students' discussions of genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy. They do not use discipline-specific vocabulary to refer to or describe multimodality and they do not show a conceptual understanding of

it either. In fact, in these statements students are not attempting to do either of these things. They are simply unconsciously demonstrating awareness of multimodality without expressing knowledge of it.

The second way in which English 104 students discussed multimodality was in reflections on how they accessed and participated in class activities and discussions. Often, these reflections had to do with the pandemic, since the online course platform was an unexpected aspect of their semester. Many students wrote about the difficulties of distance learning, but most of this writing did not concern multimodality. For example, one student wrote, "Another very important factor to my journey as a writer this semester had to be the rather obvious fact that we did everything online. The slower pace of lessons due to us meeting once a week was both a blessing and a curse. On one hand, the relaxed pace helped me feel less pressured by the class, though that may have been a double-edged sword, as the same relaxedness led to me procrastinating." While this student has made observations on how the online environment affected their learning, these observations are dispositional rather than rhetorical, and concern the student and the schedule rather than the rhetorical implications of communicating online. These students very seldom reflected on the online semester in a way that put anything like Khadka and Lee's in focus. The nearest examples are quotes like, "Utilizing the discussion boards played a huge role in concurring [*sic*] this challenge because they allowed me to analyze the content I learned in class in more depth. They helped me gather my thoughts on the topics discussed because I was able to utilize peer feedback from my classmates and instructor." In this quote, the student engages in some reflection on how the discussion

forum affected their writing, but once again the multimodal nature of the platform itself is left to the reader's assumption. Similarly, the following quote, but for the words "virtual" and "distance," identifies advantages of multimodal communication but leaves them unnamed and centers the importance of teacher/student communication:

> Communication with an instructor can also inform the said instructor, who is very likely to grade your writing, how and what to expect/look for in your writing project. Not only does this communication system establish a bridge for well-needed feedback and literal constructive criticism, but it also bridges a virtual gap between the professor and you as a student during these distance times.

While bridging the virtual gap is accomplished through multimodal communication technologies, the student does not reflect on this element of the connection, instead discussing the discursive elements of apprenticeship that they have a vocabulary to talk about. Only one student out of the thirteen whose writing was sampled for this project wrote any substantial reflections that focused on the rhetorical dimensions of multimodality. Even so, this student did not identify them as such, nor place the multimodal elements of rhetoric or communication tech at the center of their discussion. Nevertheless, this student represents the only example of the third way in which HSU's English 104 students discussed multimodality in their reflections, which was to discuss multimodality through its rhetorical effects.

This student discussed the discourse community of an online collaborative writing project. "On the surface," the student wrote, "it seems to be a rather chill group of people writing what basically amounts to exoteric campfire stories written as pseudoscientific report." However, this student goes on to relate the events of a controversy that divided the project's participants over politics and the use of multimodal rhetoric. The following quote briefly summarizes the controversy:

> In June 2018, site staff changed the logo of the site to incorporate a pride flag...the first members of the community came from 4chan...people outraged by the change, mostly people who had been held over for the communities 4chan days. The amount of 4channers in the community had been dwindling for a while at this point, but they were very loud in cries of how the site had been 'taken over' by 'liberals'.

This example shows how powerful multimodal rhetoric can be, but the student does not explicitly recognize that power. Users who upload their creative content to a website feel a sense of belonging and sometimes even ownership to the community there. When the values of the websites discourse community change over time, members from bygone eras may feel a sense of loss over the fact that things have changed. The addition of a Pride flag to the website's logo made a strong statement about acceptance and equality through a visual rhetoric that is immediate and powerful. Although this message was affirming for most participants in the SCP Wiki community, "a group of people got

mad that they were sharing the community with those they considered undesirables because of their identity," and were "angry at the pride iconography."

The effects of multimodal rhetoric here are interesting, as is how they were discussed by this student. The story clearly demonstrates how much multimodality can add to any rhetorical situation. It is possible that a simple text statement in support of LGBTQ rights would have produced a similar reaction from reactionary members of the community, but it seems unlikely. The effect of a symbol is a galvanizing power for both allies and adversaries. What's also worth noting is that the symbol played a role in removing the older 4chan user group from the community. As the student wrote in their explanation of events, "The mod team had been struggling to get rid of them for some time, as many were very old members of the community." The way that these users reacted in the wake of the Pride flag image's posting ended up giving the moderators the reasons they needed to ban many of them over their use of threatening or hateful rhetoric.

These interesting matters aside, the important point about this story, from the point of view of this research project, is that the student did not reflect on the moderators' use of multimodality using discipline-specific vocabulary or attempt to analyze *why* the iconography of a Pride flag on the website's logo brought the divisions in the community to a boiling point when fault lines had existed for so long. In this student's writing as in the others, we can see an awareness of multimodality and its rhetorical implications, but that knowledge is assumed and tacit. It is likely that many if not most students in English 104 have similar levels of background knowledge about multimodality gained through their participation in discourse communities like the SCP Wiki and other online games,

forums, and social media. The fact that students draw on this prior knowledge, even if only tacitly, shows that it is a domain of both conceptual and practical knowledge that has the potential to transfer into new writing contexts. Finding a way to teach multimodality so that it students understand it on a theoretical as well as a practical level is an achievable goal that aligns with the Composition and Rhetoric program's broad aim of teaching to transfer. Improving students' uptake of conceptual knowledge about multimodality also confirms their positions as researchers and aligns the program – both students and instructors – with scholarship in new media studies, digital humanities, and composition and rhetoric. The next section will discuss the question of why HSU's English 104 students' prior knowledge about multimodality is not being transformed, like their prior knowledge of genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy is, into defined, expressed knowledge that students own, can describe, and can apply in new and ongoing contexts. It will also consider the question of how the English 104 curriculum can develop an effective pedagogy of multimodality like it has done with other writing concepts, as well as taking stock of some of the special obstacles that a pedagogy of multimodality presents.

Instructor Perspectives

To investigate the connections between student writing and pedagogy, we can return to the perspectives HSU instructors (Sarah and Kerry) offered in their interviews. As I mentioned in the Methods chapter, the instructors of the two classes that were

studied for this project were interviewed along similar lines prior to the Fall 2020

semester. This chapter draws on data from those interviews as well as two more that were

conducted after the Fall semester was over. In the interviews, both Kerry and Sarah

conveyed the following three points regarding their pedagogical approaches to teaching

genre, rhetoric, discourse, literacy, and multimodality. First, that students enter university

with a substantial amount of background knowledge in all of these areas, but that

knowledge is tacit – understood intuitively by dint of their experiences in the discourse

communities they participated in before college and outside of school. Second, both

instructors said that their students' tacit knowledge of genre, rhetoric, discourse, and

literacy becomes explicit over the course of the semester, meaning that students learn

some of the disciplinary vocabulary of composition and rhetoric, and gain the ability to

describe their knowledge of these subjects using scholarly terms. Third, both instructors

noticed that while their students had prior experiential knowledge of multimodality, they

did not make this into explicit knowledge during the semester like they did the other four

writing concepts, and they attributed this gap to genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy

being explicitly taught in their curricula while multimodality was not.

Both Sarah and Kerry designed assignments that asked students to access prior

knowledge. "Students come in with a great deal of knowledge and you can tap that," said

Kerry, "I ask students to look at the genres that they use or the communities that they

engage with outside of the classroom – that's always the first kind of exploration of

discourse and genres that I ask students to take up." This pedagogical move immediately

lets students know two things: that the informal writing they do *is* writing, and that their

activities and peer interactions outside of school are worthy of discussion in the classroom both as subjects of study and sources of knowledge. This validates their identities as writers and piques their curiosity about linguistic groups, leading them to think about their social activities analytically, which they may never have been invited to do before. Sarah also observed that students come to the first day of class with a lot of prior writing knowledge, including knowledge about multimodal expression. "What's so wonderful to see is that they already have so much multimodal knowledge coming in," she said, "they do a ton of multimodal writing in ways that now are often multi-genre and combining various forms of media or combining video and image and voice over and graphics and meme type things and platforms." Here Sarah speaks about the participatory knowledge of multimodality that students have already gained through the online discourse communities they are part of. As we will see, this area of prior knowledge remains tacit and intuitive among HSU's first-year composition students because it isn't taught in the explicit way that genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy are. To illustrate this point, we can examine what both Sarah and Kerry had to say about how they taught each of these concepts.

To begin with, genre, rhetoric, and discourse are identified in the learning outcomes for the HSU Composition and Rhetoric program (composition.humboldt.edu). As such, students are confronted by the terms and understand them to be important from the first day they attend class. Literacies, while not an explicitly stated outcome, still receive a full unit in the course textbook *Writing About Writing* (vi). Both teachers accordingly devoted a unit of their coursework to literacies, as can be observed from their

course websites (canvas.humboldt.edu). A deeper study of these two instructors' course

syllabi reveals that genre, discourse, rhetoric, and literacy are each explicitly presented

and thoroughly defined through both readings and class activities. Students are assigned

readings such as *Sponsors of Literacy* by Deborah Brandt and James Paul Gee's

"Literacy, Discourse, and Linguistics: Introduction." Amy J. Devitt's "Generalizing

About Genre" and Kerry Dirk's "Navigating Genre" were assigned by Kerry and Sarah,

respectively. Students in both sections were asked to turn in assignments such as genre

analyses, discourse community research papers, literacy histories, and rhetorical analyses.

During each week, readings and assignments were also discussed by students

through forum posts, providing a low stakes setting in which they could practice using

these terms and having scholarly conversations about the concepts they signify

(canvas.humboldt.edu). In short, students in both Fall 2020 sections of English 104 that I

observed for this project were all but inundated with genre, rhetoric, literacy, and

discourse throughout their entire semesters. Contrasting this with how multimodality was

presented to the same students, we can see that it did not receive the same amount of

attention, emphasis, and explanation.

When they were interviewed following the Spring and Fall 2020 semesters, they

were asked how they taught multimodality, what if any readings they assigned on it, and

whether they asked students to do any multimodal work for their courses (Appendix B).

On the topic of readings, Kerry said that she hadn't "actually done a lot of multimodal

reading [she] used to assign." Sarah mentioned readings from Lori McMillan's *Focus on

Writing* that she sometimes assigns, however she did not assign them this semester. In

terms of how these teachers taught multimodality, then, it was through a tacit and assignment-based pedagogy. When asked how she taught multimodality, Sarah said it was "Through projects such as the transformation of genre project and the public genre project. And unfortunately...doing it online only in the midst of a pandemic I wasn't able to do most of the activities or give students the training of the – even just the face time or the access to library resources..." This tells us that while Sarah's course called for students to produce multimodal work, it was described in terms of genre rather than communicative modes. Kerry and Sarah's responses when asked about the multimodal work they asked their students to do throughout the 2020 similarly indicate that multimodality was taught tacitly through assignments that focused on course concepts like genre or rhetoric.

Reflecting on how the past year influenced her thinking on multimodality in her writing classroom, Kerry said, "It's made me kind of consider about how you want to be really more explicit about the kind of possibilities of like what you can do with the technologies that we have available." Like Sarah, Kerry offered students the option of responding to assignments in a variety of genres, each with a different emphasis in terms of its multimodal elements. "People are always doing multimodal work," she said, but added that "creating some intent and purpose around [multimodality] for the assignment is just not something I spend a great deal of time focusing on." Like Sarah, Kerry asks students to do multimodal work but to imagine that work in terms of genre, rhetoric, or discourse.

This trend is borne out in the reflections of the students which were discussed in the Results chapter and supported by another quote from Sarah, who said, ""I don't recall off the top of my head anyone specifically reflecting at length about multimodality...not explicitly and at length, that I can recall." Because their instructors have given them scholarly vocabularies with which to discuss genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy, these are the terms and concepts they apply when attempting to discuss multimodality. This can be quickly observed in many of the students' writing from phrases such as "the *genre* of videos" (emph. added). My purpose in pointing this out is not to criticize the way Sarah and Kerry are teaching genre, rhetoric, literacy, or discourse. Students are not mislabeling multimodality using these terms because the terms were taught incorrectly, but simply because these are the best terms they have for describing rhetorical activity, and they are trying to discuss an aspect of communication that they have not been taught to conceptualize with its own terms. Therefore, while multimodality is present in the course syllabus as a tacit expectation through this and other assignments, it is not identified as a goal for students' participation in the course or a concept with which they should analyze texts.

Both instructors highlighted the difficulty of assigning multimodal work in a distance-learning situation, a problem Sarah described during the interview. "If we hadn't been in the middle of a pandemic," she said, "we would have had a lot of in-class, in-lab experimental workshops and have the librarians come in and show students some interesting tools" This quote highlights how in-person classes are helpful for teaching multimodality and asking students to do multimodal work. While multimodality is often

associated with the internet and with digital communication platforms that students are familiar with, such as social media, more intensive projects that require an iterative process of editing, mastering, and attention to detail may require students to develop new literacies and learn to use software that they have not used before. In such situations, a teacher or other expert who is present with a student can quickly assist them if they are struggling with the technical aspects of a project or answer any questions immediately and through demonstration.

"Last year," Sarah also said, "we were all in a computer lab together, and it was so easy for someone to just grab me and say, 'Hey Sarah can you show me this, or what do you think of this?' and now that requires a Zoom meeting or an email." Zoom and email are often touted as near-miraculous communication technologies that can bring people together and help us share information across vast divides of time and space, the rhetorical aspects of writing a teacher an email or requesting a Zoom conference to ask a simple question are very different than simply raising one's hand in a classroom. Students might feel intimidated, or feel embarrassed, or that their question is not important enough to warrant such a deliberate interaction with their instructor. This has a chilling effect on student-instructor communication and a detrimental effect on instructors' opportunities to teach multimodal composition. Sarah went on to say that while she was happy to give advice through Zoom or emails, she could "understand how a student might be reluctant to reach out for that if it's just a quick question. They can't get feedback and there isn't the collaboration in real time in the same way." Even when students do reach out, the kind of feedback teachers can give through email or even Zoom is seldom as instructive

as direct interaction in the classroom. "It's just it's very different when I'm not there to like pause the video and say, 'OK. Think about – think about this. What does this thing in a video suggest about how the writer is writing for an audience?'" Sarah offered.

Kerry also shared perspectives on the added difficulty of distance learning as well as other challenges to bringing multimodality into her writing classroom. "I think the challenge next semester and presumably the semester after that," she said, "will be kind of thinking about like, well, how do you do research in distant spaces? Particularly primary research. Right? That's a new fun constraint..." In this prediction Kerry shares in the logistical frustration of many university instructors who have been struggling to find ways to move their curricula online. Writing teachers in particular are often faced with additional challenges that further complicate their capability to incorporate multimodality into their writing pedagogies. "One of the things that sucks about being a lecturer," Kerry shared, "was that like you work so damn much and no one gives a shit about you...when you don't get paid that much...it's kind of like why am I going to go do that?" Indeed, why should writing instructors take on the additional responsibility of learning about computer software in order to teach multimodal composition? The mere fact that writing faculty, most of whom are non-tenure-track and often contingently hired instructors, consider taking on the added, unpaid work of researching and mastering emerging computer literacies is honestly surprising. This, Kerry said, is why she wasn't planning substantial changes to her English 104 curriculum in order to teach incorporate multimodality in the Spring 2021 semester. "I need to spend some time doing this," she said, "I honestly think that's really not easy, though, because like I'm overburdened

[with] work and teaching six courses and doing two special projects. Things are going to be mildly tweaked and not really like thoughtfully rearranged."

Considering the situation of many writing faculty who are in similar situations to Kerry's, it is understandable why teachers can be slow to increase the amount of multimodal work in their classes. When we pair this understanding with the last point that we gleaned from Sarah and Kerry's interviews – that multimodal work is in fact already being assigned and done by teachers and students at HSU all the time, it's just not taught as such – it becomes possible to imagine a way for HSU's first-year composition instructors to improve their students' understandings of multimodality and elicit an increased amount of multimodal responses to assignments without significantly increasing workload on teachers. This can be done by explicit teaching, which provides students with the vocabulary and analytical tools to recognize, interpret, and apply multimodality in their course work.

CONCLUSIONS

Explicit teaching works in part because it draws upon prior knowledge. As we have seen by looking at students' reflective writing, they have prior knowledge of multimodality that has been gained through tacit participation in multimodal rhetorical activity before coming to college. During their interviews, both Sarah and Kerry repeatedly stated their recognition of the need for more explicit teaching around multimodality and their intention to teach it explicitly in the future. For example, Kerry mentioned tapping into some of the new readings on multimodality in the 4th edition of *Writing About Writing*. Using the course book provides students with scholarly definitions of multimodality and related concepts that come from an authoritative source, situating multimodality as a body of knowledge that exists along side genre, rhetoric, literacy, and discourse. Kerry also said that in the future she was "going to be more...assertive about in their assignment designs... really kind of calling attention to what is already multimodal and also what are some ways that they might actually think beyond what's been kind of like captured in the assignments." Kerry's desire to see her students think beyond what's been captured in the assignments could be reinterpreted as a desire to see them make scholarly conceptualizations of multimodality. When multimodal work is discussed in terms of genre or rhetoric, then these concepts take a central role in students' responses to the assignments, and multimodality (as a concept rather than an aspect of their work) is relegated to the "beyond" of Kerry's quote. Assignments that use the term multimodality and draw on readings that define and differentiate semiotic modes

place multimodality in focus and will help students to form scholarly perspectives on multimodality.

Sarah also said she wanted to adjust her assignment designs to make the possibility of multimodal responses more apparent to her students. When asked if she would do anything differently if she could do the semester over, she replied, "I would be more explicit...I think I need to really emphasize that it's an option, and I wonder if it may be...more reassuring to do it, you know face to face or screen to screen than just saying you know, a bullet point on a prompt." A short time later in the interview, Sarah also mentioned a need for more models of multimodal responses to assignments, so that her students could have examples to work from, and a related need to form connections with colleagues in order to collect and create more models. Modeling and explicit assignment design are two aspects that can be incorporated into a first-year writing pedagogy that teaches multimodality which might help elicit more multimodal responses from students.

Kerry had another idea that could be used to increase the extent to which students are willing to attempt multimodal responses to assignments: taking student writing public. "Being online really made me start to think about this idea," she said, asking whether certain online technologies or platforms could "allow for kind of more interesting like writing instruction that provides a real sense of audience for students." As scholarship has shown, the awareness that one's work is going to be circulated publicly can provide students with powerful motivation and a real sense of agency. It also helps professionalize their composition skills and breaks down the psychological barriers some

of them may have erected between work they do at and outside of school. "So much of the work that I assign in my courses still has this idea of the classroom as its circulation space," Kerry continued, but she was quick to add that there is no reason multimodal assignment responses like videos, for example, couldn't be shared with public audiences, especially when the online class setting already requires that they be shared online. Like explicit modeling and in-person instruction, sharing with public audiences might help inspire more students to take up multimodal work in response to class assignments.

All of the methods so far mentioned for improving the pedagogies of multimodality within HSU's first-year composition program focus on getting students to try more multimodal responses. However, I am not certain that this is the best approach. While having students take up more opportunities to do multimodal work in English 104 would be a positive outcome, it would be better to teach multimodality as a concept in the same way genre, rhetoric, literacy, and discourse are taught. That is, devote a unit to multimodality. Assign scholarly perspectives that define multimodality, provide a brief overview of semiotics, and provide a vocabulary with which students can discuss the multimodal elements of the complex texts they interpret and produce. This will provide students with a conceptualization of multimodality that is both well-defined and adaptable, i.e., *transferable*. Placing an emphasis on student production of multimodal texts has an important place in a composition pedagogy that aims to teach multimodality but is somewhat tantamount to having students produce a variety of arbitrarily selected genres rather than studying genre as a scholarly conceptualization of rhetorical action. Once these students had left such a course, they may, for example, be able to reproduce

the formal elements of a literature review, a bibliography, or a diner menu, but would they understand how any of those texts incorporate the values of the discourse communities that produce and use them, or how they respond to specific rhetorical situations that arise repeatedly within those communities? I imagine they would not, and venture to guess that a similar pedagogy of multimodality would yield similar results.

I propose that multimodality should be added to the HSU Composition and Rhetoric program's learning outcomes, and instructors should begin creating units that include scholarly perspectives on multimodality which center it in the pedagogy of the English 104 course alongside genre, rhetoric, discourse, and literacy. Doing so will help students become aware of the rhetorical uses of multimodality in the texts they encounter and produce at school and outside of class. The ability to name and describe our knowledge and skills increases our confidence in them. A student who thoroughly grasps multimodality as a scholarly composition concept is only more prepared to begin employing that concept in their own writing. Just like teaching students to conceptualize genre helps them enter and succeed in new writing situations, teaching them to conceptualize multimodality will help them do the same in new situations which demand their rhetorical participation in forms that differ from traditional academic writing, or even writing at all. Teaching students about multimodality in this way would therefore help writing instructors achieve the goal of preparing their students to participate in professional settings where communication is increasingly online and multimodal.

Another advantage of this approach is that it requires comparatively little investment of time and effort on the part of instructors. Scholarly writing on

multimodality, though now fairly prevalent, is still a relatively small corpus. A half hour

spent reading an article from one of the edited collections cited in this project would

hardly be sufficient to even superficially research the proliferation of, for example, sound

editing software that currently exist. Reading lists for faculty and for readings that could

be assigned to students could be curated by the program director or by faculty who are

already well read on the subject of multimodality. Interestingly, this path to developing

effective pedagogies of multimodality happens to fit what Kerry said would be her ideal

means of support for teaching this subject. "I honestly want reading groups," she said,

"I'd just love more reading groups. I mean, I think there's more practical things, like

here's a software, but I am less interested in those...I just want to be a student again."

Learning to apply software may be more practical to the immediate ends of creating a

particular multimodal text, but in terms of developing an effective pedagogy of

multimodality that helps students build transferable knowledge, all while placing as little

extra burden on instructors as possible, reading groups seem extremely practical to me.

From those reading groups might come discussions about reading selections for students,

assignment designs, and how to build connections between multimodality and the other

conceptual writing knowledge taught at HSU, leading in time to a well-defined program

learning outcome that can be observed in the reflective writing HSU students will

produce using their new scholarly vocabularies of multimodality.
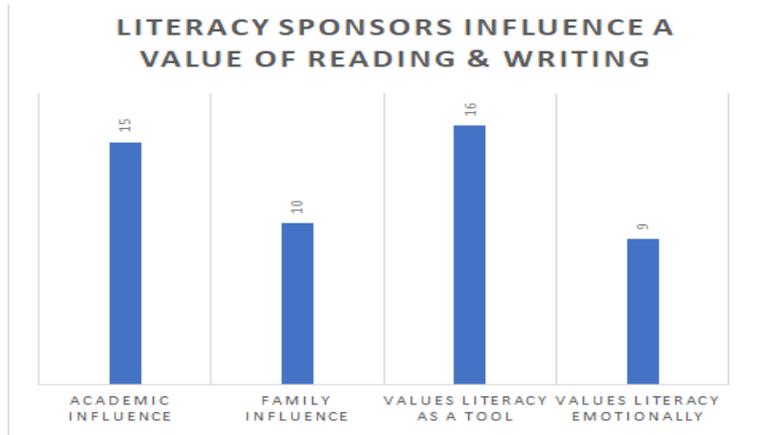
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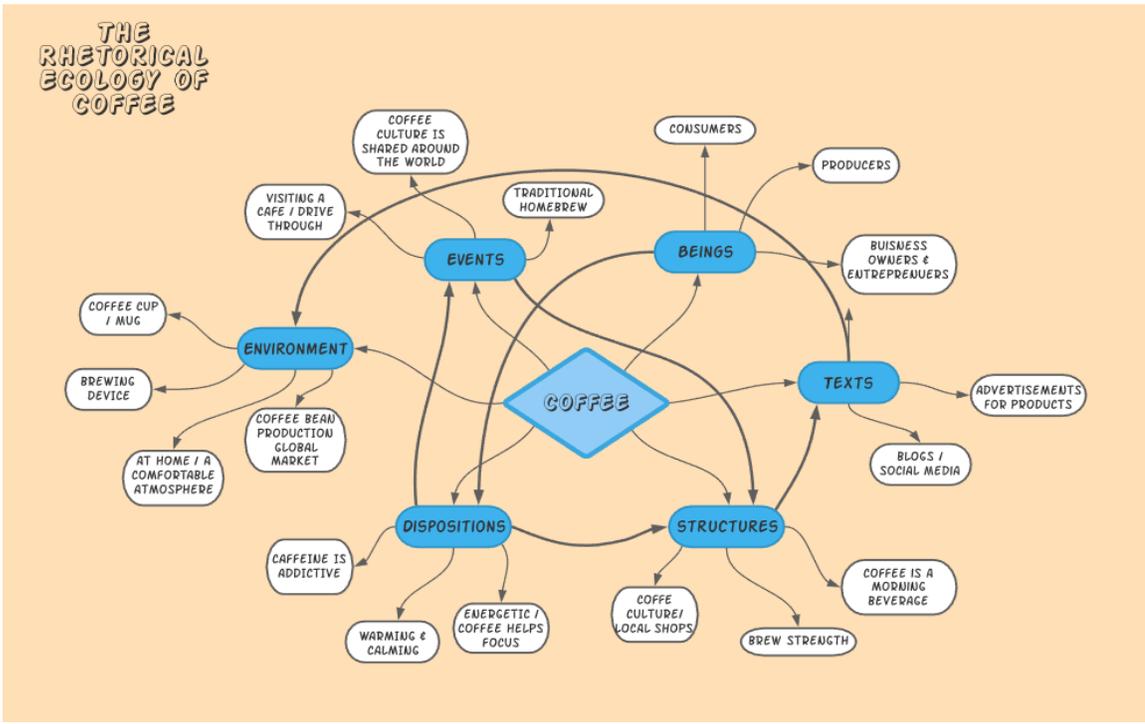
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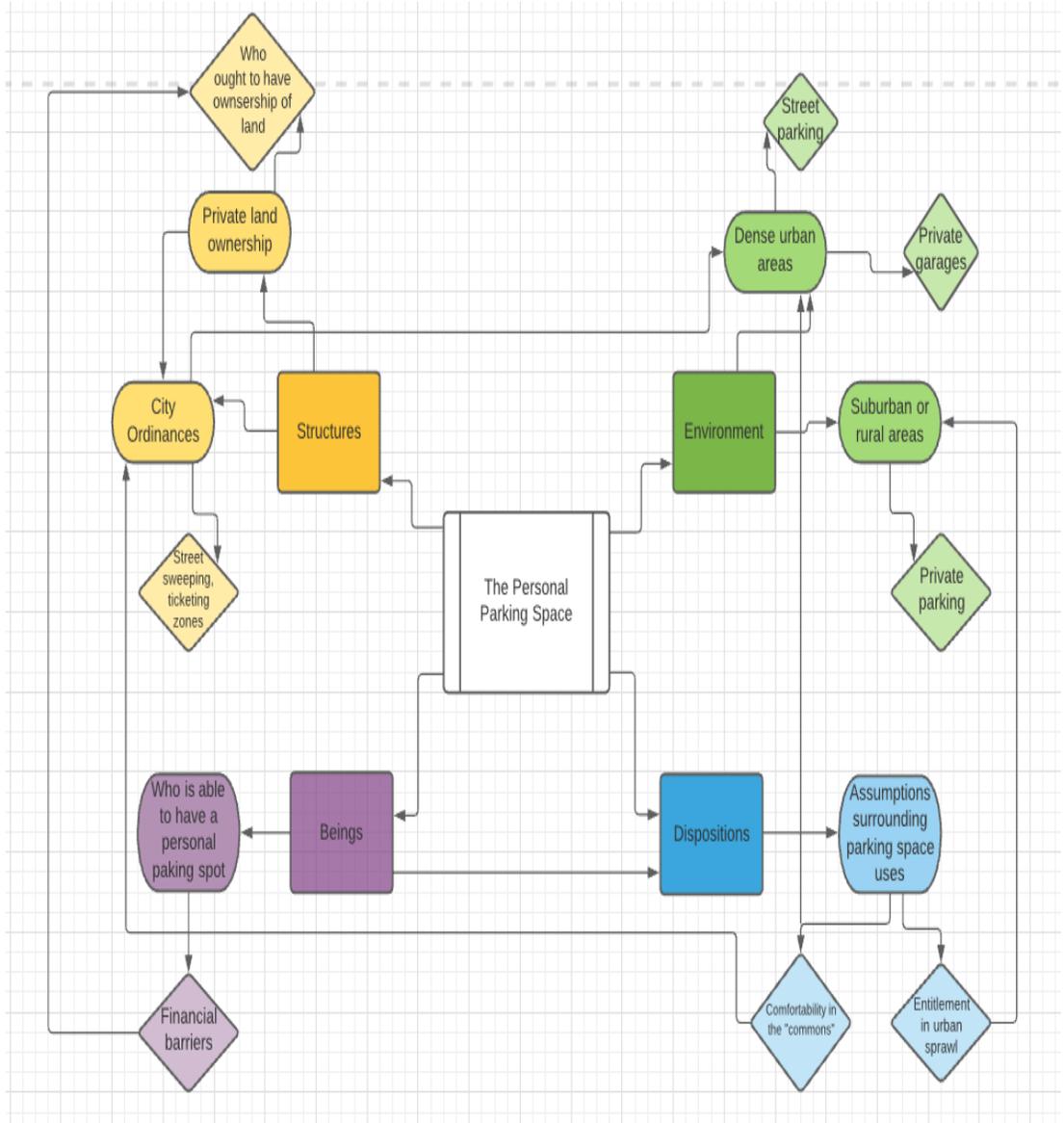
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APPENDIX A

LITERACY SPONSORS INFLUENCE A
VALUE OF READING & WRITING

- ACADEMIC INFLUENCE: 15
- FAMILY INFLUENCE: 10
- VALUES LITERACY AS A TOOL: 16
- VALUES LITERACY EMOTIONALLY: 9

THE RHETORICAL ECOLOGY OF COFFEE

APPENDIX B

For Instructor

1.   In what ways did you build multimodality into your curriculum or encourage students to respond multimodally? Were there specific assignments that accomplished this?

2.   Tell me about what a successful multimodal response to this assignment looked like. Tell me about the less successful responses.

3.   Did you include a reflective on the multimodal elements of their responses to assignments? What did you ask students to reflect about? What did they respond?

5.   What readings did you ask students to complete to support developing their understandings of multimodality? Why did you choose these? If you were to repeat this curriculum, would you make any changes?

4.   Did anything surprise you in what students produced or in what they reported about what they learned?

6.   Can you explain your assignment design process? If you were to repeat the curriculum would you make any changes to the assignment design or presentation?

7.   What advice would you give to future instructors who want to incorporate this or similar digital literacies projects into their curricula?