Expanding Public Writing Circulation and Its Impact on the First Year Composition Classroom

Expanding Public Writing Circulation and Its Impact on the First Year Composition Classroom

by

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Under the Direction of Lynée Lewis Gaillet, PhD

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the origins, pedagogy, structure, limitations, and outcomes of a first year composition English 1101 course focused on public writing circulation outside the classroom in commercial, mainstream publications through the use of a personal blog, a community profile article, and an op-ed. The study focused on teaching students to recognize the composition dissemination process, identify diverse audiences, and adapt their writing to those audiences. The research aim tested the results of extending student work beyond the classroom through publication in mainstream media and blogs, creating high-stakes assignments that enhanced students' audience awareness and composition skills, creating authentic revisions and increasing student engagement. These research findings offered practical applications for designing engaging, real-world assignments to promote authentic writing, revision, and audience interaction.

INDEX WORDS: Public writing, Community engagement, First Year Composition, Audience awareness, Authentic revision, Applied rhetoric pedagogy, Circulation, Dissemination, Writing Skills.

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DEDICATION

I am blessed beyond measure to have had the opportunities to live, work, study, and raise my children in my country and in my family. There could have been so many different paths for me, but God allowed this one and I'm forever humbled. To Russell Williams—my husband, my best friend, and my favorite cheerleader—you are one of the best people I have ever known. It was my lucky day when I met you. To my dad who always told me I could be anything and do anything—I'm sorry I'm not an attorney as requested, but at least I have your sense of humor and good looks. To my mom who gave me her wisdom and love unconditionally—you are my north star of what a woman should be. To my sons, Cooper and Cash—without question being your mother is the best thing I have ever done and my proudest accomplishment. You give me hope for the future, not only because you are my retirement plan, but because I know that a world that has you in it has to be full of promise and love. To the rest of my family and friends who support me with love, food, and simply picking up the phone when I call. I love you all desperately.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

1 INTRODUCTION

In February 2023, Nathan Heller wrote "The End of the English Major" for *The New Yorker*, decrying the 33% drop in literary arts enrollment during the previous decade. The article was immediately circulated in English departments around the nation as professors worried about their future. However, Heller's article was neither ground-breaking nor the first of its kind. Verlyn Klinkenborg published an opinion piece with a similar title in 2013 for *The New York Times* where he noted, "In 1991, 165 students graduated from Yale with a B.A. in English literature. By 2012, that number was 62. In 1991, the top two majors at Yale were history and English. In 2013, they were economics and political science." He blamed the decline on three things: a dull faculty's inability to teach, the English department's failure to explain its essentiality to education, and our students' needs to have a "practical" major (my quotes) (Klinkenborg). English departments and instructors need a perspective reboot.

By proving ourselves through renovated pedagogy, we verify our subject's importance. FYC students are accustomed to composing in a public environment where both their formal and informal products can be viewed online immediately. By creating a publicly focused classroom and curriculum, instructors help students develop their composition skills in a familiar environment while learning to think more critically about their public audiences and composition choices. My research tested this assertion while challenging the perspectives that English is not essential and not a "practical" major. As instructors, we need to listen to our own advice and adapt to (and with) our primary audience: undergraduate students.

The public writing classroom offers more than just information and skills—it fosters peer engagement, explores diverse viewpoints, and provides personalized feedback to refine writing. Most importantly, it encourages students to reflect on their places in the world. Drawing on past

and current scholarship (Dewey 170; Weisser xii; Dahlman 138), I argue that first-year composition (FYC) courses should include more public writing, ranging from targeted assignments to entire course designs and syllabi. Given students' varied backgrounds and interests, integrating student publishing research with FYC can help students connect composition with their fields of study. FYC career ready competencies (critical thinking, ethical reasoning, information literacy, inquiry and analysis, intercultural competence, perspective-taking, persuasion, problem-solving, teamwork, and time management), combined with public writing experience, have the potential to resonate with students through not only the targeting of audiences and compositional tailoring therein, but also through the more detailed attention students pay to their own works ("Competencies"). Danica Savonick, for example, found that students in her public writing classes worked harder on assignments when they knew others would read them ("What Can Our Writing" 67). Public writing in FYC can thus align with other curricula and engage students with their disciplines by focusing on relevant publishing outlets and audiences.

My research extends this argument by integrating circulation research and commercial publication into the FYC classroom through three new assignments. I hypothesized that the high stakes and immediate feedback of commercial publishing would boost student engagement, raise students' audience awareness, and demonstrate the relevance of FYC classes. This approach helps students connect classroom writing to their current needs and future goals. By linking learning values with publishing, students can take risks and engage in research tailored to their own interests.

1.1 Term Definitions and Evaluation Processes

Audience Awareness—a writer's ability to read and respond to an audience's needs. Good awareness means that a writer understands an audience's needs and motivations, engaging with them persuasively, making communication effective and resonant.

Blog—short, communicative pieces of digital writing over any subject, usually informal and conversational. They can be informative or persuasive, journalistic or industry related, but they are always published online.

Circulation—the dissemination of composition beyond the teacher-student arena and its subsequent transformation through the writer's adaptation to audience feedback.

Commercial Publishing—submission to non-academic, mass market journals, magazines, and newspapers, both in print and online. While most of these are for-profit publications, there are occasions where they exist as a non-profit. They exist both locally, nationally, and internationally and traditionally require query letters or pre-submission practices. However, there are exceptions, such as the op-ed, where submission is done mostly without a query letter. The term commercial publishing is used interchangeably in this paper with "mass market" and "for-profit media outlets."

Dissemination—the diffusion process of a text in the classroom before it is sent to circulate.

Op-ed—an opinion piece of writing (named such by its placement across from the editorial page) characterized by a thesis and main arguments of support. In my classroom, op-ed and the term "open letter" (which is normally a little longer and has different positional placement) were used interchangeably as students had to adapt their writing as the publishers responded. However, I used "op-ed" in this dissertation to describe both to remain consistent.

Personal Profile Article (PPA)—tells a story about someone—who they are, what they've done. This article required students to research and utilize a different writing style, learn to connect with an interview subject, discover the stories available in their communities, communicate those stories effectively and professionally, and then submit the stories to local publications.

Public writing—composition traditionally written for non-academic, public consumption. In the classroom, these pieces prepare students for career writing opportunities by exploring the adaptability of different styles prepared for different audiences, ultimately showing the transferability of English composition skills in the career marketplace.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW: PUBLIC WRITING IN THE FYC CLASSROOM

Few first year composition (FYC) classes incorporate a public writing pedagogy. Scholars have previously explored engagement, audience, and transfer in public writing (Weisser 98; Garcia 6; Jack 24; Deans 61; Holmes *Public* 33), but these studies often focused on community service and activism rather than commercial publishing (Cross 15; Jack 5). With a lens angled toward the commercial world, and recognizing the socially embedded "connected learning" experience that public writing presents, scholars must prioritize examining the effects of the resulting student engagement, both for students and FYC instructors (Garcia 6; Ito et al. 4). Each FYC class has a new set of students with different goals and backgrounds, yet some factors remain consistent. As Garcia says, "context drives practice" (8). Students, regardless of background, show greater enthusiasm for assignments that are relevant to their goals and experiences, that place their learning in context (Nobis 62). By incorporating mainstream media publishing in FYC, instructors can enhance the classroom experience and foster positive classroom interactions.

2.1 Theoretical Framework: Audience in FYC

Understanding audience nuances—such as culture, age, race, and gender—is vital for effective communication in real-world settings. As Liu and Guo observed: "audience awareness is…[when] the writer consciously takes the needs of the readers, the level of acceptance, the acceptance of psychology and aesthetic interests into his mental state in the process of writing" (2). Michael Jack updated this definition to conform to the modern audience by noting they are the people who want to know the magic behind what happens; "[modern audiences] are more likely to view even well-known writers as equals – regarding them more like thoughtful, articulate friends than authority figures or distant experts. They are looking to trade intimacies,

trust, and disclosures" (127). Instructing students how to be aware of their diverse audiences becomes crucial as students operate in a borderless world. Ignoring audience differences could impact students' professional futures. Ashley Holmes noted that for many public writing instructors, "situating student experience, learning, and writing in public sites beyond the classroom provides a meaningful context through which to explore social issues while facilitating student learning" (*Public* 50). This "meaningful context," combined with the reality of a digital communication world, proved essential for students in FYC. Young and Morgan's 2020 study showed that students who wrote for a public audience were more attentive to their choices, leading to "authentic revisions" and improved writing (41). Incorporating mainstream publishing in FYC can shift students' audience perception earlier in their university experiences and allow them quicker access to the critical thinking and writing strategies.

Deans observed that the critical literacy developed through public writing in the classroom allowed students to "parlay that critical consciousness into concrete civic action later in their lives" (109). He observed that classroom critical literacy enabled students to apply their critical consciousness to civic action later in life (109). Similarly, when studying activist public writing, Holmes found that real-world engagement offered a "possibility of long-term transfer of core concepts from the course" (*Public* 51). Applying Deans's and Holmes's ideas to FYC, Lindenman emphasized "the first-year writing space, whether by circumstance or for good reason, holds special weight and significance, and writing scholars and teachers have long debated what the space is for" (88). Using this space to enhance skill transfer through circulation research and students' risks warranted further investigation. Mark Caprio's 2014 study demonstrated how revising connected learning aligns with business and non-profit demands for a more engaged workforce (146; qtd. in Waye and Simpson 3; Eble and Gaillet 351). Exploring

commercial publishing might offer a novel way to value individual voices within a standardized teaching system; yet, scholars rarely examine the integration of public writing, commercial publishing, and FYC, making it an area deserving of focused research.

2.2 The Argument for Student Publishing as a High Impact Practice

George Kuh first used the phrase "high impact practices" (HIPs) in his essay introducing the 2006 National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) annual report (Kuh, O'Donnell, and Schneider 8). He highlighted the academic experiences that helped students succeed noting that "HIPs are developmentally powerful because they require applied, hands-on, integrative, and often collaborative learning experiences" (9). Public writing classrooms that emphasize publishing can connect with these HIPs in distinct ways.

First, publishing connects to the common intellectual experiences, the "big questions" that students tackle beyond the classroom. In the PPA assignment I utilized, for example, students experienced an "out-of-class" activity as Kuh suggested, connecting them with local community members or businesses. Students could *tie* their current classroom discussions with *practical* use of learned skills to *create* authentic composition pieces as they introduced their PPA subjects/community members to the world. In this module students experienced a writing and inquiry intensive course, explored community-based learning, and developed collaborative skills as they worked together to draft their projects and participated in class discussions and peer editing opportunities. Past student publishing practitioners told students that "publishing your undergraduate research provides two types of rewards…the acquisition and refinement of skills and traits that will aid you in your pursuit of graduate training and employment and…the second reward is intrinsic and comes from doing meaningful work, the value of which cannot be

measured with a course grade" (Brownlow 83-84). A writer's fortitude, ability to rethink and revise, take corrections, and look critically at composition forges the best work.

The proposed blog project achieved the goal of an e-portfolio: "Done well, ePortfolio is a powerful pedagogical approach that requires meaningful student reflection and deepens learning while making achievement visible" (Kuh, O'Donnell, and Schneider 10). The blog gave students quick access to the public sphere, encouraging thoughtful revisions due to its online nature. Publishing also connected to another HIP through the research required for composing for a specific audience: "The beauty of having students get their ideas 'out there' is that in doing so, students experience an authentic rhetorical situation with an authentic audience and purpose" (Duffy 40). Circulating their writing fostered real-world audience adaptation, a crucial HIP for classrooms.

Finally, commercial publication equips students with the practical application of their classroom-developed skills. Like in the workplace, large projects result from a series of small tasks. George Kuh highlighted the need to teach these skills in classrooms to support an educated workforce: "The discourse about what the country needs from its postsecondary system needs re-balancing and grounding in what clear-minded captains of industry have learned from experience and what the educational research shows matters to preparing people for a self-sufficient, civically responsible, and personally satisfying life" (4). Understanding the self-respect gained from doing a job well can positively impact all areas of students' lives.

2.3 A Commercial Publishing Focus

To show how I navigated students to commercial writing outlets, I precisely define the terms "commercial publishing" and "circulation" for this project. First, commercial publishing is synonymous with words like "mass market" and "for-profit media outlets." In all contexts

herein, the terms “mainstream” and “commercial” are used interchangeably regarding publishing outlets. These outlets are driven to create widespread readership, driving demand and, in most cases, profit and include non-academic magazines and newspapers, both in print and online, and websites. (Caveats: while personal blogs are not considered commercial publication, I used those as a project for the audience recognition—a less intimidating way to publish to a broader audience. Also, while mainstream books are considered commercially viable publishing, they are too long-term to be considered for one semester FYC courses.) Many scholars turned to academic presses to print their works, but commercial publishing differs. For example, Portwood-Stacer asserted, “Commercial academic presses, like university presses, publish scholarship and put them through peer review. But their economic structure differs. These companies aim to make a profit.” In his breakdown of science magazines, Stephen Buranyi noted that a traditional magazine publisher “first has to cover a multitude of costs: it pays writers for the articles; it employs editors to commission, shape and check the articles; and it pays to distribute the finished product to subscribers and retailers. A costly overhead expense means successful magazines typically make profits of around 12-15%.” Profit-driven publication models only publish works that appeal to the mass market. Newspaper barons like William Randolph Hearst and Rupert Murdoch thrived by becoming the primary outlet for information consumption and as instructors, we can show our students how to tap into that data flow.

Commercial publishing may also include trade magazines specific to an industry like *Tire Business* magazine, which is ad driven and, therefore, requires a profitable business model structure (The Library of Congress houses magazines in an online catalog: Home | Library of Congress (loc.gov)). Publications requiring query letters or pre-submission practices exist locally, nationally, and internationally and traditionally. Newspapers, magazines, and journals

exist in the mainstream world because they learn to collect *desired* content. To create pieces for commercial outlets, students participate in primary and secondary writing (direct and indirect contact with events) with mainstream publications aligning primarily with secondary style writing ("Guide to Science"). Students have the choice to gather primary sourced interviews or using their own lived experiences, but they can also gather factual information through researching/creating an opinion piece like the op-ed. Either way, mainstream publications offer a rarely-sought chance for student publishing.

The seeds of commercial publication begin with small classroom assignments that many instructors already assign: the "résumé, cover letter, memo, proposal, publicity packet, personality profile, and biographical sketch" (Deans 65). A simple pivot pushes these projects into the public sphere where they serve realistic purposes and reach realistic audiences. Commercial outlet audiences vary depending on publication but are generally considered to be of a wider, more popularly diverse group, and writing to varied audiences hones composition skills.

Many public writing scholars advocate a focus to this diverse audience. Like Deans, Ellen Cushman advocated the spreading of academic knowledge and putting it to work for the greater good: "Popularizing suggests that public intellectuals simply translate their thinking into less specialized terms, then publish in *The New Yorker* or academe. Yet, publishing to a greater number of elite audiences works more to bolster our own positions in academe than it does to widen the scope of our civic duties as intellectuals" (Cushman "The Public Intellectual" 330). Jack concurred with Cushman's assertion that academic scholars should go beyond the classroom to educate the public by publishing their research commercially. He noted, "asking questions, troubling the status quo, challenging readers to think – all these serve as fair and accurate descriptors for the good work, public writers, take on…the relentless pursuit of the ideas

that matter and the telling of the stories that captivate…They remind us that writing in service to the greater good is a task of abiding importance" (Jack 15). Ultimately, knowledge remains useless if it only helps a small portion of the population and a scholar's civic duty requires moving education and knowledge outside the classroom.

Transitioning from academia to mainstream publishing may simply involve changing the mode of delivery to a commercial publication through compositional modifications. Academic writing tends to be dry, but simplifying sentence structure, creating smaller paragraphs, or adding more entertaining facts potentially attracts a wider net of readers. For example, in this digital age, an article's simple title change exemplifies transitioning from academia to online publications; Jack told the story of an academic journal article that was downloaded less than 100 times in full text was then retitled with an attention-grabbing headline, put on social media, and consequently received over 2000 Facebook shares after being repackaged for popular readers, ultimately reaching 20 times as many readers than the original, academic publication (16). While my focus was on student writing, Jack's assertion that entertaining word choices matter in breaching academic/commercial communication lines drove one of my inquiry lines to see if commercial markets changed student composition.

To explore the publishing world, students have many choices. Most FYC instructors who incorporate publishing in their assignment design do so through university sponsored publications, non-profit publications, or unique, organizational opportunities (such as brochures for study abroad programs). While these products offer more realistic experience than classroom writing, mainstream publication offers even more competition, consequence, and reward. That competition requires more risk and has the potential to require more effort. Duffy's appeal to students that they should publish their academic research further demonstrated how experience

writing for real audiences helps students develop stronger composition skills. While her argument focused specifically on academic research, she asserts that academic publishing helps students develop "intellectual inquiry and analysis" while building credibility, which can support students' non-academic publication efforts (41). Therefore, I considered it essential to study the impact of publishing for commercial audiences to see if students reacted to a mainstream stimuli introduction.

However, attempting to publish in academic arenas can be disheartening, even for experienced writers (Brownlow 83). While public writing provides many benefits, scholars have also recognized its risks: rejection, limited writing scope, and negative community interactions (Deans 62; Holmes "Transformative" 57; Savonick "Write Out Loud;" Lindemann 23). Commercial publication recreates perils similar to community partnerships (like having a public audience) yet keeps that learning frame intact and creates its own opportunities. For example, by learning to do op-eds or profile pieces, students have agency in choosing their projects, whereas community partnerships limit writing based on an organization's needs. Mass markets allow students to change their audience in ways they can't change their teachers. The assignments I tested taught academic research and writing, but eased students into publishing publicly by creating final products (the blog, PPA, and op-ed) which were submitted to more welcoming outlets while still positively impacting their communities. It removes students' small audience lenses and reveals a potential world of readers; ultimately, it changes how students view their own compositional roles.

Branson's students "assum[ed] the role of a public expert" and used "the op-ed as a vehicle for social change" (135). Students in his study shifted their writing to reflect their understanding of their audience. For example, he observed some students "used personal

pronouns" while others "stayed distant and logical" (139). My research provided insight into not only what rhetorical choices students made, but also why and how the choices impacted their work. Branson observed that "some…[students] assumed their audience was less intelligent, uninterested, less ethical, from outside the local area they were supposed to be targeting. They positioned themselves as subject authorities, caring neighbors and some as educators. Some used personal pronouns, some stayed distant and logical. Some saw varied degrees of audience interest in the subject" (139). These writing shifts are worth exploring; my research results provided insight not only into what choices students made, but also why they made those choices and the potential impacts of their decisions. Further, by understanding students' perspectives and their results (successes and failures in publishing), we, as instructors, can design and implement assignments which better prepare students for compositional success in their careers.

In the past, writing for mainstream publications has been limited to professionals—journalism/communication majors, dedicated writers and public figures. However, advances in technology and FYC pedagogy open the doors of public communication to *all* students. Frank LoMonte noted:

> When students learn the skills and values of journalism in the classroom, they become more careful—and more effective—communicators. They learn the importance of balance, attribution, and verification. They learn to…consider the legal and ethical implications of disclosing private information. Few of them will end up being professional journalists, but all of them will end up being online publishers—and civic actors. (9)

To expand on LoMonte's point, commercial publishing introduces students to civic participation and helps them practice transferring classroom-acquired skills to broader settings. Further, public

writing assignments introduce students to higher stakes composition opportunities and make real-world connections while still very early in their education. Jack asserted that assignments like an op-ed, viewpoints piece, or editorial can ask students to initiate the conversation to inspire others by "writing something sufficiently compelling that it might inspire others to write their own letter, and reply to our piece, thereby turning the civic wheel by which public debate and discourse are advanced" (236). Essentiality is a key component to student engagement.

To be published in mainstream media, works have to be relevant and necessary. In her myth-busting article to academics, Carole Sergent wrote from a commercial perspective and questioned the academic-only works, noting how often they don't go through the rigorous editing and drafting, the search for clarity and brevity that a mainstream piece of writing would. As academics, how many times have we read and re-read lines and paragraphs, sifting through the sheets of multi-syllabic words to uncover meaning? At times, articles and books seemed to be written to check a performative, academic box. Sergent asked:

> What happens to the intellectual message of the work itself? Un-honed, it is left to die a slow, occasionally-acquired-but-seldom-checked-out death. More insidiously, that scholar is now reinforced in turning out work of the same standard (not bad work, mind you, but not work honed to the degree needed to generate anything other than a nod from colleagues). Future books will either materialize or fail to, but the ideas themselves will remain hidden behind layers of language, without the depth of clarity and focus necessary to make them actually work. (28)

Belcher concurred with Sargent's writing utilization plea noting that "The training that students do receive can consist of little more than check-marks in the margins of their papers and an occasional recommendation that a paper might meet with success if submitted, well, somewhere.

Few graduate students in the humanities can name a professor who has discussed the difference between writing for the classroom and writing for a journal" (190; emphasis mine). While Belcher targeted graduate students with this comment, it logically follows that fewer FYC students are exposed to commercial writing. So, my study asked, "What if?" What if we target students sooner in FYC, when they have the potential to have authentic revisions in a classroom before they reach the workplace with no sense of instruction? What if we look further and reach further than the normal publishing outlets? Sergent mentioned the same journals as Belcher and asserted that "students at research institutions develop a mistaken idea of what publishable quality is, having little experience of the ordinary journal article" (191). Again, FYC classrooms has the potential to reach into that sense of audience so impactful to writing. While the FYC classroom has tried to teach that concept, instructors have made the mistake of broadcasting the audience recognition message too narrowly. As author Francis Fukuyama noted, "There is an art to rhetoric and persuasion that requires understanding one's audience, and that again is something that you can't presuppose with many academics" (qtd in Sergent 27). Writing for mainstream audiences can require more editing and audience awareness than typical academic writing. Students can recognize a "clear style…[and be] forced to get to the essence of what…[they're] trying to say and to convey it in a manner that is memorable, perhaps even quotable" (24). FYC fills the space perfectly for this type of creative thought. Students are exposed to poets and fiction writers, but they need a larger resource buffet including activists, journalists, strategic thinkers—literary artists who may not be academic, but still contribute value to the human knowledge collective.

2.4 A Focus on Circulation and Dissemination Studies

The concept of "circulation" needs defining. Circulation's roots are in the composition process, not only its dissemination into the public sphere, but also its movement and adaptation once there. Laurie Gries succinctly defined it as an "interdisciplinary approach to studying rhetoric and writing in motion," but she went on to emphasize the flow of distributed rhetoric and how it changed beyond the original composition. Josephine Walwema concurred and expanded by observing, "Circulation studies goes beyond rhetoric's notions of persuasion as a human act. Circulation expands past delivery, given its capacity to track the text to transformative and affective change over the course of its material encounters" (543). For the purpose of this research, I defined "circulation" as the dissemination of composition beyond the teacher-student arena and its subsequent transformation through the writer's adaptation to audience feedback. While the most common type of high school and FYC public writing tends to lean toward activist or non-profit organization learning projects, those have limits. As Gries explained:

> In service-learning projects, students also often miss opportunities to negotiate the day-to-day decision making that goes into civic organization—from adjusting activity systems in response to constantly shifting needs to responding to emergent issues that arise once writing enters into circulation. The approach for which I advocate challenges students to take sole responsibility for inventing their own organizations, identifying their own community needs and organizational goals, and putting their own bodies and self-designed discourse into circulation in order to assemble a larger public around shared matters of concern. Such pedagogy builds on much of our current scaffolding to teach students the collaborative arts of rhetorical design, production, and delivery. However,

> this approach puts students in the hot seat, where in building their own collectives and implementing their own activist agendas, they become the organizers and drivers of rhetorical assemblage in every stage of the public writing process. (331)

Using these foundational definitions, circulation scholarship has the potential, especially in this digital age, to become a larger area of study. While writers 30 years ago were unable to track audience feedback in a timely manner, now students can adapt faster and alter compositions to better persuade their audiences. Kohn points out that "circulation scholars can be afforded the opportunity to discuss how a public's attention is gained and formed" and by using the "attention data," students can learn with real-world, self-composed writing pieces to experience how an audience responds to their writing (42). Studying circulation allows students to experiment in the classroom and know what works for them before they have the realistic need to broadcast their written thoughts once they enter the workforce.

Mary Stuckey reiterated this foundational concept and its connection to public writing when she noted, "Circulation impinges on every aspect of rhetorical theory and criticism…[and] the logics of circulation are fundamental to the study of public address" (609). Indeed, creating rhetorical public works in the classroom is essentially a useless exercise unless students can publish them and send them into the public realm to see how they move and shift once the audience receives the words and responds. I approached circulation as its root word suggested—a circle—which put text into a circulatory system of feedback and change. Yet, the dissemination of material cannot realistically be separated from its circulation, so also deserves analysis. Interestingly, only a few public writing scholars include dissemination in their examinations and *none* of them define the term.

To begin this expansion, I defined dissemination as the diffusion process of a text in the classroom before it is sent to circulate. To make an analogy, it is the difference between the process of broadcasting (disseminating) seeds in a field and the life those seeds take once they touch the soil (circulation). In her 2022 article about expanding public writing within the classroom, Alisa Russell advocated for publishing outlets that students can "reasonably author and distribute," with national op-eds being a dismissed outlet in her theories as being too expansive (82). Her reasoning was that op-eds were a heavily researched piece of writing that had to flow through multiple "layers of publishing gatekeepers" (83) and she noted the difficulty of stepping into the public space with their writing (85). While documenting Gogan and Branson's use of op-eds and editorials, however, she reconfigured her argument to focus on the dispersion of student writing: "for example, a widely-dispersed genre might be one that is intended for a large readership across numerous communities, while a narrowly-dispersed genre might be intended for a smaller readership within singular communities" (85). While Russell's use of "dispersion" is closely related to my own use of "dissemination" and "diffusion," she studied the end destination instead of the process itself.

That delivery system is crucial to creating an impactful public writing classroom because neglecting delivery "causes teachers and students 'to miss altogether the complex delivery systems through which writing circulates" (Mathieu and George 131; Trimble 189). Mathieu and George further explain that the best delivery systems can be the localized ones, noting that "for the past several years, the two of us have focused much of our attention on those small independent newspapers and on the kinds of writing that are, if we are honest with ourselves, rarely read outside small circles of like-minded individuals" (132). While my study also spoke to similar "small circles," I also proposed distributing writing both nationally and with digital,

possibly international platforms. This assignment step contradicted Mathieu and George's assumption that "such student-generated letters are rarely sent and even more rarely published" because submitting assignments were the last step of each module in my study (133). I needed to see if/how the dissemination affected students because failing to examine the delivery causes us "to miss altogether the complex delivery systems through which writing circulates" (Trimbur 189; qtd in Mathieu and George 131). I hypothesized that their writing would shift to match the mental processing that moved as they wrote and became aware of a new audience.

2.5 Research Justification and Current Gap in Public Writing Research

My writing background is a collection of academic and career lessons, all of which were the inspiration behind my research. I experienced the university classroom as an undergraduate and graduate student, interning with a magazine and a literary agent, moving on to write for print publications, then published my own magazine for nine years. In those jobs, I learned how to analyze markets, adapt writing, and teach other writers to do the same. Most of my learning was a trial-and-error process since university classrooms focused on creative fiction and academic papers. I cannot remember writing any publishable creative, non-fiction works as an undergraduate or graduate student. Publishing was not promoted or taught. For my first community interview, I was a nervous mess. If I had experienced all the skills entailed with public writing earlier in my educational career, there would have been many compositional and social mistakes I could have avoided by practicing in a less high-stakes environment. Participating in a FYC classroom like the one in this study would have better prepared me for the business world.

While few researchers have studied the audience shifting with circulation and dissemination, I did not encounter a commercially driven, public-writing-focused FYC

classroom for a study. Steven Accardi and many others (Deans, Mathieu, Holmes, Weisser) followed the traditional recommendation of a non-traditional first year classroom with a community service component, but my work has the potential to fill this new niche. An FYC classroom is a unique to teach audience conceptualization to students early. They can then transfer the skill to their majors and careers since public writing FYC assignments "build students' critical thinking skills as content creators" (Hensley and Johnson 59). FYC students may not encounter another opportunity at the university to establish the mental shifting skills they need to address specific audiences. It is imperative that educators address them early since the earlier students learn these skills, the better prepared they will be for their future classes. While much has been written about FYC students and public writing, tying in commercial publications from a circulation perspective has the potential to open students to a wider range of skills and audience awareness. They can learn how to compose business letters, conduct interviews, take risks in a controlled environment, and adapt their writing to each new challenge during the dissemination process.

For my study, I created classroom modules to examine compositional shifting, implemented in-class peer reviews, and choreographed student submissions to commercial publishers. In the course of a semester, students were able to use their peers as test subjects to mimic a real-world audience and respond to student works in class and online (sometimes anonymously), so I was able to examine students' compositional responses in situ.

3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Bringing together the well-established public writing lens toward FYC classrooms and the call for more undergraduate publishing, I proposed a FYC study in an ENGL 1101 class at a mid-sized university campus in north Georgia, focusing on three key composition pieces: the blog, the op-ed, and the personal profile article (PPA). For these assignments, I drew from predecessors like Bruce Herzberg's "Going Public" project where he asked students to think about what types of media debate take place, to list examples and to analyze how to participate in the debates (Deans 101) and a case study by Holmes in which the professor used the first assignment as a memo of introduction, students responded to each other, and they finally transitioned into posting reflections on an online blog (*Public* 53). These assignments were stimulating because Herzberg asked students to go beyond the classroom into a realistic public space and Holmes's example showed how the classroom was turned into a transfer-capable vehicle for professional documents that were pushed into the public sphere.

My positionality in relation to this study was that of a "teacher researcher" and my framework primarily drew from Young and Morgan's 2020 study as it was the closest example of a recent study of student commercially-focused publication. However, instead of using a non-profit organization or a directed activist model like theirs, I guided my students toward writing for commercial outlets such as local newspapers, newsletters, magazines, and online self-publishing outlets like self-made websites. I provided links and research guidance on how to submit query letters/emails to publishers, but students were responsible for the submissions. Students were graded on the submission, not acceptance, of their work. Also, while Young and Morgan's study looked at public writing and commercial publication, mine combined those in a more specific arena—the FYC classroom, I used these self-designed assignments to study if

creating a piece of composition intended for local commercial publication changed first year students' engagement in the classroom, views of audience, and outlook toward transfer beyond the classroom.

3.1 Research Questions and Study Outline

In conducting my study, I examined the following questions:

- What is the initial view of FYC students toward their composition? Toward audience?
- Is that audience view impacted overall by the public writing assignments? If so, how?
- Did wider circulation impact student views of community/audience? If so, how?
- Did the public circulation of their work beyond the classroom (in particular for-profit publications) impact student writing? If so, how?
- Is there any difference between the impact of the three different PW assignments?
- Did peer commentary influence their writing? Their attitudes toward FYC? Their attitudes toward digital commentaries?
- Do their views toward FYC change throughout the modules? If so, how?
- Do their views toward their own composition change throughout the modules? If so, how?
- At each stage, how do the students envision their audience? What did they think that audience needed? Did their writing adapt to this vision? If so, how?
- What was the audience reception? Did that impact the students? If so, how?
- In particular, does the submission to wider circulation in for-profit publications impact student writing/attitudes? If so, how?

3.2 Justification of Chosen Research Assignments

To answer these questions, I created a study in two English 1101 classes implementing three different public writing assignments: an op-ed, a personal profile, and an online blog. While the personal blog could have had an intentional audience, I had students select limiting preferences when they created their blogs in WIX to mitigate the risks posed by potentially harmful internet users. Ultimately, the audience was limited to FYC students only. Students shared the link to their webpages on the university class website (D2L) and were required to post brainstorming assignments, topics, personal reflections and views about classmates' websites. These were all low-stakes exercises intended to show the writing process and provide me with

baseline compositions I could use for coding. Students had access to guiding questions in the syllabus to help them get started.

The op-ed assignment had a widespread appeal and could be disseminated nationally (possibly internationally), so I began with it. As Branson noted, the op-ed would be a great assignment "prior to public engagement" because it gave them the opportunity to reflect on the public they were addressing (143). While he had students write for a school paper, I expanded the field of vision to include mainstream media and local newspapers. Students researched their target publication, reflecting on and discussing the audience, the submission steps, and topics that would be appropriate.

Finally, the PPA assignment was targeted at regional newspapers since they gave students the highest chances for publication and students interviewed local community members relevant to the outlets. To complete the PPA assignment, students fully researched the PPA assignment and the newspaper. With my past publishing experience and community connections, I already had lines of submission open for students, but we explored more possibilities when needed (for example, if a student chose an interview subject in a different state, he/she submitted work to a local media outlet there). My experience was helpful, but not necessary for study replication.

There were class discussions on the style and purpose with smaller, low-risk grades taken for steps completed (research, peer review of interview questions, rough and final drafts, as well as the blog reflections). Students had the choice of choosing their own interview subjects from local community/family members and I approved each in order to prevent overlap and evaluate publishing potential because interview subjects needed to be newsworthy with significant community connections that benefited both the publishers and readers.

The PPA module assignment sheet was designed to not only explain the public writing assignment, but also direct students toward examples of current practices and impact, combining the HIP of community-based learning with demonstrated examples of how classroom research and composition can be used in a real-world practice (Holmes "Transformative" 51; Lindenman 105; Cross 15). This narrative-type assignment was created to meet university rhetorical and composition goals while directing students' attention toward commercial publication. After they finished with the PPA, I collected articles for grading and students submitted their articles to their intended outlets. Again, students were given an additional grade for the *submission* of their work to a commercial outlet, regardless of whether or not it was accepted.

3.3 Methodology

To prepare for my study, I submitted an IRB application and obtained approval (Appendix A) in fall 2023. The in-person classes took place during the Spring 2024 semester in two English 1101 composition courses at the University of North Georgia where I taught. These FYC classes combined both writing and research skills required by the university, so both classes were taught the same information and lessons with two sections totaling 32 students. I followed IRB protocol using my CITI certification on human subjects. Participation was voluntary and obtained by utilizing the IRB qualified campus director as a third-party intermediary to gather permission and surveys (Appendix C).

After speaking to the GSU IRB department, I decided to include dual enrolled students (Category 1 exempt study plus FERPA forms were needed) to create the largest subject pool possible. To include these students, I needed consent and assent forms, as well as research protocols. I was the sole instructor for the entire semester for both classes to minimize differences in teaching methods, class structure, and curriculum variations.

One of Young and Morgan's concerns during their study was that students might elect to take a course based on the concept that it covered community-engaged studies, perhaps tainting the pool of students electing to take the composition course (36). However, like that university, mine labeled all English 1101 courses with the same description and students were unaware there was a public writing segment until in class.

Intensive focus on research and foundational rhetorical canons led up to these modules. I taught the basic essay practices of establishing introductions, context, organization, and conclusions. Additionally, in developing their advanced arguments, students had the freedom to choose their topics, in alignment with the HIP guideline encouraging FYC instructors to encourage students to connect course content with their interests. I demonstrated adapting to an audience through rhetorical means by class modeling and peer-reviewing—a HIP that teaches them to become the audience and give feedback to peers—thereby allowing them to apply their finding to their own writings and subsequently document their progress through blog postings.

To begin the study, like Young and Morgan, I used a qualitative *named* pre-survey to trace each student's thought processes and evaluate background, experiences, and personal views on their own writings. Additionally, I used a verbal exit survey and tied both surveys together for each student to have a clearer view of individual experiences. To ensure ethical standards were met, the experienced campus director conducted all pre-surveys in class without me and I did not know which students were participating until after I submitted final semester grades. Students were made aware they would not receive extra credit or other benefits from study and that I was not able to access surveys until all grades were final; both disclosures were the best way to gather the data needed and promote student agency into the assignment, so they had the freedom to share more about themselves and anticipate reflection.

I grouped students for the post-study interview, recorded those sessions, and then typed them into a transcript for later coding. During the interviews, I asked students to reflect on the public writing pieces' impacts on their attitudes toward subject engagement, understanding of audience, and if/how they adapted their writing. I also queried how students would improve this assignment, again reinforcing student agency and aiding my own research. Transcriptions were stored in my locked office desk until final class grades were submitted and I had access to all the information.

Once I received all the data, I assigned each student a randomized name and removed previously identifying information. I also needed to change the names on the transcripts to match, shredding the slips of paper and only using the reassigned names. Online data was kept on my UNG document account online. I coded and analyzed the qualifying blogs, focus group interviews, and surveys into themes to look for implications of commercial publication and dissemination within an FYC public writing-focused classroom using my original research questions. I looked for positive and negative comments and determined if students demonstrated fallacies toward traditional classroom composition and if this assignment affected those. I also looked for possible follow up studies and the potential to add elements to the public writing assignments or adapt them based on student feedback (e.g., a future comparative study from this 1101 class to a 3000-level class). The data collected helped me illustrate a greater understanding of composition theory and pedagogy.

3.4 Research Instruments

To pursue this study, I created a variety of research instruments. First, I presented blogs (Appendix E) to students at the very first class of the semester. It was a tool I used before, during, and after the study to help them with reflections, so they were used to writing online

when the study began at the mid-point of the semester. Then, students completed a pre-survey (Appendix F) which asked basic understanding and opinion questions both about English 1101 classes and public writing. I also included a question about their audiences ascertaining reader comprehension. To try to mitigate any possible fears about going public, I also asked students if they had concerns. Next, I introduced them to the op-ed piece (Appendix C) and the PPA (Appendix D) with handouts, examples, and class discussions. Finally, I conducted the exit interview using a list of questions (Appendix G) that echoed the pre-survey but went more in-depth as students answered.

3.5 Study Challenges

There were a few challenges during the study, but as one of my dissertation readers said, no study goes perfectly. The most significant unanticipated student learning gap was during the op-ed; I realized most of them had never written a letter before. They did not know how to format, compose, or close it. Adding a class session breaking down letter writing mechanics put us behind schedule. I also miscalculated the amount of research the op-ed required, and students should have had at least another week of instruction and composition. I had taught the PPA and blogs before, so was able to pace those better. Finally, there were students absent during parts of the pre- and post-surveys, so I was unable to get a 100% response rate.

4 CODING AND RESULTS

To get an overview of the study participants, I compiled demographic and educational information to better understand the study results. The study was conducted with two 1101 classes at the University of North Georgia in Blue Ridge, Georgia, a commuter campus. These classes were comprised of 23 dual-enrolled (DE) students (ranging in age approximately from 16-18) from small, rural counties in north Georgia with a wide diversity of socio-economic, educational levels. This study also included two military veterans in their mid-20s and two traditional college students in their early 20s. Ultimately, there were 33 students enrolled in the course and 32 of them participated in the study, resulting in a 97% participation rate.

4.1 Pre-Study Survey Data Coding

I distributed 30 pre-study surveys and received 29 qualified responses. The first question asked students to respond if they had created anything for public viewing before. The results were as follows:

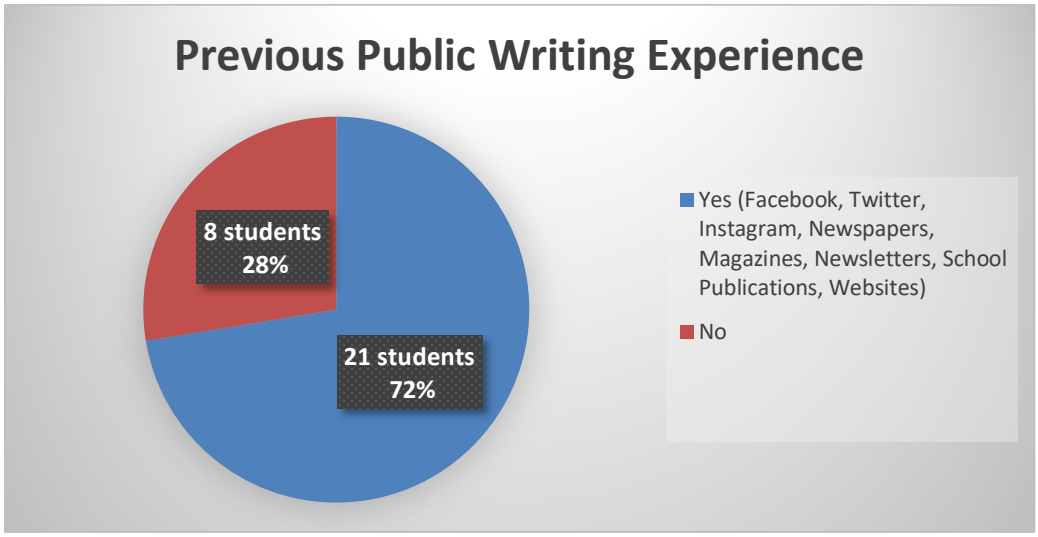

Figure 1: Previous Writing Experience

Most students answered affirmatively to having written publicly before. Some circled various outlets like Facebook or Instagram in the question, but most did not, so I opted not to hone in on the individual circumstances because it did not seem pertinent to the study. This question was an easy question meant to acclimate students to the idea of the survey topic. I did not distinguish between online and print for public writing because most printed works currently are also available online. For example, a school newsletter would have been considered print 20 years ago but is now digital and/or emailed, which parallels most current media publishing pathways.

Finally, I wanted to examine preliminary audience visualization and asked: when you write publicly, whom do you envision for your audience/intended recipients? This question was a bit nebulous, but I wanted to see how students responded. Once I got back the responses the easiest way to organize them was to create a stacked Venn diagram. Starting with the inner circle, I categorized responses from a narrowed viewpoint (1) to the most expanded viewpoint (5). As the graph expanded, each circle included the one inside of it and pushed a bit beyond in a direction from private to public. For example, the writer who is classified under a regional physical space would also consider his audience to include classmates and family members, so those numbers were included. I coded the responses as follows:

1—Self/classroom—this type of writer saw his/her writings stay in the classroom. The only readers are fellow classmates and the professor. Example responses: “other students doing research,” “I only write for my professor,” and “classmates.”

2—Family/friends—this type of writer shared writing beyond the classroom with family and friends. They wrote for fun and/or enjoy sharing poetry or creative pieces. Example responses: “people around my age,” “my peers,” and “friends and family.”

3—Regional—this writer usually saw publications in a regional area or community. For example, a local newspaper, magazine, or company/charity newsletter.

4—National/worldwide—this writer saw himself fully beyond the classroom. An example of this would be an online writer who could envision his writing being read by someone across the other side of the world. Video game players or private online groups might be a particularly good example of this.

5—Flexible and adaptable—this type of writer was able to encompass all the previous categories in his/her reflections. Example responses: "depends on the subject," "anyone all ages," "depends on the type of writing," "any age," and "depends on the topic."

The diagram emerged as follows:

Audience Recognition Stacked Venn Diagram

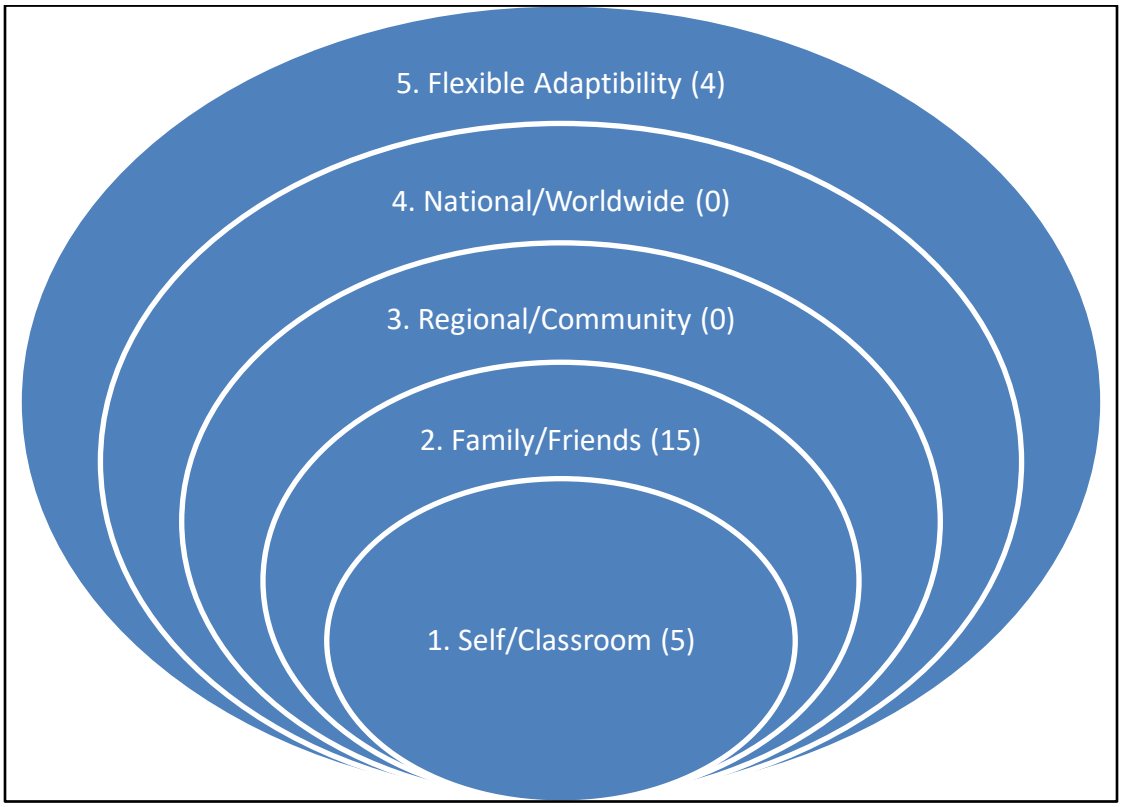

Figure 2: Audience Awareness Venn Diagram

The results were that Category 1 had 5 students, Category 2 had 15 students, Category 3 and 4 had none, and Category 5 had 4 students. Three students wrote that they do not write publicly, so the question was not applicable. I also had two vague responses that I did not include. One said, “important people” and the other was “teachers, target audience, etc.” Based on my interaction with the student, I knew that “target audience” was a buzz word and suspected the student did not understand the rhetorical meaning. I made a similar judgement call with the categories since online composition can easily cross international territories, yet I believed the students took the context of their classroom poll as a classroom question and focused their responses accordingly. Interestingly, no student scored a three or four as nobody mentioned the community, a national/world platform, or internet audiences, although that may be implied in the second and fifth categories.

The next question I asked was a simple yes or no question: “Do you consider ENGL 1101 to be necessary?” Twenty-eight students replied “yes” with only one “no.” The student who wrote “no” explained that “essential writing occurs in high school and further writing is unnecessary.” Despite the questionable seriousness of his comment and based on his playful personality, his blog experience later revealed new results as discussed in Chapter 5.

The students who responded “yes” noted how the class thus far had already helped their writing and had prepared them for college classes, providing a baseline comparison to what they valued at the end of the study. For example, they appreciated classroom editing, but at the end of the study, did they see it as valuable for its transferability beyond the classroom? Did it contribute to the ability to write/reach beyond the classroom? Sample responses included: “it is good to know how to type with correct grammar. Also how to form a professionally written paper,” “proper grammar usage,” “it allows students to understand more about writing and

reading for their day-to-day life," and "helps with grammar, sets the foundation for English 1102."

A lot of key concepts were related to grammar, editing, career, skills. Basically, almost all students felt English 1101 promoted foundational skills they would need for college. While first year composition teaches a variety of transferable concepts related to grammar, editing, and career skills, students didn't seem to grasp this utility. While almost all students felt English 1101 promoted foundational skills for college, only a few students considered relevance beyond the classroom, and these few were almost all observations about career skills. Only one student, Jessie, acknowledged the transferability of composition skills, noting the class would "help with any form of written communication." No responses specifically identified community, regional, national, or global applications.

Acknowledging that FYC students may not fully understand the term "public writing," I still wanted to benchmark their value of possible composition skills by asking them if/why they considered public writing to be a valuable skill to learn in FYC. All 29 responded yes. Some of the sample responses were: "the world is becoming more digital over time," "being taught these skills helps with professionalism for the future," and "having real people other than my professor read my paper would be beneficial and it would feel more real."

Fourteen students mentioned "skills" for life, career, digital composition, and college. Interestingly, two respondents cited the word "confidence," which I remarked upon, being such a sizable key word at the end of the study. Six respondents mentioned reaching a larger audience and that subsequent feedback, which matched the blog reflections where many students call for quality feedback and good audience response—whichever way it lands. One student specifically noted that "writing for the public ensures that you get feedback…sometimes good and bad."

Another student noted there was an understanding that classroom feedback can be biased, but public feedback, on the other hand, is more likely to be "realistic" and "solid."

Finally, I asked students if they had any concerns about public writing to assess their perceptions of risk related to the upcoming assignments. Interestingly, the answers were almost equally split, yet the majority answered affirmatively (No—12, Yes—17).

Fear of Public Writing Survey Responses

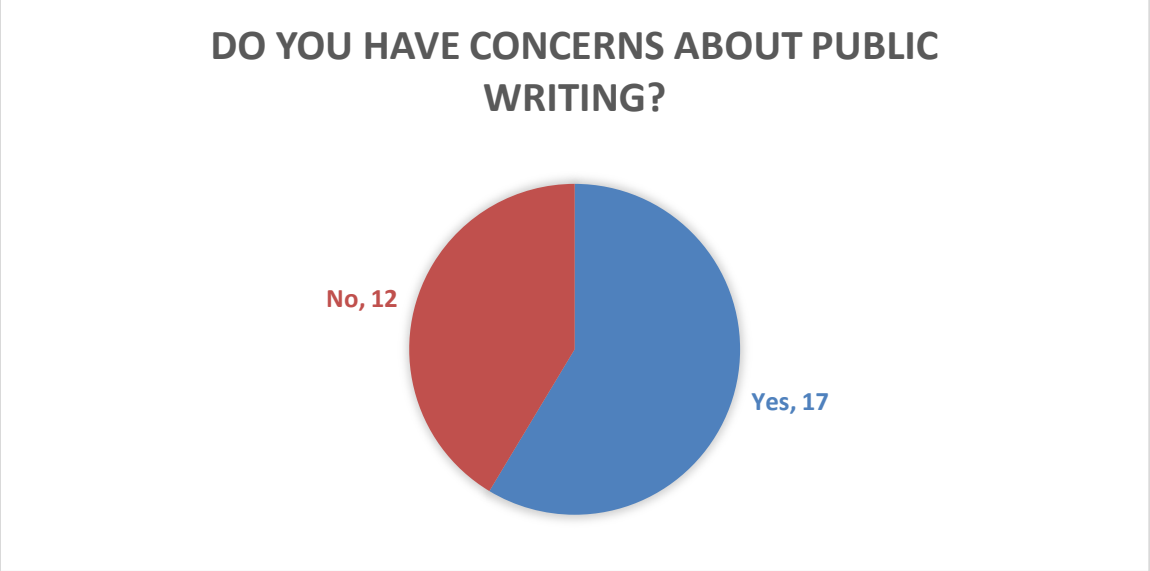

Figure 3: Fear of Public Writing Survey Responses

In their elaborations, some of the students who responded affirmatively said, "people can disagree with your stances on the web and be aggressive," "someone stealing your writing or ideas or if writing on a sensitive topic it may upset someone," "judgment of other people's opinions versus mine and public errors," and "people not liking my writing." I looked for common themes and found three main ones: fear of audience reception, fear of plagiarism, and fear of dis/misinformation. With the first one, I recognized it as a common theme with all student writing (or writers in general). However, moving from a normalized classroom editing space to a general public audience carries hazards for almost all students, especially FYC students. One

student noted that he feared “being judged or people not liking my writing.” In a digital world, writers risk a reader who “could act out aggressively toward you,” as one student wrote. I mitigated the potential for trolling and “keyboard courage” aggression by talking students through tone and wording. Students also alleviated the risk in practice by looking at multiple perspectives or taking a passive-persuasive approach with their open letters.

A few students noted plagiarism fears. However, this worry appeared to be a minuscule risk. I deemed the likelihood of mis/disinformation greater because of our digital culture’s data manipulate. However, while that could have happened, quality students research resolved that fear.

Twelve students answered in the negative category. Of which, five did not explain. The students attached qualifiers like “as of now,” “anything can happen,” “just makes me a little nervous," and “I wouldn’t publicly write on a platform I didn’t feel safe on.” Interestingly, I had only one student who was outright fearless, Devan. He wrote, “I don’t care about other people’s opinions.” I compared this response to his final reflection on public writing where he gained a sense of risk stating, “If I know that the whole population of the world can read what I am writing it scares me…I am a lot less stressed if I know one person is going to read my article.” In his verbal interview, he explained that he had a harder time with the submission process: “There’s just a lot more. They’re going to think I’m stupid because I’m not the best writer. I would second guess everything I wrote, and I would be erasing and rewriting a lot more.” His comments, which I discuss in Chapter 5, show an increased awareness of risk and writing shifting.

4.2 Op-ed Topics and Publishing Outlets

For the op-ed, I created a chart depicting a description of student work, submission venues, and acceptance results-- a convenient way to observe the various topics and track the dissemination progress.

Public Writing Op-ed Topics and Publishing Outlets Selected*

Student	Topic	Publishing Outlet	Outlet Acceptance
Quinn	The Need for Financial Education Classes in High School	Georgia Department of Education and *News Observer*	n/a and unknown
Jordan	The Need for Longer Recesses and More Hands-On Activities for Students	*News Observer* and Fannin Board of Education email	Unknown and n/a
Kai B	The Need for Mental Health Days in the School Calendar	*News Observer*	unknown
Ari	Protection for Investigative Journalism	*Washington Post*	No
Tatum	Support for Israel	*Fox News*	unknown
Cameron	Unequal Treatment and Funding for Local Girl's Softball	*News Observer* and email to superintendent	No and n/a
Abi	Support for Israel	*News Observer*	Unknown
Mia	Who to Vote for in 2024 Election	*New York Times*	Unknown
Ashton	The Benefits of Year-Round Schooling	*News Observer*	Yes
Ava	How Young People Can Make a Difference	*Washington Post*	Unknown
Madison	The Need for Manners Classes in Schools	*News Observer* and Fannin School Board	Unknown and n/a
Santana	Better Lunchroom Food	*News Observer*	No
Parker	The Need for Pedagogical Changes in Elementary Schools	*News Observer* and email to school superintendent	unknown

Jett	Millennial Parents Using Technology to Parent	*News Observer*	No
Riley	The Need for Wal-Mart Store Expansion	*News Observer* and emailed to Wal-Mart corporate	No and n/a
Carey	Changing the HOPE/Zell Miller Scholarship Requirements for Home School Students	Georgia Student Finance Commission webpage and emailed to HOPE director	n/a
Rene	Adult Predators Targeting Young Women	*GirlTalk* Magazine	Yes
Toni	Mandatory Age for TikTok	Email to Georgia House Representative Stephanie Ballard	n/a
Cleo	The Need for More Resources for Dyslexic Students	*Times Courier* and Georgia Department of Education	Yes and n/a
Remy	Lack of Discipline in Local School System	*News Observer* and emailed to Fannin School Board Chair	Unknown and n/a
Kirby	Affordable Housing in Fannin County	*News Observer* and Fannin Housing Board	unknown and n/a
Harley	Insurance Companies Making Healthcare decisions	*Forbes* Magazine	unknown
Devan	Voluntary School Attendance	Fannin School Board (emailed)	n/a
Peyton	Unequal Fire Department Pay vs. Cost of Living Locally	*News Observer*	No
Sidney	Fire Department and EMS Modernization	*News Observer*	No
Nicky	Impact of Poverty on Children's Literacy	*Times-Courier*	Yes

Raven	The Importance of Respecting Restaurant Employees	*Times-Courier*	No
Jessie	The Call for Cohesion Among the American People	*Wall Street Journal*	Unknown
Avery	How AI Should be Used in Schools	*MIT News* and emailed to Georgia Department of Education	No and n/a
Amelia	Border Crisis with Mexico	President Biden email	n/a (rec'd email response)
Angel	Border Crisis with Mexico	*Atlanta Journal-Constitution*	unknown
*Coding note: "n/a" is for "not applicable" if a student emailed the letter. The "yes" and "no" responses were definite answers. "Unknown" indicates if the student did not hear from the publisher by the end of the semester.			

Figure 4: Public Writing Op-ed Topics and Publishing Outlets Selected

Many of the topics were intricately related to students' personal interests, limited experiences, and age as suggested by the many school-related subjects. Because of these narrower subjects, I opened the idea of "commercial publishing" with the op-ed to include emails, as well as submission to a publication. For example, Toni wanted to advocate for a higher minimum age limit for TikTok accounts, but she felt like the Georgia House of Representatives would be a better fit, so she emailed Representative Stephanie Ballard in addition to her local submission to better her chances of being heard. Other students followed more personal interests and tailored their writing precisely, as was the case with Rene. While we had a few responses by the end of the semester, most of the acceptance/publication responses were unknown by the end of the study.

4.3 Blog Data Coding

At the end of the semester, I collated all the blog assignments (Appendix E) and coded them. Each assignment covered a different topic and, therefore, produced different themes and key words. Here are the blogs and the themes that emerged after coding:

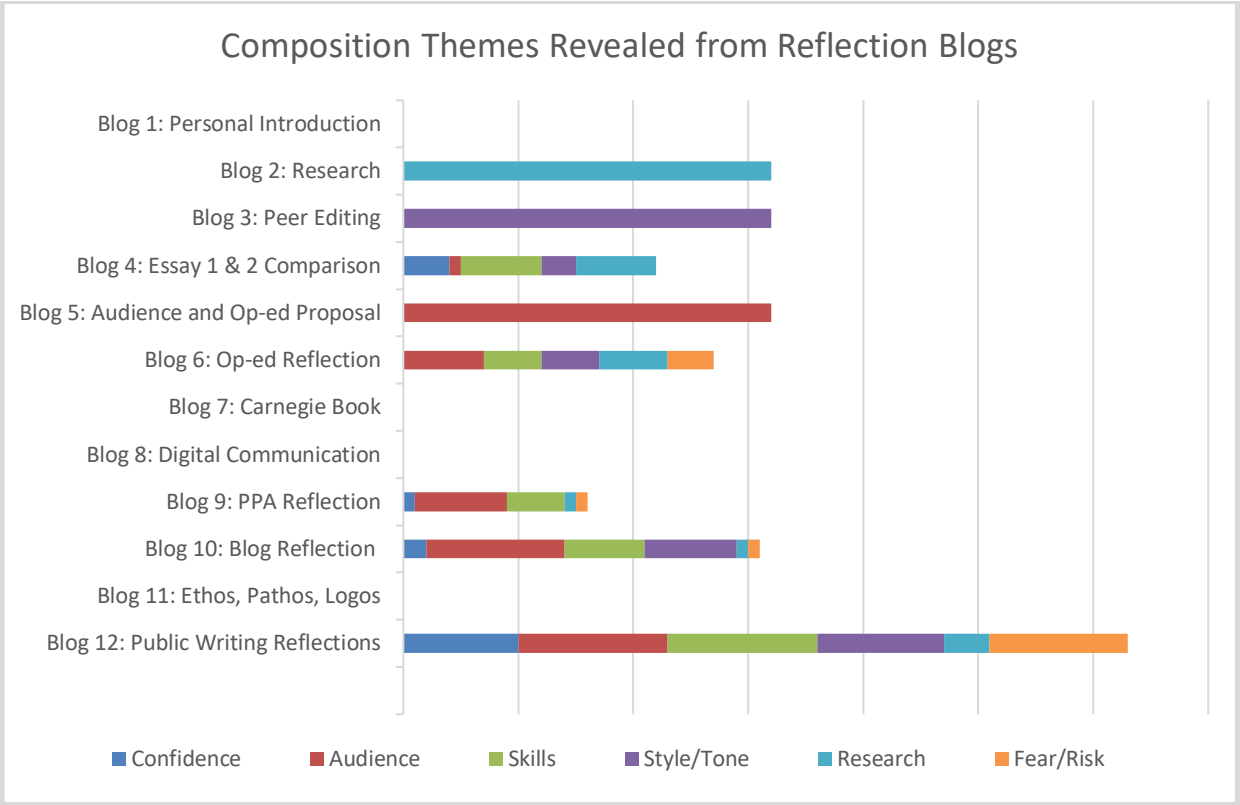

Figure 5: Reflection Blogs and Emerging Composition Themes

With this chart, I noted each time a student mentioned one of the major themes, but it in no way encompassed all the themes that emerged during my study, nor is this chart a perfect representation since my own interpretation of student writings and personalities colored my finding. There were also information gaps due to missing or unsubmitted blogs. While some students may not have mentioned any of the themes, some of them mentioned each theme (and some themes multiple times in various ways like storytelling and editing skills, which were both

categorized under “skills”). A chart was the most effective way to display blog themes. I categorized and grouped them as follows:

Confidence—A term where students used the word “confidence” or a synonym to describe the feeling of being stronger writers and their personal feelings of accomplishment.

Audience—A visualization/interpretation of the reader where students anticipated the audience’s response or interaction, the connection between writer and reader, sympathy, and empathy. I also included the idea of camaraderie with fellow students which bloggers mentioned as they noted similar feelings as other students, showing a definite connection with their audience.

Skills—A broader area encompassing various practical skills, both in the classroom and outside. Examples include interviewing, grammar/punctuation, editing, storytelling, transfer to professional jobs and careers. Students used these ideas to describe realistic or new assignments and explain a broader use for what they learned in the classroom. I also used skills to describe the authentic revisions students made.

Style/Tone—An area specific to composition where students noted changes in their approach to writing including humor, format, and being entertaining to retain audience attention. I also included tone in this area because it connects style in how students word sentences. Tone reflected their mental processes that allowed them to take a perspective approach to an argument and persuade the audience accordingly. I also used this area to denote the idea of conciseness that arose during the class reflections. Keywords included “fluff,” “entertaining,” “style,” and similar terms.

Research—An area where students focused on logos, the gathering of more information to support arguments and the databases they used.

Fear/Risk— I linked these two components together because students mentioned them a lot in the same context. They knew they were taking a risk writing publicly and it created fear. They used terms like "sounding stupid," "appearance," "scared," and "misinterpretation."

I did not code Blog 1 because it was personally tailored blog to each student discussing their likes, dislikes, hobbies, and more. Similarly, Blogs 7, 8, and 11 were reflections over specific topics and therefore focused on those class discussions. While they have a certain connection to public writing, I wanted to focus on the study assignments. Blogs 2, 3, and 5 were also over specific topics, but I included those to show the emerging reflectional themes. They may or may not have impacted the blogs that followed them, but I wanted to show the themes as they were covered in the timeline order to examine the study patterns.

Blogs 4, 6, 9, 10, and 12 were all reflective blogs from assignments. While Blog 4 covered the standard English 1101 persuasive research essay and not a public writing assignment from the study, I included it to see if there was any data to be gathered with a before and after study comparison. Blogs 6, 9, and 10 were all reflections of the three public writing study assignments and Blog 12 was an overall class writing reflection which contained information and questions over the entire study and the writings composed for the class. I used these themes in the next chapters to examine in depth the student compositional changes.

4.4 Post-Study Verbal Interview Data Coding

At the post-interview, I first asked students which public writing assignments they preferred. Overall, 37% preferred the op-ed, 16% preferred blogs, and 47% preferred the PPA.

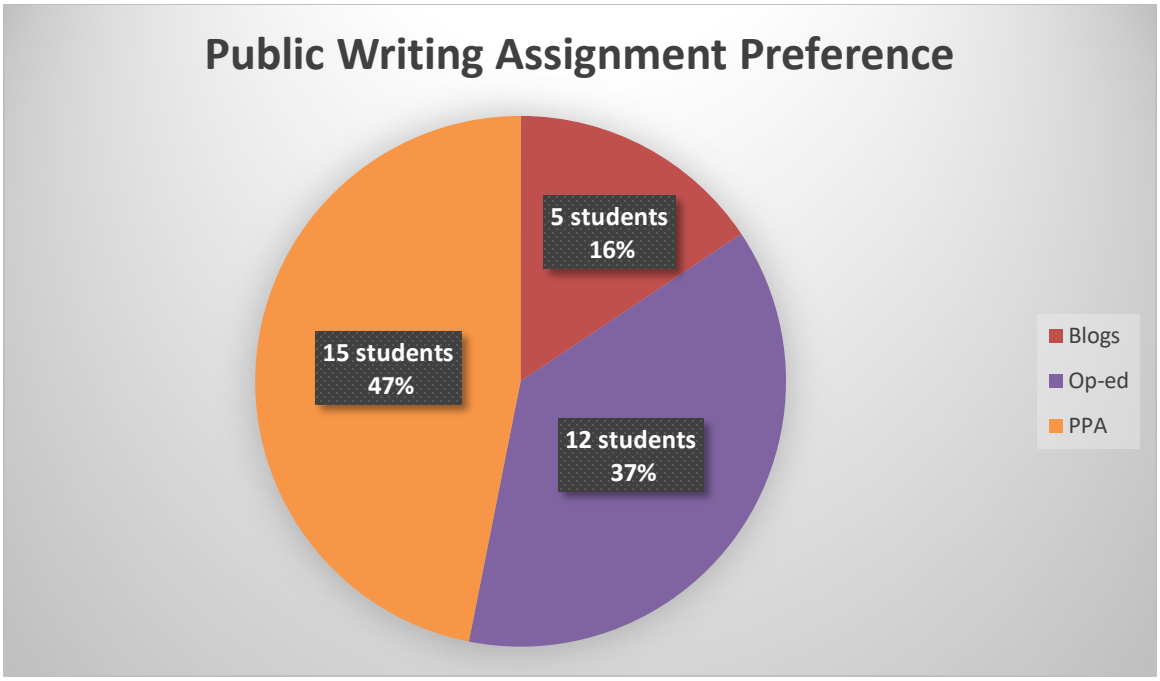

Figure 6: Survey of Public Writing Assignment Preference

This question was initially for my own feedback. However, the information has since led me to explore a change in the blog assignment, which I will fully explore in my conclusion and recommendations Chapter 7.

The transcribed post-study interviews produced similar themes to the blogs with the following exception—the submission process—which makes sense as submission was a large focus of the verbal interviews. I was able to get more specific information as to the circulation research because students discussed topic choice, publication outlets, activism, misrepresentation, and submission. They spent time discussing their subject choices and connecting them with their writing flow. When discussing publications, I asked students about their composition adaptation. Interestingly, the theme of activism came up in students' responses. Though they didn't use the term directly, it encapsulates their observations. For example, students noted: "things that were going on currently in the world," "conveying a

message or concern to a higher power in order to receive results," and "I felt very strong on the topic, and I could have written on that for pages and pages." This writing, in turn, led to a shift in tone, wording, and revisions, all things students mentioned in the interviews.

5 CONVERGING THE CLASSROOM AND PUBLIC WRITING

Classroom editing context is key to understanding how I integrated assignments into the established classroom culture. I always strive to create a supportive atmosphere where all students brought their rough drafts, put them in a chair in the center of the room, and spent the class period editing their classmates' papers from the chair. When they got done with one, they dropped it onto the chair and picked up another. Each student, on average, edited four to six papers per class period, depending on how fast he/she worked. I asked students to edit comprehensively, encouraging them to comment on grammar, punctuation, sentence comprehension, structure, organization, thesis, format—anything they saw. They were not required to fix the problem, only to comment on it.

After the editing time, students collected their paper and examined their classmates' comments. They then had the opportunity to either accept or ignore their classmates' feedback. Most students came to me to ask if the suggestion was correct, and I always reflected the question back to them by telling them to look it up (usually a simple Google search) and then come back to me to verify the answer. This self-driven investigation only took a few extra seconds and reinforced research responsibility. I pushed them to research their own questions and come to me, not only with questions, but also solutions (this expectation was in my syllabus and discussed the first day of class). The peer editing process was already structured and practiced by the time we got to the public writing study assignments, so students were comfortable with the in-class process. I also used student papers as class examples to help everyone at the same time, since many FYC students made the same mistakes. It helped them see a timely, realistic example and connect the discussion back to their own papers. Many times, I asked them to look at the paper they were editing for common practices and errors. What did

they like and why? My established editing protocol was familiar to students before the study began and resulted in much self-led research. Once the op-ed and PPA assignments began, we used these classroom techniques—organization, research, and editing—to develop the practice the new, publicly-focused pieces.

5.1 Public Writing Introduction and Student Reception

When introducing the public writing assignments (the blog, op-ed, and PPA), I went through a standardized process. I opened with an introduction of the assignment and explained its importance and purpose. Then, we looked at prepared examples as a class. Next, students were tasked with finding additional examples, finding and explaining connections between the new assignment design and the familiar essay format. Finally, students worked together with my support to break down the new format into scaffolded tasks and solidify their understanding of the assignment requirements. Then, students began the composing process by brainstorming topic ideas. Once they settled on their preferred ideas, they brought them to me for approval of the final selection. Finally, students began researching and writing.

These young writers were understandably hesitant to start on these projects. They were using writing differently than how they had previously. Additionally, as mentioned in the last chapter, the op-ed was harder to teach than I expected for a surprising reason: almost all the students had never written a letter before, which, in hindsight, I should have expected given the impact of technological communication with its emojis and text-speak, overworked teachers with large class sizes, and the de-emphasis of long writing assignments throughout all disciplines (Strauss, Graham and Perin 17). Thankfully, I had introduced memos and email writing the first day of class to help students understand professional communication, so that helped transition them into the idea of writing an op-ed/open letter.

Students were asked to brainstorm and bring back two topics, but instead they did five to six, showing a decided investment in topic choices and thrilling me to no end. I had to explain ethos with topic choice (for example, a nutritionist could write about nutrition, but not necessarily about being a lawyer, unless they have a story/experience that makes them qualified). Subsequently, students cut back topics from their initial proposals and pitched their favorites. What followed was a new experience for them.

5.1.1 "New/Realistic" Assignments

Perhaps a result of the exuberance of youth, but I did not encounter any resistance to these assignments. On the contrary, there was fear mixed with genuine cognitive investment. "I like how they [the public writing assignments] pushed you outside your comfort zone. In high school, they don't have us write a lot…but I feel more confident now," Kai told me in her post-interview. This sentiment echoed the reaction of most of the students. Madison was one of my students who wanted a marketing career and expressed her concerns about the assignments: "The public writing, it was all new to us. So, it was, of course, harder, but it was enjoyable. It was different. It's like we had to relearn how to write…somebody else's words and that was hard for me to make it flow…that's where the creativeness came in and it wasn't like the factual things in an essay, so that's why I had to really take a step back and try to get in the groove." But during the post-study verbal interview, she noted that public writing made her change her style. "I feel like I learned how to make my words flow better and I tried to widen my vocabulary and my grammar." This style shift was impactful.

Surprisingly, selected topics had a narrow range, with most students choosing to write about education. Then, I realized that they were writing about what they knew, as we had discussed in class. Rather than traditional op-ed topics like politics or community matters,

students were more inclined to lean toward educational topics relevant to their lives and educational experiences. They were sensitive topics since these writers were not well-researched educators, but instead the consumers of the educational product. As such, we discussed coming at those topics from that perspective, humbled and searching so as to not offend the community.

During the op-ed brainstorming, students needed to specify an audience. We had to drill down quite a few times to make it specific. For example, Devan addressed his letter to "teachers." After a brief discussion, he changed it to "Fannin County School Administrators," recognizing that teachers were not the appropriate listeners. Rene wrote to a women's magazine about male predators targeting teenage girls, noting the need to be concise while still addressing a larger group, noting "I had to still make mine broad [to a larger group than just one person] because I was doing it to the women's magazine. I had to do a lot of cutting back on words. I felt very strong on the topic, and I could have written on that for pages and pages. That's what I struggled with the most." Rene noted that including her own experiences in her writing was "definitely different," but she wanted to do it so she could connect with her audience using a "personal aspect." She explained, "You don't do that at all in essays…but I liked it." Finding a specific audience and being personal was unique to each student and there was understandably a transitional phase while the class moved from essays to public writing formats.

There was a lot of repetition when students wrote—the "fluff" they were used to for essays to make word count. Many of the students mentioned that essays felt very formulaic: they would say their point, add research, and repeat. At first, many of them also formatted their op-eds like essays with thesis statements and parenthetical citations. We discussed journalistic styles of citing research in sentences, and students seemed particularly thrilled to not have to document

with a works cited page. It took a few drafts to create the mental awareness that they could break out from the formal, academic box.

Perhaps because it was the last assignment, but the PPA seemed easier for some reason for students to understand and do. We were able to relate this assignment back to essays as the PPA has a focused theme similar to a thesis, but they still struggled trying to fall back into the comfortable essay format with large paragraphs and a noticeable thesis statement. The parts we worked on most were creating a character description, organizing information in chronological order, adding direct quotes, and transitioning between paragraphs. The PPA related significantly to the show vs. tell rule in creative fiction writing as students realized they had to bring their human subjects to the foreground and make them relatable. Part of that relatability was focusing on one of the following themes: overcoming odds, a unique mission/job/hobby, or running a business. Anything that did not support that story in the article was highlighted and cut from the final product, a difficult decision for students at times since they were worried about relaying everything they knew about their subjects.

They also felt like these assignments improved their writing abilities, and the positive impact on their confidence was reiterated many times. Students noticed that public writing was more refreshing even though they were stepping outside of their comfort zone. One of the best analogies a student gave compared the classroom to "bubble writing." Taylor said:

> This [assignment] was a lot more interactive than I was expecting. Typically, in literature classes you're in some closed bubble, where even though you think the thing you write is a masterpiece, it's never a public piece, like, you know, for a fact no one else is going to see your writing, which feels kind of bad. So, being able to have the opportunity to

> display my writing to the world and try to get a name for myself before anything even happens. I think that's a great thing.

Along with confidence, the PPA introduced students to the skills of interviewing and storytelling…and they overwhelmingly loved it. My post-study survey of assignment preferences showed it was the favorite, selected by 47% of students.

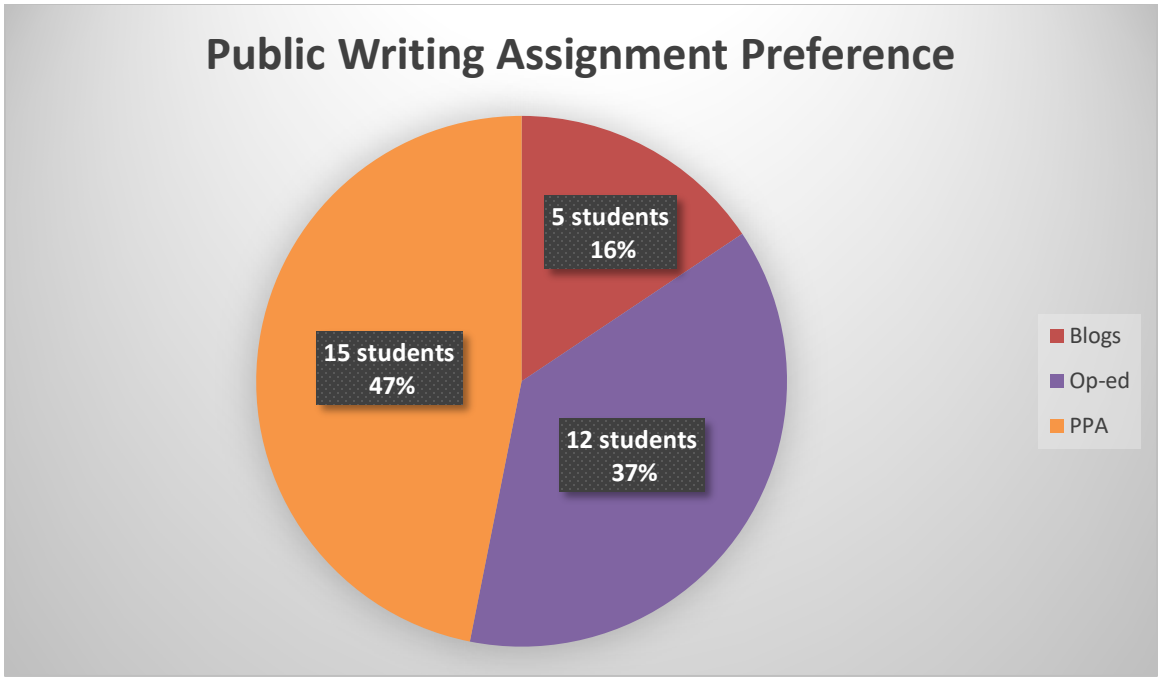

Figure 6: Survey of Public Writing Assignment Preference

Student comments suggest the reason for this preference was the human connections and skills they gained. Most students had never been in the role of the interviewer, so this process helped them understand how to formulate questions and follow up answers. One of the students mentioned it helped her with learning how to be an active listener. Interestingly, many students felt frustrated when their interview subjects did not answer the questions in expected ways. A couple of them also mentioned how their realizations during interviews would help them in the future in a professional environment. Not only from the job skills portion of it where they would

possibly be interviewed but being able to anticipate questions that job interviewers would ask and being more comfortable in an interview setting. Remy said, “The biggest thing I learned was interviewing. Honestly, I don't know how to ask questions to people, so when we wrote out the questions, that was something that I think I'm going to start doing if I ever interview anybody again. I didn't get deep quotes as when I didn’t write out the question beforehand.”

Most of the PPA interview subjects left positive impressions on students, who seemed surprised that the adults appreciated being interviewed. Wren interviewed a local corporate attorney (which was a career related article) and noted, “My interview lasted an hour. I had a lot of questions, and she was like, yeah, go ahead. She liked that I asked a lot of questions. She was awesome.” Most students had similar positive experiences and, as I surmised before, the human connection between students and community resulted in a cross-gender, cross-race, and cross-age awareness that made more enthusiastic writers. Having exposure to primary sources like a personal interviews helped students solidify their ability to analyze information and glean relevant quotes. One of my more hesitant students, Taylor, described it as a “transaction of words” where it helped him lock it in his brain a bit more than reading and recognize key phrases that would be good to put in the article; he said, “[I looked for] anything that sounds like a quote that a famous person would say, and then you place it in there. It helped me distinguish that a lot more.” Avery echoed this sentiment saying, “I used all the information she [the interview subject] gave me and based it around quotes…I’ve never had to interview somebody, [but] it gave me more information.” Taylor and Avery’s observations were not unique as most of the class felt similarly about the mental coding they did during their interviews.

5.1.2 Essays vs. Public Writing

Transitioning to public writing went more smoothly once we discussed the comparisons between public writing and essays. There was a clear correlation between these assignments and traditional essays, so once students saw the research, quotes, analysis, and conclusions similarities, the transition became less daunting except for the formatting. An essay and all the PPA assignments both had hooks, which students realized that they needed to get their audiences' attention. They were asked to find a particular focus angle. Sometimes the focal point was obvious, but other times students had to search. One of the starter questions recommended in assignment materials was to ask the person for a story. Cleo, for example, could not find a good story about her interview subject. The subject was a local doctor who started her own business, so she decided to tell the story about the day the doctor did the ribbon cutting to open her business. It was a direct story that correlated with the paper's topic of being an entrepreneur. During her conclusion, Cleo realized the connection between op-ed and essays since they both had a call to action at the end. She chose to use her conclusion as a call for future business owners to have hope and keep working toward their goals. Like essays, Cleo had to do her own research and put in business statistics and her primary-sourcing interview with the local doctor. She, like most others, struggled to not only use the doctor's quotes, but to use them naturally. The PPA format required shorter paragraphs and quotes inserted between expository paragraphs. In fact, I would argue that these public writing assignments required more cognitive creative expansion for students comprehension and adaptation to alternative formats than any other FYC assignment I researched.

During the post-survey interview, I asked a question comparing the essays versus public writing, and a few students mentioned that essays were comfortable because they were used to

them and had been doing them for a long time. However, many admitted that the public writing was enjoyable even though it was outside of their comfort zones. They enjoyed putting their opinion more in their writings and felt liked the writing "flowed." I wondered if there was a flow because it was an easier style to write or because they loved the topic more? Rene gave me the best answer: "I think it did feel easier in a way because it's like a conversation, you know? I was just writing a conversation out and I liked the flow better," indicating it was very likely a combination of the style and topic.

Topic choice was important to student engagement—many students noted how much their interest in the writing depended on the topic. One of them described it as writing through a cheese grater because he had no interest in his topic. Jett wrote an article that was making fun of millennial parents because he said they gave technology to their children all the time. He had seen a phone-focused family eating at a restaurant, and was really annoyed. However, after he wrote it, he realized that it sounded demeaning toward parents and said, "I feel like that's why Glenn [the *News Observer* newspaper publisher] hasn't responded to me," showing he had good intuition as he recognized that his writing came from a possibly offensive point of view and was very likely not to get published in a legitimate newspaper as a result. Interestingly, he and I had this discussion when he chose that topic, and I told him it would be problematic to avoid condescension. He said he could make it non offensive, but in the end, it was a very sensitive subject area and almost impossible to avoid offending somebody. Essays felt very uninteresting, and students tried to finish quickly, but passion for that topic, as Angel noted, meant that "you were going to put your best interest and your best work out there because you like it." His statement reflected my own observations of increased student interest.

Topic choices led to an introduction to community activism and internal motivation, which led to a shift in how students approached writing. Kirby preferred this assignment because he got to address things that were currently going on in the world. When I asked Kirby if he would change his writing because the public might disagree, he thought for a moment and said that he would "focus less on what particularly [I] might think and more of what the audience might think. More on what general people might think. [I] have to write more carefully because [my] words are going to be public forever [and I] have to write in neutral tones more than an assertive tone especially on certain topics like the controversial ones." His statement showed the compositional audience focus shift from teacher to public audiences. Students also noted the permanence of their writings once put in the published world. They had to be more thoughtful and careful when crafting their writing. Kai discussed in her reflection blog that it was the comments from other students that helped her realize how important her tone was since the emotions behind word choice and sentence structure seemed to surprise some students. "I'm still realizing how much readers really can tell how the author is feeling about the subject just by the different words that you use," said Kai. "It's just different. None of us expected anybody else to see it or read it, so you didn't care until it was like, oh, everybody else is reading it." Her topic was analyzing the presidential candidates in the upcoming election, which did not seem a daunting task in class when we discussed it initially, but as the op-ed progressed, she became more careful in her word choices.

The activist scope of op-eds appealed to Carey in particular who wrote about Georgia scholarships: "It's about the subject and then conveying a message or concern to a higher power in order to receive results. I thought it was really interesting," said Carey. He went on to say, "I had a specific person I was sending it to because I found the vice president, so I went through

and made it more like I was talking to that person instead of speaking to a group like you would with normal public writing when you have an audience. So, I rephrased some of the things that I said."

This ability to preliminarily adapt to new skills had the possibility to transfer to their future careers. For example, Raven did all her essays and writings based on her future career choice as a vigneron. She researched the challenges of running a vineyard, wine production, did an op-ed on being a server, and her PPA on a local vigneron, exemplifying tailoring her semester to her own interests. She later said in her blog that this English class renewed her love of writing.

Besides the topic choices, in the pursuit of this writing assignment, students were exposed to practical, professional skills to help them in those careers. Ari noted that having the format that looked professional was personally important: "I was keeping it all consistent all the way through. I was having coherent thoughts but needed the right grammar in a format that fits." Emailing was also a skill that transferred over to their other classes. Professionalism was a consistent theme with students, paralleling the desire to "not sound stupid." Peyton noted that she "did some edits at the very end when [she] was trying to send the op-ed in. I just wanted to sound more professional, especially in the beginning where your subject heading is…I wanted them to look at it and…take me seriously."

A component of professionalism that many students fixated on was writing mechanics. Students consistently wanted to check and make sure there were no typos. I told them I would do a visual check over the emails before they sent them, which left most of them relieved. As an adult who was in the professional world when email was invented, it took a little mental adjustment for me to remember the insecurity of young adulthood. As Taylor so succinctly put it, "It's just making sure you don't screw up an email when you're sending it to someone who has

way more of a social background than you. It's intimidating." But, having me support them with submission oversight made a difference. In that same conversation, Avery reassured Taylor and explained that he shouldn't worry about submission: "I know you were worried about messing something up but that's why she's here [gesturing toward me]. She always looked over it before we sent it off to someone." His assurance showed deep trust in classroom safety, reinforcing the need for boundaries when doing public writing projects such as these.

Speaking to Glenn Harbinson, a local publisher, after submissions was also helpful. One weak area I noted during the course of these assignments was the op-ed research and he saw it, too. Research skills, in general, are one of the earmarks of first year composition classes and, while I spend weeks teaching students how to use online databases and find quality sources, it does not always translate to new assignments. As a university, we do not have access to online databases for local publications, so the experiment had a weak spot in that students were not able to research what topics had already been written and published. In my post semester interview with Harbinson, he noted this weak spot for most articles submitted to his paper: "Students need to stick to current events. Quit reading the internet and read the local paper. A lot of the op-eds we got were out of date or did not have enough facts to back them up. Know enough of what you're talking about," he said. "Also, op-eds needed a solution at the end. Bring something new to the table to make people think" (Harbinson). Devan reinforced Harbinson's statement, observing, "It was much easier to write an argument than investigate. Something that was argumentative you had to argue was a whole lot more like this is my opinion. This is how it affects me. Instead of just writing about something else that I don't value." As the instructor, classroom investigative failure is my fault. It was difficult to get students to comprehend a letter, then to understand the purpose, find a topic, form an opinion and write it. I asked them to

research but adding that would need an extra week or two and I would have to double check their research. While I taught both research skills, not all students in the study followed those skills or had time to implement them fully, which I address in my recommendation section in Chapter 7. However, as a result of our interview, Harbinson offered to allow students free access to his newspaper database during the assignment period next semester, a very generous offer and unsurprising since most people in the communities were generous toward students and wanted to help them learn. Harbinson was thrilled to let students into his archives and make phone calls. These were soft skills that he saw missing in current job applicants (Harbinson). As a community member, he wanted to see responsible, well-read citizens graduating in his community.

5.2 Student Compositional Shifting

As students began the public writing assignments, the shift from essays to what came next was partially predictable (regarding formatting and use of quotes, for example), but also unpredictable. As many studies have shown, compositional creation in K-12 grades has declined in favor of more focused, longer assignments (Santelises and Dabrowski; Ferretti; Graham and Perin 22). A 2015 study that analyzed over 1,500 public school middle grade assignments discovered that only 9% of writing assignments asked for multiple paragraphs (Santelises and Dabrowski 11). Their findings confirmed my own, informal class poll where only two students had been exposed to a communication assignment like a letter. I coded skill development and style/tone as two separate pieces on my blog reflection chart (green and purple), yet I grouped them both together in this chapter due to their relevant proximity to each other.

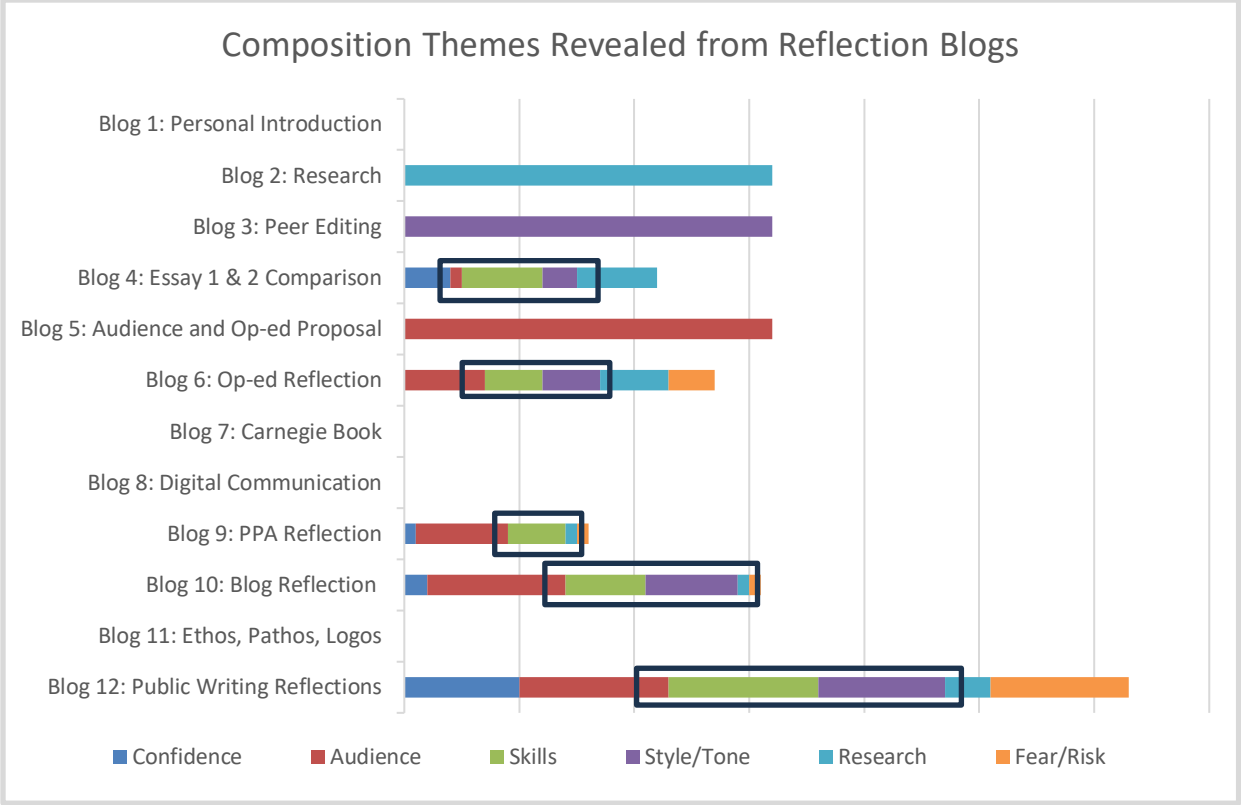

Figure 5: Reflection Blogs and Emerging Composition Themes

Students' abilities to shift style to a new format proved difficult. Years of academic writing had trained them to write a certain way, and they had to break up "big and chunky" essay-like paragraphs (as Sloan described them) into smaller ones, inserting quotes between their narration to give their subject a voice. They were also asked to include a brief description of the person during the PPA, which also differed from traditional essays. However, organization was the most difficult hurdle. Kirby, for example, explained he felt like he would have two paragraphs that were connected and then another two paragraphs that had nothing to do with the first, so he had to find transitional ways to flow from one theme of information to the next…without the traditional topic sentences provided in essays. I knew students would need to change their styles, but when I evaluated their reflections, I was surprised by the emphasis on entertainment and tone, which I coded under the theme of skills, along with humor, storytelling, and inserting

details in their composition. Altogether, skills and style comprised a large part of the study results and deserved their own chapter.

5.2.1 Style

The style shifting came mainly from the commercial publications' requirements. As students researched the publishing outlets and realized the difference between those and academic writing, they came to see public writing as more "informal" because the op-ed and blogs could be personal, and they could use personal pronouns that are disliked in essays. There was also more freedom to use their "punctuation toolbox" (one of the terms I use in class to get them beyond the basic period, exclamation mark and question mark) and creative writing techniques. One of the big things that students noted was that previous research essays had always been very logical. They used facts and kept their opinions out of it. They were taught to not use personal pronouns in order to be moderate and logically persuasive. Doing the public writing assignments was a switch for them. Ashton said, "I think that [style] was the biggest thing I got from all of those, and it is huge in writing. You just don't realize until you have to do it."

With the op-ed, many students noted the difficulty writing these since they were part of the community and commenting on that same community. They did not want to be completely negative and appear inoffensive and persuasive. I think instinctively they realized that adding another layer of pathos to their words would increase their persuasive odds because many of them noted that they tried to put more emotion into it. This rhetorical realization was a turning point for many budding writers (Shafer 816; Jack 66; Young and Morgan 43). Adding that personal layer had an important effect on students. Remy thought this assignment connected with the audience a little better because it was more personal, confirming Morgan's explanation about

writing adaptation. She worried about "sounding stupid," so I asked how she adapted her writing which advocated for firefighter salary increases. She responded, "Personal experience, I think. I tried to explain why they need it to happen more than just instead of just saying firefighters need more pay because they [firefight]…I just talked about more personal [feelings]…toward firefighters in the fire department." This addition of pathos into papers, I believe, was a result of students digging deeper for persuasion tools they already possessed by simply being human.

While students may have understood why they went deeper than simple logos, their shift moved beyond that rhetorical tenant. Understanding persuasive psychology was evident in how they approached arguments. Not wanting to attack directly, most students found alternative ways to gain the trust of their audience through ethos. In particular, Jordan said, "I learned that if you're trying to accomplish a goal or get someone to change their mind…you have to make it seem like you're both on a team and then it's not you against them…So, I had to reword some of my op-ed into that, so it didn't come across as if I'm just bashing you for what you're doing and it's more like let's come together and better it for the kids." Kirby approached his op-ed by addressing the problem of rising house prices in his county by using his personal angle of not wanting to live with his parents forever. He noted, "It's hard to do without coming off as abrasive, so doing it in a way that convinces them instead of hurting their pride. I came at it by giving them a suggestion where that was beneficial to them."

As the reflective blogs revealed, style shift was evident. Remy wrote to the local newspaper about the prevalence of behavior disorders and the lack of discipline in his local school system where his mother was a teacher. He said:

> While reading and writing my open letter, I realized that most of my essays are written in a very monotone and scripted writing style. When I read some of my other classmates'

> papers, they used strategies such as ethos, logos, and pathos to their advantage. Many of their sentences pulled at my heartstrings and some others gave me logical data to reform my thinking. After I had read their papers, I returned to my own and started to rethink mine. I changed my writing style from casual to more emotional... meaningful and impactful... Others wrote about personal experiences that impacted their opinions, so I started writing stories of my own.

He had been both nervous and excited for the op-ed, since he saw the struggles his educator-mother dealt with on a daily basis and wanted to help. We discussed potential pushback, but despite the possibility of rejection, he still wanted to speak out saying, "Even if they dismiss my letter, I know that at last some of them will start to consider the difficulties teachers have when they try to earn respect from their students." Remy recognized a need and determined the risk was worth the effort in order to affect change. It became personal and his observations of peer writing techniques and the imitation that followed reflected that investment.

Students' choice of wording to reflect tone provided one of the best examples of style. One student, Mia, found the connection between tone and word choice to be a revelation: "While reading through these comments [on my blog] I realized a lot of readers can pick up my tone in the writings...I did not realize how much information a reader can take in just based on how the writer talks. I also realized how you talk about your information such as stories, research, and emotions…all these can affect the reader's mood toward the writing." In her blogs, Kai started her sentences with basic, flat sentences like "What I have learned," "I also have learned," "There are many different sites," and "I am," but commenters noted that she had a lot of errors, and her sentence structure was "okay," but they also noted she seemed rushed and needed more depth to her blogs. As a result, Kai's last three blogs (the ones written after the peer commentary) were

approximately twice the size of the first nine…combined. They were more reflective, and she cited commentary that appealed to her and explained it, showing the ability to shift her word choices to develop an engaged tone. For example, she put herself in her audience's place by using first and second person pronouns: "*you* may ask *yourself*, 'Oh *I* am going to comment or post *my* opinion online about the presidential election,' but it may be difficult for *you*, but if *you* don't have information to back *you* up, no one will really be able to support *you*" (emphasis mine). Many students found personalization appealing and I saw more of it as the op-ed and blogs continued.

Another revelation came through the audience shifting, from the instructor to the public and, with blogs, to people in other classes. Students defined blogs as digital communication like text messages or emails, but I did not see any of them realize that even public writing today is comprised of digital communication—still being sent electronically, many times to strangers. The op-ed and PPA were also digital communication. The subjects may have been personal, but they were sent beyond the classroom. I realized that assignments like essays have a known reader—the instructor, with whom the student has a personal relationship and trusts. But public writing? There is neither trust, nor implicit understanding of a writer's tone and personality; these are revealed with word choices and structure, requiring significantly more effort.

A gifted writer, Jessie, had a particularly difficult time with the public writing assignments. Thankfully, he was one of the ones that had scored a five on my Venn diagram pre-survey question asking about audience recognition and had noted that it would help with any form of written communication, which would suggest he understood the adaptability. He was an excellent researcher and essay writer, scoring high on his use of logos. But he struggled with shifting to public writing and wrote in his blog:

> In my experience communicating digitally hinders the writer's ability to establish pathos and ethos with the audience. Since the reader cannot see the person, he cannot determine if the writer has credibility as they cannot get physical proof. It is especially difficult with pathos as in human communication, a person's mannerisms and tone affect how the listener interprets what they are saying and how they feel, making it a much more personal interaction. Digitally, it is impossible to use mannerisms, and an author must rely solely on tone, punctuation, and word choice to relay emotions.

Jessie relied on non-verbal body language interpretation in his classroom interactions to gain a sense of tone and personality to reveal if the topic was personal. Shifting to being able to use only words, despite his high intelligence and excellent academic writing skills (or maybe because of) proved to be a challenge. He wrote an op-ed to the *Wall Street Journal* condemning our country's divisiveness. It was filled with excellent quotes and facts, complete with referencing the H.R. 815 bill which addressed illegal immigration. Yet, classmates wrote that they did not understand Jessie's argument or what his topic was when they read his first op-ed draft. His essays had been filled with technical jargon about biomechanical engineering to the point that I, too, had to look up concepts and words to help—he was that smart. He tried to use those same techniques with his op-ed only to find it lost his audience. I believe Jessie was used to teachers and professors who took the time to understand his work but realized that the public wasn't going to expend the same effort. So, he was forced to shift (and I mean forced…he was a great student and understood why he needed to change, but he enjoyed essays because they were logical and comfortable to him). I had to explain ethos and pathos again and we went through his words together to see where he could add himself/his personality in the writing. We asked other students to highlight sections that needed to be explained further. Despite his initial discomfort

with ethos and pathos, his writings showed improvement through his addition of a narrative story as a hook and contextual information to help an uninformed audience with the specialized topics (DNA mapping and genetic testing). When Jessie got feedback from students on his blogs, he came up to me after class upset because he disagreed with the comments. One person had mentioned that he should be more formal. He insisted to me that a blog "is meant to be simple language and informal," which showed an understanding about style and tone online and was an encouraging evolution considering where he started at the beginning of the semester with very formal, problematic technical language. I reaffirmed his decision to keep the tone informal and he nodded firmly as he left, calling the commenter "an idiot."

Kai and Jessie were not the only students who realized the word choice-tone correlation. Raven, one of my quiet students, focused on punctuation when discussing how something simple like a period could seem curt or angry on a text: "Another thing to consider is the use of punctuation marks…[like] adding a period after [the word okay] suggests that there is a negative emotion behind what you are saying." While that may seem obvious to English majors, it was a revelation to FYC students. University instructors (not solely English ones) are tasked with introducing students increasingly to the professional world. "I never thought about anything wrong with how I communicated until my art teacher lectured me on how it was inappropriate to start an e-mail off with 'Hey,' said Rene. "I never thought about how sometimes being abrupt and casual word choices could lead to a demeaning tone in my writing. People do not know when they need to communicate formally using technology and I do not think it is taught enough. You never talk to your siblings like you would your professors, so it is important you review your word choices when communicating." Her last sentence showed an awareness of audience adaptation. She knew tone was an essential component of reaching various audiences.

While these comments were driven by answering the digital communication question, the blogs revealed more of an experimentation with skills.

5.2.2 Entertainment

Early 19th century stripper, Gypsy Rose Lee sang "Let Me Entertain You," and she was right. Art involves more than being on a stage or throwing words at a page. Another key student revelation was the use of entertainment in writing. I used the term "entertainment" to describe the collective words students used like "appealing," "eye-catching," "interesting," and "entertainment." Students had a new awareness of the correlation between entertainment and audience engagement. The idea of using humor, stories, and pictures for entertainment is not a new concept as early rhetoricians including Aristotle and Cicero recognized the role of appealing to the audience in persuasion. A rhetorician, said Aristotle, should "be able to reason logically, to understand human character and goodness in their various forms, and to understand the emotions—that is, to name them and describe them, to know their causes and the way in which they are excited" (8). Understanding human character, emotions and the cause of excitement connects with audiences of all cultures and times. A 2008 study examining the motives and responsiveness of blogs found that "information search and entertainment motives positively affect opinion acceptance; blog readers who focus on information and those who read for fun both view blogs as trustworthy sources" (Huang, Chou, and Lin 351). Changing the mode of delivery requires a change of style and entertaining word choices matter in breaching academic/commercial communication lines (Jack16). Focusing on mass media publications forced a more entertaining style shift with students and this study highlighted what Aristotle found thousands of years previously—if writers make composition appealing, readers are more likely to be engaged. FYC students appreciate entertainment in their own lives but failed to see

how to incorporate it in the classroom until they had to practice public writing circulation. The four main ways I saw students shift to be more entertaining were through humor, storytelling, details (including visual images in blogs), and conciseness.

5.2.3 Humor

Being a fan of good humor, I was delighted to see students start showing their personalities with words. Apart from Jett's sarcastic millennial parents op-ed, all humor was done in the blogs. We discussed in class the dangers of humor in public writing because it could be misinterpreted so easily. The blogs were meant to be more personal, so it was an appropriate context. Ari said, "I started out robotic, sort of just kind of answering the questions, but as I reached the end, I was kind of adding a little bit of humor there because I knew that the readers for our classmates are going to read the same thing over and over. So, I ended up adding in like over the top stories about digital miscommunication."

When I asked if they adapted their writings, many of students noted that they needed to be more entertaining to keep their reader's attention, which goes beyond interest. Entertainment, especially using humor, can show a comfortability with an audience and/or a desire to keep them interested. As all writers have their strengths with genres, so it was with students. One of them, Devan, got so much better when he started writing more informally. He had a great voice and sense of humor using phrases like: "God forbid you use the wiki," "you better have some good logic or else I'm laughing in your face and calling you stupid," and "I would definitely advise people to be yourself when blogging because it makes it a lot easier to connect with. When commenting on a blog, I would try to find something in common or point out something you liked, before you do anything else to butter the bread before you give any criticism." This freestyling humor could be a result of the classroom atmosphere, but more likely it was a result

of students realizing the connection between humor-entertainment and audience. Two people commented on Devan's blog telling him they liked his sense of humor, yet ironically, Devan was the only student who felt blogging was useless. It is possible Devan used humor for the same reason as Angel who said, "I tried to make mine fun because, you know, it's not. It was kind of like a me thing. So, I felt like, you know, I could make it a little funny." Angel just wanted to make a classroom assignment fun. Fair enough.

5.2.4 Storytelling

Storytelling, the idea of creating narratives from primary sources, provided another substantial theme and the next form of entertainment students used. Remi explained, "being able to expand your writing style into telling personal stories" was why the PPA assignment was his favorite. "You know that just something is we were never allowed to do [before]." Remy interviewed a local youth pastor who had a rock band in his youth and was excited to tell the story. This narrative skill was honed during the PPA as students told their subjects' stories. While professors may suggest stories as a hook for traditional essays, the PPA reinforced that lesson. Students had to learn to find an interesting story or fact during their interviews and re-tell it for the hook.

The topics we ended up with focused on three different areas: 13 students focused on career, 8 on business/entrepreneurial, and 8 on the subject's life/hobby. Besides a personal interest, students also chose former teachers as subjects, whether because good student-instructor interactions are comfortable relationships or because they truly wanted to showcase their teachers. I always encouraged students at the beginning of the PPA to research someone with an interest aligned to their own. So, careers were a large chunk of the topics because students loved being able to explore someone's life without spending years in classes before deciding. Business

PPA articles during this study were centered around local community members who were the students' work/family contacts. Again, these articles highlighted personal journeys and successes—a subject's life, hobby or accomplishment (such as a bonsai tree cultivator or motorcross racing champion).

These life-focused articles were meant to show the journey and end result. Students who chose this route, in particular with military veteran family members, always cited this assignment as their favorite. One of them, Jett, interviewed his grandfather and said it helped him learn more about history than any class. "Even with the initial interview," he said, "I still needed to clarify and ask for additional information to make my essay as factually correct as it can be. The revision process consisted of testing what could and could not be feasible in a newspaper with a lot of cutting down." He showed a development of interview skills, follow up research and authentic revision resulting from his intent to disseminate to a public outlet, genuinely interacting with his grandfather and deciding which pieces to retain or cut, while still accurately representing the man he respected. His opening paragraph read:

> Dense fog coated the 1989 Panamanian midnight over a canopy of rainforest trees. "Slade," alpha team leader, turn squad leader by circumstance, stood minutes away from being approximately 500 feet above foreign fortifications in a four-propellered C130 Hercules. Enemy combatants were blissfully aware of their arrival below radar detection until they needed to fly at jump altitude. Morale became a rare commodity after monitors blinked to life, showing the guerrilla fighters vehicles. Ensuring that his squad came prepared for the invasion, he received a minute warning for the drop zone... green light. Slade began to shuffle Rangers forward, concerned at the lack of reserve troops provided for them. A

> display of shrapnel provided deafening cracks against the aircraft's steel body. The jumpmaster sent them plummeting directly into the enemy's view with ZSU23-4 anti-air rounds and small arms fire tearing holes in parachutes period less than 30 seconds passed before their boots punched the soil.

Jett's endeavor to represent his grandfather started with a character description, not of him physically, but of one of his acts of heroism in the service of his country, beautifully done and instantly riveted classmates with many who responded with praise.

All students needed to give a character sketch for their audience that was brief, yet insightful. Once those parts were established, these young writers had to organize the PPA article, usually chronologically, into a story. These skills mimicked the popular fiction writing genre in a non-fiction manner with the main character already provided…all the ingredients to a remarkable story. As Toni described it, "I feel like I have to just like talk [well] about this person and, you know, it's cool to hear their stories. Then, I just got to rewrite their story. So, it's exciting that I could eventually share that with somebody else, this story that most people wouldn't know or ask questions about." During our interview, Remy agreed with Toni saying, "It's pretty much the same as him. Just being able to expand your writing style into now telling personal stories, that was just something we were never allowed to do. That's why I'm making such a big deal about it is because if we ever wrote anything like 'I, me, my' stories in our other essays they [educators] count it as wrong."

Yet, the op-ed also included its own storytelling opportunity. One of my dual enrolled students, Cleo, struggled with dyslexia and wanted to reach out in an open letter emailed to the Georgia Department of Education and publish it in the local paper, as well. Her argument was asking the state school systems to provide more resources for students with dyslexia. "I learned I

must have a personal story to engage the audience," Cleo confessed. "Writing an open letter appealed to me because I could help others with my situation…However, applying myself in the open letter to get my point across did not appeal to me. Specifically, I did not want people to look at me differently since I have an academic disability or treat me differently." While Cleo never received a response to her email, she did get it published in the local newspaper a month after submission. In addition, she received a positive reception from classmates in her blog comments including one that remarked he, too, had dyslexia and agreed with her point. That simple connection with another, unknown student delighted young Cleo, validating her point and giving a sense of purpose for her writing beyond what I could have provided in the classroom alone.

5.2.5 Details

Adding details to their writings was the next form of entertainment. I noted this particular adaptation because students pointed out those details in their blogs and the post-interview. They used words like "context," "graphics," "examples," and "pictures." Wren wrote about context that she failed to provide in one of her blogs and how that missing information was confusing to readers as she said, "Everybody should understand in which way they want to get their audience's attention. You do not want to be the person who is known for writing un-captivating work." Her desire to be interesting, to make fellow students pay attention to her words, showed an engagement beyond having the professor as her audience. While Wren was the kind of student who cared about her work from the beginning, Ava was not. However, Ava learned through the op-ed to:

> Proofread my paper like it was someone else's. I found myself losing interest while reading my own paper and would have to add details to make it more appealing to the

> reader. Given a wider audience, my paper had to be more advanced than usual with stronger arguments and thorough research. I expanded my research past Galileo and into more biased sites to widen my knowledge on any and all counter arguments. While posting publicly, the writer must be ready for comments, questions, and arguments regarding their piece.

Because she knew she was going up against the outside world, Ava took more time evaluating her work.

Students also used visual details to enhance their blogs like photos and graphs. Angel used funny pictures in blog posts, and Kirby even put a graph in his op-ed asking the local government to create the opportunity for affordable housing for young people wanting to stay in the local community, a unique, unprompted graphic that mimicked Kirby's attitude toward blogs, showing an overflow of learned skills from one assignment to the next. "Moving forward," he stated, "[I know I need] to write better for my audience. I found that I need to make my blog posts more engaging and personable to the reader. To do this, I need to bring real world examples and universal experiences that can encapsulate what I am trying to convey in an effective manner. Being able to write thorough, yet concise, blogs." More visual details included changing fonts and paragraph formatting into a more legible and compelling structure. "The individual comments made me realize what information catches the attention of the audience," explained Jett. "Whenever I made a visible change to my paragraphs size or the overall sentence structure, the audience commented more frequently on that particular paragraph...that it was visually appealing to the eye. It could be the case that it is simply a matter of how easy it is to read." Jett noticed the digital audience liked visual appeal and adapted with shorter paragraphs and more structured layout. He was a very logos-focused writer that had previously discounted

ethos and pathos suggestions provided in class, so I was pleased to hear he had heeded other students' advice. Despite our discussions in class, he insisted on continuing with a sardonic slant on his piece on millennial parenting, and this piece became an example of sarcasm that failed to connect as he later mentioned it in his post-study interview: "The open letters [op-eds] pushed me to eliminate the typical thesis with three paragraphs. After all, no one really likes reading research essays…I would have skimmed over anything that lacked in purpose or was mundane in a newspaper, so I included some rather eye-catching jokes. Although, I probably should not have said children are akin to vegetables." More interesting topic choices were a common theme in the public writing assignments and Jett wanted to change current culture because his little brother had more technological access and Jett saw the effects. Yet, he was able to self-reflect on his own writing and by experimenting with jokes and format, realized that the audience needed entertainment without being turned away by ill-delivered humor. He smiled at me during our interview as he joked, "Maybe that's why Glenn [the publisher] hasn't returned my email."

However they chose to use pathos and ethos to enhance entertainment value, the choice was pivotal. Quite a few students noted detail inclusion and practiced it with their later blogs. Cameron was a very intelligent student who struggled with the switch to public writing finding the format confusing. In her op-ed, she argued against the unequal treatment for the local high school girls' softball funding and support and submitted it to the local newspaper and in an email to the school superintendent. Many students submitted their letters to two places—a publishing outlet and a person in charge. I did not require second submissions, but many students opted to do it anyway. I surmised from their actions and our conversations that they truly intended to affect change and wanted to give their work to someone who could hear them and make a difference. However, Cameron's op-ed was not published because Harbinson decided the letter

did not have solid facts nor offered solutions; it only seemed to complain. That being said, Cameron still said she gained insight from the assignment: “This process [the flow of thoughts] helped me incorporate pathos and emotion into my letter. My writing during this assignment became more specific to my personal experience…after writing my first draft and peer editing I came to the realization that my letter was not personal enough. I then went back and included personal stories and how they relate to both me and the topic.” Cameron’s inclusion of personal stories to enhance her op-ed exemplified the evolution of her writing as her essays were, while well-written, very dry and lacked passion. When she wrote it was “without thinking too much about word choice” which, based on the context at the time meant that she was able to write in a flow state where her feelings connected with her writing. It had a distinct tonal personality, a quality that more students noticed in their own works: "I learned that blogs need to carry a personality... A crucial piece of writing that I had to learn was ethos, logos, and pathos,” said Remy. “I must say, they aren't easy to start using but the best way to start is by writing blogs about things you're passionate about.... It’s like when you root a plant. If you tear the plant from the roots, it will never have a chance to regrow, to connect with anyone, either online or not. You must talk about yourself and get to know them”—a great example of a student using an example to explain his point. While Remy’s first blogs were straightforward answers to questions, he showed more tone and style with his later blogs and the understanding of passion and pathos. He noticed the response he got, and it validated his writing and attention to details: “One of my favorite comments was someone who said that I was sincere. I have always strived to belong to that group so seeing that made me extremely happy. I also didn't add any titles to my blogs, so I think some of my audiences were confused about what I was writing about.” In his later revisions, Remy went on to add titles, something that added essential organization to a piece of

writing like a topic sentence or thesis. I saw more titles with the later blogs as students were (un)consciously trying to connect with their audience using details focused on pathos and ethos.

5.2.6 Conciseness

The famous line "always leave them wanting more," came to exemplify the final form of entertainment—being concise. The circulation from the classroom to the public required this new technique. Students had to know what to cut and when to stop talking. As any experienced writer knows, those are hard lessons to implement when someone eagerly engages in a topic. From the beginning of the semester, one of the things students mentioned was that they did not care for a required word count with writing. Essays and blogs are a good example of where they were told to write a specific number of words from the beginning, but the op-ed and PPA were left open (I gave a general goal of 1,000 words). Yet, once students matched their piece of writing to a publisher, many of them realized they needed to cut back so they could submit.

Fascinatingly, with word count, the essays and blogs were underwritten and the PPAs and op-eds were overwritten. Despite the topics being personalized on the first two, students still complained about "fluff," which commonly described repetitive information that added nothing. As Jett noted, "I've seen an abundance of 'fluffing' in essays, meaning that the sentence says nothing and goes nowhere." Taylor added to Jett's definition in his blog when he wrote, "So far I have found that my righting [sic] can sound much like a political speech with a lot of large and extravagant words but with no meaning behind them…a constant loop where little to no information is exchanged effectively. This realization has been surprising but beneficial to my writing style as it encourages clearer messaging toward my intended audience." From our class discussions and post-interviews, I realized that students focused on quantity over quality because it was easier than thinking critically. So, Taylor's comment of "looping" made sense. But, when

they overwrote for the PPA and the op-ed, they found it difficult to be more concise and still add in details.

First, the students were more invested in the topic since it reflected a personal opinion and was headed for public circulation, so they had a difficult time cutting back on writing—not an often-practiced skill, requiring more thoughtful revisions and, best of all, the ability to identify "fluff." That extra information loses audience attention. An impactful comparison we made in class was Edward Everett's two-hour speech delivered right before Abraham Lincoln's *Gettysburg Address* where quantity was not the key to impact—quality was. "Completing my essays and blogs has opened my eyes to how certain words in a writing can affect how the readers think about the information," said Kai about her blogs. "I had no idea it would affect the reader that much. I have noticed over the weeks that online posts can be a little hard to get emotion out, to relate to the reader, and to have enough information to keep the reader engaged…They may be interested in the information, but you put so much information into the blog or any other online site that it made them lose interest in what you had to say." Jett (my very logical student who wrote the sarcastic op-ed) saw a change in his blogs: "Blog-wise, I wrote the same style I used in the first two essays, like a research paper in every grammatical convention. I soon realized that if I couldn't bear reading it myself, then everyone else would not appreciate the uplifted, posh, Ph.D. style. Over time, I improved and simplified my writing, tailoring it to be enjoyed by anyone." His use of the words "improved" and "simplified" together showed a realization that he understood the value of choosing appropriate words to speak to a public audience, much like code switching.

Jett also used the idea of writing being "enjoyed," which implied entertainment. Students knew what they liked and were not used to working to keep their audience's attention. They

realized that teachers and professors are required to read papers, no matter how dry, and entertaining those academics was, sadly, not a priority. Jett's writing style changed drastically during his 11 blogs, tempering the verbal irony he preferred and turning it toward playful wording and energetic styling. For example, an excerpt from Blog 2 read: "researching assignments without a plan will most likely lead to disaster. Organization is key, so taking notes while reading from sources is necessary." Then, in Blog 6, he expanded his word choice and tone into a more creative direction: "overall, I changed how I conveyed my message by sucker punching the audience into enacting change. I added impact by shortening my sentence structure, using ellipses, and changing dogy vocabulary to a rather blunt style…opening my eyes to being 'real' with people." His use of "sucker punching" and "dogy" was more creative and varied than previous blogs. He spoke about shorter sentence and blunt style which he equated with his blog audience. They were, after all, classmates and peers, not professors. Finally, in his final blog (Blog 12), he said, "Every base had already been covered up until ethos was introduced, so I passionately value the appeal. I will use these skills in the future to make sure the audience fully knows who I am before I berate them with logos and pathos." Yes, he kidded about berating his audience, but that constituted part of Jett's personality, and that verbal irony came across frequently in his later blogs. His use of the simple word "passionately" is more intense and heartfelt, showing his enactive emphasis on ethos to connect with his audience.

Having never encountered a time when someone asked them to write *less*, students expressed consistent frustration during the op-ed in class about having to cut back their words to fit publishers. Battling her topic passion with the submission policies, Rene said, "I did [submit to] a woman's magazine. So, I made mine sort of broad still…but I had to do a lot of cutting back on words. I felt very strong on the topic, and I could have written on that for pages and pages,

and I thought I still had too many words. So, that's probably what I struggled most with on that one." The following conversation between students during our post-study interview revealed their mutual frustrations on conciseness:

> Ari: (shaking his head) It felt like I had something meaningful and then I had to take it out again. It felt like my writing was kind of [limited] like there's points in it that maybe needed expanding and [while] some people they had to write 800 and they cut down the 400 and mine was a max [of] 750. So, I got lucky with that for the *Washington Post*. I didn't have to cut out too much, just like maybe one or two points that were sticking out. I know some people [who] probably had points that they wanted to expand on but, like, maybe they couldn't because they didn't have enough room.
>
> Remy: Yeah, I mean, mine was way too much. I wrote, like, 1,000 words, and I had to cut mine in half and that was way too much. I basically just rewrote my entire op-ed because I was, like, I can't go further into much explanation. So, it didn't really help me as much just because I just wrote, like, way too much. I had a lot to say on that topic that I really just had to shorten.
>
> Jett: I mean, I thought it was useful in the sense that it helped me change my sentence structure just to make it less confusing and how many words I used. But it was definitely a struggle trying to cut down from around 900 to, I mean, I could only get it down to 632 without removing my points but I don't know…(Jett shrugged here and trailed off).

This conversation focused on the op-ed because publishers closely monitor those pieces. PPAs had more flexibility since they attracted consumers and advertisers, as opposed to opinion pieces which were more difficult to publish unless they discussed controversial topics or were written by a well-known author. Yet, both students expressed the same frustration many of their classmates had—the ability to expand and contract their writing to fit an assignment or, in this case, a publishing outlet, proving the efficacy of this assignment to teaching compositional adaptation with realistic expectations.

6 AUDIENCE AND CIRCULATION

This study established writer-audience interactions with a few techniques. The first was peer editing, which we accomplished through reviewing assignment papers in class and online commenting on blogs. These techniques mimicked public writing circulation in a classroom environment, allowing students to submit writing, get feedback, and repeat the cycle. It was during the dissemination and circulation experience that their audience feedback became noticeably impactful on their writing.

6.1 In Class Peer Editing

As students moved beyond their initial writing drafts and into peer editing, writing shifted intriguingly. To give context, peer editing in my FYC classes started from the first draft. Students marked their peers' papers with comments and corrections. With each draft, the process started again. I walked around, reading, commenting, and discussing observations with the young editors and, at times, having them reexplain suggestions to the writer. For example, Jessie was a logically-focused writer who consistently wrote technically error-free papers, yet once the assignments changed to op-eds and PPAs, two of his peer editors offered to sit with Jessie to help capture ethos and pathos in his writing. This practice reinforced agency in all the writers, but it also capitalized on the impactful HIP, learning-by-teaching technique.

One of the best moments happened when I asked if they thought they had a perfect paper ready to turn in, then we edited again. Over the years, a paper rarely came back unmarked, solidifying student comprehension about the editing process being more than just a "one and done" process. We spent part of the class editing and part teaching, consistently building on a paper until the deadline. Without exception, every student in the class loved the process, and over the years students have consistently reported the editing process in instructor evaluations as

the favorite skill they learned in FYC. "I have never seen peer editing done the way we do it in this class," said Ashton. "We continued to peer edit for days after actually completing the full writing." As mentioned in the last chapter, I asked students to self-research most questions, specifically when they questioned peer comments on their papers. For example, Taylor was one of my mid-range ability students who, while not possessing the confidence of high-performance English students, still had a thoughtful mind that learned to question others' comments, as became increasingly common throughout the semester. "I really like [peer editing and] how it's like exchanging [ideas] with those students," he said. "Whenever you get like a good editor, it feels like you're really making progress. The problem is [when] you don't get good peer editor and then they put in a lot of edits that don't make sense or are objectively wrong. I had this one…they're writing some stuff on my paper, and it caused comma splices. It was wrong and then they were trying to cut out information that was integral." Many times, Taylor came to me after peer editing sessions with questions because he was faced with determining to adopt in or ignore his peers' opinions. Yet, his questions grew his writing confidence and his assignment grades reflected his knowledge growth.

Once we got to the op-ed and PPA, the peer editing became more personal. Harley was one of the other students in Taylor's class. I had an incident in my class where I pulled two sample papers up to the overhead to show everyone else what to look for in editing. The op-eds were still trying to imitate a research essay, so I demonstrated changes and suggestions, as was common with many of our editing lessons. Everyone learned because most of them made the same mistakes and, by looking at someone else's paper to see the clues, they could go back to their own and make changes. Despite my own hardened look at my own writing and regardless of asking the students' permission first, I unfortunately forgot to recognize that these were young

writers who possibly could be uncomfortable with their writing being used as an example. Indeed, it made an impact on Harley when I used his paper about health insurance companies as one of the many examples in class. He wrote about it later in Blog 6 and it was passionate and heartbreaking for me to read:

> Imagine being content with a paper you have written, but you are not confident in it. Then, that paper is showed [sic] and critiqued in front of your entire class. I was not the happiest person when I was put into that situation. Apparently, it was so bad that we only looked at the first page. When I got my paper back the first half of it was full of red marks. I am not accustomed to persuasive or emotional writing so choosing a topic [that was] boring on a whim did not help.

After reading his blog, I immediately sent him an email and apologized for hurting him. However, his movement from a factual manner of writing in his previous blogs into this descriptive tone was momentous. He used pathos from his very first sentence to connect his reader to his own feelings ("Imagine being content…"). He put his audience into his shoes and created a personal connection so the audience would feel what he felt (ethos). He described the story and built the tension, describing his own feelings ("not the happiest person"), which left room for interpretation as that phrase was likely an intentional understatement, which left readers to fill in their own possible emotions—another connection. I do not use red pens when I make corrections due to their negative psychological impact, so when he pointed out that detail, it could have been subconscious substitution, or it could have been another student who used a red pen. Either way, that colorful detail added another point of connection with the readers as most students have had papers marked with a red (or other color) pen at some point.

During our post-study interview, he said he still loved the class and learned a lot: “One of the most prominent points that I picked up is that I needed to establish who I am, how the topic affects me, and why anyone should care. Each of which I made sure to emphasize when I made the edits. Also, hearing other people’s letters really helped me see how it should look because they were really good at getting the reader to care. Overall, the edits on the open letter were definitely eye-opening.” In his Blog 10, he really started to relax into his writing:

> As for the critiques, none of them were devastating. They each were beneficial, and I plan to implement them in the future. One critique comment that stood out to me was about me talking poorly about my open letter. Whoever commented on this is most definitely right that I should not talk down on my work. That being said, I STILL DON’T LIKE MY OPEN LETTER [his all caps]….The lessons I have learned from the comments on my blog are that people like to be able to relate to things, my mistakes will help others to not make that mistake, and that no matter what, I will always dislike my open letter.

Harley’s writing got better and better, from bland to captivating. He used all caps and varied his sentence structure. The emotional impact of the op-ed and the public critique were very clear and colored his views in all his blogs related to the op-ed. But it led to deep reflection, thought, and self-deprecating humor, which was a demonstration of considerable writing development. In his final reflection, he reiterated his tough start saying, “I am so used to writing formally that I forgot how to convey emotion in my writing; that was very easy to notice in my first draft of the open letter. It was very stale and monotonous and failed at evoking emotion in the reader…the biggest changes I made…were using more powerful words and adding more of my own feelings.”

Harley confessed to procrastination and not being deliberate with his topics, which he realized made him procrastinate, but he also appreciated when people around them did their jobs. The PPA was his favorite assignment and he chose to interview a local gym owner and friend. He noted, “The revisions were kind of all over the place because few people had written anything like this before. So, some people’s articles were well made and told a good story while others were unclear,” showing he recognized writing that was well done and the importance of adding narrative to writing. Peer editing, while sometimes upsetting, also proved impactful, which lead to the question—why was my classroom the first time FYC students encountered this? Why didn’t previous classrooms implement similar techniques? Quinn posed the same query in his blog: “I really enjoyed the peer editing of essays...I don't really understand why every English class does not do it because I actually learned instead of fix and forget. I was able to look at my peers’ blogs and understand what struggles and successes they had in class.” His phrasing “fix and forget” gave me insight as to his previous classes. Quinn was able to realize the value of learning from other students’ papers and integrate those lessons into authentic revisions with his own paper. Kai also agreed with Quinn’s observations and previous experiences saying, “Before I got into this class, I did not know what proper grammar was. All I saw were markings on my papers. Seeing these errors has made my eye learn how to catch it in my own writing.”

Two other students, Sidney and Remy, also noted they used peer editing to see different styles and adapted their own. Remy wrote his op-ed about the lack of discipline in the Fannin school system and addressed it to the school board in an email as well as submitted it to the local newspaper. He excitedly wrote on his topic because his mother taught in the school system, and he wanted to be heard on her behalf. He realized his essays were “monotone and scripted” and he wanted to change saying, “I changed my writing style from casual to more emotional...

meaningful and impactful... Others wrote about personal experiences that impacted their opinions, so I started writing stories of my own." Remy's compositional shift showed his recognition of rhetorical impact—tone, style, pathos, and ethos. The observations from peer editing added an extra filter to the writing. The fact that the writing was meant for the public added a new viewpoint for students. "I think the public writing was helpful in the aspect that as we grow older and are moving into college and adulthood, the likeliness of our opinions becoming more apparent whether written or spoken are high," said Toni in her blog. "[Public writing] added an extra aspect of pressure but overall paid off. To be able to get out of your comfort zone and take criticism, whether it's anonymous or not, is important in the real world because not everyone is going to agree with your opinion." Harley, Quinn, Sidney, Remy, and Toni were a few of the many students who saw value in a harrowing experience. With public writing pieces at stake, students were more than normally grateful for the classroom editing filter. Students *wanted* their editors to disagree with them, perhaps not at first, but definitely later when they realized the different viewpoint added a valuable addition to their writing.

Through peer editing, Ari, a naturally gifted writer, found he needed to add more "depth" and explain context: "I have a hard time taking criticism due to my social anxiety. I always want to be the best at what I do, so it can be difficult to see that my writing has obvious weaknesses that need to be addressed. Although I prefer pure edits, it is more helpful to have anonymous reviews from my peers because they are more honest and helpful to my overall skill as a writer." I was gratified to see the first part of the quote because he was also the student that did not see a need for FYC classes during his pre-study survey. He also recognized that the audience's response was very neutral despite his implementation of comedy which suggests that Ari would shift his writing to make it more entertaining if he were to continue. But I found it curious that he

thought blog commenter anonymity was more helpful and saw that as a positive thing because he equated it with honesty. None of the other students mentioned that connection, and it would be an interesting study to see how many young people felt the same way with online peer editing through blog comments.

6.2 Online Commenting

I structured the online commenting by placing students into small groups, giving them links to three to four blog websites, normally from another 1101 class, and allowing them two days out of class to give feedback on the blogs, then read and reflect on the comments made on their own blogs. There were mixed responses with the blog commenting. While some were detailed and thoughtful, others were artificial and one-dimensional as expected since many researchers noted blogs to be fraught with mixed responses (Holmes "Transformative" 57; Palfrey 208; Nobis et al. 49; Schmier et al. 58). I realized from this assignment that 1. Students recognized artificial feedback when they read it and 2. They cared about the quality of feedback they got. It was easy to assume that students worked for a grade and tossed it in the trash once they got the paper back (as in Quinn's "fix and forget" philosophy), but the blogs created a microcosm of classroom feedback, showing the reciprocating relationship between the writer and reader once the writing circulates. Quality writing wanted quality feedback. The students who admitted they procrastinated or did not turn in quality work were less likely to comment on others' feedback, presumably because they did not turn in quality feedback either…and others noticed. All of the writing and reviewing was due on a Friday and I got emails Wednesday evening and Thursday morning from frustrated students who could not complete their work because either the blogs they were supposed to read were not written at all or no one had commented on their blogs and the students could not finish their reflections.

After years of experiencing student irresponsibility, I, too, was frustrated at the last-minute submissions, but it was nothing to the ire of the students emailing me about how it kept them from doing their work. One of my more vocal students, Cleo, was traveling in a different country for a sports competition and emailed me two days before the assignment was due to tell me nobody in her group had posted blogs, so she could not do her work. “It was kind of annoying because some people wouldn't do their work and then you had to wait for them,” she wrote later in her last blog. During our interview, she was still visibly upset, explaining that she made time out of her busy schedule on another continent to get her work done and be responsible, but she was held hostage by her classmates. Another student, Jessie, agreed with her. “I had two where I couldn't really comment on them,” Jessie said. “I was eventually able to comment on them. But there was…one that I, if I'm remembering correctly, I don't think they ever even posted their blogs…but then there was another one where they did do it, but not in the way that blogs are supposed to be. So, I couldn't comment on them.” The lack of material was a common theme. “I feel like for the blogs,” said Kirby. “The most difficult [thing was that] one of the people in my group, their site was completely blank, like, they just had their name on it. Then the other person…they copied and pasted the stuff…But the comments I received, it felt like some of them were just people doing a brief scan of what other comments said and then writing a summary of [those]…just getting it done for the assignment.” These students were absolutely on target with their feelings and observations, as the later post-study interview showed:

> Me: Blogs. What did you learn from that experience?
>
> Jett: Don’t rely on people. I mean, they got the work done. And I mean, I did wait until Thursday before it was [due], but I mean, then again, I was procrastinating. So, I understand. Yeah, it's just accountability. But I feel

like if people had their names in the comments, then it would have been done a lot sooner. But it's just that anonymity really.

Ari: That weekend, I sat in my room with my laptop.

Me: You procrastinated until that weekend?

Ari: Oh, absolutely! I had read all my blogs and, it was just kind of, well, like I have soccer, and still all of my other classes. So, that week I was thinking, *Yeah, I gotta get it done*. And, then I also Friday wrote all my blogs and replies. I didn't, like, rush it. I spent like a few hours, actually went through it, and then that Saturday I fixed my [unintelligible]. And then Sunday, all the PPA. So, that weekend, just like a big workload.

They understood the assignments were due Friday, but Ari and Jett still waited to finish, despite having two months to complete the blogs. Jett made a good point about tying names to comments to keep students accountable, and I had considered this option but instead reenacted the public sphere more precisely by allowing anonymous comments. Ari did not factor on his classmates' need to finish their part of the work like a group project, which usually ends up with an unfair workload or, in this case, problems for high achievers who adhere to deadlines. What resulted for some students was a lack of audience reception, which they certainly noted and complained about in class when we reconvened. As Quinn put it in his blog, "It aggravates me a little bit that I did not get more comments. As I read through my comments I can see where the reader would truly be relating to my blog and also see where they just skimmed through and just gave me enough of a comment for their credit. I realized that it is not beneficial to anyone, and I needed to not be selfish and do my job."

However, positive results developed from this classroom circulation publishing. I coded the reflection blogs to get a better idea about the emerging themes from all the modules.

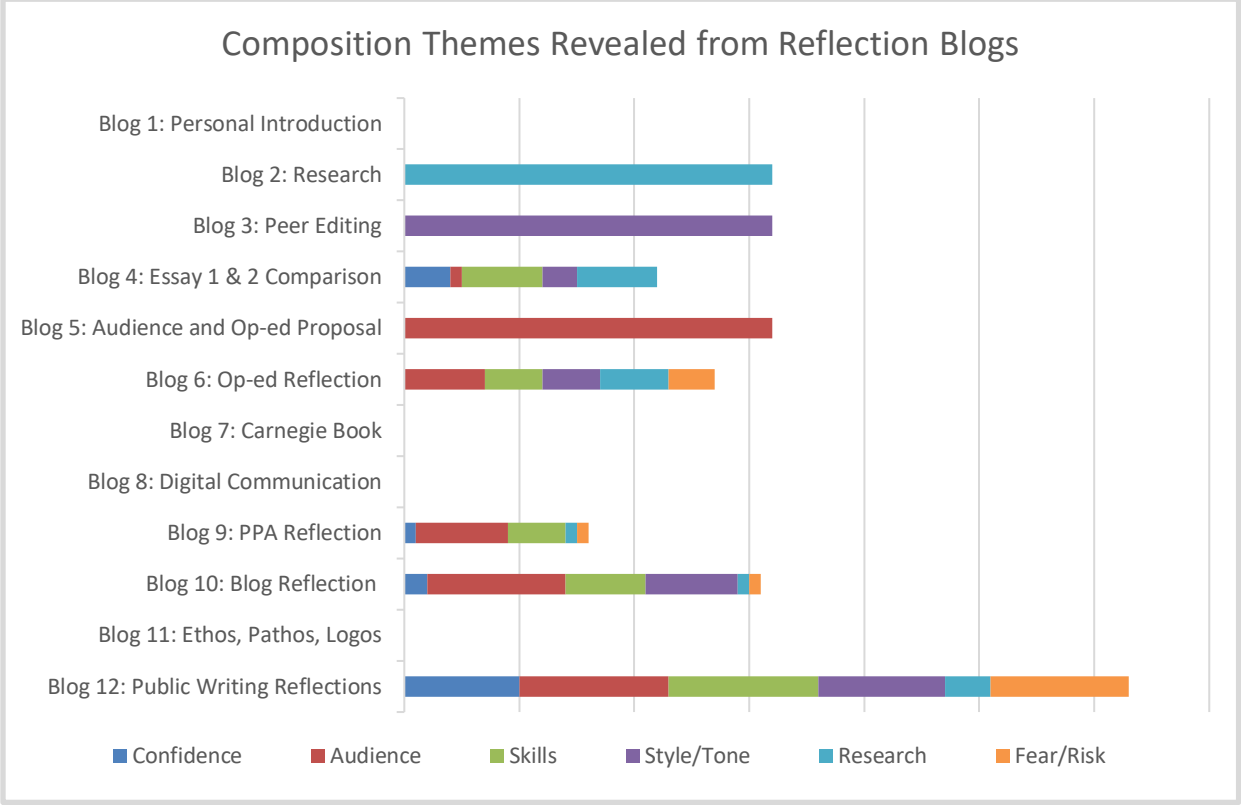

Figure 5: Reflection Blogs and Emerging Composition Themes

The graph showed an appearance of audience recognition beginning with Blog 4 and appeared on each blog after it (Blogs 7 and 8 were discounted due their lack of relevance), showing an increasingly consistent audience awareness. Devan, one of my procrastinating students, noted:

> As I was reading the comments on my blogs I realized that they all followed a specific pattern. Almost every single person that commented on my blogs tried to find something in common we had or something they agreed on. Their opening sentence was usually 'I agree with, or I also liked.' I think the reason most people did this was to establish a connection with the author so when the reader gives criticism, or encouragement, it is received better...Criticism is only useful when the person getting advice is receiving it in a good

way. If the person thinks they are getting attacked, they are much less likely to do anything and will just get defensive."

Devan's comments were very insightful as to the patterns and psychology behind comments, showing an awareness of audience and writer interaction with digital communication. He saw where people encouraged him before they found something they suggested for change, showing not only Devan's awareness of ethos, but also his blog commentors' awareness of the same. By segueing into a possibly difficult conversation over lackluster blogs, they found it best to find a complimentary characteristic of his writing first.

6.3 Writer-Audience Interaction Results

"Knowing that my peers were going to read and comment on my blog posts made me strive for perfection and a professional tone," said Sidney in her final blog. "Blogs are meant to delight the reader while also getting a point across....Being able to read and understand all the different ways my classmates agreed with what I said in my blogs gave me a personal insight into my audience. I felt as if I was giving my classmates the same personal connection back as I commented on theirs." This student showed a strong appreciation for authentic comments in these blogs, noting the basic feedback but focusing on the authentic readings. In fact, many students noted the basic feedback they got, which was comprised of derivative comments like "great job!" and "good thoughts here," basically giving no helpful insight for the writer. Sidney appreciated genuine readings where students pointed out examples they enjoyed and particular things she did, but I had seven students comment on their disappointment with commenters specifically in the blog reflections.

While Sidney focused on her own tone and how the comments affected her, I found it also helpful to see the tone of those trite comments and what they said about those writers. It was

obvious that the commenters were not trying to persuade Sidney or help her in any way and, as such, they put little effort into their word choices, using the same, empty words repeatedly on each blog. Some did not even change the comments, just copied and pasted, making Sidney's frustration understandable. Yet, what was so insightful about this assignment was the interaction between the two groups and seeing the frustration of the hard workers and how they responded to their audience once their writings circulated.

Parker, Santana, Quinn, and Toni were more outspoken about their works. As Quinn's earlier comment about being aggravated with his lack of feedback showed, he was able to use that experience to empathize with future students in his role as a student-editor and "not be selfish and do my job." He turned his bad circulation experience into a self-reflection of how he could do a better job in the future. I have no way of knowing if Quinn was one of the students that failed to provide good feedback (many comments were anonymous) on the assignments, but the shallow feedback he received was a good experience for that reason and, based on his reflection, I believe it will make him a better writer/editor. On the other hand, Parker was a student that gave thoughtful edits. He showed an understanding that a thoughtful critique was more valuable feedback than banal comments. "Again," he said, "I wish they would have pointed out the bad more and given more criticism." Surprisingly, he pointed out that he wanted to have more constructive criticism, which could have been a poor word choice, and I wondered if he meant that he wanted more thoughtful feedback. His words showed his appreciation and desire to be a better writer and only receiving the same edits failed to help him achieve his goal.

One example of inattentive feedback was Santana, a student who pointed out that his audience did not like the question-and-answer format he used with the blogs: "They also told [me] about the format I was using saying to get rid of the questions. I'll agree with this as it does

make the blog seem more forced instead of personal." He admitted it he had known his uninspired format was a bad idea, yet he still decided to use it. He also noted the superficial editing comments and excused lazy editors by pointing out that they may have been rushed for time like he had been. He noticed that the good blogs were neat, written well, and without mistakes, but failed to go back and change his blogs. What he submitted at the end of the study were the same, unedited blogs. The comments and suggestions were there to offer change, and he obviously understood, but still failed to follow through, suggesting that circulation changes students' writings only when they *want* to change. This student's editing failure contrasted with his motivation during the op-ed and PPA, which he edited up until the point he submitted them, listening to editors and changing wording as needed. Obviously, he felt no need to improve his blogs, possibly because I was the final audience. Yet, he knew his other public writing assignment had a final audience destination outside the classroom and did authentic revisions based on that assumption. Santana was not the only student that failed to make the same "authentic revisions" in blogs as he did with the other assignments. Seeing this revisional difference based on final audience proved the impact of circulating public writing beyond the classroom.

Sloan was another student that had a reserved personality, so the bare minimum of information was given on her own blogs, yet her blog writing reflected her personality well. During her reflection, she recognized the lack of blog information and that other students commented on it. Despite knowing the blogs were going to be peer reviewed, she had originally written her blogs as more of a personal diary and later confessed she was embarrassed once she realized that people were going to read them. However, she realized her peers did not seem to mind her diary format and, I confess, she was one of my favorite blogs to read since she had such

a wonderful voice. Sloan also recognized the repetition and "cookie cutter" comments as they helped her realize her need for elaboration, but she, like Quinn, felt the comments were very mechanical, and she surmised it was because they were a required part of the course, and students were checking that assignment off a list. Sloan's response was fascinating because, despite being an excellent writer, she was a naturally withdrawn person who put her private feelings in a very personal way on her blogs, albeit in very brief posts. That was how she wrote and that was how she expected the comments to be given back. It was her digital language, and she was disappointed she did not receive thoughtful comments in return. These writer-audience dissemination examples led up to four main results that emerged from my study coding: imitation, social engagement, contextual awareness, and confidence. Of those, I only recognized imitation as an obvious result from my previous classes.

6.3.1 Imitation

Imitation is a natural response to stimuli and essential for learning as humans move past their mimicry into a deeper identification of process. As English instructors, we use peer examples and parodies to teach because these social learning practices work (Vygotsky 96; Wette 62). As such, "imitation is crucial to achieve internalization" (Wu 128). So, compositional imitation should ultimately drive student writing comprehension and retention. During peer editing and online commenting, I saw imitation being used as students were exposed to various qualities of work and incorporated the ideas they liked. They saw all levels of work beyond that of their own teacher-student relationship and their own classroom. Sidney said she liked seeing how everyone wrote theirs blogs differently and thought, *Oh, I could do that, too!* Other students added visual tools like bullet points and photos to organize and enhance their writing.

Raven explored one possible reason for peer imitation noting, “It helps to know what people around your age say about your writing. I feel like it's good when you grade it, but when people that are kind of the same as me, it's, like, a little more helpful.” Her statement was understandable since a professor can tell a student to make corrections and there is not as much pressure to perform because the student-teacher relationship has an expectation of student struggles. On the other hand, few college students appreciate displaying shortcomings in front of their peers. Madison confirmed my hypothesis when I asked her during our post-survey interview if it was helpful to see what other people were writing. “Yes,” she said, “I had to work on Jett’s blogs and his blogs brought up stuff I didn't even think about, and so it was really cool to see from a different perspective, like, stuff to do. I did like a lot of his points.” Both Madison and Jett were excellent students, who were probably at the top of their high school classes separately, but together they were able to learn from each other, increasing their writing knowledge in our FYC class by blogging and peer editing.

Another great example was Peyton. “Being able to look at someone else’s paper gave me a new perspective,” she said. “I saw how my peer was citing their research and understood then how to do mine.” Peyton also changed her online writing style. Her first few blogs were very dry and factual—“During my time writing essay number 1, I was very overwhelmed by the amount of time I was going to have to put into it...Trying to persuade someone through a point that many people disagree with is hard.” Yet, her final blogs added more understanding about her audience and what she learned from her classmates: “It showed me how to use my empathy in writing. I can do that by relating to the people I am directing my letter to, and feeling *with* [my emphasis] them…let them know it’s not just them…Pathos is the way to make them feel how I construe the passage…I helped these readers to understand they are not alone.” Peyton moved from focusing

on herself and using first person pronouns to recognizing her audience, aligning with them using the word "with," and eventually mimicking them, a reflection to communicate with people in a language they would understand.

6.3.2 Contextual Awareness

A grasping audience becomes a fickle reader who will turn the page or click out of a window. Like the details section noted in Chapter 5, context is a type of detail. Yet, its purpose is less to entertain and more to educate the reader. Many students noted they needed to go back and add more details to their blogs because their commenters asked questions. Sloan was a former military veteran who had a very strong voice in her writing and was able to branch out with her punctuation toolbox early, despite her denials that she did not like to be out of her comfort area. She said about the blogs, "When I wrote them, I wrote them from a perspective that somebody from the class would be reading them. So, they left comments saying, 'Oh, you left out a lot of detail' [and] like, 'I have no idea what's going on.' That opened my eyes to blogging. I'm not a blogger." Sloan's narrowed view of her audience had been limited to those inside her own class, not part of the entire FYC classes I taught. In fact, she had scored a one (1) on her initial pre-survey Venn diagram in audience awareness, stating "I only write for my professor," showing either an initial inclination to a narrowed space or a reluctance to spread out beyond it. Yet, expanding the blog audience beyond the classroom was essential in teaching this skill and in her case, it worked.

Despite being told repeatedly that their blogs were going to be shared, many students were still surprised when they got feedback. "None of us expected anybody else to see it or read it," said Kai, "I mean, you didn't care until it was like, oh, somebody else and everybody else is reading [it]." I asked her if she would have changed anything had she realized her wider

audience. “Yeah,” she responded. “When I found out, I went back to my blogs. A lot of people weren’t in [our] class, so they didn’t know the context and it was hard to explain. One of them, it was a 250-word count and it's like three sentences and you're trying to figure out what to say…I feel like I would change it, getting more in detail.” One of Kai’s commenters wanted her to be “more juicy,” which contextually made Kai assume the reader wanted more description on her experiences. That wording stuck with Kai, and she remembered it weeks later in our interview, showing the importance of word choices and the impact those words make on her memory of her blogging experience.

Ava explained why her blogs were around 50 words by saying, “I was just kind of answering the questions like [they] already knew what [the questions] were about. Whenever I was reading people's blogs, I was like, I don't know what you're talking about. So, I had to go back and add context [back to mine] like when I was writing my PPA, you know?” Ava’s transition from minimum answers to slowing down and giving her reader context was prompted by what she saw in her role as a peer editor. She observed the lack of context in other blogs and realized her own writing had the same flaw. The connection she made at the end of her quote was between the PPA and the blogs was telling—both were assignments where students initially edited class papers and had multiple missing pieces. Ava realized there was a pattern of behavior with papers only offering minimal information without taking the audience’s prior lack of knowledge into consideration. Because of the peer editing and commenting, students took time to slow down. They began by answering the questions their peers asked and then continued to expand during each draft. Wren was another student who added more missing context to her paper, and she made the connection between that context and her audience when she wrote: “Everybody should understand in which way they want to get their audiences attention. You do

not want to be the person who is known for writing un-captivating work." Harley noted that he had never been able to write persuasive pieces like these public writing assignments in high school. He also saw that adding stories and experiences and those details made the work better. It connected him with his audience in a different way than Wren because the more feedback he got, the more he wanted to work harder for that human connection. He cared about what his peers thought, and it impacted his revisions.

6.3.3 Social Engagement a.k.a. Camaraderie

That human connection took on a different angle with blogs. As Mathieu noted about online sites, "We would add that such sites can help us understand how public messages do and do not circulate and why it is important to be part of a network of communication rather than imagine that anyone can truly 'go it alone' when it comes to writing that aims to make a difference" (131). The blogs created a perfect example of the network of communication that Mathieu mentioned. For example, Quinn wrote, "I was able to look at my peers' blogs and understand what struggles and successes they had in class." The second example was Cleo, who was surprised when another student commented he also had dyslexia. "It brought me comfort," she said, "because it showed others related to me." Both students noticed a potentially supportive network and that they were not "go[ing] it alone."

Much to my chagrin, a few students used blog commenting as a toned-down way to complain about class assignments, but I chose to see it to commiserate and connect with fellow students because it certainly did the job. One of the difficult things with classroom editing only is the fact that students feel like their mistakes are unique to them. "While I was editing my peers' papers, I realized we all shared the same mistake in our papers," said Wren. "[For example], we had trouble knowing how to correctly use parenthetical citation in the research paper." Blog

commenting helped them bond with students from other classes in a unique, digital way. In the case of Peyton, she felt inadequate having some contentious topics, but she was brave enough to write about them and her online editors' comments made her feel like she was part of a community. That community made some of my more reticent students a little more thoughtful. Carey was a student who had failed English before and sat by himself in class. He did not trust his peer edits because he discounted his fellow students' abilities. He was smart and questioned the purpose for everything we did in class, so I was encouraged to read his reflections on the blogs:

> Something that felt impactful was how realistic the writing setting was with blogs. I had an actual audience; I was not just writing for a professor to look over my grammar and give me a grade… being able to teach people about a subject I care about felt good and was very encouraging. I loved learning about all of my classmates through reading their blogs, especially the first ones about our introductory memos. I often struggle to see the students and teachers around me as real people who have their own lives, struggles, dreams, and interests.

Carey exhibited a complete shift in his attitude toward class, toward his classmates, and therefore, toward his audience. His normal reserve dissolved in his online assignment where he was able to see his audience as "real people." He connected with them because he saw their "lives, struggle, dreams, and interests," a camaraderie which made students more empathetic as readers and more sympathetic as writers. "They said they could see how much I cared about the topic that I chose which made me feel proud of myself," said Wren, who chose to write about the impact of poverty on children's literacy in her local community.

There is always a risk with online, anonymous commenting that some of it will be negative. These digital born students instinctively understood that because students reflected their surprise and noted the positive comments. Remy was a very kind and anxious student who found every English paper daunting, despite his clear writing skills. He had a nervous episode one morning before class; I was walking to our class and visually tracked a trail of water from the cooler to my classroom…to Remy's seat where he sat, hands shaking. A young dual-enrolled student, his body started trembling with all the pressure and he could not steady his cup of water. I brought him to the counselor, and he eventually came back to class. But this nervousness was obvious in his reflection: "An interesting truth that I learned through looking at the comments is that the audience doesn't necessarily always look at the negatives. In fact, many of them seem to be more interested in my stories and blogs than the mistakes that I made...I want to stop looking for things to complain about and instead look at the joys in not just writing but my daily walk through life." Remy was expecting negative feedback, but positive interaction with his audience caused him to stop and inspired introspection and reflection about his own life, focusing on the positive, a personal impact to a professional situation. He was expecting adverse feedback, but he got the opposite and felt validated.

Remy was not alone in his nervousness, but the reason for the positive comments could be explained by Madison's Blog 10. She focused her reflection, not on her reaction to comments, but on her own commenting process—the only person in both classes that chose that perspective. It was a unique and insightful find. "I don't love critiquing others, so I relate something they did in their blog to something I have experienced," said Madison. "I try my best to give positive comments because everyone likes reading positive comments rather than critical ones!" She mentioned some personal formatting issues and her fear of peer reception but most of her

feedback was positive, so she was happy. She also noticed that people had given her star ratings, which were an optional feature for the blogs and most students did not use them. However, one of Madison's readers did use the stars and she noticed, indicating she made a connection between how good she did with how many stars she got. The stars were unexpected, but created an extra visual, positive reinforcement from reader to writer.

6.3.4 Confidence

As I began coding, I knew that there were certain themes to expect from doing interviews with students. However, one unexpected theme was the word "confidence," which was repeated frequently with students. I coded it with dark blue below:

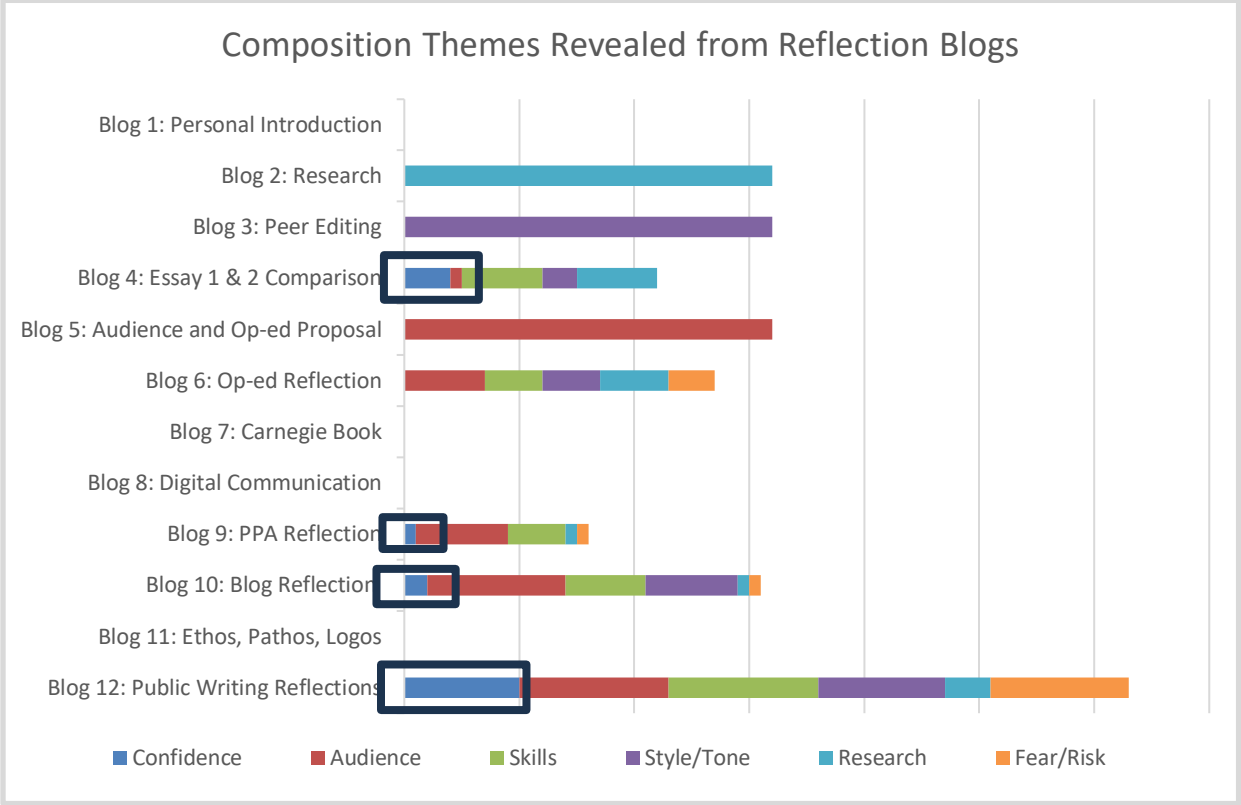

Figure 5: Reflection Blogs and Emerging Composition Themes

Question 4 on the pre-study survey had three students mention the word "confidence," but in the post-study reflection and interviews it was a frequent theme toward how students felt public writing submissions impacted their current writing and future success. "A fresh pair of eyes...boosted my confidence," said Peyton about peer editing. But when those editing "eyes" looked at public submissions, the process was challenging. Sidney described the process in her blog:

> Being able to write about something I am passionate about and or have personal ties to definitely made the assignment more interesting. I learned how to write as if I were talking to an audience. I found all three of these assignments to be fun and intriguing, pushing me to strive for perfection. From the beginning, I knew that my blogs, open letter, and personal profile article would be open to the public; therefore, I shaped my writing more differently than normal... Out of fear of making a mistake...[It] pushed me to work diligently on these writing pieces. I have never completed an English course feeling this confident and successful with my writing abilities.

Kai agreed with Sidney in her verbal interview: "I like how [the assignments] pushed you outside your comfort zone. In high school, they don't have us write a lot…but I feel more confident now." She wrote her PPA about her brother because she thought his story could help others, but she noted that constructive criticism is not easy despite noticing that it helped her. "At some point, I would think *Oh wait. I shouldn't write that because I don't want to sound stupid, or like I don't care*." Kai also learned how to tailor her writing based on the desire to keep readers entertained and said that writing to an unknown audience helped her develop the ability to write in a way everyone can understand. "Knowing that something was going to be public, I paid more attention to the research I was conducting," she wrote in her blog. "I chose better sources and

spent more time choosing better information. After having this class I feel confident that I could write any style of writing I was given."

Mia, a classmate, recognized and pointed out the authentic revisions she made in her writing, taking more time and consideration in her writing. But the hard work paid off—by pushing herself in class to submit outside the class, she learned to adapt her writing skills to a different situation, creating self-confidence. Kirby also echoed Kai's research experiences and confidence. It was by facing his fears that he learned he could overcome them. "Having my work published in the real world made me feel anxious because I don't want people to think I didn't research. I believe this experience molded me into a calmer research-based writer," said Kirby in our interview. With his attention to detail and compassionate attitude toward his peers, he was one of the best editors in his class. He asked me for the names of the people who had left good comments on his blogs so he could thank them. Recognizing his talent, his peers consistently praised him, I believe, because his positive personality traits were more exposed with his public writing pieces than his essays. I argue that the increased pressure of public writing created both authentic revisions and an increased appreciation for quality editing.

When students were able to talk about personal ideas, stories, and people, it made them vulnerable to their readers. Once that vulnerability was revealed, accepted and met with camaraderie, it changed the way students perceived their writing abilities. "I have learned to listen to constructive criticism, become confident, and share personal stuff that I usually do not talk about to people I do not know," said Wren revealing the connection between peer editing, personalness, and confidence. Yet not all students appreciated those connections. It was possible other students did not want to be offensive by revealing any negative responses toward these assignments, but I did receive some unhappy feedback. Sloan, one of my former military

veterans, wanted to write about the current Israel-Palestinian war, but it made her nervous: "Professor Williams wanted me to be more direct and incorporate statistics that made me have to change *literally everything* [her emphasis]…submitting to a publisher is nerve wracking and I don't think I will have the confidence….I appreciate the experience, but this style is not for me." Sloan did end up having the confidence to submit her assignment, but she asked me to look it over many times before she submitted her email, wanting it to be as perfect as possible. Despite a few detractors, overall, most students considered public writing worth the risk.

While confidence building was not a study goal, it should have been. Kuh's HIPs all lead to self-confidence, but he only touches on the idea lightly using the term "self-understanding" ("HIPs" 10). Yet, all of the classroom interactions and module steps including collaboration, first year experiences, and civic engagement helped students develop the problem solving skills in a real world setting that bolstered confidence.

6.4 Audience Perspective Shift

While I have touched on student-audience awareness in each section of this chapter, one of the culminating, and perhaps most important, results from this study was the mental shift I observed once student writing circulated. Remembering the Venn diagram results from the pre-study survey, there were few students who saw an audience beyond Level 2 and I observed no apparent Level 3 or Level 4 indicating a lack of alertness of a regional or national audience. No student mentioned any keywords indicating they saw an audience in that middle area. There was also no mention of internet audiences, although that may be implied in the 2nd and 5th categories. However, at the end of the study, students spoke differently about their audiences, possibly due to classroom discussions or, more likely, their classroom submissions to commercial publishing outlets.

Audience Awareness Stacked Venn Diagram

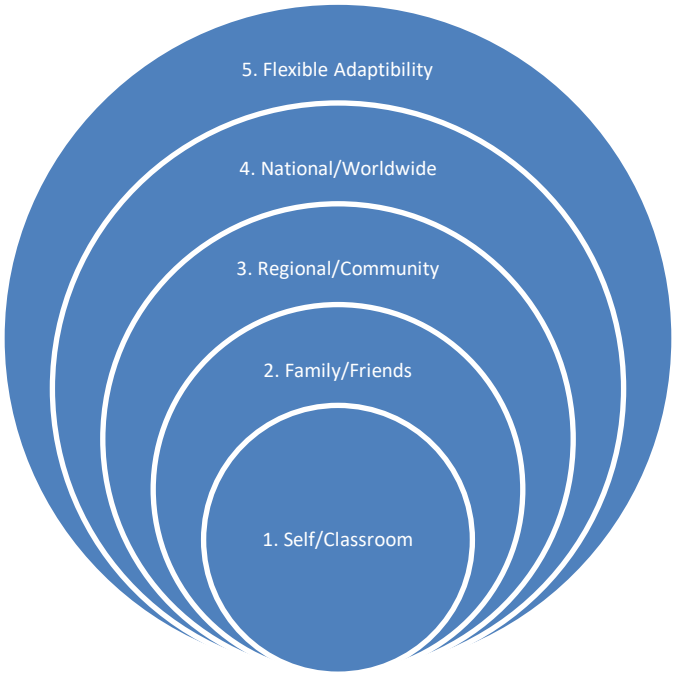

Figure 2: Audience Awareness Venn Diagram

Ultimately, every student was able to move beyond circles 1 and 2. At the end of the study and based on their submissions and experiences, I would argue that all students were able to see the potential to publish beyond the classroom in circles 3 or 4, but not all would be comfortable addressing those audiences.

6.4.1 Audience

Public writing had the overall result of expanding students' audience awareness beyond their original category in multiple ways. Kirby, the student everyone praised as being such a good editor made the point that he learned how to address his audience better during the public writing during my interview with him and Jessie:

Kirby: “Typically in writing, I've only had high school classes before…But throughout this class I've learned how to write publicly instead of writing for just my teacher for the grade. Because right now my writing is not directed towards you, it's directed towards my general audience.”

Me: So how did that change your writing?

Kirby: It made me focus less on what particularly you might think and what more of the audience might think, more on what general people might think.

Me: And you would care about what they think? Why?

Jessie: So that way I can appeal to what they, what their beliefs are.

Both students realized that audience understanding was key to audience persuasion. Kirby explained why these assignments worked “more so than essays because in essays it is general purpose but in this one, I'm trying to persuade them, which is different than an argument.” He was correct. An argumentative paper is just that—flat and uni-directional with the information exchange. However, the persuasive type papers involved in public writing were bi-directional—students knew they needed reader acceptance and so tailored their tones, styles and words to get that influence. Kirby continued to explain his position by saying, “I’m trying to make them feel like they’re respected in the sense that their opinion is as valid as mine. However, it’s just more about this [viewpoint] in a nice tone.” Another student, Jordan, wanted to write to her local school board, but she first assessed her audience:

> I realized that if I wrote in a way that was offensive to the school board then they would instantly become defensive and shoot down my idea. So, I tried to make it seem like we were on the same side and that it was us against the problem, not them against me. I learned that open letters are a mind game and in order to get what you want you have to

play with the reader's mind and picture yourself as the reader. I read it back to myself and thought, *Would this offend me? Would I feel targeted?*

Other students echoed Jordan's realization during the drafting of the op-ed. Unlike the PPA, which showcased a person, the op-ed displayed an opinion. But she was able to realize that her words needed to be edited in an alternative mindset, so with her letter, she changed the original introduction from an outright statement that the school system needed to have more recess time and interactive activities to "imagine being an energetic child forced to sit still at a desk all day and complete tedious assignments while all you can think about is how your leg is bouncing and your mind is racing because you have been sitting down for hours," identifying with her audience and putting them into a position beside, not in front, of her. She and I also discussed consistently using the word "we" throughout the paper, instead of "you" to reflect the solidarity stance with the school board as if they were working together to solve the problem.

A wide audience's multi-faceted perspectives was highlighted with all three of these assignments. The op-ed forced the students to take a public stance on a topic and consider how best to persuade people from the opposite opinion. They knew there was a possibility of backlash or social consequences even in a regulated classroom. Similarly, the PPA required them to create a narrative to represent someone else publicly—the perspective dependent on the student portrayal of the interview subject. Finally, the blogs made the students realize the importance of context and details to an unknown audience. As Avery said about blogs, "On certain things, they're [the audience] looking at a different perspective on something [and] that taught me different ways [to explain things] because people think in different ways and view things in different ways." "You kind of like to get to see into their minds," agreed Toni. "Like what

they're thinking. It's really cool because you get to see somebody phrasing something so much better [during peer edits]."

Public writing was not every student's favorite part of class. Ava and Kai explained in our interview that they liked the student chosen topic essays better than public writing because "we don't have to consider what other people want. We can just write for ourselves." While their statement sounds unaware of circulation's positive effects, it proves the opposite. Their essays allowed them to explore personally enjoyable subject, but the public writing forced them outside their self-focused writing and made them realize when they wrote publicly, they had to "consider what other people want." They had to think about what would persuade someone beyond their professor and then implement all the approaches involved, indicating a possible consequence of public writing which made students less self-focused and "challenge[d] students to take sole responsibility for inventing their own organizations, identifying their own community needs and organizational goals, and putting their own bodies and self-designed discourse into circulation" (Gries 331), and created a compositional movement beyond the classroom into the consideration of others which defines public writing's main attribute (Young and Morgan 27; Jack 236).

Devan, a student that scored in Level 1 of the Venn Diagram moved to Level 5 in his reflection blog when he wrote, "If I know that the whole population of the world can read what I am writing it scares me, especially that I can't erase it after I publish it, at least not completely. I am a lot less stressed when I know one person is going to read my article." To prepare for his "whole population of the world audience," Devan tried to make his paper "more advanced than usual with stronger arguments and thorough research. I expanded my research past Galileo and into more biased sites to widen my knowledge on any and all counter arguments. While posting publicly, the writer must be ready for comments, questions, and arguments regarding their

piece." His last comment showed how he knew his audience would be outside the classroom, but would also have a wide variety of viewpoints, creating the need for him to research and think more broadly.

Santana agreed with Devan in his interview with me: "Knowing [that] a paper I was writing was going to be in the newspaper or [a] news outlet had me plenty concerned. It…forced my writing style to change so that it would appeal to the editors and to the public….This changed my understanding of how to write things. I would never have used quotes…to explain more about a person. I would normally pick a quote to make it work with the way I'm writing." What stood out about Santana's comment was how identifying a larger audience made him shift his writing. Instead of adapting research to suit his needs, he adapted it to suit the audience's needs. When writing for his professor (me), Santana consistently plugged in information to create a research paper to reach minimum requirements, but when writing for the public, he pieced together information to create a persuasive piece of work that could make a difference in the local community (his audience).

One of my ESL students, Angel, struggled at first with the class, not with language as much as with the complexity of writing. He noted in his reflection:

> With English not being my first language, I never really learned how to write papers and essays well... with the different style of papers, it gives you an opportunity to express thoughts and opinions with words. It is scary to think about your writing going into the public, especially in papers that require your personal opinion. This did benefit me to take into consideration that it might not just be the teacher and fellow classmates reading my papers. If you look at your writing like that, it helps you improve yourself overall, not

> only in the basics like spelling and grammar, but the actual root of what your story and writings are even about.

Angel's insights about a different "public" style not being "just the teacher and fellow classmates," but also the outside publishing world where he was also a minority voice, not only as a student but also by race, which was particularly important to me since students may not feel they have the right to their opinions in an adult-led world and public writing promotes activism (Cushman "Beyond Specialization" 176; Jack 260; Holmes *Public* 55). They may not be as educated in certain areas as experienced adults but getting the practice of knowing how to speak up, even if their opinions are rejected, is the basis for our democratic government and creates well-spoken, critical thinking citizens. Raven wrote about how customers treated servers poorly and she felt the op-ed truly mattered to her and used her personal experience. "Although knowing that my work would be read commercially by a larger audience didn't change the way I felt about my writing, it did change the quality of my arguments," she said. "I made sure to include as much appeal to emotion as I could because that tends to make people agree with your stance more so than if you didn't include any pathos." Her statement showed a compositional reciprocation crucial to public writing success.

6.4.2 Compositional Reciprocation

The relationship between writer and audience and the resulting compositional reciprocation bears examination through the transfer of stories and feelings that occurred when students realized they needed to create ethos through all the techniques mentioned in section 5.2, but creating that ethos resulted in pathos from the audience. Likewise, eliciting pathos from the reader created a bond that made the writer seem more credible, reinforcing ethos…it was a reciprocating cycle. Students learned to give a personal touch or stories to make the audience

trust them and *feel* their words, to empathize with them. In fact, the word "feel" was said a staggering 111 times during the post-survey verbal interviews with students. As Peyton's op-ed discussed unequal pay of local fire department and how those employees cannot compete with the cost of living in the community. She wrote:

> This assignment showed me how to use my empathy in writing. I can do that by relating to the people I am directing my letter to you, and *feeling* with them what they may be frustrated about... It is not just them. Pathos is the way to make them *feel* how I construe the passage. I had to *feel* with the people I was writing to and give my point. It had to be mature enough and knowledgeable before I could simply send it anywhere that would take it seriously.... sympathy and bond that I gave readers to understand they are not alone.

Peyton's reflection proved the transforming connection she felt with her audience, indicating a deep empathy and desire to be heard that was common to public writing results (Deans 69; Holmes *Public* 53). As Holmes noted in her research, "that discomfort and affect, when balanced out with an ethics of care, can be productive and transformative for students' learning" (*Public* 53).

Recall that Harley was the student who had such a difficult time with peer revisions in class due to his fear of public rejection. But he said the skills he most valued in his FYC class were "learning how to use pathos, ethos, and logos. I learned to connect with my audience better. Pathos used to be difficult for me as I am normally most persuaded by logic over emotion. However, when writing about topics important to me—such as my open letter—I learned the value of pathos as I needed to be able to express my beliefs and convince my audience that what I said was important." He added pathos to his writing included adding a personal story to how he

broke a bone and insurance companies would not cover the injury without certain protocol being followed. Harley realized he needed positionality. While he was a student that did not care for public writing, Kirby was one of the ones that appreciated it:

> As I immersed myself in the writing process, I came upon a steep learning curve, discovering the nuances of writing to appeal rather than merely inform. Every word became a vessel for eliciting emotion, every sentence a conduit for empathy and understanding. Through this journey, I not only honed my skills as a writer but also cultivated a deeper appreciation for the transformative power of storytelling and advocacy. In retrospect, the open letter stands as a testament to my growth, both as a writer and as an advocate. It catalyzed personal and professional development, offering invaluable lessons in persuasion, empathy, and the art of connecting with others through the written word.

Kirby's words were eloquently written, admitting his "learning curve" and yet, using writing techniques like repetition—"every word…every sentence"—to reach his final audience…me. He also noted his professional development, proving he understood the transfer skills from the study.

Three students stood out in this compositional reciprocation area. Devan joked in his blog about that "art of connecting" when he said, "If you can't connect with people online, good luck getting a partner. I don't think anyone has ever said 'I love how they don't have anything in common with me. It really makes me want to get to know them more.'" Even in his ironic way, Devan pointed out the importance of compositional reciprocation as a persuasion technique—finding something in common with the audience and using those connections for persuading them to listen. The second student, Toni, in her op-ed about raising the mandatory age on

TikTok, said, “As I continued writing my open letter I found that my writing changed from solely writing about the negatives of my topic to actually including experiences and examples…and how it affects someone…and potentially in the same way as the reader…but it is hard writing an open letter on a topic that could affect a large group of people especially if they are likely to disagree with you.” So, Toni discussed with me how she could get a larger audience to care about her feelings. In the end, she led with a personal story and tried to speak to local community parents, advocating them to enforce digital boundaries. The final student, Sloan, established her ethos in her op-ed by listing the atrocities committed by Hamas in Israel as she wrote, “Killing more than 1,200 Israel citizens and taking more than 240 hostages. Hamas pulled women, children, and elderly persons from their homes and drug them into a living hell. They killed, raped, and cut out babies from their mother’s stomachs. They burned people alive.” Then, she signed her letter as “A Disappointed Veteran.” She was in favor of the detailed descriptions, but the rest was harder. We discussed putting her military experience in the letter and, despite her bent toward privacy, she felt it gave her more credibility. Indeed, it did. Without discussion, she later used this personal touch with her PPA describing her husband, also with success. Both instances showed an evolution of reaching with ethos to elicit pathos.

Since the PPA represented community members, students realized they needed to make their subjects become real and relatable. The first technique they developed was an introductory description of their character. Students described the sound of their interviewees’ voices, the feeling that they evoked from others, and what they looked like. Two to three simple sentences were a great way to capture a visual image in the audience’s imagination. The second way that students created pathos with their audience was to show the courage and heroism in their subjects. Some of them had military veterans that overcame obstacles while others had

entrepreneurs that started a business. All of them, however, had one thing in common: they overcame odds. Recognizing that all human beings have certain motivational factors in common like love, fear, power, success, etc., during our class discussions, students were able to hone in on certain themes with their interviewees and focus on those as a universal theme to appeal to their audiences thereby creating an ethos where the audience trusts them and, in turn, wants the community members to succeed. For example, Sloan's introduction to her PPA began:

> The low hum of machinery and thick smell of metal engulf a room filled with…an assortment of well used tools…that has seen better days...This hole in the wall is normally occupied by a man filled with integrity and honor… He has a peaceful aura despite his rugged exterior. He is always dressed in neutral earth tones that complement the woods that surround his workshop. His arms are decorated in tattoos that depict the overcoming of struggles and reminders of lessons that linger for a lifetime…. 'I don't know how legal it is to make an extrovert talk about themselves,' John said with a lighthearted chuckle before telling his story…

Sloan began her PPA by using imagery and smells to create a scene before she introduced her character, James, giving him a voice and an approachable personality in one sentence. She went on to talk about his career in military intelligence and his consultancy business. Her paper was filled with very detailed information discussing both him and the weapons he builds. There was an obvious admiration in her tone and word choice, which carried over to her audience. Fellow students rated her paper as one of their favorites because it was an interesting career, and how she portrayed John as an approachable subject.

6.5 Circulation and Dissemination: A Publishing Experience

Part of circulation research is seeing writing in motion, the changes it makes as it moves through the process from thoughts to computer screens to paper drafts to revisions to publications to reviews. Like water drops that never flowed in the same path despite the same origin, students diverged widely in their composition after the assignment began. As this study proved, "In public writing, good composition is important but not determinative…Over time we have learned that while traditional compositional issues like tone, research, and framing issues are still vital to the process of public writing, equally so is the circulation and physical embodiment of the rhetoric through relationships, theatrical performance, public demonstrations, or interactions" (Mathieu and George 131). My students moved beyond finding the right words or framing their arguments into looking into "tone, research, and framing issues." While my study did not examine Mathieu and George's theatrical performances or public demonstrations, as I showed in the previous sections in this chapter, students still had persistent links between relationships, interactions in the classroom, and beyond.

In "Emerging Public Literacies: A Micro-Case Study of Public Writing Pedagogy," Branson had his students write an op-ed for a school paper. I was unsure that an op-ed for a university press was risky enough to evoke significant compositional changes. Students in a public writing classroom composing op-eds for a school newspaper are not taking those kinds of risks because their products do not circulate outside the classroom where pressure is heightened and rejection is real. There is no authentic circulation, either, at least by Warner's definition (62). Moreover, from the student writing I collected, there is very little evidence of the kind of circulation and counterpublic orientation that public sphere theories tell us "count" as public discourse (130). Yet, some of Branson's students used the viewpoint where they place the reader

in the scene. He noted his students saw the op-ed as a way to "assum[e] the role of a public expert and using the genre of the op-ed as a vehicle for social change" (Branson 135). Some of them assumed their audience was less intelligent, uninterested, less ethical, or from outside the local area they were supposed to be targeting and positioned themselves as subject authorities, caring neighbors and some as educators (139). Some used personal pronouns, stayed distant and logical, and saw varied degrees of audience interest in the subject (139).

In most cases during this study, students placed themselves compositionally as subject authorities, yet the interviews and reflections showed their hesitation and concern. Did they think their audience had the same interest in the topic as they did? Not necessarily. Remy wrote an op-ed submission about the need for more discipline in schools and noted, "Even if they dismiss my letter, I know that at last some of them will start to consider the difficulties teachers have when they try to earn respect from their students." His comment showed awareness in this quote that he may not necessarily become a published writer, but his piece could still affect change within the classroom. To him, he was proud enough to courageously submit work outside the college. Remy made two assumptions in his quote: that his words being public would make his audience listen and, while he realized this publicity did not necessarily result in an interested reader, he still assumed that his letter would be interpreted similarly to the classroom, with a complete reading and thoughtful consideration.

Yet, the commercial circulation of these assignments created more risk for students. Unlike a traditional research essay, they experienced what happened when their writing moved within class and outside. As Gries noted, "In service-learning projects, students also often miss opportunities to negotiate the day-to-day decision making that goes into civic organization—from adjusting activity systems in response to constantly shifting needs to responding to

emergent issues that arise once writing enters into circulation" (331). Gries's approach to writing asked students to "take sole responsibility for inventing their own organizations, identifying their own community needs and organizational goals, and putting their own bodies and self-designed discourse into circulation to assemble a larger public around shared matters of concern. Such pedagogy builds on much of our current scaffolding to teach students the collaborative arts of rhetorical design, production, and delivery" (331). Using essays and introductory assignments on professional communication segued perfectly into public writing.

When students realized their writing had real-world audiences, an indescribable feeling entered the room. Suddenly, they were more intent, more alert, more serious. They still smiled when praised, but they wanted me to personally recheck all their work. Even students who were not English proponents started to ask more questions. Two students in particular stood out. Amelia was content floating through her essays at the beginning of the semester. But, once she began her op-ed, her engagement shifted. Her topic (the border crisis with Mexico) mattered to her. "I noticed throughout my writing how I felt freer," she said in her blog. "I was talking about an issue that bothered me, so I felt more compassion in my writing. I noticed that I was more open with my opinion with this assignment. I didn't have to keep out my thoughts and feelings." Her statement revealed she felt constricted with previous essays. As she explained to me later in her interview, it was a relief to be able to say exactly what she wanted, how she wanted. Amelia wanted to address her letter to the local paper at first, but we discussed her final purpose. Who was the right person to make a difference? After seeing voting records of her state representatives, she decided she wanted to address President Joe Biden. It was a larger stage than she had anticipated but not out of bounds for her piece because she approached him from the angle of a new voter. "With my audience being the president, it could leave an impact by

showing him that something needs to be done because new voters are seeing this issue," said Amelia in her blog. She later noted that public writing helped her learn how to write to an audience and research, particularly putting emotions in writing made it more real, not only with the op-ed, but also in over to her blogging. "Reading back on my other blogs and seeing how I didn't put much effort into them and not looking at my current blogs is unreal," she wrote. In the end, Amelia emailed her letter to the *Atlanta Journal and Constitution* and the White House. She contacted me after the semester was over, excited that she had gotten an e-mail back from the White House. She knew a staffer had probably responded, but it was still a response. "He was basically telling me his side to the argument and breaking down his political point of view and the cost to the country it would cause," she wrote. "Also, he broke numbers down on what it would cost and how many men and women it would take. I just thought it was very cool that he responded back to my open letter. I was in complete shock if I am being honest." While I was unable to follow up with her last email, it bears considering that if President Biden's email impacted her opinion at all, it would clearly demonstrate critical thinking, which requires adjusting one's position in light of new information, all resulting from writing circulation.

Knowing that their writing was going to be circulated during peer reviews pressured students, but public writing increased the intensity of their authentic revisions. Gries noted, "This approach puts students in the hot seat, where in building their own collectives and implementing their own activist agendas, they become the organizers and drivers of rhetorical assemblage in every stage of the public writing process" (331). Gries's observance of the "hot seat" that students felt during her study simply by "implementing their own activist agendas" aligned with my students' experience during this study.

Harley explained, “I had to consider that they [the assignments] would be published publicly. This resulted in me having to consider how readers could misinterpret my statements. I also had to consider how many words my open letter had as the publisher I wanted to submit to only allowed a maximum of 1,000 words. This resulted in my having to condense my ideas and viewpoint.” Harley wanted to submit his letter about healthcare to *Forbes* magazine, but the 1,000-word restriction made it difficult for him to restructure. The first revision he had to make was to look for repetition, the easiest writing to delete. Secondly, he had to look at if he had been overly wordy with his arguments. Finally, he had to look at his sentence to see if he could streamline them. He was worried he would be misinterpreted because his ideas were condensed. Essentially, he felt he had less time to speak. Harley slowly whittled his op-ed down until it was as close as he could make it—1,004 words. It taught him to recognize there were different ways to say the same thing, some more impactful than others: “It gave a purpose to what I was writing, and I was more motivated and excited to write than I have ever been. My writings are now more flexible and structured... I can put sentences together in ways that I was unable to do before with my new punctuation skills.” Harley’s new skills were driven to a new level because of he was “motivated and excited.”

6.5.1 Authentic Revisions

Young and Morgan’s 2020 study noticing student authentic revisions during public writing proved how writers made more effort when they knew their writings were going to be seen outside the classroom. Merging student effort with the inquiry driven pedagogy Holmes explored that was meant to engage students in public action and discover the world around them was significant. They needed to “deliberate social issues and work toward addressing them through the circulation of student generated, public writing“ (Holmes *Public* 38). I hypothesized

that the same would happen with my students; my hypothesis ultimately proved to be correct. “It sounds bad, but yeah, I tried a little more because I knew I was representing another person,” said Harley during his interview. Sloan agreed saying, “I think the submission part made me really nervous about seeing it. Usually…it’s just for you, you know, so I’m not like *ahh*!!! But, having to submit it to somebody else it was like adding an extra filter process because you want to go back and …change it a few more times.” Harley and Sloan echoed the same sentiments students told me consistently throughout the study. Harley was referring to his PPA, which many students felt was more intimate for the exact reason he stated—he was representing someone else. Making that community connection and meeting a real person instead of doing screen research was a more personal for the students. Their subjects had faces and lives. The commercial publication and circulation added extra pressure.

Students began by creating their (very) rough drafts. We discussed how to make the audience see a person with words and then tell a story, both of which were familiar to the students but not well practiced in their K-12 classrooms. Specifically, the use of a primary source like an interview was impactful, not only on a logistical level of learning how interviews worked but also on an emotional level. Instead of working for a grade or for a professor, students worked because they cared about the people they interviewed. It was an exchange type of writing. Students gave their best effort, not to me, but to interviewees who gave them time and the opportunities to hear stories. It meant that they were growing beyond the classroom and working for someone based on desire, not a grade, echoing Savonick’s same experiences in her public writing classroom (“Teaching”). To easily understand what I saw, I categorized my expectations and student behaviors into a chart:

WHAT I EXPECTED	WHAT HAPPENED
Mundane, basic topics	Heartfelt and risky topics
Regular peer editing	Many more questions Personal requests for ME to read
Deep thinking	Deep thinking
Nervousness and excitement	REAL nervousness and fear

Figure 7: Expectations vs. Reality

When students in FYC classes produce their own topics for writing assignments with research essays they usually bring whatever Google generates...gun control, abortion, capital punishment, and more—topics that have been debated for 50 years with many published writings. These topics are easily plagiarized, rarely tailored to student interests, and monotonous to read. Often, I veto papers if I have already read something similar or it lacks complexity, but I was not sure what to expect with the op-ed as I thought the topics may be along the same lines as the research essay proposals at the beginning of the semester. Instead of general topics, I got proposals for housing changes, financial needs for local sports teams, and calls for higher salaries for community members. The students connected what they cared about with what they wrote about (see Figure 4). Not all the topics were deep; some focused on superficial needs like a larger shopping center, and it was difficult to see how students viewed topics until we saw a rough draft with arguments.

As we edited the public writing assignments, students still appreciated peer edits, but did not seem as comfortable with them like previous essays. They wanted *me* to edit it personally. Quite a few came up to me before class and asked that I look at theirs when I did my classroom walk during peer edits, looking over shoulders and discussing changes. I usually pointed out

positive and negative points on papers to get them to think about how to edit. Many times, when the students had questions, I rephrased it back to them and asked them to research them, then let me know the answer. It took a few minutes of online searching, but they always came back and told me before they made an editing decision. Yet, with these assignments I had so many ask my opinion on their papers that I asked them to write the questions at the top of the paper before it got edited. The result, thankfully, was that their peers answered many of the questions before I got to them, showing students an easier way to process editing in the future.

Based on previous research, I hypothesized that these assignments would create an atmosphere of deeper thinking (Jack 119; Kuh 10; Holmes "Transformative" 48). From my observations, I defined this deeper thinking as an evolution from critical thinking (purely analytical and logical) to thought processes that also consider audience reception and speaker perception. Young and Morgan also noted:

> Community-engaged writing students wrote and spoke frequently about how their work was for 'more than a grade' or how their writing would help their partner organization and community, demonstrating a focus on purpose. Students also spoke of specific choices they made to ensure they were respectful to their subject or to focus on one important aspect of a subject's story that made their writing more appealing to their audience. (43)

I measured deeper thinking by observing if my own students made the same choices and recognized those decisions.

I expected nervousness and excitement, but students displayed genuine trepidation with these assignments which increased the authenticity of revisions. It created the "extra filter" Sloan said she used in her quote earlier to refine her writing more. I saw the sincere anxiety in students'

body language in the classroom, but I also saw it in their writings. Cleo mentioned it was a challenge finding the right addressee for her article. “When I discovered that my personal profile and open letter would be read by others, it motivated me to create a better writing piece. I wanted to show the public my writing capabilities,” she wrote in her blog. Peyton also addressed this desire in her interview with me:

> Me: You had to research where to publish. You had to look at word count, you had to adapt your writing and then you had to compose emails. How did that process affect you?
>
> Peyton: I was really nervous, I guess, just sending it to somebody. It is a lot to think about and the submission process is nerve wracking because you're just thinking about all those other people and then what they're going to see and if they do put it in. Like, what can I do to make this better at the last minute?
>
> Me: So, did that change your writing at all?
>
> Peyton: I feel like I did some edits at the very end when I was trying to send my op-ed in. I just wanted to sound more professional, especially in the beginning where your subject heading [is] or whoever it's supposed to go to and then who you're writing to.
>
> Me: So, you changed your subject head and who you're writing it to—that’s the two points where you were trying to look more professional?
>
> Peyton: I wanted them to look at it and think, *Oh, this is cool!* and take me seriously.

Peyton's nervousness carried over into the submission process to the submission email itself. Anticipating their anxiety, I asked students to compose their email drafts and let me preview them beforehand. It made the process less stressful for them each time they submitted their compositions outside the classroom. If they followed basic correspondence protocols I had given them at the beginning of the semester, it was a brief skim on my part. If they needed corrections, I told them to review the handout and edit, making it easy for me and practically foolproof for them. As Avery explained to a classmate, "I know you were worried about messing something up but that's why she's here." He gestured at me. "She always looked over it before we sent it off to someone…I mean, they're scholars with, you know, years of experience, you know, so they could critique every little thing." The downside to my formulaic e-mail handout was that I had 32 students submitting emails that looked very familiar to editors, the local publishers especially. It was unfortunate, but I decided to compromise e-mail creativity for the sake of streamlining class time.

Referencing her PPA, Wren noted the importance of the classroom dissemination for her transition into the public sphere: "As my peers and professor edited my paper—before I submitted a final draft—I got comfortable with people reading my op-ed…I struggled mostly with emphasizing ethos [and] why I cared about my topic…I got anxious because it was in my hands to make sure to write about this person's life. It is scarier because you want to be able to write something incredible that does the person justice." The intersection between public writing, authentic revisions, and fear is a perfect example of why public writing assignment work so well. Wren wanted to portray her interviewee accurately and positively—to "do her justice"—which echoed the same results Young and Morgan had in their study when they discussed students' drive for authentic revisions in the face of public writing (43).

6.5.2 Risk and Fear

While I observed anxiety during the assignments in class, it was not until the post-survey interviews and the blog coding that I recognized the idea of fear and risk. These two components I linked together because students mentioned them often in the same context. They knew they were taking a *risk* writing publicly and it created *fear*. They used terms like "sounding stupid," "appearance," "scared," and "misinterpretation." Blog 12, for example, was the blog that allowed students to reflect on all the public writing assignments. During this blog, my coding caught quite a few numbers of words that connected to fear/risk as noted with the green space on the Blog 12 line at the bottom of the composition themes chart below:

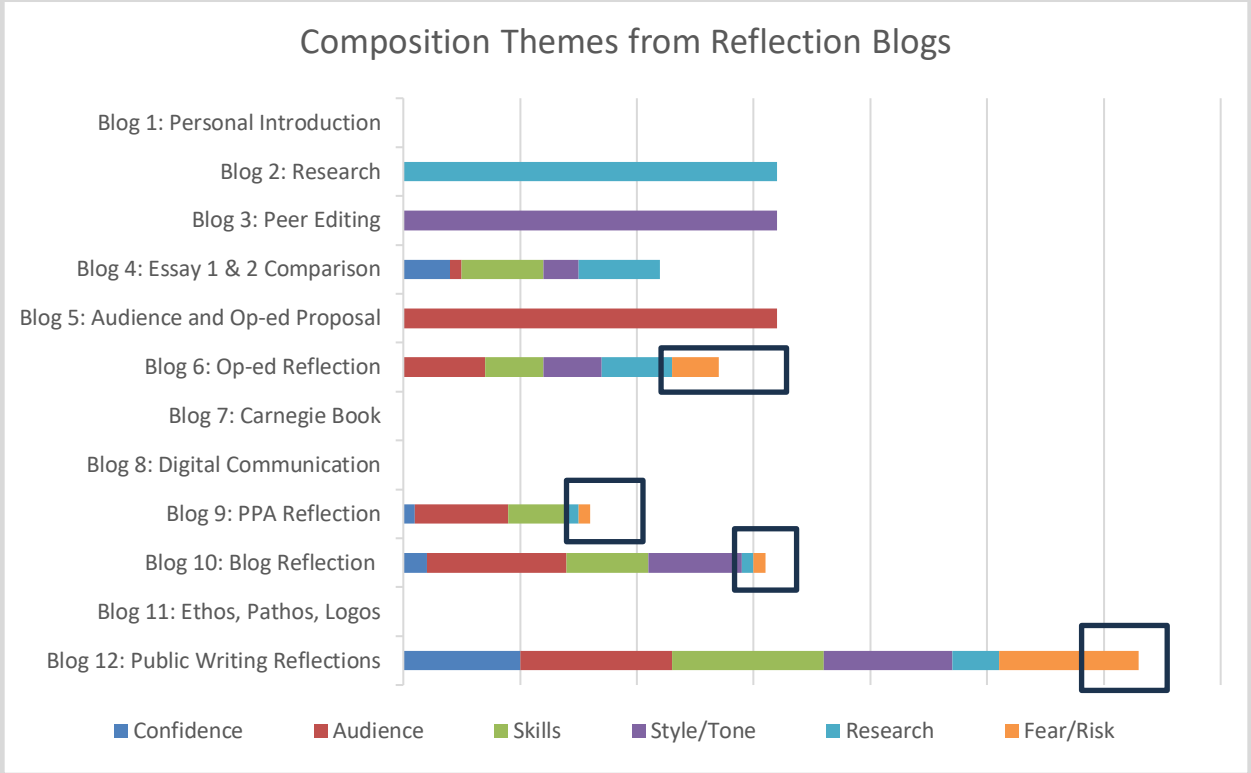

Figure 5: Reflection Blogs and Emerging Composition Themes

I noticed there were three main concerns of the students who answered affirmatively— fear of plagiarism, fear of audience reception, and fear of dis/misinformation. With the first one, I

thought it was odd. From my standpoint as the professor, I did not make the connection between plagiarism and public writing, which is usually so specific it was unable to be plagiarized, both as something to copy and something to be copied. Not that many people are going to be writing about the same interview subject and why would they? It didn't make logical sense until I started thinking about my students. They were not as familiar with the idea of public writing and had only ever done essays before. Knowing that, I realized that it was very easy to plagiarize an essay or have an essay plagiarized. The students that mentioned plagiarism in their comments in the pre-study survey may not have had context as to the role (or lack thereof) of plagiarism in these assignments. In the final blogs and interview no one mentioned plagiarism and I concluded that it was a lack of understanding on their part and a lack of explanation on mine. To elaborate a bit more, Devan wrote on his pre-survey that he was worried about "someone stealing my work and changing it to saying something it is not supposed to with my name attached." During my coding, I concluded this fear was less about stealing and more about using his work for mis/disinformation which really ties it into the next fear—dis/misinformation.

With the op-ed, students were afraid that their opinions would be used against them in the future, that someone would misinterpret or deliberately twist their words. In her blog, Madison said, "I am very nervous to publish this assignment because of the backlash and the fact that my topic could be perceived wrong." Brooke's fear with the op-ed pushed her "to be perfect." She explained that "somebody outside these walls is going to read it and we've never submitted a paper to the public before [so] it has to be perfect because what if, like, the *Washington Post* [publishes it] or if it's published in the newspaper? It's like everybody's reading so you don't want that one mistake to be the thing they remember…so you spend time on it and don't procrastinate." Both students were worried about making a mistake or offending their audiences.

Sloan was one of my older students who did not have an online presence, but she noted it was important to be clear, aware, honest, truthful, and reiterated again that what went online was permanent. She talked about clarity and misinterpretation in her blogs with her interviewee, John, saying, “I feel like I didn't do him justice when writing as words can sometimes never describe his character and the presence he carries.” Even past the moment she pressed the key to submit her article, she was still concerned about properly representing her subject. In my interview with her and Jessie, he elaborated on their compositional caution to counteract this fear:

> Jessie: So, I'd say the real struggle with the op-ed was, like, just keeping it where I don't misrepresent what I'm saying and keep everything the way that I want it presented it to who would be reading it. Other than that, I was just keeping it to a word count.
>
> Me: So, you wanted to make sure that somebody didn't misinterpret, and you had to be really careful like what you said about that?
>
> Jessie: Like the controversial topics. If I am going to talk about those, I don't want to have something that can be misinterpreted.

Another student, Quinn, asserted he did not like digital communication, and it was surprising how many young students expressed the same dislike in their blogs noting the easy anonymity online. As he said in the pre-survey, “What you post stays forever and may be misinterpreted.” These digital born students noticed the lack of human interaction and the permanence of digital communication. Quinn later noted, “I like and dislike the guest setting [in the comments section]… it takes away from human interaction and you will never truly know who you are

talking to... I do not like digital communication, but it is the new way of doing things….[what you put on the internet] never truly goes away." It was a valid fear.

Yet, with the PPA, they felt a different type of anxiety...a fear of misrepresenting their subjects and not writing well. Most of them knew that they were trying to explain someone else's life and put it into a public sphere. During the interview process they connected with these community members, and the assignment became personal for them, so misrepresenting that person to the public was significant. Part of the assignment was to show someone's story, evolution, or overcoming odds. Students realized that they did not want to create a negative reflection on their interviewees but had to balance that and being able to inspire others with a full narrative. For example, Sloan wrote a profile over her husband and pointed out that she "had to change [her] writing style because it's really hard to put somebody that you respect on the paper. It's the whole person you're trying to explain with words, especially if you want to shine the right light on them…because maybe somebody reads your tone differently." Ari wrote a profile over his baseball coach's career and later said in his reflection, "I worried more about not capturing the entirely of Jerald's story than capturing too much." Sloan and Ari were not alone. For students coming out of high school classrooms writing two-page essays, it delighted me when they felt like their five pages were not enough. The PPA was the assignment where students were most frustrated that they had to cut out parts of it. They ended up writing more than they needed and then had to choose which pieces to throw away. There was the occasional teeth-gnashing as they strove for perfection.

Not every student took the same pride in this assignment. I had one student, Tatum, who consistently fought against a word count. His blogs were usually only a few sentences, much less than the 250-word minimum I had asked for. In his profile article about a local teacher, he was

supposed to write 1,000 words and only ended up with around 400 on his first draft. I asked him to go back twice and add more information. In this instance, he struggled to understand entertainment and elaboration, and his reflection blog restated his frustration with word count. Out of 33 students, he was the only outlier resistant to word count, possibly because of his higher age and having been out of the classroom for so long.

Finally, I recognized fear of audience reception as a common theme with all student writing and writers in general. However, moving from a normalized classroom editing space to a public audience is a risky step for almost all students, especially FYC students. One student noted that he feared "being judged or people not liking my writing." In a digital world, there is a very real risk of a reader who "could act out aggressively toward you," as another student wrote. Trolling and keyboard courage were very much risks I tried to mitigate by talking them through tone and wording.

Looking at multiple perspectives and taking a passive-persuasive approach were popular techniques with the open letters. For example, Jordan was a student that wanted to contact the local board of education to convince them to push for more hands-on activities in elementary schools. Jordan's realization that she needed to align herself with her audience was echoed by many students during the drafting of the op-ed. Unlike the PPA, which highlighted a person, the op-ed showcased an opinion and Jordan she realized that her words needed to be edited in an alternative mindset. With her letter, she changed the original introduction from an outright statement that the school system needed to have more recess time and interactive activities to the revised one that said: "Imagine being an energetic child forced to sit still at a desk all day and complete tedious assignments while all you can thing about is how your leg is bouncing and your mind is racing because you have been sitting down for hours." She used the word "we"

throughout the paper, instead of "you" to reflect the solidarity stance with the school board as if they were working together to solve the problem. In her reflective blog about the assignment Jordan said, "However, I am worried about really submitting this to be published because I feel like my writing is not good enough or persuasive enough." Despite Jordan's concerns, she still submitted her op-ed and in her final Blog 12 she wrote, "The peer edits and her [my professor] editing my papers along the way really strengthened my writing skills…As I read through my classmates' blogs and made comments, I realized the struggle and achievements they had in the semester were often similar to mine. I appreciated this because it helped me feel as if I was not alone."

The main fear with blogs differed from the op-ed and PPA. With blogs, students were anxious readers would be critical. As Cleo said, "I think it's like now that you don't have to show your face you can be mean online. Do you know what I mean? So maybe I was worried that some people would say bad things about mine, but they didn't." In fact, I only had one student who had a negative experience toward the blogs. Angel put unique and seemingly unrelated photos into his blogs. He seemed surprised about the negative comments and expressed his feelings of inadequacy in his reflection Blog 10. "At first I was a little confused by these comments," said Angel. "I mean, sure, maybe the picture didn't perfectly match the topic, but I didn't think it was that big of a deal. What surprised me more was that some people seemed to assume that I had just randomly picked a picture without putting any thought into it. They didn't realize that I had chosen the picture because it meant something to me personally." His title of his blog was "Haters," an appropriate word that matched his frustration when he came to me in class after the comments were finished and he worked on his reflection. "Is this okay?" he asked me, showing me his blog, then proceeded to click on each one and explain it to me. Students

wrote they did not think his photos matched his content, yet it was impossible to miss the impact those negative comments made on him. Other students, like Jessie, simply disagreed with the comments and told me that in their reflections. I even had one list each comment and agree or disagree, which was a less creative style, but not necessarily a wrong one. It was more direct and organized but laid out arguments and rebuttals in a way to control the risk/fear.

Kai noted that constructive criticism was not easy, but it was helpful saying: "At some point, I would think *Oh wait. I shouldn't write that because I don't want to sound stupid, or like I don't care*." She also learned how to tailor her writing based on the desire to keep readers entertained and said that writing to an unknown audience helped her develop the ability to write in a way everyone can understand. "Knowing that something was going to be public, I paid more attention to the research I was conducting. I chose better sources and spent more time choosing better information. After having this class I feel confident that I could write any style of writing I was given," she said. Her fear motivated her to be more entertaining and have better research in her blogs. Sidney agreed with Kai and stated in her final reflective blog:

> Being able to write about something I am passionate about and or have personal ties to definitely made these assignments more interesting. I learned how to write as if I were talking to an audience. I found all three of these assignments to be fun and intriguing, pushing me to strive for perfection. From the beginning, I knew that my blogs, open letter, and personal profile article would be open to the public; therefore, I shaped my writing more differently than normal... Out of fear of making a mistake...[It] pushed me to work diligently on these writing pieces. I have never completed an English course feeling this confident and successful with my writing abilities."

The last part of Sidney's quote leads me to reiterate that, despite the risks students encountered with this public writing study, I saw a connection to confidence as I noted in section 6.3.4. These assignments, while at times daunting, were also steps forward for young adults entering the world. One of those large steps was finding someone to listen and proposing an idea.

6.5.3 Choosing a Publication Outlet and Submission

Students had so many choices when it came to circulation through mainstream publishing, it was almost overwhelming to them. Eyes glazed over or looked panicked. I brought physical copies of previous articles to class so students could see those, but it would have been difficult to show them previously published work online. Like Amelia and her letter to President Biden, students had to decide what their topics were, who would care about the same thing, AND who could affect change. At first, I noticed students were mixing publishing outlets and audience at first. Many began writing letters to Glenn Harbinson, the local *News Observer* publisher, and addressing him in their letters. As Mathieu and George stated, "successful circulation of public writing is not achieved by going it alone, but through networks of relationships, in alliances between those in power and those without…Any changes made or attempted…are found in the writing's circulation, in how it works in the world, fostering conversation, creating pressure, and even creating unexpected allies (133). Harbinson was an example of just that—an alliance with someone in power who wanted to foster conversation and was an ally. In working with him and other local publications, my students were able to open the door to a public forum. Addressing their letters to "Dear Glenn" mimicked the classroom mindset where students thought they only had to consider me with their composition. However, Downs et al. argued that classrooms need expanded venues for the circulation of research saying instructors "need to imagine what research can look like beyond traditional genres, such as the research articles found in journals

like YSW…[leading to] 'consequential publicness'" (95). Downs's "consequential publicness" corresponded with Gries's call to create a "pedagogical approach as writing to assemble publics" (331). Yet, the deliberate research to these publishing outlets showed there was not a clear differentiation to students that the outlet may not necessarily equal the audience. It made sense to equate Rene's *GirlTalk* magazine as having a similar publisher and audience (both are teenage females), but some publications like local magazines, websites, or newspapers have very diverse audiences whose only common factor may be that they simply clicked on the website or picked up the publication. However, as their rough drafts were edited in class, students marked passages they did not understand, resulting in the compositional shifting with details I described in section 5.2.

To give a brief overview of student topics and publication outlets, I created *Figure 4: Public Writing Op-ed Topics and Publishing Outlets Selected* (located in Chapter 3) to explain students, their topics, their outlets, and if the publishing outlet accepted their works. The local newspapers and magazines were a practical outlet for local community themes like the fire department or local school system problems. Many students focused on problems with schools because they were not well-educated with national controversies. The students who focused on national problems submitted work to the *AJC*, *Forbes*, *Wall Street Journal* or emailed someone directly. Rene's was the most well-focused letter, submitted to *GirlTalk* magazine, a non-profit outlet that publishes bi-monthly and has specific themes for each issue. They responded to Rene and told her the op-ed would be a good fit in their August magazine. Yet, Rene began with the general idea of publishing locally and addressing her op-ed to "Dear Women." But, as she began to compose more she filled her rough draft with personal examples of her job:

> It made me feel more mature to think that these older men thought I looked pretty. This feeling slowly dissolved, and the discomfort replaced it. The glances and whispers soon turned to catcalling and constant questions of when I would be turning 18. As soon as my 18th birthday came around, the inappropriateness got to a whole other level. Workers and even customers would say things like "You look so hot in a bathing suit" or "You look like a girl I had seen in a video before." One guy even joked with me about how he wished he could kidnap me. He repeatedly asked for my number. Not knowing what to say, I just laughed it off every time. The worst part is most of these men were married… I am a noticeably quiet and reserved person, and I never try to put myself in these situations…It just makes me uncomfortable.

Once the class read her op-ed, they realized her audience was very specific—young teenage women and publishing in the local newspaper was not going to reach that audience. The only options for the right outlet were those that spoke to young women, so Rene went back and researched for a women's magazine that had history publishing difficult topics. She found *GirlTalk* magazine who stated their purpose as:

> The *GirlTalk* Magazine is dedicated to empowering young women and girls to start and spread the discussion of important topics surrounding intersectional feminism, gender & sexuality, and other related issues through our bimonthly magazine. *GirlTalk* is a space for people to share new perspectives and art that they may not be able to share elsewhere, as well as seek new opinions to be informed in gender related issues around the globe. With articles from diverse voices covering a wide range of topics and perspectives, *GirlTalk* is an international magazine completely run and organized by high school students. We welcome critical and constructive discussion of gender.

GirlTalk welcomed op-eds from women and their life experiences—the perfect outlet for Rene. In her classroom research, she noted the magazine's use of "feminism" and "sexuality." She also noted it was run by high school students, which was Rene's target audience.

Her argument was that age was a number, not an invitation for adult males to prey on young women. As such, her view shifted from trying to change society to trying to speak to young women. Rene wanted them to be aware of their surroundings and not be flattered into having a toxic relationship. She cut sentences that said, "We need the government to create better consent laws and understand that creating many freedoms for inexperienced 18-year-olds can lead to psychological impacts in their lives...we need to advocate for clarity within these laws" and she added, "As women, sisters, daughters, and mothers, we need to address this issue because young women deserve to feel safe and respected in all aspects of life. We should be treasures, not targets." This compositional shift occurred because she looked at her publication outlet and realized she needed to adapt based on the magazine's goal of sexuality discussion. She wrote as a female to other females about creating agency as young women in the world.

While Rene had a very specific audience, another student, Toni, struggled with hers for a different reason. She felt strongly about the dangers of TikTok to the current younger generation, despite the very general topic. "I just picked the topic that I thought was about banning TikTok and because I know there's so many kids that literally just spend hours on hours on it," she said. "I mean, I just kind of used examples of how I see it today, how people are literally just stuck in their phones like no one has conversations anymore." Because Toni wanted to keep her topic, she had to really think about if she could make an impact. She said, "It was hard writing an open letter on a topic that could affect a large group of people especially if they are likely to disagree with you." Toni knew that advocating against the use of such a popular app like TikTok would

be difficult. We discussed who could truly benefit from Toni's research and listening to a young person's point of view. While she considered a local newspaper, she dismissed that idea because no one in the local government could create a legal change. We based the idea on a legal change on the recent (at that time) Utah's 2024 bill that regulated social media for underage people. So, Toni decided to reach further to the Georgia government and reach out to her local House representative, who would have the ability to propose change. Toni had to learn how to adapt, saying, "As I continued writing my open letter I found that my writing changed from solely writing about the negatives of my topic to actually including experiences and example of why it's bad and how it affects someone from my perspective and potentially in the same way as the reader."

The decision to submit her op-ed as an email instead of to a publication made Toni ask if her submission would still count as public writing, a great question since the assumption for the assignment was submitting to a publication. However, I decided to hold off on the answer until I saw her work—if she performed well and created a piece fit for publication, then we could make the decision. Toni still felt the pressure to perform, which, I believe, helped her write the same as other students. As she said in her post-interview, "I think the public writing was helpful in the aspect that as we grow older and are moving into college and adulthood, the likeliness of our opinions becoming more apparent whether written or spoken are high... [it] added an extra aspect of pressure but overall paid off. You can…take criticism…in the real world because not everyone is going to agree with your opinion." Her awareness of the "real world" consequences matched the public writing project's ability to transfer skills. Ultimately, based on her drafts and work, I told her I would still consider it public writing for grading purposes. However, I also encouraged her to consider submitting it to an outlet as well as emailing. In the end, Toni

decided to keep it to an email. As she researched, she did not find a publication outlet that seemed to be receptive to her topic and angle. It was such a very myopic topic from an unknown, unpublished teenager that finding a publisher would have been a long shot. Yet, as a letter to an elected official, it was a suitable venue for personal communication. It was a judgement call we made together based on her performance as a student and the quality of drafts she submitted. In the end, I was pleased with her progress.

On a brief side note, publication bias also entered the conversation in our classroom. During our post-survey interview, two politically conservative students talked about finding the best publication outlet for their work. They wanted to make sure it was someone that was receptive. "You want to find the audience to agree with you," said Angel, "because the people that agree with you will want to put it out [in the publication world]." "Yes," Tatum agreed. "Like, for both of us it worked with *Fox News*. They're very pro-American and his [Angel's] was about illegal immigration. Mine was the protesters and all that. So, that was our favorite because somewhere like those other news outlets that don't agree with that…side would most likely not publish it for sure." It was an understandable assumption and they both submitted their conservative opinion op-eds to *Fox News*, a conservative news outlet. News outlet preferences were an essential part of choosing both topics and commercial outlets.

I interviewed a local publisher, Glenn Harbinson, who gave me insight into his publication's purpose. He loved the PPA articles and noted the community response to those was always positive. "People love profiles. I've always tried to get to people that people know," he said, noting the importance of community feedback for publishing outlets. The PPA articles were written about local people, by local students. They showed the intergenerational connections and many of these students were able to showcase extraordinary people the newspaper would never

have known about otherwise. Harbinson acknowledged his paper, unlike larger papers, focused mostly on positive topics. “I don’t publish opinions that attack businesses, and I don’t do anonymous. If I’m going to put my name out there to publish something, you should, too,” he said. This bent toward positive composition reinforced student outlook on their works. They, too, wanted to be positive, as shown by the blog comments and the PPA. The op-ed was more difficult because it was asking for an activist change, but it taught students how to be careful with their wording.

For dissemination, the actual composition of the emails was created by a formula I gave students. However, many students commented on how the hardest part was clicking the button to send it. Jett said, “It took me like 10 minutes to send my e-mail. I was just looking at it, checking it. Submitting it was difficult.” Students were also required to research the name of the receiver. Ari noted that he pieced his together as he went. He was sending it to the *Washington Post* and was not sure which editor it went to, so he did a generalized “Dear Editor.” He explained his dissemination experience: “It just kind of felt like somebody's going to read it and if they like it they like it and if they don't then maybe they'll send something back. Maybe I could submit again. This kind of felt like I was submitting my [essay] writing. It didn't feel like I was making a huge impact with the submission.” His words insinuated the dissemination was almost surreal and not impactful to him. Nonetheless, his unreality dissipated with all other students as the assignment got closer to submission. The way the study was structured allowed a gradual transition to the realism of public writing. Wren wrote her op-ed about community literacy and her PPA about a corporate lawyer (a career she wanted). In her reflection, she noted this transition saying:

> As my peers and professor edited my paper--before I submitted a final draft—I got comfortable with people reading my op-ed…I struggled mostly with emphasizing ethos throughout it. I had to be more specific about why I cared about my topic. I was very excited, but I got anxious because it was in my hands to make sure to write about this person's life. It is scarier because you want to be able to write something incredible that does the person justice…I have learned to listen to constructive criticism, become confident, and share personal stuff that I usually do not talk about to people I do not know.

Wren got a response to her op-ed submission while we were in class saying that it was accepted. She was incredibly excited and the whole class clapped for her, showing that, while not everyone had their work accepted, the triumphs were celebrated with sincere congratulations, a symbol of the classroom fellowship that had developed.

7 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Does incorporating public writing assignments have the potential to change students' attitudes toward FYC classes? Absolutely. My study reflected this impactfulness more than the traditional research essays, proving prior research and extending it further as it demonstrated the greater impact public writing assignments have on students compared to traditional research essays, lending more support to this area of research. While previous studies used activist assignments in outlets like university and service learning/non-profit publications or upper level/graduate classes (Deans 4, Cushman "Sustainable," Mathieu 17, Belcher, Cross 15, Jack 5), mine targeted commercial outlets and in-class circulation in FYC, relying on the higher risk involved to reveal a need for professional composition, authentic revisions, compositional reciprocation, audience adaptation, and compositional shifting skills.

Assignments like the op-ed, blogs, and PPA are usually assigned to upper-level courses, not only because they require more writing skills, but also because they require more instructor emphasis. It is very easy for university professors to continue teaching traditional essays, but my study showed that FYC students are ready for more advanced type of writing—and they need it now, prior to upper-level classes. We are waiting too long to introduce students to public writing in the classroom as many students have experience writing online by their early teens. By not bringing public writing into the FYC classroom and showing the risks involved, we do them and ourselves a disservice. Not only did a mainstream media focus both enhance students' writing and classroom interaction, but it also pushed FYC students into the community for a civically embedded experience that connected learning to real-world practicality early in their university experiences. These media outlets were real and risky, and the subjects were genuine and personal. Consequently, students were more engaged in these assignments because they were

riskier. Most students submitted to local commercial outlets and felt the performance pressure of being in front of their communities. Yet, they viewed these projects as realistic and worthwhile. Yes, student compositional skills may not have been the same quality as upper-level students, but I would argue the writing was honed, perhaps more quickly, in ways traditional essay assignments don't because essays lack risk and are more familiar. Most of these FYC students will never have the chance to experience upper-level English/communication courses, so experiencing it *now* was essential. All of my study's scaffolding steps carefully developed real audience awareness and transferable skills throughout the study timeline.

Cushman noted in her 2017 keynote address the importance of our daily human connections: "Through our interactions with each other inside of classrooms and outside of classrooms, at conferences or workshops, at home or in our communities, we help each other become more skilled in more areas of life…[public writing serves as] a steppingstone in their personal journey of becoming skilled in all areas of life ("2017 Conference" 20). All three assignments made students more deliberate and skilled. They took more time to revise them and think. I got more questions in class and more requests to view their work before submission than in previous traditional FYC classes. I saw them change with their style by adding humor, storytelling, and details…much more so than essays. Public writing assignments inherently made students push their skills further than traditional essays because they became more invested with authentic revisions knowing their writing was going to be in a public forum. The classroom atmosphere took on a more serious and dedicated tone. Not only did it make a difference in how FYC students viewed the classroom, but it also made a difference in how these students viewed their audiences.

In the beginning, they wrote solely to me, but their perspectives changed as the semester continued. Instead of looking to only me for affirmation, students started relying on each other for their feedback. They learned how to discern, think critically, and fully research before presenting their audience with information. They had all the fears of audience reception and rose to the challenge. Jordan noted that she tried to approach her op-ed from both a "teacher angle as well as a student angle" and "taking the standpoint of an older individual advocating for children that do not know how to tell teachers what they need." Her ability to try to see the teacher's point of view, while also speaking from a student's perspective showed me she was adapting to her audience, ready to be politic in her argument. While she argued that she was an "older individual," I did not see that to be outside of her realm of experience or taking on a persona she did not have.

Indeed, with public writing there were opportunities for students to take on the role of a teacher or pretend to be something they were not, but I did not see that in my study, unlike Branson's study. Instead, I saw them be completely honest about themselves, which was part of the assignment as establishing ethos was probably one of the largest compositional shifts that students made. Originally, students thought their audience was the classroom and/or friends and family…all accepting people who rarely criticized essays. But, with the public writing assignments, students realized that they needed to put themselves in their writing to gain trust from this new audience in the compositional reciprocation. Instead of seeing the professor and appealing to her, they had to broaden their writing and appeal to unknown readers…people from all different points of view that may not think the same way. Once they established ethos, they learned to use pathos through storytelling and word choices, creating imagery and evoking audience emotion. They also realized the importance of being entertaining to win the audience's

attention. Previous students in traditional FYC classes tended to only think about drafting the essay, getting a grade, and moving on, but these assignments created civically engaged, public writing students who grasped the scope of a wider audience by circulating and submitting work in a realistic setting.

While not a main focus of this study, the lack of research awareness in my FYC classes was surprisingly low. I had conjectured that introducing public writing would help student research skills, but according to my blog graph (Figure 5), research was relatively insignificant. A follow up study could hypothesize why research was not more calculable. Assuming that I may have inadvertently overemphasized certain skills, further studies could measure including a module on research specifically since it is possible the inattentiveness toward research during our interviews was due to students not connecting interviews/primary sourcing and internet searches as "research." I believe they understood databases for traditional, argumentative essays as information sources and, if our topics had not been geared toward current public writing topics, those databases would have been investigated more thoroughly, which would have contributed to a higher "research" theme during coding.

Nevertheless, students' viewpoints were certainly influenced by these public writing assignments. Even the students that enjoyed the traditional research essays because essays were "comfortable," still appreciated the skills they learned through these assignments. While these skills could have been learned by keeping the ratings in the classroom, submitting them to commercial publications raised the stakes. Students learned valuable transfer skills like emails, professionalism, interviewing, manners and being courteous. The act of dissemination and wider circulation beyond the classroom impacted their abilities not only to navigate in the classroom and create the camaraderie that helped them trust each other as editors but also to allow them a

support system. The wider circulation beyond the classroom was essential to push students forward and make them the responsible citizens that our society needs. The fact that we submitted to for profit publications did allow for more reflection for them and a wider, realistic publishing field. Students had to consider the primary goals of these commercial publications. Needing to make a profit, these outlets focused on stories that were monetarily print worthy—subjects that would create conversations, local people who would be recognized, and all these written by students who were putting themselves in the world for the first time, making the outlets look supportive. It was a good recipe for student success and had the potential to help other classrooms benefit from public writing with its risks and rewards.

Incorporating public writing and circulation research pedagogy into FYC classrooms would be more than a boon to the students; it would teach them essential skills for their future careers. The op-ed impacted their views of audience primarily through learning how to use ethos and pathos. They had to learn how to tailor their writing to those news outlets and in doing so learn how to be more concise with their arguments. We ended up overwriting and then cutting rather than the opposite because it was easier to have and not need than need and not have.

Op-eds also helped students learn how to find a hook to interest their readers by learning how to connect with the audience to get their opinions heard. The increased fear and risk came because students knew not everyone would agree with them in the audience, disagreeing with peers does not make as much of a difference as disagreeing with community leaders and decision makers. Students had to look at all aspects of their argument and they researched more deeply to make sure that their arguments were sound. The op-ed also allowed them to learn how to cite sources in a sentence without using the traditional parenthetical citations that they were so used to, a skill many reporters and commentators use yet is not taught until upper-level classes.

The personal profile article impacted students primarily through storytelling and the ability to add more details to a piece of writing to make it appeal with imagery. They were representing another person and had to pace a story to connect with the audience for their interviewees. Unlike the op-ed where students feared for their own acceptance, the PPA pushed them to go into the community and have concern about someone else's acceptance. Community engagement pushed them to create more ethos and pathos because students had connected with their community members. They had to learn how to entertain and keep the readers' attention, something they did not need to do with a teacher paid to grade essays. Going forward, students will be able to take pride in their published articles and, more importantly, an *experience* of being part of something bigger than themselves. It was a favorable induction into the circle of social contractualness that allows the younger generation to listen to the older people, absorbing stories to gain wisdom and skills so that students can pass on these values to their children.

The online blogs impacted students mostly through social engagement and real time circulation observations. Not only did they learn about responsibility, but they also learned how to interact with an online audience by connecting with anonymous students in other classes. The class outsiders simulated a best-case scenario for a way to analyze online interactions because it was done in a safe, confined space like my university FYC classes, filled with students of a similar age and cultural background learning the same lessons. The results were not always positive (as in Angel's case with his unrelated photos), but most students took constructive lessons away from the experience, feeling more connected and encouraged about their writing struggles because of the online readers' empathy. Because these commentors responded with blog questions to other classes' blogs, students realized the need for more details and contextual awareness in writing. They had assumed their audiences understood their writing and had the

same background context, but once the writers got blog feedback, they revised their thinking. Both as content creators and commentators, students learned to be cautious with shared information through word choices and topics, hopefully creating more responsible online citizens in the future. Some students observed the lack of effort in others and themselves, but progress pitfalls also reflected realistic group work setting where the work is often done unevenly by a few. But their adaptation to these challenges taught them self-reliance, communication with each other/the instructor, and encouraged them as to how to handle future civic participation, all practical, transferable goals for FYC students that benefit them, their universities, and their communities.

Throughout the peer editing process, students gained the ability to mimic what they saw, to take away the parts that they liked and to point out the parts they did not. The process in which we edited in our FYC classes may not be unique to upper-level university classes, but it was certainly unique to these new college students. The in-class audience reception to the op-ed and the PPA were mostly positive. A lot of those were little suggestions and edits. However, the reception to the blogs was a little different. I don't believe that the in-class reception changed the students other than paying attention to editing, but knowing that their work was going to go beyond the classroom did change the students. Having works published thrilled students and the failure to receive submission responses was disheartening for many. Yet, when their submission was rejected or ignored, most of them explained it by admitting it was their fault for not having better research or the right tone in their writing. I believe students knew instinctively when they did a respectable job. Yes, some articles were well-written, but not a good fit for the publication. Rejection was also a good learning experience for life skills, teaching humility, gratefulness, and resilience. Learning how to handle adversity in FYC can potentially create mentally adept,

stronger students, preparing them for future classes and careers. These perseverance and communication skills are a necessity in the first year of college because it sets a professional tone with professors, making the classroom a future classroom/work environment microcosm where students can learn to view challenges as learning experiences and carry that mindset over to their future workplaces.

Overall, students' views toward their own composition did change. I saw many of them very pleased with their new compositional, mental and social skills even if they did not like the assignments. A lot of them mentioned the word "confidence" in their reflections and post-study interviews. Skills and confidence—if students can recognize those two things when they walk out of a class, the teacher has done her job. Despite the heavy workload involved in administrating new public writing assignments, seeing students appreciate their learning experience validated my teaching efforts. The anonymous end-semester class evaluations were positive toward the classes and experiences and a majority of students elected to take classes with me the next semester. Knowing that I could help them be better prepared for their futures was important to me, both as an instructor and community member.

Recommendations

After conducting my study, I have multiple recommendations both for the assignments and future researchers. For the op-ed, I would change the format of the assignment sheet to have spaces for topic, audience, publisher, writing requirements and an email address to submit the article. I feel like an organized format would make it easier for the students to visualize the result at the very beginning and work towards a goal, especially as most of them had never written a letter before. I emailed links to help with formatting and examples. They tried researching "famous open letters" in class, but it was a bit overwhelming. We had to break the assignment

apart and find audience, ethos, logos and pathos. They needed more examples of what to look for since they had no previous experience with traditional newspapers and magazines. Perhaps a worksheet with fill in the blanks and group work to find the pieces would be an excellent idea if we had more time. We really required more time for this assignment for extra steps as I had mistakenly assumed they knew how to write a letter. We also discussed the use of stories (especially for ethos to establish *why* they cared about the topic), examples, stats, and facts. With more time, students should find and bring their own articles to class for their op-eds, like a reading list of ideas that they looked at to help them research, keeping in mind that FYC is a first-year university class and therefore not necessarily meant to teach an in-depth piece of writing.

I would also recommend using local archives for deeper research on op-ed topics before selecting a final theme. Harbinson generously offered free access for a month, and that would be plenty of time for students to interact and learn online research skills in specialized archives. Since the op-ed was also a little more critical than students were comfortable writing, another possible idea would be to focus on positive op-eds praising someone/something in the community, which was Harbinson's idea. He noted op-eds did not have to be critical and he published positive ones frequently when he got them. He also suggested Mother's Day articles in the spring or fall-themed ones in the fall, perhaps visitor travel sites around the county.

Another change I would make would be with the blogs, without doubt the least liked assignment. In the verbal survey I did during the verbal interviews, only 5 out of 32 students liked these the most. Devan called it "meaningless blogging." Many students felt like it was repetitive. Raven said, "I felt like after we wrote like a big, long essay, it just like, oh, we have more to write about what we just wrote." Despite learning skills from blogs that were missing

from the previous two assignments, these skills could arguably be learned with a platform more intuitive or prevalent like Instagram. Therefore, I would suggest changing future public writing blog assignments to try current platforms that do not take up extra time for students to have to learn how to create a website. A popular (and probably familiar) platform would be much easier to integrate into the classroom. Even if students choose to not participate in social media, the public writing skills would still prove invaluable for their digital literacy, always keeping in mind privacy concerns and ways to mitigate that risk like we did keeping the blogs private and only shareable with a link.

Alisa Russell was correct when she articulated the difficulties in creating op-eds for regional and national publications (83). A better focused idea for a future op-ed assignment might be, as Crisco suggested, to "approach the class with a materialist pedagogy focusing on local contexts" (47). This pedagogy could use a singular community event/debate to steer the op-ed assignment toward a specific topic, debated in class, researching it, and creating a compositional piece to be submitted, either to the same outlet or similar ones if the dissemination area is larger, reinforcing David Coogan's argument that student writing would show "how the materiality of discourse intersects with human agency at unique, historical moments and produces changes that communities can really see" (669; qtd. in Crisco 47)). A materialist pedagogy would allow FYC classrooms to create focused, particular changes, with the obvious problem of finding an event/debate that is timely, relevant, and debatable.

Future researchers should have a warning—these assignments do require more hands-on instruction. Students are familiar with essays but not these. To put public writing assignments in the classroom, publishing experience is not required, but there is a learning curve for the instructor. I reached out to the local publishers and had already established relationships with

them. However, most of the extra work involved was in class helping students sculpt their papers. I would say my own revisions to their papers were also more authentic as I knew students represented the university (and me) when they submitted assignments. As a result, I had to be very careful in my instructions in how I guided them to be represented outside the classroom. It is unclear how to minimize my own workload except to cut down the assignments and maybe only do one or two during a FYC class. While my experience with publishing was helpful, any English instructor willing to put in the work to teach a new public writing assignment is able to successfully teach these. As instructors, we teach adaptability, and these assignments are an extension of our own compositional abilities. The students help with the research and take the risk along with us. While I did not ask students about their reflections on me personally, I do feel that these assignments brought us closer together in that they helped me understand their goals and help them. Once students understood I was available to help them with concerns, they willingly took risks, and I tailored my recommendations based on their goals and limitations.

For potential research and to check the validity of this study, I would recommend a replicated study with FYC students with alternative characteristics including classes with more underprivileged, online, minority, or ELL students. As many of my students were dual enrolled, I would also recommend future studies with a wider age range. In the past, older students added unique perspectives to assignments and really helped class discussions with real world experience and stories. Future scholars could explore other avenues for publishing including multi-modal outlets with greater online emphasis, which would complement online students. Another study could compare my findings to a 3000-level class to evaluate impactfulness. Those students would be at a higher, more focused level, raising the question of impact and preparedness for lower vs. higher division courses. In other words, would researchers see the

same shifts and FYC appreciation in upper-level courses? If 3000 level students have never done public writing either, would they be more prepared by virtue of their experience, or would they face the same challenges? In which case, a study could be done to examine if starting earlier is more beneficial as upper level students could then be already better prepared for seeking industry specific publishing opportunities.

Finally, there is the question of whether students experienced deep learning and retention or merely reproduced text that would fit course requirements. Another idea for a study would be a long-term one, ideal to confirm knowledge retention and long-term efficacy of public writing in FYC classrooms. A researcher could track students over the course of at least three years to see how these skills transferred to other curriculums and areas of study. It would also be worth noting if/how students use their compositional shifting and audience awareness in career pathways. That would truly be valuable and marketable data for writing studies and English departments in particular.

While other instructors may choose to avoid/limit public writing in FYC, my study still starts the conversation as to how we can teach students to view their writing as purposeful beyond the classroom. University instructors interested in incorporating public writing in their classes only need to start with finding a way to connect classroom work with commercial publications—a way for students to become teachers, showing how what they learn can be useful to the world. That type of assignment could start with something as simple as linking a biology experiment to a local non-profit and then publishing an article about the university-community experience. Regarding FYC specifically, instructors can tailor their own students' needs and career interests to possible public writing assignments—anything that makes students realize the possibility of a world-based audience. In any curriculum, building community relationships with

publishers and service learning organizations is a benefit to the university classrooms and its students. For that matter, students and the community are excellent resources for their own circulation ideas. As Harbinson offered to give my classes future access, completely free, to his publication, other mainstream outlets could be just as generous. University libraries could request access to local publications and media relations could offer their own resources to professors and students. Public writing instruction only requires a desire to connect students to the world around them.

Nathan Heller's 2023 article may have been the latest in a trend toward English department self-examinations, but the article itself is an example of public writing and why it matters. The world has not lost its need for people that can write well; it just needs to focus that need on writing well *publicly*, not only to improve student composition, but also to prove English's worth as a subject. Public writing has the potential to combine audience and engagement, but adding circulation of those works, through commercial publishing can potentially facilitate transfer to real world, concrete skills FYC students can appreciate. We teach the art of rhetoric and have access to every student who attends college—if we fail to influence them, then we have no one to blame but ourselves.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: IRB Proposal Application

Overview

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of commercial publishing with a public writing project on student engagement, views of audience and transfer. Participation involves completing pre-surveys as well as writing major public writing pieces of work with the intent to publish them commercially. There is no compensation to this study and all responses will be anonymous. Surveys will not be viewed by the instructor until after all final grades are submitted at the end of the semester.

Based on past and present scholarship (Dewey 170; Weisser xii; Dahlman 138), I argue that public writing conversations should happen in the first year by assigning more public writing in first year composition (FYC) classrooms or even have entire syllabi geared toward this goal. My research goal takes this argument a step further to introduce commercial publication to the public writing FYC classroom. For the study assignment, I will be also be drawing from inspiration like Bruce Herzberg's "Going Public" project where he asks students to think about what types of media debate takes place, list and analyze how to participate in the debate (Deans 101) and a case study example by Ashley Holmes where the professor used the first assignment as a memo of introduction and then responded to each other, and finally transitioned into posting reflections on an online blog (53).

My positionality in relation to this study is that of a "teacher researcher" and my framework primarily draws from Young and Morgan's 2020 study as my inspiration due to it being the closest example study of student commercially-focused publication. Instead of using a non-profit organization or directed activist model like theirs, I intend to point my students toward writing for commercial outlets such as local newspapers, newsletters, magazines, and online self-publishing outlets like YouTube and Apple Podcasting. I will provide links and research guidance on how to form query letters/emails to publishers, but students will be responsible for the submissions. Also, while Young and Morgan's study looks at public writing and commercial publication, mine delves into combining those in a more specific arena—the FYC classroom, where my self-designed assignment will be used to study if creating a piece of composition intended for local commercial publication changes freshmen engagement in the classroom, views of audience.

Literature Review

In the past, scholars have studied audience as one of the key concepts in public writing (Weisser 98; Garcia 6; Jack 24; Deans 61; Holmes 33). However, these studies have mainly been geared toward community/university service-based learning and activism with rare notes toward commercial publishing. With a lens angled toward the commercial world, and realizing the socially embedded, "connected learning" experience public writing presents, I follow those early scholars and study the effects of the resulting student engagement, both for students and instructors (Garcia 6; Ito et al. 4). Each classroom is filled with a newly shuffled set of students with different goals and backgrounds, yet as experienced educators know, "context drives practice" (Garcia 8). Students are more enthusiastic when assignments are contextual and tailored to them (Nobis 62). With publishing in mainstream media, student experience has the potential to promote better composition and drive classroom interaction in a positive direction.

The essentiality of making students aware of their audiences—the nuances of culture, age, race, gender—all need to be considered for a writer to successfully convey his/her meaning in a real-world setting. As Liu and Guo phrased it: "audience awareness is…[when] the writer consciously takes the needs of the readers, the level of acceptance, the acceptance of psychology and aesthetic interests into his mental state in the process of writing" (2). Michael Jack updates this definition to conform to the modern audience by noting they are the people who want to know the magic behind what happens. "They are more likely to view even well-known writers as equals – regarding them, more like thoughtful, articulate, friends than authority, figures, or distant experts. They are looking to trade intimacies, trust, and disclosures" (Jack 127). Tapping into audience awareness for public writing is an essential component of instruction—students are operating with and communicating to their audiences in a borderless world. Their audience is not only their friends—it is comprised of people from all different races, nationalities, ages, genders, and cultures. To be blind to those differences could impact students professionally one day. Holmes notes that, for many public writing instructors, "situating student experience, learning, and writing in public sites beyond the classroom provides a meaningful context through which to explore social issues while facilitating student learning" (Holmes 50). This "meaningful context," combined with the reality of a world where most communication is done digitally, is essential for students to absorb in FYC. Exemplifying this was Young and Morgan's 2020 study where students who recognized writing for an intended public audience were more alert to their choices of wording, organization, and motivation, causing "authentic revisions" the researchers noted that created, not only a better piece of writing, but a better writer (Young and Morgan 41). Unless they become English majors/minors, addressing mainstream publications has the potential in FYC to create a valuable audience perspective shift that students may not be exposed to once they leave their core classes.

As Deans observes with public writing, classroom critical literacy allows students to "parlay that critical consciousness into concrete civic action later in their lives" (109). Stepping out into real-world and the subsequent engagement allows for the "possibility of long-term transfer of core concepts from the course" (Holmes 51). Tying these concepts into FYC, Lindeman points out that "The first-year writing space, whether by circumstance or for good reason, holds special weight and significance, and writing scholars and teachers have long debated what the space is for (88). Using that space to reinforce audience awareness through a lens of commercial publishing and the risks it holds is worthy of research consideration. Mark Caprio's 2014 study shows the idea of undergraduate agency and how revised thought about connected learning responds to the current call from businesses and non-profit leaders for a more engaged workforce (146; qtd. in Waye and Simpson 3; Eble and Gaillet 351). Perhaps, exploring commercial publishing is the new way to make a space for individual voices in an innovative way otherwise mired in a standardized system of teaching.

Study Procedures

The in-person classes will take place during the Spring 2024 semester in two English 1101 composition courses at the University of North Georgia where I teach. These FYC classes combine both writing and research skills required by the university, so both classes will be taught the same information and lessons. There will be two sections of this course with a total number of students to be determined (but qualified students usually average 15-25 per class/per semester). Since I occasionally have dual enrolled students under the age of 18, I would like to include them in the study to make a fuller picture. To be able to publish this for my dissertation, I will be following IRB protocol using my CITI certification on human subjects. Participation will

be voluntary and obtained by utilizing the campus director as a third-party intermediary. She will disseminate and collect the consent/assent forms the first day of class. She will need to follow up with parents and students to collect any missing forms. At the end of the study (which coincides with the end of the semester), I will conduct an oral interview with the class as a group, recording it via my phone and transcribing it later.

I propose to be the sole instructor for the entire semester for both classes to minimize differences in teaching methods, class structure, and curriculum variations. I do not foresee the need for IRB recruiting or debriefing materials since students will be already registered for the class and surveys will suffice for debriefing.

One of Young and Morgan's concerns during their study was that students might elect to take a course based on the concept that it covers community-engaged studies, perhaps tainting the pool of students electing to take the composition course (36). However, like their university, mine identifies all English 1101 courses with the same description and students will be unaware there will be a public writing segment until the class begins. The intensive focus on research and foundational rhetorical canons that lead up to these modules is important. The basic essay practices of establishing introductions, context, organization, and conclusions will be given to both classes. All sections of classes will begin by focusing on research, with students having the freedom to choose their own advanced argumentative topics, another HIP that connects their first year with their own interests. They will be taught about adapting to audience through rhetorical means by class models and peer-reviewing—a HIP that teaches them to become the audience and give feedback to peers, thereby allowing their findings to be applied to their own writings.

To begin the study, like Young and Morgan, I will use qualitative (IRB approved) student pre-surveys assignment to evaluate student backgrounds, experiences, and views on their own writing. Both the pre-survey and the interviews will be tied together for the instructor to have a clearer view of individual experiences. To ensure ethical standards will be met, all surveys will be conducted in class by the campus director without the instructor present and I will not know which students are participating until after grades are submitted for the assignment. Students will be made aware they will not receive extra credit or other benefits from participation in the study and that I will not be able to access surveys until all grades are final. While the surveys do ask for name, I will anonymize surveys with a gender-neutral names. I will scrub surveys for identifying information and store it according to current IRB protocol. I believe this to not only be a way to gather the data needed, but it also promotes student agency into the assignment. They have the freedom to share more about themselves and anticipate reflection.

Students will then be introduced to the op-ed assignment. They will be given the assignment sheet, asked to research, find a topic and possible publishing outlet. After completing the writing, they will be asked to submit the piece of writing formally.

To complete the PPA assignment, students will be required to fully research the public type of writing required and the publishing outlets. With my past publishing experience and community connections, I already have lines of submission open for students, but we will explore more possibilities. (My experience is helpful, but I do not consider it necessary for study replication.) There will be class discussions on the style and purpose with smaller, low-risk grades taken for steps completed (research, peer review of interview questions, rough and final drafts). Students will have the choice of choosing their own interview people from local community/family members. I will approve each to prevent overlap.

The PPA module assignment sheet is designed to not only explain the public writing assignment, but also to direct students toward examples of current practices and impact,

combining the high impact practice (HIP) of community-based learning with demonstrated examples of how classroom research and composition can be used in a real-world practice (Holmes "Transformative" 51; Lindenman 105; Cross 15). This narrative-type assignment is created to still meet university rhetorical and composition goals while directing students' attention toward the end goal of commercial publication. After they are finished with the PPA, I will collect articles for course grading. Then, students will be required to submit their articles to the intended outlets. Submission (not acceptance) is another grade.

Once students are finished with their assignments, I will interview students as a group to reflect on the public writing pieces' impacts on students' attitudes toward subject engagement, understanding of audience. Finally, I will posit how students would improve this assignment, reinforcing student agency and aiding my own research. Once the semester is complete, I have the surveys and interviews completed and transcribed, I will code and analyze the similarities into themes to look for implications of commercial publication within a FYC public writing-focused classroom. Were there patterns in pre-assignment attitudes toward FYC? How many students were aware of their audience? How did the experience of publishing change their attitudes? Did writing for a realistic purpose that comes with risk change their attitudes toward FYC? I will look for positive and negative comments and see if there are student fallacies toward traditional classroom composition and if this assignment affected those. I will also look for possible follow up studies and the potential to add elements to this assignment or adapt it based on student feedback (e.g., a future comparative study from this 1101 class to a 3000-level class).

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Appendix B: IRB Study Consent Form

UNG UNIVERSITY of NORTH GEORGIA™

Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Consent Form

Title of the Study: The Impact of Commercial Publishing on First Year Composition Studies

Study Number: [Insert Study Number once assigned by IRB]

Principal Investigator: Jodi Williams, English Department Lecturer

We are asking you to allow your child to take part in a research study. This consent form describes the research study and give you information you need to know before deciding whether to allow them to take part. You may freely choose whether or not to allow them take part in the study; participation is completely voluntary. At the end of the form we will ask you to confirm that you voluntarily agree to allow them to be part of this study.

Overview of Key Information

- The goal is to investigate the impact of student publishing in mainstream outlets on student audience awareness.
- Will take one semester (Spring 2024)
- Your child will complete surveys, write blogs and articles, and be interviewed by the instructor.
- We will ask for information that could be used to tell who your child is through first name only.
- We will not share information about your child's identity with anyone else.
- Risks are the same as in everyday life.
- Benefits to this study are using practical writing assignments to help your child. Public writing assignments have been an up-and-coming research area shown to improve student writing and help them adapt to a technological world. Future English instructors may benefit from what the researcher learns in this study, helping change first year English classes for students into something more practical and functional, focusing on a student's place within the community and how he/she communicates within the community.

Why is this research study being done?

The goal of this research study is to determine if public writing creates a significant impact on student ability to write and revise to varied audiences (increasing audience awareness). We plan to have approximately 20 people take part in this study.

What are you being asked to do?

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of public writing projects on student participation and the views of audience. Your child's participation involves completing pre- and post-assignment surveys, as well as writing a major public writing piece of work with the intent to publish it commercially. They will create a digital blog, an op-ed, and a personal profile article—all of which will be submitted for publication. There is no compensation to this study and all responses will be anonymized before being used. A final interview with the instructor will be recorded via audio recording, turned into a transcript and anonymized before use. All surveys and interviews will be kept in a locked cabinet in the campus director's office until the end of the semester. Surveys will not be viewed by the instructor until after all final grades are submitted at the end of the semester. The information from this study will be used in dissertation work and future publications for the instructor to help other instructors understand how to adapt to student needs.

How will we use your private information?

In this study, we will ask your child to provide his/her name to trace the pre and post surveys, information that you or your child might not want other people to know. This information could be used to tell who your child is, but the names will be anonymized once the results from each student are submitted.

We may remove any information that could be used to tell who your child is. If we do so, then we may then use the data for future research studies, and we may also share the data with other researchers. We will do the best we can to make sure that the information your child provides is kept confidential. We will store the recordings in a locked file cabinet in the campus director's office until the end of the study. Then, it will be kept in the locked principal investigator's office. We will not use your child's name or other information that could be used to tell who they are in any presentations or publications.

In some cases we may need to share the information your child provides. The UNG Institutional Review Board makes sure that research with people is done ethically. They may review our records. State or federal laws or court orders may also require us to share information from the study records.

What are the risks?

The possibility of harm or discomfort in this research study is no more than a normal, routine day and is minimal. It is a standard English 1101 class that simply uses a different set of assignments to assess student writing awareness. Opting in or out of this study does not change the assignments given to your child, only whether the instructor can use the information to help other students.

What are the benefits of being in this research study?

Your child may benefit from this research study. Public writing assignments have been an up-and-coming research area shown to improve student writing and help them adapt to a technological world. Future English instructors may benefit from what the researcher learns in this study, helping change first year English classes for students into something more practical and functional, focusing on a student's place within the community and how he/she communicates within the community.

What will we pay or give you in exchange for being in this study?

Your child will not be paid for taking part in this study. They will receive full course credit by participating and passing this English 1101 course.

Who can you contact if you have questions?

For questions about this study, you can call or email the principal investigator, Jodi Williams, at jodi.williams@ung.edu.

For questions about being a research participant, please contact the chair of the Institutional Review Board (irbchair@ung.edu) or the Assistant Director for Research Integrity, Dr. Troy Smith, 3820 Mundy Mill Road, Oakwood, GA 30566, 678-717-3670, troy.smith@ung.edu.

What are your rights as a research study volunteer?

Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to allow your child to take part in this study. There is no penalty if you decide not to let them take part. You may withdraw your child from the study at any time. Leaving the study will not affect your child's course grade. Your child will have full access to school resources and to help and tutoring services whether they take part or not. The researcher will notify you if they discover anything during the research project that could affect your decision to allow your child to take part in this study. The researcher may take your child out of the study if disciplinary or academic issues arise where the researcher decides keeping your child in this study is not in his/her best interest.

Please confirm that you understand

I have read this consent document. I have been able to ask any questions I have about the study. I have been able to tell the researcher about my concerns. The researcher has answered my questions and responded to my concerns. I believe that I understand the research study, the potential risks, and the potential benefits. I agree to allow my child to take part in this study.

Printed Name of Participant

| --- | --- | --- |
| Printed Name of Parent/Guardian | Parent/Guardian's Signature | Date |

| --- | --- | --- |
| Printed Name of Parent/Guardian | Parent/Guardian's Signature | Date |

FOR THE RESEARCHER

I have explained the nature and purpose of the research study, the possible risks, and the possible benefits to the person named above. I have answered any questions and have responded to any concerns that have been raised. I have given a copy of this signed consent document to the parents/guardians of the research participant.

| --- | --- | --- |
| Printed Name of Consenting Research Team Member | Signature of Consenting Research Team Member | Date |

Appendix C: Op-ed/Open Letter Assignment Sheet

JODI WILLIAMS

The Op-ed Assignment Sheet

Purpose: The Open Letter, a Letter to the Editor, or the Op-Ed are all opinion pieces designed to make someone's voice heard in a public, published forum. However, there are differences in them related to the length and topics.

Research Links to Begin: An Open Letter ... About Open Letters : NPR

Your assignment:
You will write an Op-ed—Opinion | How to write an op-ed for The Washington Post - The Washington Post

Here are a few links to read through.
This one is my favorite. It is an excellent page from MIT. Especially, note the section under "SKILLS": https://mitcommlab.mit.edu/broad/commkit/op-ed/

Here is a template:
https://championprovider.ucsf.edu/sites/champion.ucsf.edu/files/2017-09-28%20Op-ed%20template_Revised.pdf

Here are examples of two good ones/one bad one:
https://www.publicanthropology.org/Yanomami/General/Criteria-Examples.htm

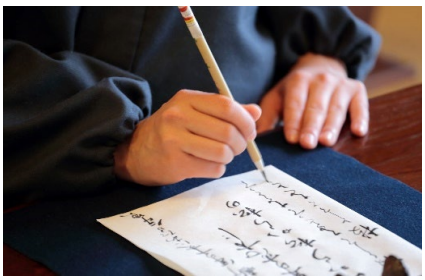
TIPS:

*Most particularly, be specific when you think about your audience—narrow it down and focus on them when you write.

*Use Ethos (establish who you are and why this matters to you), Pathos (use persuasive language to make this matter to us), and Logos (use logical arguments to prove your points).

*Letters are NOT essays. They are meant to be personal—a call to action. Letters can start revolutions and cultural changes. Be the change.

Audience: Audience depends solely on your topic. Research where to be published and tailor writing toward that publication.



Questions to ask yourself about the publisher:

What style do they publish?

Who is their audience?

What is the length normally accepted?

What topics are relevant to them? To you? Which ones can intersect and therefore be published?

DIRECTIONS:

1. Think about topics. What is important to you? What do you have to say to the world?
2. Think about what makes your perspective unique? What can you bring to the conversation that others could not?
3. Research your topic thoroughly. Look at all sides. Shore up your arguments.
4. Write a rough draft. Look at it carefully. If you were a publisher, would it appeal to you? Would it be worth publishing?
5. Did you include statistics/stories/real examples?
6. Did you put your own reason for caring in the first paragraph?
7. Did you sign it?
8. Submit to the class for peer reviewing.

Make sure you bring a COMPLETE rough draft to class so we can help you. Most of these are 750-1200 words (3-5 pages double spaced).

Op-Ed Submission Directions:

1. You have been given back an edited copy of your op-ed/open letter.
2. Fix the op-ed/letter. Bring it back to class one more time.
3. Find the email address you need to submit.
4. Find the word count and make sure your letter matches.
5. If needed, edit your letter to fit any other requirements.
6. Read through it one more time. Remember, you are getting ready to make this public.

Just like a memo, find the following information and compose an email:

To: enter the email address

Bcc: jrwilliams@ung.edu

Subject: An Op-Ed (or Open Letter) from enter your perspective here (e.g. FCHS Student/ A Scared Student, a former U.S. Marine, etc.)

Dear Find a name to address here, (a.k.a. the person in charge)

Please consider my op-ed/open letter for publication. For any questions, please feel free to contact me at phone number. It has _____ words, but it can be tailored as needed.

<copy/paste your letter here>

Thank you,

Your Name

Appendix D: PPA Assignment Sheet

Due Date: _____

Purpose: Profile articles tell a story about someone—who they are, what they've done, what makes them amazing. You will be telling their story. This assignment will teach you to research and plan a different writing style, learn to connect with an interview subject, discover the stories available in our community, and communicate those stories effectively and professionally. We will also be submitting these to local publications.

Audience: Professional magazines and newspapers always like to publish human interest stories. Not only does it make for good reading, but it also makes for a profitable publication (more readers=more advertisers=more money). Make your article look professional and about someone readers would want to know more about. Look publications for possible publishing outlets. Remember, local people attract local audiences and local publications. More well-known people attract larger audiences and larger publications.

history

A Life of service

part I by Jodi Williams

I know it's odd, but as a little girl, I would look forward to seeing the doctor when I was sick. The office wasn't fancy and it didn't have marble floors or leather chairs – it was better. It was like walking into your grandmother's home where you could almost feel the love. When he walked in the room, Dr. Wilbur Schneider brought calming waves of smiles and compassion to a sick little girl. He looked into your eyes and spoke in a gentle voice, with just a hint of his Portuguese accent. He made you laugh. There was something comforting about knowing that someone who had known you your whole life was going to help you. Of course, the lollipops in the examining room drawers also helped. Patients felt better just by walking in the doors of Dr. Schneider's office because they could tell he was a man who truly wanted to help."

Born December 29, 1916 in Clinton, Missouri, Wilbur Donald Schneider was taught service to others at an early age. His parents chose to become medical missionaries in Brazil when Wilbur was five years old and moved immediately to Brazil, taking Wilbur and his brother, Ellsworth. They grew up in Rio de Janeiro where their father started a sanitarium to bring healthcare to the local populace. The family had a furlough only every seven years, but they were happy. "All my classes at school were in Portuguese until high school," Dr. Schneider reminisces. "At our dinner table, my father would say 'Wilbur will be the doctor and Ellsworth will be the dentist.' Both sons accomplished their father's dream.

Together, Wilbur and Ellsworth attended Pacific Union College in California where they were nicknamed "The Brazilnuts". Also known as "Mr. Culture" in college, Wilbur Schneider was teased because he opened doors for all the women. "But not for the men," he smiles. "They could open their own doors." It was there he also met his future wife, Margaret. Part of a singing trio, Margie was performing when he was in the audience. "I turned to my friends and said 'I want that blonde in the middle'. Then I had to ask how to approach her since the culture was different from Brazil. I asked her to a picnic where I got fresh and held her hand. After that she was a goner." They never dated anyone else.

Lacking funds, Wilbur Schneider transferred to Fresno State College, then to Walla Walla College in Washington where his aunt and uncle lived. "My uncle offered me a job and a place to live while I went to school and Aunt Marie was a really good cook, so that suited me just fine," he jokes. His studies were interrupted when his draft papers arrived in 1940 summoning him to service in the Army during World War II.

Wilbur's background in foreign languages stood him in good stead for the military. He is fluent in five languages – English, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and German. His grandparents emigrated from Germany in the 1800's and insisted their grandchildren learn to speak their language. "My grandmother would insist we speak to her in Deutsch before we got any cookies," says Dr. Schneider. "We learned very quickly." His German allowed him to speak with Nazi prisoners while he was stationed in Italy (where he learned Italian). He can remember being on a carrier with 5,000 soldiers; the ship was weaving in the ocean to avoid possible German submarine torpedoes. As part of the occupational forces right after the Allies invaded, Wilbur was assigned as a medical staff sergeant, frequently translating for the Army.

to be continued...

STEPS TO WRITING:

1. It's important to learn how to adapt your writing. While I have provided starting links, you will need to research "how to write a personal profile article" for yourself AND take notes to present to the class (they will be graded).
2. Read the examples below and check out the links.
3. Pick someone to interview that has these qualities:

   Older than 30

   Did something interesting (military, business owner, grandparents, hobbies, traveled, cool background or faced challenges)

   Willing to talk (make sure they understand this will take at least 30 minutes and possibly be published)

4. Write open-ended interview questions (also graded).
5. Set up a date to interview him/her (after we approve questions).
6. Make sure you can record the interview and transcribe it.

TIPS:

Find an angle. Instead of trying to focus on someone's career, family, background, and hobbies, choose only ONE and explore that. You can mention the other achievements in a sentence or two, but this will keep your article from jumping around.

Take yourself out (no I, you, me, we, us). You're trying to connect your reader with the subject. They don't need you standing between them.

Don't do a Question-and-Answer format. Save those for short, email-based interviews.

LINKS TO PROFILE EXAMPLES:

For this, I just googled: "Personal Profiles examples" and came up with thousands of hits. I know many of you will do your own research, but here are some links to get started:

Profiles | The New Yorker This one is the most professional.

Dr. Carol Morgan personality profile example | Jeff Louderback

Good Examples of Profiles in Journalism | the Vagabond Journalist (wordpress.com) This one has links to more articles.

DEVELOPING QUESTIONS:

Plan to come up with 10-12 general questions. As you begin speaking with your subject, you may find your conversation goes in a certain direction (HINT: This is where you find your angle).

What attracted you to this person in the first place? Start there and ask questions. How did he/she begin the journey?

Ask open-ended question vs. yes/no questions. (For example: Was it hard starting your business? vs. What was your greatest challenge starting your business?)

Guide the interview as needed. If you feel your subject getting off course, redirect him/her back.

Take hand-written notes/questions during the interview. It will help you remember what's important and you can ask follow-up questions from those notes.

Be respectful and grateful! Make sure you thank your subject for taking the time to talk to you and follow up with a copy of the article and another grateful note. People always remember the college student who was a well-mannered, respectful person and the world, and sometimes careers, were built on establishing those relationships.

SAMPLE LAYOUT:

1. Hook—maybe a story or in the middle of some action or a striking quote (1-2 paragraphs*)
2. Establish credentials—depending on what your focus is, you may want to give the reader background or explain why this person is important to you (1-2 paragraphs*)
3. Introduce the problem—this is where you analyze your subject's problem and show him/her solving it. Alternatively, you could show us the journey your subject took to become the amazing person he/she is. (10-15 paragraphs*)
4. Ending—a good ending reminds the audience about what they can learn from your subject, looks toward the future and/or it circles back to the hook and rounds out the story. (1 paragraph*)

*Commercial paragraphs are usually only 3-5 sentences.

**A good profile length is whatever the publisher requires (but normally around 900-1300 words). It's always better to have too much (so you can cut some out) than not enough.

Appendix E: Blog Assignment Sheet

A Personal Website Blog

Due Date: _____

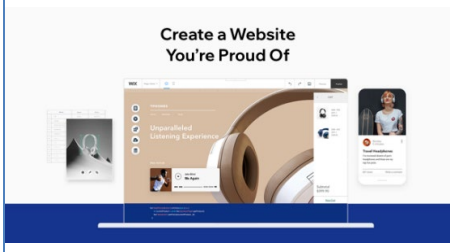
Purpose: You will be creating an online portfolio on WIX this semester that you can use for all your college work the next four years. WIX will allow you to store your personal reflections in a blog format and create links to your self-published files. If you want to familiarize yourself with it and go ahead and create your page, it would be beneficial and save you time later when you have more work.

Audience: While this website will be used primarily for grading, you can choose whether or not you want it to be published publicly (see steps for privacy below). I will not publish anything without your express permission.

STEPS TO CREATING YOUR WEBSITE :

WIX INSTRUCTIONS:

GO TO: WWW.WIX.COM



FREE WEBSITE BUILDER | CREATE A FREE WEBSITE | W

CREATE A PROFESSIONAL WEBSITE WITH THE WIX WEBSIT
CHOOSE A CUSTOMIZABLE DESIGNER-MADE TEMPLATE AN
FEATURES YOU NEED. GET STARTED TODAY.

WWW.WIX.COM

SELECT PORTFOLIO

SELECT WRITING PORTFOLIO

SELECT CHAT AND BLOG

LET IT BUILD IT FOR YOU.

LOOK AT YOUTUBE VIDEOS FOR INSTRUCTIONS IF YOU NEED HELP.

GO AHEAD AND MESS AROUND AND TAILOR IT TO YOUR OWN NEEDS.

*********IN CASE YOU WANT TO KEEP YOUR WEBSITE PRIVATE, FOLLOW THESE INSTRUCTIONS: (THIS MAY ESPECIALLY BE IMPORTANT FOR MINORS UNDER THE AGE OF 18...SPEAK WITH YOUR PARENTS). *******

IN SEO BASICS, THEY CAN SELECT TO NOT LET SEARCH ENGINES INDEX SITE. THIS MEANS ONLY FOLKS WHO HAVE THE URL CAN FIND IT. SIMILAR TO AN UNLISTED YOUTUBE VIDEO. SO THE GENERAL PUBLIC CANNOT FIND IT. I ALSO LET STUDENTS DECIDE THAT FOR THEIR PORTFOLIO. THE DEFAULT IS ON…BUT IT IS EASY TO TURN OFF

Blog 1: Write a memo—Tell the professor about yourself so she can help tailor future assignments toward your interests--Who I am, my goals, describe my life, my hopes/dreams if there was nothing to stop me, and What I hope to accomplish with writing this semester. What do I think learning to communicate could do for me?). You will upload this to the assignments tab on D2L. Memo will be due before the next class starts. Look on Word for templates and type in "memo" or google memo templates and pick one.

Blog 2: Read *15 Steps to Good Research | Georgetown University Library* . Georgetown University library provides an excellent place to start research and analyzing the quality of sources. Post a blog (#2) analyzing what you learned. 250 words.

Blog 3: Post reflection blog on WIX—What did you learn from peer edits? What are you noticing about other student papers and research? Describe your experiences with Galileo and research so far.

Blog 4: Post Blog #4: What were the results from Essay 1? What did I learn? What can I do to improve my writing? Compare it to Essay 2. What were the differences?

Blog 5: Use these readings to help get you started: Identifying Audiences - Purdue OWL® - Purdue University
The Perils of Public Writing | National Affairs
An Open Letter ... About Open Letters : NPR
Write a memo and post it to the assignments tab on D2L proposing your open letter topic and where you plan to submit the letter. Explain why you chose that topic and why that outlet. You may want to include data on previous letters published by this outlet. What do you think you could bring to the table that is unique and publishable? Copy and paste the data in this memo to Blog #5. Include your thoughts on this assignment (concerns, excitement, how do you think this could be beneficial? How could this open letter be used to impact the world around you? Who is your audience? How could you impact them specifically?)

Blog 6: The op-ed—What did you learn? Did your writing change through this assignment? How? Were there any specific realizations? What appealed to you? What didn't?

Blog 7: (we skipped this one). Discuss your thoughts on what you learned about people through Carnegie book. Reflect on how you can use those skills in your writing. How can you use them in your life? Your business/work life? Which stood out to you more? Did you have any revelations?

Blog 8: Write a 250-word blog post about digital communication. Have you ever had a confusing experience communicating digitally with someone? Tell us the story. If not, research digital miscommunications. Find out the cause for these and using what you learned in the research articles, give advice to your readers.

Blog 9: Write a 250-word post. What were your experiences with the personal interview you conducted for the article assignment? What did you learn? How did the writing go? How about the revision process? How did you feel about that? Was it harder/easier than previous

essays?

Blog 10: Write a blog post responding to comments on your blog from other students. 400-600 words. What were the responses? Were they critical, helpful, or neutral? Were there any surprises? Were they insightful? If so, how? If not, why not? Explain. Did the comments give you insight into your audience? How?

Blog 11: 400-600 words. Reflect on the ethos, pathos and logos of writing online. Break it down and explain it as you think it through. How might the digital element of blogging impact your ability to connect with your audience? Does it make a difference? What specific skills have you learned that could help you connect in the future? If you could give advice to anyone writing online comments, blogs, tweets, posts, what advice would you give them?

Blog 12: Write final blog post (#12). This should be your most thoughtful one. 600-1000 words.

Reflect over what you've learned in this class. Look at your public writing—the blogs, the open letter, the personal profile—how did your writing develop? Does this type of writing matter/Should we consider it to be important? Why/why not? What skills did you learn? What skills did you value most? How can you use these skills in your future? How can they be applied practically? Look at the actual act of submission to a public, commercial outlet—Did that impact your writing? If so, how? What impact did the wider circulation (beyond the classroom) have on you? Explain. How does knowing your work would be read commercially by a larger public audience shape your research, writing, and arguments? Do you think it was a good experience? Could it help you in the future with your writing? How? Overall, looking at the class, what changes can you see? What impacts to your writing did these experiences make?

Appendix F: Pre-Survey Form

English 1101 Public Writing Class Pre-Survey

Public writing is any type of writing you create for a commercial/public audience. It is not intended to be private or protected like academic papers or private communications.

1. Please circle any experience you have had writing for public viewing:

   Facebook Twitter Instagram Newspapers Magazines Newsletters School Publications Websites None

2. When you write publicly, whom do you envision for your audience? Who do you think are your intended recipients?

3. Do you consider this course (ENGL 1101) to be necessary?

   Yes No

   Please explain your answer:

4. Would you consider public writing to be a valuable skill to learn in your English classes at the university?

   Yes No

   Please explain your answer:

Appendix G: Post-Survey Interview Questions

English 1101 Post-Public Writing Class Interview Questions

1. Compared to your past research essays, was your enthusiasm for this class different at the beginning?
2. Did that change? If so, how? If not, explain.
3. Did knowing that your assignment was intended for commercial publication change your outlook on your work? If so, how? If not, explain.
4. Did knowing that your writing could be read by a local audience impact your current online writing you mentioned in your first survey? (Reminder: You were asked about Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Newspapers, Magazines, Newsletters, School Publications, and Websites.) If so, how? If not, explain.
5. Have these assignments changed your outlook on writing in general?
6. What were some of your most memorable experiences through these writing experiences?
7. What skills did you learn/improve during this assignment?
8. Do you see yourself using those skills beyond this class? If so, how?
9. Which assignment was your favorite? Why?
10. What suggestions or changes would you make to this assignment to help future students?
11. Please provide any other reflections from this assignment or the class where your outlook/enthusiasm has changed.