

DISCOVERING VOICE THROUGH MULTIMODAL WRITING:  
AN ANTI-RACIST MODEL FOR WRITING INSTRUCTORS

A Dissertation

by

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## ABSTRACT

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Texas A&M University-Commerce, 2021

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This dissertation contributes to the growing body of scholarship in rhetoric and composition responding to calls for explicitly anti-racist teaching and research practices. Titular examples of the field's widespread commitment to this work include official "Position Statements" by our flagship professional organizations, like the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) and the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE). Much like the aforementioned position statements, the CCCC's "Black Technical and Professional Communication Position Statement with Resource Guide" insists on inclusion for Black professionals and scholars in developing germane materials.

To this end, the current study brings together seminal scholarship on student voice, by Peter Elbow and Darsie Bowden, and multimodal writing by Jody Shipka and Gunther Kress, along with the dominant narrative by Toni Morrison. The author offers a new pedagogical framework, through a carefully designed sequence of writing and classroom activities, created to take up difficult conversations about race endemic. Ultimately, this dissertation argues that multimodal writing instruction can enable students of all races to discover their own voices and,

thereby, disrupt the master narratives. The author articulates a new theoretical framework for anti-racist writing instruction called pedagogy of rhetorical projection, a model for writing instructors. Pedagogy of rhetorical projection is a communicative trilateral approach to writing, interconnecting definition, identification, and application, affectionately referred to as DIA. To compose traditional and/or digital writing, students possess a cognitive definition of the conceptualization that warrants representation through identification and employs articulation through application; therefore, conscientious meanings reflect emblematic forms of communicative structures to convey cohesive content. This rhetorical framework provides students with linguistic prognosticism, which is supported by semantography, that aids in the expression of voice.

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I, humbly, recognize my mother, Selma Jean Copeland Reed, the first prolific writer, poignant speaker, and consummate intellectual I knew. Her contagious power to excel and belief to achieve resonate in me. Donald Edward Reed, my beloved brother and best friend, had a selfless nature and faith-filled determination. His champion spirit motivates me to be exceptional. My daddy, Fedies Reed, was a pillar of strength and a quiet grace in my life. His pure expectation and certainty transform my thinking.

I am extremely thankful for my daughter, Faith Skylar-Sedies Reed, who speaks words of confidence and encouragement when I need them most. Her fearless resilience inspires me to dream outside of the lines and to define my own ambitions. I, respectfully, dedicate this dissertation to her.

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## Chapter 1

### GIVING VOICE TO THE VOICELESS

When students find their voice and understand the power and magic of words, they are capable of expressing a myriad of emotions: frustration, anger, sadness, joy, wonder, curiosity. Through writing, students allow teachers to gain insight into their lives and innermost thoughts. Through writing, students can also share their strongest memories, deepest fears and hope for the future. And in classrooms where writing is shared, empathy, acceptance and appreciation for others take hold. The benefits go far beyond academics. When students find their voice, they can often discover more about themselves and the people around them. (Posnick-Goodwin)

This dissertation was inspired, in no small part, by a student I will call “Sharon.” “Sharon” is not the name of an individual but what Deborah Brandt calls a “composite”—a representative character drawing together traits of multiple people representing recurring trends/themes” (172). Writing from her position as an African American woman being pulled over by the police, “Sharon” told part of the story in her essay. But, when she talked about it during class, I was shocked to hear her devastating and dehumanizing feelings because she never expressed those feelings in her written essay. I was surprised to hear this version of her story since her written version was a monolithic, one-dimensional incidental recollection, which represented the dominant narrative; therefore, her voice was suppressed. However, her vocalized version was a polythetic, multi-dimensional spatial recollection, including multimodality that engaged the audience with so much depth to the narrative. Because of my shock, I was curious to know how she created two different versions of the same story. I wanted to understand what I did, or neglected to do, to contribute to these two diverse narratives. I had an epiphany.

Around the same time, I was taking a course in digital humanities where I had to create a multimodal text with a classmate. In the process of creating the multimodal assignment, I saw a possible solution to the problem I discovered with respect to “Sharon”’s stifled voice. This led to my first research question: How can multimodal writing disrupt the dominant narrative, that limits and shapes common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes? There are many definitions of multimodal writing.

Basically, “multimodal” means more than one modality at once. “Sharon”’s original essay was just the one mode—alphabetic text. I wanted to experience what would happen if students selected difficult projects, like police brutality, with multiple modalities--including audio, video, images, and other. As Gunther Kress declares, multimodality represents “dimensions of . . . mediated-meaning making” with “coded symbols” “that reflect “a community” (45).

Instead of being limited to one option—a traditional essay, “Sharon” had at her disposal what Jody Shipka described as the incredible versatility and polyvocality of multimodal writing. Thus, multimodality required utilizing “multiple semiotic resources and language varieties, changing shape and meaning, evolving based on existing technologies and mindsets” (“A Multimodal Task-Based”, 278). A key element of my project was the role played not just by the confines of traditional alphabet text, but by the actual subject matter. “Sharon”’s voice was stifled not only by the format itself, but also by the dominant narrative that influenced an audience’s understanding of how complex social issues unfolded, especially, when discussing issues of race and racism. By dominant narrative, I mean just the narrative taught by living everyday life that communicated *it* as the “way things are” (emphasis added). Literary theorist Jean-François Lyotard, in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, explains the

grand narrative or “master narrative” as oppressive and supporting the ideology that “one grand narrative excludes another” (4). Toni Morrison, author, literary critic, and professor, asserts that the “master narrative” upholds the ideology that “lives have no meaning and no depth without the white gaze.” In fact, its dominance negates the existence of another perspective (“Exposing”). “Sharon”’s essay reiterated the negation that Lyotard and Morrison’s definitions of the dominant narrative possess. In addition, revelation of the dominant narrative controlling “Sharon”’s story, and her voice, displayed the difficult experience with a police officer just being the result of an “officer doing his job,” rather than a systemic issue of racial injustice.

A 2016 study entitled “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart” reveals that more than 70 percent of people believe racism is the result of individual racist people and racist actions, not systemic or institutional issues. Their rationale is the dominant narrative—racism—is a problem with individual racists. So, if writing instructors taught tolerance, they would cure racism. The counter narrative, however, represents only 19 percent of people surveyed, who believe that racism is institutionalized and systemic (Pew Center of Research) reiterating the way the general public in this country goes about everyday life. (Appendix A) In “Counter-Narrative,” Raúl A. Mora, professor of English studies and literacy studies, attests that counter narratives “arise from the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized.” Therefore, it is my hope that writing instructors acknowledge “the idea of “counter,” itself, implies a space of resistance against traditional domination” so that students are offered opportunities to voice their narratives without meeting the opposition of the dominant narrative. For, “a counter-narrative goes beyond the notion that those in relative positions of power can just tell the stories of those in the margins” (Mora). Audre Lorde, writer, feminist, Civil Rights activist, confirms the presence of counter narratives by acknowledging

“there are very real differences between us of race, age, and sex. But, it is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects upon human behavior and expectation” (4). Because of my “denial and destroy” ascription to the persistent rationale of the dominant narrative, along with the aforementioned revelations, I arrived at a working title for my dissertation: *Discovering Voice Through Multimodal Writing: An Anti-Racist Model for Writing Instructors*.

This project offered an anti-racist model with clear roots in critical pedagogy, going all the way back to the 1970s with Paulo Friere’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire, leading advocate of critical pedagogy, contends that critical pedagogy is “conscientization in the classroom” with emphasis on “praxis” (23). To add to an understanding of anti-racist pedagogy, Bell Hooks, in *Teaching to Transgress*, declares it is a “devotion to learning . . . to counter-hegemonic act, a fundamental way to resist every strategy of white racist colonization” (4). Transdisciplinary teacher-researcher-activist, April Baker-Bell challenges instructors to “produce antiracist scholarship, praxis, and knowledge that work toward transformation and social change . . . addressing racial, cultural, and linguistic inequities in language and literacy education” in her article “*We Been Knowin: Toward an Antiracist Language & Literacy Education*” (1). At this juncture in my pursuit to determine the disconnect between the two narrative versions “Sharon” presented, I began reflecting on my instructional criteria.

I derived a second question for my project. The first, as I beforementioned, was the following: How can multimodal writing disrupt the dominant narrative that limits and shapes common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes? My second research question examined the question of “voice” and, thus, helping students “discover voice”: What

role does voice play in that process? Therefore, another key term in my study was voice. Peter Elbow's work on "voice" is perhaps best known and, certainly, the most influential on generations of teachers and scholars in our field. Elbow, in "About Voice and Writing," defines voice as notions of a "well-situated voice with authority . . . resonant voice or presence" (179). Sperling and Appleman's ascription is that voice is "rhetorical, linguistic, and educational" (73) as Darsie Bowden's contention is that "voice . . . is audible, measurable, and identifiable"; it imparts the "heart and soul" of a signature voice reflecting stylist choices ("Voice and Style" 243). My project utilized these definitions of "voice" as starting points, but my curiosity intensified for more understanding.

As I said, this project was, explicitly, an anti-racist one. The dominant narrative said that the classroom was no place for politics, and "voice" was a matter of individual expression. In "An Interview with James Berlin," the writer historian and professor, himself, firmly disagreed with this philosophy. In fact, Berlin's counter narrative disputed that ideology; moreover, he expressed that "All teaching is political" (McDonald and Berlin 26). To give "voice" to students, according to an antiracist framework, is to give voice to the stories arising from "the vantage point of those who have been historically marginalized" (Mora).

To this end, I utilized autoethnography to examine my experience as I journeyed to answer my two research questions and understood how I might improve my pedagogy. According to research scholars Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, autoethnography is "An approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience" (739). Garance Marechal, a senior lecturer, defines it as a "method of research that involves self-observation and reflexive investigation" (43).

For my study, that means I sought to describe and systemically analyze my personal experience as a writing instructor at a particular historic juncture: the global uprisings against systemic racism following the murder of George Floyd last summer. I, sincerely, tried to understand how stories, like the one “Sharon” was trying to talk about regarding her encounter with police—as an African American woman—might be silenced. Furthermore, I desired to know how writing instructors, committed to anti-racist pedagogy, could give voice to the counter narratives that critical race theory<sup>1</sup> argues we need to render visible to disrupt ongoing injustice.

Ultimately, then, my dissertation offered an approach—“pedagogy of rhetorical projection,” which I created as a new theoretical framework for anti-racist writing instruction—a trilateral approach to rhetoric, interconnecting definition, identification, and application (DIA). I, Benita Reed, was honored to create a rhetorical move and, then, share my approaches so that writing instructors have another pedagogical model for teaching their students (*Discovering Voice*). The trilateral diagram demonstrates the possibility to provide conscientious meanings reflect emblematic forms of communicative structures to convey voice. (Appendix B)

Furthermore, I offered a series of my own writing assignments and classroom activities designed as a direct response to the need for counter stories, through voice, to previously silenced stories. (Appendix C)

I lacked the ability to ignore the present state of our world. The myriad consecutive racial happenings, and their consequential responses across the world, forced me to do more than take notice. Silence in the classroom, as in the streets of major cities, served no longer as an option because the beast of such injustice acts of violence had demanded our attention and our

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<sup>1</sup>Critical race theory (CRT) began as a “scholarly movement in the early 1970s with the early writings of Derrick Bell, an African-American civil rights lawyer and the first Black to teach at Harvard Law School” (Delgado and Stefancic).

speech. The fires that raged in the streets, on buildings, and in cars, presently, equaled the fury that tempered within us—those teaching and learning. Intense topics emerged and, then, something major happened: my consciousness altered the nature of our course. In the midst of our course, we took a distinctive shift in rhetoric and composition marked as undeniable. Rhetoric scholars Shannon Carter and others, in the introduction “What *Does* Democracy Look Like?” in *Writing Democracy: The Political Turn in and Beyond the Trump Era*, identify this as a “political turn” where rhetoric and composition collide with activism; thus, analytical approaches shape pedagogy established in “historical materialism” (7-8). In addition, they acknowledge that academia has always entrenched the ‘isms’ within our discipline, but the present state of our world called for a “political turn” that reflects “Marx’s theory of historical materialism” (Carter et al., “What *Does* Democracy Look Like?” 9).

I, however, was cognizant that there had been a debate about the “politicization” of academia and concerning course content with social and political issues. Some composition scholars, like Maxine Hairston in her article “Diversity, Ideology, and Teaching Writing,” insist that social and political matters do not belong in the classroom. Hairston believes it is a “regressive model” to place the “social goals of the teacher before the educational needs of the student” (180). James Berlin, composition historian and scholar, asserts that “the political” is in everything; therefore, teaching is political (McDonald and Berlin 26). With the racially-charged, politically-tense historic juncture of 2020, where systemic racism was rampant, my students and I could not ignore the social, racial, and political issues. Like Berlin, Angela Baker-Bell warns against “schools and literacy learning [standing] on the outside of racial violence” (1). I contended that it was a complicated, well-established debate, but I support Berlin and Angela Baker-Bell’s position.

In “A Pedagogy for the Political Turn” in *Writing Democracy: The Political Turn in and Beyond the Trump Era*, Deborah Mutnick continues the argument that Berlin and Angela Baker-Bell build. Mutnick argues that Marx’s theory of “metabolic rift” establishes itself as an effectual pedagogical approach during turbulent, climatic times as these, where racial and social issues—like hate crimes, metaphorically, call for this “political turn” (258). The controversially, racially-charged “nationalist” the previous Administration set erect upon the backdrop of these climatic times. Mutnick’s article is applicable to my dissertation study because of the #BlackLivesMatters movement, different suffocating social issues, and racially violent occurrences, including overt police brutality and injustices. Therefore, Mutnick’s contention to employ Marx’s pedagogical principles, based on an “historical materialistic theoretical framework,” (260) accurately positions rhetoric and composition scholar/teacher/activists to design their course work. In essence, the classroom served as a bridge between the (raging) world, in which we lived, and the Composition I work we embraced to discover critical concepts.

For my study, establishing counter narratives of the dominant narrative might present divergent solutions that would lead to probable changes for more equitable practices. Again, Lyotard, in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, refers to the dominant narrative as the “grand narrative or master narrative because it is oppressive and supports the ideology that “one grand narrative excludes another”” (4). Similarly, author, literary critic, and professor, Toni Morrison assigns the phrase “master narrative” when referencing the dominant narrative. In her literary criticism *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison explicates that the “master narrative” upholds the ideology that “lives have no meaning and no depth without the white gaze” (*Toni*). Its dominance negates the existence of another perspective as Lyotard declares.

Steven Alvarez authors “Dismantling the Wall: Analyzing the Rhetorics of Shock and Writing Political Transformation,” in *Writing Democracy: The Political Turn in and Beyond the Trump Era*, where he analyzes the dichotomized “walls”—so effortlessly mentioned throughout much of the previous Administration—as symbols of division and concealment while that Administration attempted to present them as representations of social construct, reflecting unity and revelation. With the prevalence of “shock politics,” Alvarez demands a “political turn” as rhetoric scholars Carter and others beforementioned. Alvarez emphasizes “neoliberal ideologies”—that arose quite richly from the previous Administration—and inspires students to become provocateurs of truth. In fact, Alvarez challenges students to posture themselves as storytellers, who unveil truths about the social issues that “dismantle” our world (346). Alvarez and I agree that students possess the power to counter the dominant perspective of our world’s social issues—and the previous Administration—in their narratives, which might become “transforming” agents for our nation and for the fields of rhetoric and composition.

Tamara Isaak, professor and rhetoric scholar, shares the same sentiment as Alvarez and I; we believe the classroom is the opportune “space” to engage in dialogue and writing about the prevailing social injustices and issues. In her article “How Does It Feel to be a Problem at the 9/11 Museum?” in *Writing Democracy: The Political Turn in and Beyond the Trump Era*, Isaak sends a clarion call for action to institutions, such as “schools, museums, libraries,” to make “space” for distinctive discussions (328). Isaak acknowledges, as I, that it is more tragic to ignore the traumatic experiences of our culture instead of talking about them and analyzing our variant feelings regarding them. Though Isaak emphasizes a rise in Islamophobia after the tragedy of September 2011 in her article, I attested that the most recent human and social injustices, especially with police and their violations of human rights, warranted as much attention. Isaak

details the importance of planning class sessions and assignments to focus on specific aspects of occurrences and artifacts (329). Such course planning allowed my students a “space” to sift through encounters, interpretations, and analyses of them, including visualizations and intricate features. In essence, Alvarez and Isaak encourage students, as I, to analyze and utilize multimodalities that express their points of view.

However, I grew puzzled when I sensed students, most often, repeated or inferred the dominate narrative that some major news outlets communicated. I felt they feared ridicule by classmates, or even me, if they expressed their views. I, therefore, experienced a barrage of reiterated dominant narratives that the networks aired. Again, Lyotard’s definition comes into play; the dominant narrative is oppressive and supports the ideology that “one grand narrative excludes another” (4). Like Sharon’s voice—discussed earlier in this chapter—I thought theirs became ‘lost in translation,’ from hearing the same dominant narrative, repeatedly. Then, I had another epiphany: first, my students did not know they could disagree or, simply, express their own perspective on a narrative, especially a high-profile one, like the George Floyd killing; second, my instructions on the assignment needed to encourage them to think about and, then, structure their own point of view, even if it did not align with the major news outlets; third and most tragic, I sensed my students did not believe their voice had value, or mattered, enough for others to listen and take stake in them. For me, this understanding reflected a moment of discovery—a moment of self-illumination!

I realized that my students were caught in the matrix of the dominant narrative (DN). Carmen Kynard, Professor of English at Texas Christian University, echoes the “revolutionary transformation” for which I was advocating for my student/activists. Kynard, in a keynote speech at the Conference on Community Writing, in October of 2019, reiterates the “political turn” that

rhetoric scholars Carter and others detail in *Writing Democracy: The Political Turn in and Beyond the Trump Era*. Kynard, a rhetoric scholar and researcher, austerely, declares a need for a “political turn” to evoke, now, amid the racial and social struggles around our United States and political storms that surrounded the previous Administration. I concur with Kynard, who is also an activist, that scholar/teacher/activists must remain cognizant of our world and discuss pertinent issues with students. Further, Kynard has recognized that scholar/teacher/activists have already begun the “political turning” by addressing, in classrooms, the variant racial and social issues that plague this world. Just as I, Kynard, strongly, encourages students to articulate their points of view, and not that of the popular, dominant one (“*All I Need is One Mic*”). However, it was that voice they heard, most frequently, that seemed to have gained enormous authority, and appeared to be the most acceptable and expected perspective.

David Bartholomae, in “Inventing the University,” provides insight on the immense pressures student writers encounter when composing. The definition of “inventing the university” details that weight. “Basic” student writers are required “to speak our language, to speak as we do, to try on the peculiar ways of knowing, selecting, evaluating, reporting, concluding, and arguing that define the discourse of our community” (403). Bartholomae’s “basic” student writers, like our present-day student writers in Composition I college-level writing courses, attempt to fulfill the expectations we, scholar/teacher/activists, set although they are novice. To this end, Bartholomae acknowledges the implicit knowledge; we presume that student writers should have the “distinctive register” of academic discourse (415); however, scholar/teacher/activists must admit student writers need pedagogical guidance to learn academic language and rhetorical nuances. Acquiring such skills materializes an understanding and a

confidence “to speak with authority... with power and wisdom” (413) to specify their voice, whether it reflected a writer or an activist, who happened to be a student.

Toni Morrison, who self-proclaims has “spent [her] entire writing life trying to make sure that the white gaze was not the dominant one,” calls this DN the “master narrative” (*Toni*). As aforementioned, this term, “master narrative” or “grand narrative,” was first mentioned by Paolo Lyotard in 1979 (4). In the visual documentary, *Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am*, Morrison defines the DN as the “white male life.” It is “whatever ideological script that is being imposed by the people in authority on everybody else.” Morrison, further, asserts “the master narrative . . . has a certain point of view” (*Toni*) that polarizes people, and even characters in written literature, to express and to demand hegemonic control. In essence, Morrison maintains that this “white male gaze” perspective encourages and perpetuates division, especially to promulgate the authoritative presence and to cause all others to surrender to it. Angela Davis, an American political activist, academic, and author, contends that Morrison makes an unyielding “effort to discredit the notion that this white male gaze must be omnipresent” (*Toni*) though teachers, still, see and combat with an overwhelming use of the master narrative and this monolithic perspective.

In *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, a literary criticism by Morrison, she affirms that the DN “relates back to the construction of the American Literary Canon because it, too, is a type of standard that doesn’t leave much room for diversity” (5). Morrison criticizes this dominant, rigid style of composing even in the classic works, like *Moby Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn*. She acknowledges the gross negation of “Africanist presence” and highlights the dehumanization of the usual one black in the work, (5) though not significantly ingrained in the narrative, whose characterization was terribly marginalized and static with,

possibly, one vaguely recognizable quality upon search. That characteristic, severely, leaned on the “Americanness” of the white male main character for mere remembrance. Without the white male protagonist, that one black character might not have representation because, as Morrison acknowledges about the paralysis of the DN, “our lives have no meaning and no depth without the white gaze” (*Toni*). Morrison, further, declares that the DN speaks in everyday life. For example, when “little girls see that the most prized gift they can receive at Christmas time is this little white doll” (“Exposing”) the DN has communicated that to them. What Morrison maintains is that every gift desired is pronounced by what white life proclaims; therefore, it is presumed that all little girls, like writers and their readers, aspire to emulate white life. Importantly, Morrison declares that such an “assumption is that the reader is a white person” (*Toni*) which confirmed that the DN could limit and shape critical analyses and narratives, much like “Sharon”’s and now, George Floyd’s encounters with white law enforcement. Morrison confirms this, profoundly, significant point of the suppressing rhetorical influence, that I ascertained as the matrix of the DN, that convinced my students. Further, Morrison’s research on the overwhelming evidence of the DN in literature and in everyday life, firmly, supports the need for my study.

Within this framework, I enacted a pedagogical approach I coined the pedagogy of rhetorical projection. Pedagogy of rhetorical projection is defined as a communicative trilateral approach to writing—interconnecting definition, identification, and application, affectionately referred to as DIA. To compose traditional and/or digital writing, students possess a cognitive definition of the conceptualization that warrants representation through identification and employs articulation through application; therefore, conscientious meanings reflect emblematic forms of communicative structures to convey cohesive content.

After experiencing the actions and habits of my students, I learned that they engaged in gaming and technology very frequently. As Shannon Carter, author of *The Way Literacy Lives: Rhetorical Dexterity and Basic Writing Instructions*, I had come to understand and even value vernacular literacies. Various video games and movies, like *Star Trek*, *The Hunger Games*, and *Marvel Series*, along with other digital communicative forms, appeared entrenched in the literate lives of my students (98). Writing instructors, must realize the hybridity of the worlds; students were no longer traditionally writing, only, but digitally composing. Writing teachers must bridge traditional writing with digital tools as we connected conventional writing skills with digital rhetoric. With such intention, I shifted my writing pedagogy to meet my students' where they dwell—culturally, socially, politically. In fact, it had been a trilateral collaboration of my learning students' literacies, my instructional and curriculum experiences, and our racial and social world, during a global uprising against systemic racism following the murder of George Floyd. In recent years, our world had been politically-charged by the previous Administration, which Carmen Kynard discusses above. This politically-charged time in our world modified my Composition I curriculum to embrace the “political turn” that rhetoric scholars Carter and others detail in *Writing Democracy: The Political Turn in and Beyond the Trump Era*.

To navigate this rhetorical move, I considered a few significant aspects. I encouraged my students to express themselves, especially their view of the world, with authority. In addition, I validated my students' actual competencies and skills as I designed my activities from a complementary viewpoint. From an instructional perspective, I developed rhetorical activities and assignments for students that exhibited my dual duty: one, in accordance with the State of Texas' literacy requirements; and two, in adherence to my institution's curriculum requirements for a Composition I course, again, correspondingly the State of Texas. Thus, I displayed my

understanding of current theories and trends in rhetoric and writing. Significant to mention was my understanding, much like Shannon Carter's cognizance, that students conveyed their interpretations of signs and perspectives of languages and "literacies" (*The Way Literacy Lives* 14) to our rhetorical space; therefore, we, writing scholars/teachers, must place greater value on them and acknowledge them. Disregarding their forms of communication narrowed the value of their points of view and reflected an institution's desire to frame their discourse into a monolithic academic piece. Instead of requiring my students to compose the traditional four or five modality essays, I assigned a digital humanities project—with three or four modality essays—utilizing multimodal writing to disrupt the DN on common sense approaches to social issues, like hate crimes.

Within this context, I reshaped my own more rigid approach through pedagogy of rhetorical projection. Pedagogy of rhetorical projection acknowledges "vernacular literacies" so that students have communicative liberties to determine how they choose to articulate their view to an audience. As Adler-Kassner and Harrington assert, "literacy, power, and language are linked" (98) and, therefore, students confidently gave their experiences assigned literacies that conveyed their messages. With emphasis on "projection," this aspect of pedagogy assisted in guiding the curriculum and instruction. For this study, I explicitly chose to focus on the "political turn" since my students had been consumed with racial and social issues that the previous Administration politicized. Rhetoric scholars, of "What *Does* Democracy Look Like?," in *Writing Democracy: The Political Turn in and Beyond the Trump Era*, define the "political turn" as the "intensifying role of the university as factor for the production of knowledge, particularly as it circulates on the Internet, and for a labor force to meet the shifting needs of capital as a "crucial site in which wider social struggles are won and lost" (Carter et al. 17) in

what Cox and Nilsen call “the twilight of neoliberalism” (125-26). Lastly, the emphasis of my study reflected a focal point regarding “projection.” Students ‘projected’ their voice by employing strategies and techniques assigned through the pedagogy of rhetorical projection.

Gunther Kress, a founder of visual and multimodality studies, affirms the “pedagogic dimensions of multimodality” through “mediated meaning-making” of a mode, which is a culmination of “social-representational needs” that reflect “a community” and signify a purpose and function of a “social-semiotic theory” (212). Kress and I acknowledge that storytelling involved more than one mode and that meanings of signs revealed their social and communal significances. It is important, however, to mention that some signs might convey universal meanings that transcended race while other matters might divide us and, therefore, expressed segregated communicative connotations, like social and communal associations. Thus, with options to express her perspective, my student “Sharon” gladly moved from only the traditional rhetoric format to variant modes that engaged her and classmates through socio-communal communicative measures to represent her encounter and to deliver her message. Her employment of multiple modes reiterated my hypothesis for this study: multimodal writing disrupts the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes.

So, when my African American female student questioned an officer of the law, who personified white patriarchal authority—assuredly, upholding legal decrees and privileged demands shaped by white patriarchy—and objected to his unauthorized actions toward her, he became belligerent because this one “black” girl had the audacity to contest “an ideal standard” established centuries ago. The white police officer, thus, appeared unaware that he “see[s] the world in only extremes [that] severely cripple the individual and ultimately affect humanity” (Tagomori). Importantly, Morrison refers to this marginalized perspective as the “white

judgmental eye checking [her], editing [her], approving of [her]" (*Toni*). In my student's scenario, the white police officer was the "master narrative" voice Morrison "deconstructs" in her novels while she interrogates its "polarization" in her literary criticism. For, through the eyes of "judgment," "edit," and "approval," the officer commanded the silence of the African American female student and her submission to DN, like George Floyd and his compliance to authority, even unto his death. Finally, I learned how my student's digital humanities project highlighted the white officer's DN perspective and his tone deafness—ironically, another harsh act of the DN.

The #BlackLivesMatter movement, founded by Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi, after "the July 2013 acquittal of George Zimmerman for the shooting death of Trayvon Martin," (Langford and Speight 78) shed light on the DN that existed against African Americans. As a result of the continued police brutality, the senseless murders by police, and the lack of judicial responses to the inhumane treatment toward African Americans, the #BlackLivesMatter movement has grown into a global crusade. But, I insisted that the #BlackLivesMatter movement was more than a global fight; it underscored Morrison's acknowledgment that the "master narrative" has been given the authority to declare, with that critical "eye" of judgment, "what is ugliness [and] . . . worthlessness" (*Toni*) and, then, it emphasized what Dr. Catherine L. Langford and Montene' Speight assert: the "#BlackLivesMatter hashtag provides a rhetorical space to rescript Black bodies" that have been through "slavery, black codes, Jim Crow, lynching, poverty, and shootings, [which] coach White society that Black lives do not matter." Presently, "rescripted material violence against Black Americans," like shootings and asphyxiations by police, teaches society that "Black bodies," (79) like Black characters, are what Morrison describes as "worthless" or "props, jokes—no one took them seriously. . . ever" (*Toni*).

(The #BlackLivesMatter movement has made police brutality against African American people real, ubiquitous, and, as many argue, a clear hate crime.) In this interpretative dissertation, I examined “my experiences” and “cultural understanding” to determine ways in which multimodal writing projects, like the aforementioned one, can disrupt DN that limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes.

Derrick P. Aldridge, in “The Limits of Master Narratives in History Textbooks: An Analysis of Representations of Martin Luther King, Jr.,” criticizes historians who manipulate writing to make it become “one-dimensional . . . prescribed, oversimplified.” It is quite inappropriate that “some authors of King’s narratives have obscured important elements in King’s life and thought . . . [and] deny students critical lenses through which to examine, analyze, and interpret social issues today” (662). Aldridge acknowledged the overpowering nature of the DN that authorized a writer to control and even skew, or distort, a narrative that restricted the synthesis of details to understand critical analyses of societal issues. Like Morrison, Aldridge emphasized that the DN repudiated other viewpoints and, in doing so, silenced the voices of others, like my African American female student, or George Floyd, who experienced the unfortunate encounter of an officer characterizing DN. “Sharon,” my African American female student, was denied a voice by the DN, who evoked his DN voice. In fact, he ignored her mere representation as Aldridge and Morrison recognizes.

As a reminder, George Floyd was the African American man who died from asphyxiation because a white officer constricted his breathing, in public, by pressing his knee into Floyd’s neck as two other officers had knees in Floyd’s back and stomach. In both cases, audience might be forbidden to engage with the author and/or narrator to formulate our own analyses, regarding

the social issues of police brutality and hate crimes. The audience, actually, experienced the denial of the DN in George Floyd's encounter with the murderous DN.

With Morrison's understanding of the rigid effect of the DN, I experienced how my activities for multimodal writing projects, like my African American female students, can interrupt the DN by responding to the clarion call made by Jody Shipka: "bridge the gap between the text and practices typically associated with the composition classroom and the various other texts and practices students experience beyond the space of the classroom" ("Beyond Text and Talk" 212). In essence, Shipka's pedagogical approach widens the scope for students to exercise their communicative authority. With an amalgamation of rhetorical approaches from which to glean, I incorporated Shipka's recommendations within comprehensive assignments. My experience with developing and revising multimodal activities would provide a rhetorical avenue for students to express experiential selves—compositional, social, communal, personal—to convey their voice, and not that of the DN. Presently, teachers and students are "reading, thinking, and learning about composition as a course, object, and multimodal communicative practice" ("Beyond Text and Talk" 214) according to Shipka; however, the literature still had a few gaps in the scholarship. It is, mainly, confined to rhetoric and composition, had not discovered a method to assess multimodal writing that incorporated digital technologies and, largely, did not encourage students to utilize multimodal writing to communicate about complex social issues. To this end, I examined my "experience" and "understanding" by reflecting on ways digital storytelling efforts might utilize multimodal writing, expose multiple narrative perspectives, and present multiple analyses by disrupting the DN that can limit and shape common sense approaches to social issues, specifically hate crimes.

Digital storytelling emerged from Joe Lambert's international, Berkeley-based community writing initiative "The Center for Digital Storytelling," now named "StoryCenter".<sup>2</sup> StoryCenter is committed to "challenging white supremacy and supporting social justice, in every aspect of work" (Lambert). In this dissertation, my "introspective" focus on myself, as an instructor, was assessing my anti-racist activities to assist in digital storytelling efforts by Composition I students in a Texas community college institution about a pressing *social* issue rather than group productions that portray the stories of others. To this end, my study contributed to this field's growing understanding of digital storytelling to foster students' composition of "verbal/visual relationships," that enable them to execute "multi-analysis" (Shipka, "A Multimodal Task-Based" 278). Therefore, I examined my "experience" and "cultural understanding" how multimodal writing projects can disrupt the DN that limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues; thus, I join Jody Shipka and Joe Lambert in advocating for composing that interrelates technologies, encourages variant modes of composition and information, and presents critical analyses to create a comprehensive story.

In recent years, compositional studies has become increasingly concerned with multimodal writing, diverse narrative perspectives, and evaluations of digital composing/storytelling. Matthew Davis and Kathleen Blake Yancey argue, for example, for "materiality" and the incorporation of "multimodality and multimedia" for the development of scrapbooks and ePortfolios (1). Building upon Davis and Yancey's work, Suzanne M. Miller and Mary McVee suggest students work with different "digital/technologies and literacies" (201) and practice developing wide-ranging works. I concurred that digital humanities projects encouraged a rhetorical merger of varied modalities through divergent digital and technological techniques

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<sup>2</sup> StoryCenter declares to "create spaces for transforming lives and communities, through the acts of listening to and sharing stories, . . . to partner with organizations around the world on projects in story facilitation, digital storytelling, and other forms of digital media production" ("StoryCenter").

that convey meaningful content. A key study that addresses the need for diverse technologies and digital tools, while including multiple modes and media, is Jody Shipka's "A Multimodal Task-Based Framework for Composing," in which she devises "goal directed multimodal . . . composing" based on theories and "outcomes" (285) as evidence. Through her work, I could interpret an integration and interrelation of how digital technologies function to "bridge the gap between the texts and practices typically associated with the composition classroom experience beyond the space of the classroom" (Shipka, "Beyond Text and Talk" 212) as earlier expressed.

My current study built upon Shipka's work. It challenged me to design assignments and activities that encouraged students to employ various technologies and digital tools that demonstrate the interdependence of multiple modes, texts, and visualizations, along with multiple media. Yet, instead of the production of rhetoric and composition, I surveyed ways I "experienced" and "understood" multimodal writing projects created by my devised materials to convey digital storytelling that disrupted DNs that limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes. Consequently, this investigation matters to the field because it reveals different narrative perspectives to develop composite digital stories that present multiple analyses of current social issues, like hate crimes, that had been otherwise portrayed from a narrow, DN viewpoint. Shipka theorizes multimodal writing as a tool to "renegotiate" communicating rhetoric and composition in non-traditional ways; I, however, theorized its use, through my assignments and activities, for digital storytelling projects, employing multimodal writing, that disrupted the DN to analyze social issues, specifically hate crimes.

I analyzed my study from an autoethnographic method: it provided an opportunity for me to be introspective and reflexive of my assignments and my approaches, and to recall my

“personal experience in order to understand my cultural experience” (Ellis and Bochner 199) as students developed their digital humanities projects through multimodal writing. To share a “social space” with students, (Reed-Danahay 5) offers a level of insight that might magnify the effectiveness of my pedagogical approaches, rhetorical practices, and social and “cultural understanding” that assisted students in expressing their voice. My reflexive examination enlightened me on my pedagogical skills and strategies. Therefore, I have knowledge and information on how multimodal writing can disrupt the DN that can limit and shape complex social issues, like hate crimes.

### **Statement of the Problem**

As a teacher of English Composition I courses, I accept the responsibility and privilege of teaching students and facilitating their writing. Therefore, as a composition teacher, I am committed to learning about the discipline. In my nearly thirty years of teaching writing courses, both developmental and composition, I have observed a major concern in students’ writing: the constant recurrence of the DN despite the writers and their cultural and social influences. Students, more specifically, do not express their voice but that of the DN.

The State of Texas, as with most States, has legislative representatives who declare specific, minimal educational standards. I surmise that state legislatures—intensely—pressured independent school districts; in turn, the districts or school board representatives pressured administrators to strongly encourage their teachers to ensure their students pass standardized examinations. In line with the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for English Language Arts and Reading, according to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) in the State of Texas, the emphasis is on writing processes “planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing”; more specifically, primary TEKS criteria for writing are to provide “a clear

controlling idea, coherent organization, and sufficient detail” (Chapter 110). When detailing research content, ironically, one of the several TEKS expectations is “a clearly stated point of view” (Chapter 110) although elements for developing a point of view are not specified. In fact, the language of this massive TEKS document conveys a presumption that students know and understand how to express their point of view. My conflict is that TEA, through TEKS, should clearly communicate its point of view through the lists of the essential elements for composition.

When I taught secondary English, though teachers followed their State issued curriculum, January was the month when fellow English teachers joined to talk about the ‘game plan’. Therefore, secondary English teachers became unyielding, regarding students’ structure and development, while students’ point of view was nullified. English teachers’ overwhelming use of formulaic writing caused students to follow a pre-planned structure with a three-point thesis-controlled essay. In an article about formulaic writing, Cathy Birkenstein and Gerald Graff present an objective argument on this “dominant model” in secondary writing. Birkenstein and Graff identify the obvious about formulaic writing: it is defined as “cookie cutter” and they criticize students for “insert[ing] raw material into a mold” to produce a fixed written outcome without thought (“Point of View”). Nonetheless, Birkenstein and Graff confirm, as I, that this pedagogical rhetorical style aids students’ understanding of structure and development, especially as a template for multi-paragraph essays, so this dominating debate that formulaic writing is frowned upon by collegiate level instructors, overwhelmingly, overshadows the important issue: students abandon thinking critically about their topics and, therefore, forsake their perspective, which is my focal point for this study.

Though formulaic writing may facilitate essay structure and development, it does not aid students’ voice. I assert that the emphasis on structure and development comes at a cost—

namely, the expression of students' points of view. Students, quite frankly, repeat the DN—like the formulaic template—that they hear or read, sometimes, in the media. I believe, though, that assigning digital humanities projects, with multimodal writing, can disrupt the DN that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes.

As an entry-level writing course, English Composition I serves as a portal for students who enter higher education and need this freshman level writing course. Many traditional students, who transition immediately from high school into higher education, display their writing practices and skills in this course. Typically, students enrolled in English Composition I courses reveal their rhetorical habits. Preliminary writing assignments that function as diagnostic examinations convey students' written stylistic nuances, inconsistencies, deficiencies, along with their writing strengths. Research & Education Association editors develop a number of evaluation texts. For example, the College-Level Examination Program (*CLEP*) provides a written “assessment of [students'] knowledge, targeted review of exam content, and reinforcement in the areas where [students] need the most help” (Research & Education Association 12). I surmised that expression of voice, especially the counter narrative, was one area of interest. As stated in the aforementioned paragraph, formulaic writing that focuses on structure and development contributes to the rigidity of the DN. Because the DN, readily, prevails among students' writing, in Composition I courses, students' perspectives are not heard nor known. Oxymoronicly, the lack of voice *expressed* by students in their writing is a primary issue (emphasis added). Students, in essence, reproduce the same DN, just with different language; readers never know their unique points of view and, thus, do not gain insight on a particular topic. Therefore, I reflected on my experience how multimodal writing assignments,

through digital humanities projects, can disrupt the DN that can limit or shape common sense approaches to social issues, like hate crimes.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to provide a personalized account of how multimodal writing can disrupt the DN that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues. I examined my personal experience in one of my Composition I courses as students conveyed voice through digital humanities projects, utilizing multimodal writing to present digital stories. Hopefully, this research enables fellow peers in applicable disciplines to reflect on effective methods and practices.

Because the DN—also known as the “master narrative”—is defined by author and literary critic Toni Morrison as “white male life,” which is an “ideological script that is being imposed by the people in authority on everybody else,” (*Toni*) it limits and shapes a story. Morrison discusses the rigidity of the DN in her visual documentary “Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am” while she evaluates said dominant, rigid perspective in her literary criticism, *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*. In both of these works by Morrison, I am reminded of how monolithic a narrative could be if an author employs the DN. So, I agree with Toni Morrison that the writer using the DN implies, or categorically “assumes that the reader is a white person” (*Toni*) and, therefore, excludes those who are not white. I, however, theorized that multimodal writing, a style of digital humanities, might grant students a rhetorical avenue to express their voice, and not the DN.

Jody Shipka, an advocate and scholar of multimodal writing, endorses “bridg[ing] gaps” related to writing and its approaches, coupled with students’ educational and personal experiences (“Beyond Text and Talk” 212). Like Shipka, I wholeheartedly support joining

traditional writing conventions and digital rhetoric while incorporating their academic and individual lives. My experience and understanding of diverse rhetorical assignments can benefit students in their rhetorical pursuits. With such an amalgamation of rhetorical and personal options, students are able to communicate their perspective. Therefore, I take Shipka's theoretical approaches regarding multimodal writing a step further; I employ them in assignments and activities to aid students' conveyance of voice. A leading expressionist and proponent of voice, who has been most influential on generations of teachers and scholars in our field, Peter Elbow examined the significance of voice and, therefore, lends way to Martha Kolln and Loretta Gray's "voice as style" that I will explore through my experience in this study. According to Kolln and Gray, word choice and syntax aid in conveying point of view and message. More significantly, control in writing is an abstract element essential to express voice; thus, Kolln and Gray underscore key "features of language" that help students with the development of voice (122).

To inspect how multimodal writing can disrupt the DN that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes, I provided an autoethnographic assessment. Deborah Reed-Danahay espouses that the "social space" (5) afforded to me through introspection and evaluation, by the methodology of autoethnography, allowed me an opportunity with my students as they composed their digital humanities project. As a "participant-observation" ethnographer, according to researchers Robert M. Emerson et al., I could catalogue my experiences of "textualization" and coding of my assignments and activities to engage in dissecting my discoveries (26-28) of how students disrupted the DN by employing multimodal writing. Moreover, in Chapter 2—the Literature Review—research is discussed more extensively.

### **Research Questions**

Teachers of English Composition I, researching pedagogical strategies that address the rhetorical issue of students repetitiously positing the DN in writing, can evaluate multimodal writing. Jody Shipka, author of “A Multimodal Task-Based Framework for Composing,” asserts that “goal directed multimodal . . . composing” based on theories and “outcomes” (285) supports students’ use of . . . “verbal/visual relationships” (278) that project their perspective. To determine variant pedagogical approaches, teachers of English Composition I can perform reflective research that influences their instructional plans. Autoethnography serves as a framework that provides an avenue for me to examine my experiences with the paralysis students once exhibited when they, repetitively, postulated the DN in their writing. Deborah Reed-Danahay affirms that positioning the self within a social environment, like a classroom, autoethnography fastens the individual to the “cultural experience” through examinations and annotations (2). Thus, my ethnographical analysis of my experiences during this study examines the following questions:

1. How can multimodal writing disrupt the dominant narrative, that limits and shapes common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes?
2. What role does voice play in this process?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study is significant to investigate how multimodal writing can disrupt the DN that limits and shapes common sense approaches to complex social issues. Scholars, however, have researched effective uses and outcomes of multimodal writing in the discipline of English composition. Jody Millward, in a surveyed analysis in the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA), affirms present “training and curriculum innovation.” She encourages

teachers of English to engage in “pedagogical training in the uses of technologies” to enrich the praxis of teaching and learning and to incorporate “multimodal essays and electronic portfolios” (372). This approach to writing broadens the scope of writing for students, so they are no longer bound to the classroom nor the traditional rudiments of English Composition I. In digital rhetoric, scholars Douglas Eyman and Cheryl E. Ball contend that rhetoric, design, and code establish a standard of composing in their article “Composing for Digital Publication: Rhetoric, Design, and Code”. Eyman and Ball encourage equitable “usefulness” of linguistic and visual text, reflecting the purposes of the writer and the audience (116). It is apparent; scholarship continues to identify the need to incorporate technology and multimodal writing in the academy, specifically in English Composition courses. But a gap in the literature exists when examining how the use of multimodal writing can be utilized to disrupt the DN.

This study proposes to fill this gap in the literature. I will provide an autoethnographic assessment to detail my experiences and understanding how my students employ multimodal writing in a digital humanities project to disrupt the DN of social issues, like hate crimes. Deborah Reed-Danahay argues that an individual’s position within a “social space” promotes a “self-reflexive” analysis, where he/she identifies critical approaches (5). My detailed observations of my experiences of interactions and collaborations in developing and designing multimodal writing assignments and activities aid my evaluation how students convey their perspective and, thus, disrupt the DN. Researchers Emerson et al. delineate the methodical process of a “participant-observation” ethnographer. They expound on the intricacy of the “textualization” and coding of field notes to engage in analyzing findings (26-28). Such information renders insightful content that provides critical approaches for teachers of English Composition I and adds to the scholarship on multimodal writing and compositional studies.

To determine how multimodal writing can disrupt the DN, I examine my assignments and activities from “my personal and cultural experiences” (Ellis and Bochner 199) with the digital humanities projects of students in my current English Composition I courses. I employ a multimodal social semiotics methodology to assess the beforementioned. Rich Ledema explains multimodality as a “practice or representation in all its semiotic complexity and richness” (39) while Gunther Kress, a semiotician and scholar of multimodal writing, expounds on multimodality by defining mode as “a socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning.” Kress, with Theo Van Leeuwen, further asserts that [d]ifferent modes offer different potentials for making meaning” (79). By analyzing my systematic approaches to aid students’ multimodal writing and describing my “personal experience to understand cultural experience” (Ellis and Bochner 199) of interactivities I designed to create digital humanities projects, I reflect how my pedagogical strategies to guide socio-cultural meanings of diverse modes. Ledema, along with scholars, provide a comprehensive definition of multimodality that reflects social semiotics, a theory coined by M. A. K. Halliday, “the pioneer of social semiotics,” (Angermuller et al. 263) though the epistemology of this semiotic theory is attributed to Ferdinand de Saussure (Yakin and Totu 4).

Principal multimodal theorist Jody Shipka concurs with the aforementioned multimodal social semiotic scholars. Shipka, in “A Multimodal Task-Based Framework for Composing,” confirms that “goal directed multimodal . . . composing” based on theories and “outcomes” (285) support students’ use of “multiple media outlets,” along with “verbal/visual relationships” (278) to design and construct communicative pieces of discourse. In fact, Shipka theorizes multimodal writing as a tool to “renegotiate” communicating rhetoric and composition in non-traditional ways. I, however, theorize its use for digital humanities projects, through multimodal

writing, that disrupt the DN to analyze social issues, critically. This study, then, provides scholarly insight and bridges a gap in the literature on multimodal writing, including multimodal social semiotic, and voice in compositional studies.

Much like Jody Millward's assertion that the collaboration of technology and composition improves academia and the discipline, Tara McPherson—a chief digital humanities theorist—reiterates the need to “bridge the gap” (as Jody Shipka attests) between learning in the academy and practical application in the field. She declares the following six maxims—“remember history, consider context, make the future (hands-on), broaden participation, foster literacies, and learn to toggle” (McPherson19). McPherson's tenets, as do I with the pedagogy of rhetorical projection, foster a pedagogical ideology that aligns technology and composition. To survey how my pedagogical assignments for students aid them in expressing a specific point of view in their digital humanities project, utilizing multimodal writing, I explore the new expressionist movement. Through my exploration, I hope to examine the effectiveness of my assignments, and my experience and understanding, as students disrupt the DN for complex social issues, like hate crimes.

David Murray, an expressionist, endorses the process approach to writing (12) that so many teachers of composition utilize today. However, Murray's instructional position to emphasize the process of writing for students countered a focal point of past and current compositional writing teachers: structure (14). James Berlin, composition historian, coins this style of composition instruction as “Brahminical romanticism” because it focuses on self-realization (*Rhetoric and Reality* 44-5). I maintain that students have a socio-cultural link with the content they present because they select the topic, or hate crime, of their choice. Therefore, I surmise they realize themselves within the framework of the social issues. In terms of

construction of digital humanities projects, I bridge Berlin's concept with that of compositionists, during the new expressivist movement. They reiterated Murray's dual perspective: *instructional strategy* that supported his *compositional philosophy* to emphasize content more than structure (emphasis added).

Significantly, this process focused on the writer and the development of himself as he discovers his voice through the chosen subject. Expressionist leader Donald Graves affirms Murray and Berlin's analyses about the importance of voice. Graves even contends that "writing collapses . . . its own weight" (227) when it is void of this, sometimes, elusive factor that leverages an authentic point of view versus the authoritarian perspective, hence, the DN. Since voice is that essential authorial element that establishes the author's point of view, I believe it is worth examining how the new expressionist movement shapes an author's voice through multimodal writing as it disrupts the DN for complex social issues.

Peter Elbow, a leading expressionist and proponent of voice, identifies five types of voice: audible voice or intonation, dramatic voice, recognizable or distinct voice, voice with authority, and resonant voice or presence ("About Voice and Writing" xxiv-xxxv). However, for this study, I explore "voice as style" according to Martha Kolln and Loretta Gray's "features of language" (122). Kolln and Gray's more recent approach derives from Elbow's earlier assertion about voice. More specifically, I examine diction—"choice of words"—and metadiscourse—"the signals that help guide the reader through the text as well as communicate the writer's credibility and authority," (Kolln and Gray 122) two preminent *features* of voice that Kolln and Gray declare essential to create a writer's voice. Therefore, I want to examine how my experience with the expressionist's ideology of diction and metadiscourse supports multimodal

writing, a style of digital humanities, that can disrupt the DN with common sense approaches on complex social issues, such as hate crimes.

After nearly thirty years of teaching writing courses—developmental and English Composition I and II courses—at universities and community colleges full-time and part-time, I am intrigued by this subject matter. I am bewildered, particularly, by traditional higher education students who transition from high school into the college or university English Composition setting. (As a notation, my study was not exclusive to this demographic. I did have non-traditional students.) They, brazenly, present their opinionated voice on myriad topics through social media outlets, yet they negate declaring a point of view in traditional composition writing. I am concerned that they diminish their voice, or simply feel their voice is insignificant, so they resort to repeating the DN. David H. Stevens, in *The Changing Humanities*, “tabulates” that “rhetorical qualities” and “linguistic patterns” construct the “distinctive style” of voice (237). Even in my role as a composition teacher-tutor in writing or tutoring centers and writing laboratories, I have grown baffled by students’ adoption of the DN because I believe as Darsie Bowden that “voice locates the source of its explanatory power in the human voice, which is audible, measurable, and identifiable” (“Voice and Style” 233). So, after years and years of conferencing students on their writing, I have grown more inquisitive about my study. I, therefore, inspect my experience to reflect how students’ employment of multimodal writing, along with “diction” and “metadiscourse,” can disrupt the DN for their digital humanities project on complex social issues, like hate crimes.

### **Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of this dissertation, the following definitions apply:

***Autoethnography.*** According to Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, autoethnography is “an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (739).

***Field Research/Notes.*** Robert M. Emerson et al. declare that field research “involves the study of groups and people as they go about their everyday lives” (1) while the University of Southern California Research Guides define field notes as “notes created . . . to remember and record the behaviors, activities, events, and other features of an observation. Field notes . . . produce meaning and understanding of the culture, social situation, and phenomenon being studied” (115).

***Master Narrative.*** Author and literary critic, Toni Morrison states that the master narrative is “white male life” and “whatever ideological script that is being imposed by the people in authority on everybody else” (*Toni*).

***Multimodal Writing.*** Multimodal writing, according to scholar Cynthia Selfe, involves writing variant modes: “text, visuals, video, audio, etc.” Specifically, multimodal denotes “exceeding the alphabetic and may include, images, animations, color, words, music, and sound” (616).

***Multimodal Social Semiotic.*** This approach to multimodality “means to describe a practice or representation in all its semiotic complexity and richness” (Ledema 39).

***Social Semiotic.*** This theoretical framework assesses the “meaning in all its appearances, in all social occasions and in all cultural sites” (Kress 2).

***Voice.*** Darsie Bowden contends that “voice is the writer coming through the words, the sense that a real person is speaking to us and cares about the message. It is the heart and soul of the writing, the magic, the wit, the feeling, the life and breath. When the writer is engaged

personally with the topic, he/she imparts a personal tone and flavor to the piece that is unmistakably his/hers alone. And it is that individual something—different from the mark of all other writers—that we call Voice” (“Voice and Style” 243).

### **Limitations**

This study has a limited scope to the views and encounters of one English professor at a single, multi-cultural public community college in Texas. The research, strictly, reflects the observations and interpretations that I experience. My previous pedagogical experiences and rhetorical knowledge of compositional assignments suggest plausible constraints. I provide my personal narrative of inspections of occurrences and interactions with students in addition to my account of their collaborations. These students are enrolled in my current English Composition I courses.

### **Delimitations**

This study has delimitations; it is delimited to only my English Composition I students currently enrolled. A qualitative research is ascribed to examine this study. Specifically, an interpretative autoethnographic framework assesses the research questions.

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions are thoughts presumed to be true though they are not (yet) verified. To preclude misrepresentation, researchers engage in ample investigations to acknowledge and discuss probable assumptions (Fischer and Stenner 89). This study assumes that students enrolled in my current English Composition I course complete the multimodal writing project. Moreover, this study assumes that students perceive that the multimodal writing project helps them understand how to convey their perspective and equips them to persist in communicating their viewpoint in future writing assignments.

As the researcher, I assume this study demonstrates the effectiveness of multimodal writing. I, further, assume that this study inspires more teachers of English composition I to utilize multimodal writing projects.

### **Organization of Dissertation Chapters**

This dissertation is organized in five chapters. Chapter One presents an introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research question, significance of the study, definitions of terms, limitations, delimitations, and assumptions. Chapter Two offers a review of the scholarly discourse related to areas significant to this study: (auto)ethnography, social semiotic, compositional studies, digital rhetoric, digital humanities, DN. Chapter Three outlines a limited research study of my current English Composition I students; therefore, the method of procedure, including the design of the study, instrumentation, sample selection, data gathering, and treatment of data, frames the study. Chapter Four provides a detailed presentation of data that reflects my experiences and understandings as students employ multimodal writing to a project designed to disrupt the DN. Chapter Five closes the dissertation with a summary of the study and the findings, conclusions, implications, and recommendations of future research related to the utilization of a multimodal writing project.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this study, I argue that multimodal writing disrupts DN that limit and shape commonsense approaches to complex social issues, like alcoholism and hate crimes. Through digital humanities and digital rhetoric, multimodal writing constructs more non-linear discourse that allows students and audiences to engage in more multifarious discussions about social issues. Therefore, for my dissertation study, a few areas of appraisal are essential: voice, digital humanities, digital rhetoric, multimodal writing, and the dominant narrative (DN).

#### **Voice**

Peter Elbow, a proponent of voice and leading expressionist, provided an objective, comprehensive view of voice in his article “Voice in Writing Again: Embracing Contraries.” Elbow, candidly, presented the differing theories on voice as an important rhetorical tool. For example, in this article, Elbow revealed contrasting standpoints about voice as an “authentic self” or the “fabricated self” (172). Nonetheless, Elbow’s point of view was that a writer should develop a voice, which might change based on the significant factors, like subject matter; he believed voice was essential and “emphasizes the limitations of compromise in composition” (174) while discussing his different pedagogical compositional strategies to aid students in the process of recognizing their voice. Significantly, in this article, Elbow underscored that “sincerity” and “resonance” are interwoven in shaping voice (179), yet he was cognizant that “good writing” requires more than voice.

Melanie Sperling and Deborah Appleman, authors of “Voice in the Context of Literacy Studies,” as Peter Elbow, recognized the contradiction of voice that caused student writers to be apprehensive about projecting one. However, Sperling and Appleman contested that voice

conveyed a specific viewpoint, through language that reflects individual, social, and cultural influences and experiences. Sperling and Appleman conversed about the divergent foundations of voice—“rhetorical, linguistic, and educational” (73). Significantly, Sperling and Appleman supported the theoretical perspective that voice could be taught. As a rhetorical tool shaped by the student writer and his language, among other inspirations, voice was projected. In my study, I examined my experiences and understanding how multimodal writing, through a digital humanities project, could disrupt the DN of complex social issues, so Sperling and Appleman’s theory aided how voice was developed.

### **Digital Humanities--Pedagogy**

Jody Millward published an analysis in the Two-Year College English Association (TYCA) where she recognized the current integration of technology and pedagogy in composition courses; thus, TYCA analyzed a survey about the teaching and learning praxis, the need for interdisciplinary composition, the use of technology in writing, and the means to assess the teaching and learning of writing with and through technologies. TYCA identified a few significant areas of emphasis: “multimodal essays and electronic portfolios, pedagogical training in the uses of technologies, and intersections of training and curriculum innovation” (372). This documentation encouraged instructors of FYC courses to (re)design assignments and activities to ensure multiple modes convey contemplated analyses of social issues.

Tara McPherson, a chief digital humanities theorist for my study, outlined a set of rules to employ “technologies” with the intent to bridge the gap between the learning in the academy and the practical application in the field. In “A Rule Set for the Future,” McPherson provided six maxims: “remember history, consider context, make the future (hands-on), broaden participation, foster literacies, and learn to toggle” (19). In her article, McPherson desired to

emphasize the necessity for academia to accept the accelerating technology and information changes related to communicating and disseminating content. This work might serve as a call to action for Composition I instructors to engage in digital humanities, that includes multimodal writing. Students could demonstrate their use of technology, and variant modes, to connect history with social issues and express their understanding of the connections.

Stephen Brier, in his essay “Where’s the Pedagogy? The Role of Teaching and Learning in the Digital Humanities,” detailed the conversion of his classroom through “digital humanities practices”; in fact, he noted that digital humanities “reshaped [his] teaching and learning” (390-91). Brier pronounced the employment of digital tools “to support collaboration, integrative learning, community building, and student-centered pedagogies” (395-96). He, further, endorsed pedagogical approaches to learning and utilizing digital tool to compose multimodal writing. Brier’s work affirmed my argument that multimodal writing can disrupt DN that stifled perspectives to complex social issues. In *Digital Humanities Pedagogy: Practices, Principles, and Politics*, Brett D. Hirsch provided pedagogical illustrations and models of digital humanities projects. More importantly, Hirsch presented digital humanities as a substantiated discipline with theoretical practices signifying pedagogical methods, which cultivated a plan for the academy to establish its necessity. Hirsch proclaimed that his work “brings the technological and the human together” (17) where students engaged in multimodal writing that reveals complex issues in more nuanced ways.

### **Digital Humanities—Scholarship**

Shannon Carter’s digital humanities project *Remixing Rural Texas: Local Texts, Global Contexts* (RRT) served as an archetype for my study. Carter’s digital humanities project portrayed qualities of digital humanities projects and their intricate developmental aspects (A

Digital Humanities Project). In an insightful article, researchers Carter et al. displayed the “need [for] meaningful ways to capture that dynamic interplay through which texts and related literacy practices create meaning” (“Beyond Territorial Disputes” 40). Significant to mention is the magnitude of knowledge and influence Carter’s RRT provided, regarding clarity of diverse textual modes and digital tools; the interdisciplinary rhetorical intricacy of texts, aesthetic appeals, audio, video, and divergent digital technologies reveal a harmonious project about depths of human conditions. Therefore, my study highlighted my experiences and understanding of the best practices of digital humanities disposable to students when they desired to communicate a multimodal message that imparted the complexities of social issues.

“How is Digital Mapping Changing the Way We Visualize Racism,” a digital humanities project by Scott Nesbitt and President Edward L. Ayers of the University of Richmond, was a project funded by the We the People program. It, too, served as a good model of multimodal work that transmits a clear message. The platform designed, along with the divergent modes of writing and the visualizations, portrayed a representation of a digital humanities project. Nesbitt and Ayers’ project underscored my study that digital humanities had the potential to enable writers and readers to reveal the particulars of social issues and questions, which allowed them to contemplate and possibly participate in solutions.

Like Hirsch, Bryan W. Carter disclosed several approaches in digital humanities and admitted its popularity in *Digital Humanities: Current Perspective, Practices, and Research*. Carter recognized digital humanities as the most prominent form of multimodal writing; consequently, he authenticated multimodal writing and digital humanities were creditable rhetorical situations that continued to develop and thrive in academia. His book presented content about divergent “digital communications and advanced visualization” involved in the

“step-by-step” production process (B. Carter 22). Significantly, Carter included case studies and critiques of case studies to aid instruction and learning; thus, his work assisted me in determining best practices for developing activities of digital humanities that aided students in communicating about complex social issues.

Joe Lambert, the founder of StoryCenter, formerly the Center for Digital Storytelling, detailed the significance in converting traditional storytelling into digital and media formats. He and his team at StoryCenter were devoted to partnering with variant people and organizations around the world to convey stories in diverse and intriguing manners. In fact, he was committed to challenging white supremacy and supporting social justice, in every aspect of work” to communicate stories that “transform lives and communities” (“StoryCenter”). Lambert advocated utilizing divergent styles to formulate stories that were impactful.

### **Digital Rhetoric**

Douglas Eyman, a principal scholar of digital rhetoric, with Cheryl E. Ball contended that digital rhetoric was essential for composing. In their article “Composing for Digital Publication: Rhetoric, Design, and Code,” Eyman and Ball declared that rhetoric, design, and code established a standard of composing that encouraged equitable “usefulness” of linguistic and visual text, reflecting the purposes of the writer and the audience. Regarding design, Eyman and Ball asserted that style and organization shape the functionality of the multiple modes and the concept while code maintained the structure of digital texts to ensure appropriate formats and interactive actions incorporated (116). With an historical view of digital rhetoric and its rise presented in *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, and Practice*, Douglas Eyman referenced theories, methods, and practices to demonstrate the application of digital rhetoric and its practicality. Moreover, Eyman exhibited an evolution of the variant digital tools and

technologies; then, he presented actual projects that digital rhetoric scholars and practitioners have modified. This exposition validated digital rhetoric as a reputable discipline of study, which displayed effective practices of digital humanities.

Like Eyman and Ball, Lisa Gerrard is a proponent of digital rhetoric. As a writing professor and author of “Writing in Multiple Media,” she thoroughly detailed current pedagogic strategies for composition writing. In fact, Gerrard approached the incorporation of computers and other technological tools with simple, careful processes, sensing apprehension among writing colleagues and their students. She inspired novice writers by acknowledging the utilization of writing as a process, then, engaging divergent digital tools and including multimodal writing so that they maintained “control over their composing strategies” (410-11). Gerrard even provided specific assignments that expressed methods for transitioning traditional writing into digital rhetoric, including digital products and design suggestions.

In an earlier article, “Rhetoric, Community, and Cyberspace,” James P. Zappen and fellow writers acknowledged the change in communicative exchange and interpretation. They recognized the community as an integral part of rhetoric. A rhetor has the responsibility to communicate with individuals in a community, which might shape the individuals’ understanding and/or may reveal a complex relationship. Rhetoric scholars Zappen and others believed that potential divisive language in traditionally written text might be transformed into through digital rhetoric and, thus, transmitted even complex issues acceptably and respectfully (Zappen et al. 402). In “Digital Rhetoric: Toward and Integrated Theory,” Zappen expressed resistance to change strategies and techniques of composing that had been practiced for many years; nevertheless, he endorsed an integration of the traditional and the digital to create a rhetoric that encompassed digital spaces and social communities through unique opportunities to

express individuality and collaborative relationships (323). Zappen detailed the features, provisions, and formations of digital rhetoric while identifying common issues. Significantly, Zappen explored the globalization of digital rhetoric, both social exploration and rhetorical exposition, which helped me determine best practices for composing assignments for digital humanities.

Jennifer Sano-Franchini, in her study “Cultural Rhetorics and the Digital Humanities: Toward Cultural Reflexivity in Digital Making,” detailed how a cultural analysis permits divergent “bodies of digital texts” (49) to communicate a cohesive message while maintaining their intricacies. Instead of individualizing variant theoretical studies for diverse areas of interest, Sano-Franchini contended “cultural rhetorics is an interdisciplinary field of study, a scholarly practice, and a category for interpreting the world” (52). In fact, Sano-Franchini asserted that digital humanities produces content “in ways that are attentive to race, gender, sexuality, class, . . . and other kinds of difference” (50) that many outlets, including mainstream, strategically neglect. My study demonstrated how I “systematically analyzed my personal experience . . . [and] understanding [of my] cultural experience” (Ellis and Bochner 23) as students employed Sano-Franchini’s position on cultural rhetoric to dissect and discuss complex social issues that might be limited and narrowed without the inclusion of multimodal writing.

### **Multimodal Writing**

The incorporation of multiple modes has grown in popularity as instructors understand the need for students to embrace the interrelated nature of composition. Interestingly, students demonstrated a greater engagement while developing multimodal writing. In her essay “A Multimodal Task-Based Framework for Composing,” Jody Shipka, my principal multimodal theorist, affirmed “goal directed multimodal . . . composing” based on theories and “outcomes”

(285) supporting students' use of "multiple media outlets," along with "verbal/visual relationships," and their aptitude to execute a "multi-analysis" (278). Shipka's pedagogical approaches facilitated my identification of best practices of digital humanities to facilitate students' discussions of social issues. In her essay "Beyond Text and Talk: A Multimodal Approach to First-Year Composition," Shipka argued "that our courses need to do more to bridge the gap between the texts and practices typically associated with the composition classroom experience beyond the space of the classroom" (212). My study reflected best digital humanities practices that aid in bridging the gap that Shipka reveals in her discussion. In *Pitt Comp Literacy Culture: Toward a Composition Made Whole*, Shipka reiterated her theory of "precisely defined goal statements," so students "become increasingly cognizant of how texts are comprised of a series of rhetorical, technological, and methodological moves" (112). When contending the need for multimodal writing with the intent to transmit complex social issues, Shipka provided objectives to shape best practices of digital humanities in Composition I courses, establishing a multimodal approach.

In "Made Not Only in Words: Composition in a New Key," Kathleen Blake Yancey underscored the necessity to revamp composition with "intertextual circulation" of writing as it correlates with "real world" genres (311) and, thus, enabled students to communicate complex issues in distinctive ways. Yancey proclaimed the employment of "contexts of time and space, . . . circulating across and around rhetorical situations both inside and outside school" (308) also helped them. Kathy A. Mills, in her essay "Multiliteracies: Interrogating Competing Discourses," probed the emerging discourses that have evolved from the different "contemporary" texts. Mills evaluated the cultural and etymological relevance when assessing multimodal literacies to communicate a message, which aided my determining the best practices

of digital humanities (112). Gunther Kress and Staffan Selander, in “Multimodal Design, Learning and Cultures of Recognition,” outlined the “virtual space, blended media, and new communicative patterns” (265) of multimodal projects. In their article, Kress and Selander identified theoretical principles and recognized the interactive processes involved in building meaningful representations of a subject. I examined Kress and Selander’s findings to reflect and influence how I “systematically analyzed [my] experience and culturally experienced” (Ellis and Bochner 23) how multimodal writing disrupted DN and permitted more non-linear discussions of complex social issues.

In *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*, Gunther Kress continued his scholarly work on multimodality. Kress, a founding father of multimodal writing, discussed and illustrated the “mixing” and “remixing” of divergent modes (45), which were reflected in Shannon Carter’s digital humanities project *Remixing Rural Texas: Local Texts, Global Contexts* (RRT). Kress continued to acknowledge that multimodal writing moves beyond text and language though it did not exclude them. Communal, social, and cultural references have a significant impact on “meaning making” in multimodal writing (45). With “coded symbols” and “modal ensembles,” (28) among other evaluations, Kress continued his life’s work of multimodal writing to demonstrate its relevance as a discipline. Kress’ work aided in my examination of my experience as students employed multimodal writing to demonstrate how it disrupted the DN when discussing complex social issues, like hate crimes.

Suzanne M. Miller and Mary McVee, the authors of *Multimodal Composing in Classrooms: Learning and Teaching in a Digital World*, are advocates of multimodal writing and encourage students to employ variant “digital/technologies and literacies” (201). Miller and McVee declared students’ writing begins to deepen, through interactive assignments, learning

technologically driven writing strategies, and effective digital techniques. As proponents of multidimensional composition, they discussed the analyses and interconnectivities students participated in to produce non-linear work about complex issues. The authors, also, included case studies to serve as paradigms for multimodal writing. Carl Whithaus and Tracey Bowen's book *Multimodal Literacies and Emerging Genres* disclosed the resistance prevalent among instructors and administrators, along with the preconceived limitations to compose multimodal work. However, Whithaus and Bowen presented theoretical and practical information that encouraged instructors to gain the knowledge and skills "to help students become more aware of these ways of working across multiple modes of communication" (2). They learned to articulate details about social issues and interrogated them to ponder conditions and assess probable solutions. Whithaus and Bowen, then, articulated their advocacy for "sustainable" and "relevant" student writing that included different genres and pedagogical approaches, "infusing multimodal and multimedia" (17) to reveal the simplicity of composing multimodal writing while enabling students' chances to detail complex issues.

Fernando Sánchez and others merged their research about FYC and multimodal writing in "Engaging Writing about Writing Theory and Multimodal Praxis: Remediating WAW for English 106: First Year Composition." Their approach reflected a conversion of a writing program to replicate the changes in rhetorical situations and literacy deliveries. Furthermore, Sánchez and fellow colleagues professed a more functional matriculation of multiple modes of writing with the utilization of diverse tools (Sánchez et al. 127). Like Miller and McVee, they established the need to move students from linear writing to multi-dimensional, multimodal rhetorical composition, and pragmatic approaches.

### The Dominant Narrative

*Toni Morrison: The Pieces I Am*, directed by Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, presented a visual documentary of Toni Morrison—a few of her career trials and triumphs, fellow writing comrades and their beliefs about Morrison’s writing, and Morrison’s journey of writing. As my chief scholar on the DN, Morrison provided insight about the DN that enlightened about the rigidity and linear perspective it produces. Morrison, specifically, defines the DN as “white male life” and as an “ideological script that is being imposed by the people in authority on everybody else.” She, unapologetically, pronounces her intentionality “to discredit the notion that this white male gaze must be omnipresent” (*Toni*). Morrison’s devotion to avoid such a monolithic point of view in her novels revealed the forgotten Black voice. To that end, then, Morrison helped readers to see how peripheral the DN is and, consequentially, how this awareness acknowledged the marginality, or even absence, of other perspectives.

Toni Morrison, in her literary criticism *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination*, criticized the use of the DN because it created an unyielding writing that lacked structural and character diversification. The perspective of the DN presented a restrictive view, thus, skewing the composition and the multi-dimensional lens. Furthermore, Morrison acknowledged the gross negation of the “Africanist presence” and highlighted the dehumanization of the usual one black in the work even in American classics, like *Moby Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn* (5). In “Exposing the “Master Narrative”: Teaching Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*,” Morrison recognized the divisiveness of the DN as it imparts the “white male” viewpoint. The imposition of a way of life on others by those in authority slanted a narrative, and only a dominant voice prevails.

Erin Tagomori's article "*The Bluest Eye* and the Master Narrative" emphasized the harmful effects of the DN on an individual and on society. With only the presentation of a linear scope on life, the DN inadvertently devalued the probable view of others and, therefore, inflicted one view that appeared extreme and without variant perspectives. In "The Limits of Master Narratives in History Textbooks: An Analysis of Representations of Martin Luther King, Jr.," Derrick P. Aldridge disapproved of any of King's historians who skewed his narrative writing by imposing their DN view; they transformed King's writing into this "one-dimensional . . . prescribed [and] oversimplified" discourse (662). Aldridge acknowledged the suppressing nature of the DN that authorized a writer to control and to restrict the synthesis of details that created the understanding of critical analyses of societal issues.

My study highlighted my experience and understanding of multimodal writing assignments and activities that can disrupt DNs, which appeared to be a traditional, standard mode of writing. With this traditional rhetorical interruption, multimodal writing permitted students, and their audiences, occasions to view social issues in multiple and diverse ways. Digital humanities pedagogic literature identified variant pedagogical methodologies that illuminated techniques and strategies that aided students' development of multimodal writing. In addition, digital humanities scholarship revealed theoretical approaches, along with paradigms and practices of digital humanities practitioners to exhibit illustrations and procedures—some routine and some innovative. These exemplars, with the literature, demonstrated practical strategies for students to follow. Digital rhetoric research reiterated the digital tools and techniques to construct spaces for communities to engage in discussions, so students learned to utilize various digital and technological devices and how to frame their discourse with properly formulated anti-racist assignments. With multimodal writing, students were encouraged to

incorporate multiple forms of writing—visual, aural, traditional modes. Thus, my study confirmed how my experience and understanding of multimodal writing enabled students and audiences to articulate and to understand complex issues, like hate crimes, in more diverse ways.

## Chapter 3

## AUTOETHNOGRAPHY AND DISRUPTING THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE

This semester, I wanted to challenge my students' sensibilities through their views of the world. I yearned for them to awaken the radical writer/activists within . . . to grant the activism within them opportunities to speak, boldly, through their writing. I desired for my students to accept their calling to be the vocal vehicle—like Patrisse Cullors, Alicia Garza, and Opal Tometi, founders of the #BlackLivesMatters movement—for those who have been silenced or who dared to say anything contrary to the usual, politically correct, and popularized perspective. They answered the clarion call to expose the DN that exists against African Americans. So, as my students' professor, I needed to interrupt the very comfortable and normal major assignment with its, traditionally, presumed expectations that make my students feel secure, yet lack much enthusiasm. The traditional writing research assignment for Composition I students had nullified their sensibilities and voices. As their writing facilitator, in this politically-charged, “political turn” racially-infused climate, I answered the trumpet summon to provide my students a platform and a space conducive for them to discuss and to design an intricately developed project that, explicitly, exposed obvious and grave concerns, like hate crimes, that have plagued this world.

Therefore, I contested the, usually, regimented argumentative or persuasive research paper that revealed a debatable topic and their clearly and comfortably expressed position with convincing details and examples and, of course, carefully sound research evidence. I, instead, challenged my students to tantalize their writer/activists to develop a digital humanities project that unmasked critical social issues in society, specifically hate crimes; some of which resulted in severe atrocities. The project included variant modes of traditional text writing—like illustration, cause-effect, comparison-contrast, and argumentation-persuasion—as determined by student

writer/activists, yet traditional text writing did not consume the project, nor did it hold the essence of the content. The digital humanities project was not designed to adhere to the traditionally structured written modular essays; instead, the project utilized and incorporated different digital and technological tools, supported by principal multimodal theorist Jody Shipka. In fact, the primary focus for the digital humanities project was to employ multimodal writing to disrupt the DN, that could limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes.

Furthermore, I encouraged my students to exercise their creative and rhetorical autonomy with a tri-digital rhetoric of “materiality” and “multimodality and multimedia” (Davis and Yancey 1) affirmed by Matthew Davis and Kathleen Blake Yancey, yet designed by them. So, I was in pursuit of their, unapologetically, expressed voice. I reiterate: I was disinterested in what others declared about their chosen hate crime and how they, traditionally, professed it. I did not want to learn what a commentator on CNN News said about police brutality, and neither did I care to know what an influential politician expressed about it. My purpose for the digital humanities project was to learn what, voice scholar, Darsie Bowden asserts: “voice locates the source of its explanatory power in the human voice, which is audible, measurable, and identifiable” (“Voice and Style” 233) with the incorporation of digital rhetoric. Therefore, I sought to experience and to understand their perspective and wanted it to resound, emphatically, throughout their digital humanities project.

### **Historical Foundation and Autoethnography**

Years ago, in 1991, my own sensibilities were shattered! It seemed the world, literally the United States and other countries, stopped and tuned into the next unbelievable act to be seen

with the naked eye. I had never laid my eyes of such overtly and brashly disturbing actions by anyone, excluding the men who vowed to “serve and protect.”

Like many, I read about Emmett Till and had seen pictures of his, stoically, mortified body positioned in a coffin. A Northern, Chicago black teenage boy, with innocence and enthusiasm, visited his Southern Mississippi cousins, but he returned home to his mother brutally killed at the hands of grown white racist men. It was inconceivable how white *men* had beaten and tortured that one little boy, but we have all seen the pictures of his grossly disfigured face and body. We, too, read about and saw pictures of the brute assassinations of Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, and Martin Luther King, Jr. They were trailblazers of the Civil Rights Movement and equality for black people and others of color. They were grown men with families who wanted what the Constitution declares black people, *no* all people, already have “equal rights” (emphasis added).

Still, Emmett Till was an innocent boy, killed in 1955, before I was born. When my sensibilities were shaken, it was 1991, nearly 40 years later; this time, I witnessed it. Even after Thurgood Marshall had been a Supreme Court Justice for 14 years, another vicious occurrence by white men was displayed. As a result, the LA Riots raged out of control. Most of the country was glued to the television in sheer astonishment. The world witnessed Los Angeles Police Department officers, publically and brutally, beat Rodney King. With their fists, clubs, knees, and feet, those police officers, senselessly and repeatedly, struck Mr. King. But, what dumbfounded most was that “a jury of their peers” found all of the police officers, who publicly beat Mr. King and had record of it via videotape for the world to see, received a “not guilty” verdict. These, clearly, punishable acts by white male police officers consistently went unpunished, and that continued, reverberated “not guilty” verdict conveyed a message to the

world, loudly and clearly: this DN is powerful enough to do whatever it desires and not suffer any consequences.

Now, more than two decades later, after the Civil Rights Act had been signed, on May 25, 2020, George Floyd was killed in Minneapolis, Minnesota. It, like Rodney King's brutal beating 29 years earlier, was videotaped and even "live," in real time, for the world to witness. Surprisingly, he was being arrested for something menial . . . allegedly using a counterfeit \$20 bill in a convenience store. But, his arrest was everything but "convenient" though the circumstances did not warrant asphyxiation or his death, as a result of it. George Floyd's death was only one, in 2020, that had consumed the consciousness of many people of color and their thought of safety and equality in this country. White patriarchal police officers, issuing a no-knock warrant, in March, carelessly yet, intentionally, shot ten-rounds into the apartment of Brionna Taylor while five bullets invaded her body and killed her. Those police officers were not arrested for months and, then, were not indicted for killing her. Shockingly, only one officer was indicted for wanton, which admonished the negligence of shooting into her neighbor's home and the probable danger of harming Brionna Taylor's neighbor. . . not actually killing Brionna Taylor!

In these United States, DN possesses a power that grants the privilege to discount or, more specifically, invalidate other perspectives and evidences that support them. Extrapolating the evidence was baffling. For example, the officers were exempt from penalty, just as the 1-2-3-4-5 bullets from the guns owned by white patriarchal officers that invaded Brionna Taylor's body. Brionna Taylor's voice, her habitat, her living body and, now, her dead body had, absolutely, no reverence. However, the wall adjacent to her neighbor's habitat—not Brionna Taylor's side of the wall, or home—had a respected voice. Yes, the structure of a wall had a

voice, yet the person of Brionna Taylor had none! The *possibility* of just harming the neighbor—not, actually, killing Brionna Taylor and, then, choosing not to render living medical aid but to step over her body and loudly pronouncing her dead—was granted a venerated voice. Yes, the *possibility* of simple harm had a voice, yet the reality of a dead Brionna Taylor had none! Consequently, the white patriarchal police officers’ voice that exclaimed Brionna Taylor was dead as they trampled through her home and stepped over her lifeless body was revered. Yes, white patriarchal police officers’ cavalier declaration of Brionna Taylor’s extermination demanded a voice, yet physical, scientific evidence of her dead body did not have a voice. Amid rummaged items the white patriarchal police officers carelessly tossed about in her home lay Brionna Taylor’s dead body, apparently, equivalent to the items on the floor. However, her body did not possess a voice. This DN must be accountable, or it will continue to manifest in disparaging ways (emphasis added).

Likewise, in February of 2020, law enforcement did not arrest a father-son murder duo, who taunted, chased, and viciously shot Ahmaud Arbery while he was taking a casual jog; they hunted Ahmaud Arbery like a rabid dog. Then, in March of 2020, Daniel Prude died by asphyxiation as police officers restrained him though he, like George Floyd, repeatedly begged for his life, then, implored, “I can’t breathe”.

The year 2020 brought about a revelation in these United States of America: we are not a “united” people, nor are we equitable in this union. It was apparent, in these United States, that all of the aforementioned African Americans murdered, among many others, did not have a voice—neither their words nor their bodies. Not one was granted an ear or act of caution because neither was thought to possess any of Peter Elbow’s “five types of voice: audible voice or intonation, dramatic voice, recognizable or distinct voice, voice with authority, and resonant

voice or presence” (“About Voice and Writing” xxiv-xxxv). All of the aforementioned victims spoke; they communicated, clearly and desperately, for their lives. However, Toni Morrison’s “master narrative,” (*Toni*) or DN, reverberated in the brutal, visual lynching of George Floyd when a white patriarchal police officer, casually, rested his weight on Floyd’s neck until he died. The DN ignored Floyd’s “dramatic voice,” as he frantically uttered a vocal declaration: “I can’t breathe.” The DN denounced the dignity of Floyd’s body even as it expelled bodily fluid and witnesses continued verbally protesting and pleading for Floyd’s life. In 2020, Americans witnessed how Morrison’s DN dominated and silenced African Americans while protecting the DN law enforcement, who took their lives.

This measure of hatred or racism is everywhere; no one can escape it. In September of 2016, Colin Kaepernick—a former professional football player—kneeled as a peaceful protest to expose and speak against the disproportionate and senseless murders of African Americans at the hands of law enforcement officers with no legal consequences for officers. The truth is the lack of humanity and equality in these *United States* is suffocating, and people of color have been dying at the hands. . . and with the bodies. . . of those in authority, designed to “protect and serve,” in plain sight for *all* to (*re*)view (emphasis added). And, nothing happens: those in authority, apparently, have been granted a leverage to determine how they “serve,” even if that includes killing someone in daylight before witnesses, who plead for the “life” of the person being killed. How does that happen in these United States of America? Is anyone countering this DN?

In this Chapter, I combined autoethnography and multimodal writing to annotate my experience and understanding how students in one of my English Composition courses employed multimodal writing to disrupt the DN, that could limit and shape common sense approaches to

complex social issues, like hate crimes. As expressed in Chapter 1, my students completed a digital humanities project. In this study, I called for my students to focus on the “political turn,” that rhetoric scholars Carter et al. detail in their collaborative project. With protesters in the streets of America and other countries, demanding justice and equality and echoing the many names of those whose lives had been taken, my students had been consumed with racial and social struggles that the previous Administration politicized, constantly (“What *Does* Democracy Look Like?” 19). I contended that my students and I had been encapsulated in this racially, socially, and politically charged climate that raged in America, and swelled in my classroom. With this challenge to voice their perspective, students actively engaged in assignments and activities I designed for provocative discussions, moving discourse, and peaceful protests.

The more prominent point, in this chapter, conveyed what I experienced and understood as students discovered and, explicitly, expressed their voice by employing multimodal writing to disrupt the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes. A primary, and significant, focus of the digital humanities project related to my experience and understanding that altered a pedagogical approach to form a pedagogy that was conducive for this unique combination of students’ intricate and diverse communicative skills and for this unorthodox, historical time in our world. Within this context, I reshaped my pedagogical approach, entitled pedagogy of rhetorical projection, a new theoretical framework for anti-racist writing instruction—a trilateral approach to rhetoric, interconnecting definition, identification, and application affectionately referred to as DIA. The trilateral diagram demonstrates the possibility to provide conscientious meanings reflect emblematic forms of communicative structures to convey voice. (Appendix B) I attested experientially that, through pedagogy of rhetorical projection, my students came to know their point of view. Therefore, I

surveyed how my experience with rhetorical projection, through the theory of semantography, aided my students' employment of multimodal writing to disrupt the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes, and "project" their countered perspective to the DN.

The structure of this chapter presented a scope of negotiating factors that establish the methods and processes necessary for my study. A foremost contemplation surrounded the best method to reveal how students in one of my English Composition courses employ multimodal writing to disrupt the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes. A few considerations caused concern for me. After openly discussing the severe racial conflicts and countless racial incidents in this politicized world, under the previous Administration, I sensed a number of my students displayed tension when addressing racial hostilities; therefore, they remained silent and did not engage. In addition, I felt my students do not share their writing about racial issues. Because of the two aforementioned concerns, I thought introspectively about an effective method that carved a space for my students to discover their voice. A more important revelation was my students connected when I was more participatory; therefore, I chose autoethnography because Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner, chief autoethnographic scholars, suggest that the researcher becomes "entrenched" in the study to gather insight otherwise unknown without such proximity. The readers of the study, then, gain a view of the decisive conclusions, even arguments, as the researcher unveils the intimate content (739).

Negotiating the rhetorical move rested on my knowledge of students' present writing practices, so I determined that an escape from a traditional rhetorical approach was essential to foster students' discovery and knowledge of their voice. The pedagogy of rhetorical projection

functioned as the rhetorical move. Additionally, pedagogy of rhetorical projection served as the instrument for students to “project” their voice through their design of a digital humanities project, and other modes of rhetoric. With the theory of semantography, students embraced their autonomous privilege of linguistic prognostism that the pedagogy of rhetorical projection offered.

As stated in Chapter 1, I had explicitly chosen to focus on the “political turn” since my students had been consumed with racial and social issues that the previous Administration had politicized, constantly. The “political turn,” that rhetoric scholars Carter et al. reference, is the “intensifying role of the university as factor for the production of knowledge, particularly as it circulates on the Internet, and for a labor force to meet the shifting needs of capital as a “crucial site in which wider social struggles are won and lost” (“What *Does* Democracy Look Like?” 125-26). However, I understood that students became consumed with pleasing me as their professor—a representative of the academy and all of its rhetorical requirements—by “sounding” academic and by articulating the popularized point of view, especially when it was widely, and repeatedly, presented on variant media outlets.

Their impression of writing assignments conjured such rigidity that it stifled their style of communication, voice, and creativity. (This is an additional reason autoethnography is appropriate; it served my students and my study.) Quite honestly, they were caged in a triangulation of sorts that had grown predictable and, rhetorically, flat; contrarily, the essence of writing possessed a richness that indulged nonlinear fluidity and creative con-structure, a term I coined that means a combination of constructing, or rhetorically building, their meanings and organizing their meanings in a desired presentation to convey their voice. (The desired presentation, for my study, was digital humanities.) Therefore, I was compelled to assess my

pedagogical approach to rhetoric and determined a rhetorical shift was essential to nurture their writing experience and processes. A duality persisted to create a strategic pedagogy—(1) that guided students’ understanding of their voice; and, (2) that aided students’ design and development of a digital humanities project, with a “political turn,” that voiced their counter to the DN.

Since I realized my students were caught in the DN matrix, I reshaped my pedagogical approach to teach and facilitate my students about projection and espousal of point of view. The essence of pedagogy of rhetorical projection was linguistic prognosticism, by which the theory of semantography was incorporated, to aid instructors with methods that guided students’ knowledge of their distinctive voice while, simultaneously or not, helping them formulate or design the “projection” of voice.

Because there were competing cultural, social, and political powers that could influence and shape the points of view of students, a rhetorical move was imperative to allow them opportunities to discover and learn their perspective. Congruently, students experienced the “oppression” to express their voice and structure their writing in accordance to the traditional expectations of collegiate level writing. Carter criticizes this “autonomous model of literacy” (*The Way Literacy Lives* 23) as do I because it marginalized students’ abilities to articulate. Such rhetorical confinement contributed to the conceptualization of the pedagogy of rhetorical projection. This rhetorical move had dual responsibilities: (1) for instructors, pedagogy of rhetorical projection—a trilateral approach to rhetoric, interconnecting definition, identification, and application (DIA), provided a formula for developing a curriculum and instruction template plan of strategies, assignments, and activities that assisted teachers in aiding students’ understanding of their voice, despite socio-political and cultural influences; and (2) for students,

pedagogy of rhetorical projection, still—a trilateral approach to rhetoric, interconnecting definition, identification, and application (DIA) was a template plan of strategies, assignments, and activities that aided students in revealing their voice, despite popularized socio-political and cultural perspectives.

The theory of semantography was a derivative of semantics + graphy. The denotation of semantics is “the meaning of a word, phrase, sentence, or text” (*Oxford Dictionary*). However, for semantography, the definition of semantics extends beyond the traditional meaning. It includes ascribing the meaning(s) of structures and constructions that are both conventional and unconventional; thus, they are not etymologically related but usually metaphorically and/or symbolically derived. Visual and aural structures and constructions, already created or writer-formulated, are done so through “graphy,” or writing, but not entirely through traditional, alphabetic text. Therefore, the theory of semantography bestowed the authorial sovereignty upon students, not the institution or a representative of it. The employment of the pedagogy of rhetorical projection, including the theory of semantography, granted students the autonomy essential for linguistic prognosticism. Hence, through the pedagogy of rhetorical projection and the theory of semantography, students utilized multimodal writing to disrupt the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes, and “project” their countered perspective to the DN.

When negotiating framework to examine voice, I considered chief voice scholar Peter Elbow because he advocates for a “well-situated voice” that expresses the authority of voice (“What Do We Mean” 27). The significance of my students learning their voice and, then, positioning it confidently within a topic demonstrated a control of their formulated perspective, regardless of the variant socio-cultural, political, and even familial powers. In conjunction, voice

scholar Darsie Bowden contends that “voice is the writer coming through the words. . . [expressing] the heart and soul [and] impart[ing] a personal tone and flavor. . . that is unmistakably his/hers alone” (“Voice and Style” 243). Further, in a different article entitled “The Rise of a Metaphor: ‘Voice’ in Composition Pedagogy,” Bowden believes that an authentic voice derives from acquiring an interpretation of “social and individualistic perspectives of writing and self” (173). Elbow asserts students postulate their voice, and Bowden recognizes the accentuation of voice because it possesses a signature style. The amalgamation of Elbow and Bowden’s aforementioned assertions about voice reflected my goal for students as they formulated their voice through a digital humanities project. Further, Melanie Sperling and Deborah Appleman confirm my contextualization of voice as an “authorial choice . . . [that] can be taught, and . . . is a lens for understanding reading, writing, and learning processes” (70); hence, pedagogy of rhetorical projection is an appropriate theoretical approach to instruct and assess the effective “projection” of voice as students employed multimodal writing to disrupt the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes.

Upon assessing students’ counter of the DN, I realized that prior to class activities they were persuaded, sometimes manipulated, by different, metaphorical, ‘strings’ that inadvertently shaped their voice. I identified them as ‘strings’ because their connectivity to our lives reflected the sources and, thus, the influences. I deemed the ‘strings’ essential to *know* all ‘selves’ to express voice. Cognizant of the ‘selves,’ for student/writers, lessened the unconscious expression of voice while student/writers, intentionally, employed a rhetorical consolidation, even construction, of the ‘selves’. Jody Shipka, a proponent of multimodal writing and digital humanities, ascribes to student/writers “bridging,” not denouncing, the “gaps” that exist between the social,

political, cultural, communal and, then, “students’ experiences beyond the space of the classroom” to convey their voice (“Beyond Text and Talk” 212). I concur with Shipka; “bridg[ing] the gap” acknowledges the ‘strings’ of influence. Awareness of the divergent ‘strings’ grants students the control—the power—to “bridge the gap” (212) essential to transmit their voice, which is empowering. Thus, Shipka imparts a nod of permission for instructors to facilitate their student/writers con-structures of “verbal/visual relationships,” (“A Multimodal Task-Based” 278) whether conventional and unconventional constructions, through various technologies and digital tools.

With emphasis on “projection,” this aspect of pedagogy assisted in guiding assignments and activities, along with my instruction and facilitation. Lastly, my introspective experience elected a focal point regarding “projection.” Students ‘project’ their countered voice to the DN by employing multimodal writing, that can disrupt the DN, which can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes. With the theory of semantography, my students conveyed their countered perspective with the assistance of instructional assignments and activities that adhered to the pedagogy of rhetorical projection.

As I have been arguing throughout, I evaluated my experience with the project how students’ employment of multimodal writing can disrupt the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes. To guide my students’ “projected” voice, I cultivated a rhetorical approach that aided the expression of their voice. Pedagogy of rhetorical projection is the utilization of methods and practices to influence composition students and learners to project and express their voice. In conjunction with the pedagogy of rhetorical projection, I developed the theory of semantography, a language-meaning construction of symbols, lexical, images, and the like—utilizing semantics, but not limited to it.

My experience reflected on the conventional and unconventional structures and constructions fostered students' messages through variant modes of writing or communication, including traditional text; thus, they were not etymologically related but could be metaphorically and symbolically derived. My reflection on a number of tenets of the pedagogy of rhetorical projection and the theory of semantography aided me and students of rhetoric in one of my English Composition I courses to arrive at their "projected" voice.

Therefore, my students emerged as writers and activists in a safe, academically-charged communal space, where they inspected the "political turn" by dissecting the previous Administration's perpetual divisiveness, their support of racial violence that further split the country among cultural and ethnic lines, and their barrage of inferno-raging jargon that insulted, bullied, and berated Americans and others while caressing and toying with presumed adversaries. To navigate the rhetorical move of pedagogy of rhetorical projection and the theory of semantography, I constructed, analyzed, and revised my rhetorical activities and assignments for students to develop a digital humanities project. Because hate crimes had risen to such an alarming rate, students identified the prevailing DN at the root of them. Student/writers, then, employed multimodal writing to disrupt the DN on common sense approaches to social issues prevalent in hate crimes.

## Chapter 4

DISRUPTING THE DOMINANT NARRATIVE THROUGH  
MULTIMODAL WRITING: AN AUTHETHNOGRAPHIC  
PERSPECTIVE

In the midst of my study, something shocking happened: the DN manifested, itself, precisely at my front door. Though I know that the DN exists and has plagued our world, I was in disbelief when what, or the persona, I had been evaluating and writing about, actually, had the audacity to show up at my doorstep with a bold, arrogant, defensive, bullish posture. Like many evidences of the DN we had witnessed, most recently, I had onlookers—my daughter Faith and my God-sister Tania—who acknowledged my experience; in fact, Tania and I glared at each other in bewilderment as I encountered the brash nature of this DN at my—presumed safe—threshold.

The summer of 2020 had been an unusual one for most people; for the first time in more than 100 years, our world was experiencing a pandemic due to COVID-19—widely known as the Coronavirus. My Husband James, who is a Sergeant in law enforcement for a federal agency, and I noticed a few people driving by our home taking pictures and videotaping our property. We were baffled by this behavior of strangers and, thus, became cautious of our homestead surrounding. One afternoon, after viewing this uncommon activity, I expressed grave concern to my Husband, who was at work. Without hesitation, my Husband contacted the Grand Prairie Police Department of Grand Prairie, Texas, to seek assistance and, ultimately, protection for our family. He informed me that an officer was in route to our home, and we both shared a sense of security as we communicated; a tonal sigh rested in our vocal exchange.

My anticipation of “rescue” displayed in my action: with a welcomed relief, I opened by front door as the two Grand Prairie Police Department officers—one white male and one Hispanic female—approached. I spoke to both officers, then, noticed that only the white male officer returned in-kind while the Hispanic female officer nodded and, casually, looked away though she kept her hand on your gun holster and stood behind him at a slightly but cautious distance. Going forward, the white male officer and I talked; he asked me what was going on, and I mentioned that my Husband had called the police department. He acknowledged knowing and summarized my Husband’s concern, so I only had to repeat major points of concern. Ironically, the white male officer began a line of questioning that was perplexing. He asked if our frequent disturbances were related to domestic issues related to past relationships. I, immediately, responded that my Husband and I had been married for fifteen years. My answer, however, did not influence the white male officer, otherwise, so he continued his approach and contended that our fifteen-year marriage did not matter because old boyfriends and girlfriends might do strange things. The white male officer’s proceedings of our alleged disgruntled domestic past, causing a disturbance at our home, prompted me to state that I am a Professor at Tarrant County College, and my Husband is a Sergeant with the federal government. Interestingly, the officer abruptly interrupted my response, and even repeated that he knew my husband was a police officer.

As I was providing very concise credentials of our professions, believing they would convince the white male officer that we were upstanding people with a genuine concern for our lives, he brazenly began looking around the porch area of our home. To my dismay, he persisted: he asked if we had angered our HOA and inquired if I had called the president, whose name he knew, of our HOA to question if we had violated any regulations, like grass height. I replied by

gesturing at our, recently, manicured lawn and stated that the lawn service had just completed our service the previous day. Then, I thought that I might mention our spiritual lifestyle. I was certain that learning of our belief in God and commitment to serve people warranted a level of civil respect from this officer of the law since he had been dissatisfied with my responses to his disparaging line of questioning. I informed him that my Husband and I are leaders at our church, a large worship center not far from our home. (In fact, the officers passed signage in our lawn from our church that confirmed our leadership roles.) That did not appeal to him and, by now, I grew offended and perplexed by his insistence that my Husband and I had some type of self-inflicted domestic issue, and not a sincere security concern threatening our family. With anger, I was forced to admit and confront the DN I had been discussing.

The DN had been personified through this officer, like so many others who cavalierly pronounced their narrow judgments upon others. More poignantly, this white male police officer invaded my sensibilities by standing at the threshold of my haven. Upon my acknowledgment of his DN, I folded my arms in contempt because I did not like nor appreciate the officer's erroneous, and unfounded, persisting allegations. I could not preclude wondering what would have happened if I had met him on a traffic stop. The threshold of my door symbolized the distinguishable division between the DN and me, a victim of frequently common DN profiling and brutality. The bad background, the stereotyping, and the racial profiling reflected by-products by which the DN ascribed to "projecting" its DN point of view upon victims. This DN represented the engine of systemic racism that almost has a bottomless portal that houses itself for frequent use. Systemic racism supports the DN that rested its knee on the neck of George Floyd. For my study, I focused on the DN that adamantly "projects" its voice upon its victims and proceeded to defend it through variant media with its dominant voice. However, I contended

that through pedagogy of rhetorical projection, a communicative trilateral approach to writing—interconnecting definition, identification, and application, affectionately referred to as DIA, my experience and understanding reflected how my students’ employment of multimodal writing could disrupt the DN. That DN could limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes, and “project” their countered perspective to the DN.

In the previous chapter, I divulged the negotiations of the analytical framework for my study. A focal aspect of my study is voice; therefore, I merged Peter Elbow and Darsie Bowden’s theoretical approaches to voice. Elbow’s “well-situated voice,” reflects what I assign as authority of voice (“What Do We Mean” 27). Bowden’s “heart and soul impart[s] a personal tone and flavor” (“Voice and Style” 243) that mirrored what I credit as accentuation of vocal signature style. Another focal point of my study is utilizing multimodal writing. Judy Shipka ascribes “goal directed multimodal . . . composing,” (“A Multimodal Task-Based” 278) to which I followed to devise and revise my assignments and activities, in hopes that students communicated their voice. To foster students’ discovery, knowledge, and expression of voice, I reshaped a rhetorical move: pedagogy of rhetorical projection. Pedagogy of rhetorical projection functions as a tool that grants students an autonomous privilege of linguistic prognostism, coupled with a technique I designed: theory of semantography. Theory of semantography aids instructors with pedagogical approaches while providing structures and constructions for students, already created or writer-formulated, through writing that communicates their voice. With these frameworks, I examined the two questions for my study: How can multimodal writing disrupt the dominant narrative, that limits and shapes common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes? What is the role of voice in this process?

In this chapter, I reflected on my experiences and my understanding of students in one of my English Composition I courses as they developed and designed a digital humanities project. I investigated my experiences and “cultural understanding” how their employment of multimodal writing could disrupt the DN, that could limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes. My autoethnographic approach revealed essential insight about my experiences and understanding, regarding students’ interaction and collaboration, their engagement, and their inquiries; significantly, such annotations imparted impressionable knowledge that aided me in altering necessary pedagogical approaches.

Reflexive observations from an autoethnographic viewpoint provided a unique perspective for me. Autoethnography allowed me to contemplate students’ interaction, engagement, and inquiries through my experiences and my assignments. Notably, autoethnography positioned me in a dual role: teacher and student. Possessing “double vision” with this project, I gained such insight and much illumination from both perspectives. Thus, I am a better teacher and student of rhetoric as a result of my binary experience.

For this digital humanities project, the “double vision” autoethnography granted me an invitation to experience and “culturally understanding” my students’ cooperative learning and rhetorical experiences. This learning opportunity offered me permission to engage with students as their views were challenged and evolving through their work with my assignments. In addition, this scholarly assignment created an exploration of perspectives for my student/activists. They, indirectly, challenged my pedagogical acumen to guide their processes. Metaphorically, I reached a pedagogical fissure to facilitate the execution of their voice. The nature of the topics required less pedagogical control of my student/activists but more trust in them and the material processes I devised. Based on my introspective observations of my

pedagogical style and current pedagogical adoptions, I experienced and sensed students' incorporation of multimodal writing that can disrupt the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes.

This chapter centers on specific processes of development for students as they design their digital humanities project, expressing their voice on social issues, like hate crimes. Initially, a description of students' interactions and collaborations was essential; then, a demonstration of activities revealed cultural conveniences and clashes. After that, an illustration of their engagement among each other presented variant collaborative challenges while their perspectives seemed to evolve. Following their engagement, students' inquiries expressed their voice and provided an example of multimodal writing that reconciled their need for pedagogy that complimented the projection of their voice.

#### **Discovering the Firm Hold of the Dominant Narrative: Teacher Perspective**

I utilized the discovery and listing steps of traditional writing processes, for Tier 1a, to help students generate ideas about their hate crimes. The autoethnographic viewpoint, however, quickly disclosed a revelation to me: That traditional rhetorical approach exposed an error in my method because it suggested the assignment required the usual rhetorical strategies. I, soon, instructed students to select another classmate with whom they had not collaborated (most likely, someone of a different culture) and discussed their point of view of current social issues, relegated to hate crimes; some had been briefly referenced. Somewhat surprising, and contrary to my instructions, I noticed students decided to partner with those whom they were quite familiar. Students of the same culture, interestingly, linked to address the assignment. From a teacher's viewpoint, I sensed an overwhelming comfortable, free-flowing communication and thought such a level of comfort would benefit their countered points of view.

On the contrary, students almost always expressed the same opinions and views, or complemented them with their common cultural experiences; therefore, their interaction was monolithic and created an intellectual rigidity that would not allow them to perceive other perspectives, or variations of the one discussed. This familiar interaction stifled their communicative movement and reflected the blinding nature of the DN matrix. More importantly, I understood students lacked vulnerability to interrogate or challenge their chosen partners' points of view, though their views countered the DN. I realized and experienced students expressing related cultural diction colloquialisms and communication nuisances within group discussions. I experienced students' emergent approvals to rid themselves of potential discomfort. Hesitation, however, conveyed reservations and disapprovals. Students, who were uncomfortable, displayed it: closed postures with arms crossed, balled fists—some of them positioned against their mouths—nodding heads, and sitting agitation, where they repeatedly viewed their watches for the time to move beyond this activity.

I understood some cultural collaborations demonstrated sincere and enjoyable discussions. The familiar upward head nods as well as cultural semblances as the clapped hand shakes, some with a brief embrace, acknowledged a level of trust and comfort in their relationship. I, also, experienced this greeting sanctioned territory among students and conveyed an exclusivity that reminded me of a 'tribal' effect. Therefore, such familiarity lacked divergence and depth. This dynamic classroom communal interaction reminded me of what I called the box effect: those within the box reacted quite securely and comfortably, interconnecting with fluid exchanges while those outside the box withdrew and retreated to their own cultural boxes. I experienced students refusing to gain or challenge knowledge; in addition, they relegated to express varying perspectives or deviated from common ones because of their academic practices

with friends (or familiar classmates) in the classroom and/or because of their presumed cultural semblances. Eventually, cultural views accentuated when they questioned fellow group members and confirmed their cultural affiliations, which likely became apparent with their language choices and discussion selections because they predicated their voice. (It is interesting to note that in this phase of the assignment, I understood their cultural ties bound them and their perspective; in fact, their perspective seemed to reflect preconceived complexities consigned to their culture, even though it, mostly, countered the DN.) In a second cooperative learning activity, I experienced student representatives of different cultures; most exhibited communicative and cultural agitation. I sensed the unfamiliarity caused some distress.

Interestingly, the cultural partnerships shared such semblances and identified their cultural DN, and accepted it. As an autoethnographic aside, I understood their vernacular echoed communal nuances; thus, they did not display verbal agility from a formative, semantically, communicative view while paired with someone of the same culture. For, Toni Morrison's contention that the "white male gaze" is just one perspective that perpetuates division and causes others to surrender to it; plus, it is dominant and rigid (*Toni*). Lyotard echoes Morrison with a poignant assertion of this oppressive ideology that "one grand narrative excludes another" (4). This communicative behavior, probably unnoticed by cultural (and communal) partners, reflected the DN.

However, I must preface my experiences with the following retrospective conclusion: This rhetorical assignment was distinctive from the traditional text writing, so I anticipated an altered approach by my students. I presumed that I, explicitly, communicated the exclusivity of this digital humanities assignment with my thorough introduction of the intricate and multimodality expectations and requirements for the assignment and my expository delivery

about challenging their sensibilities. In addition, I provided a poignant and racially-charged glimpse of social issues, like hate crimes, from historical lenses to provoke intellectually, contemplative exchanges that produced narratives that reflected myriad perspectives and, thus, disrupted the matrix of the DN. Students transmitted points of view that countered the DN. Nevertheless, to introspectively evaluate my experiences with interaction and collaboration, with my “double vision,” I assumed said positions—teacher/instructor and student. This invitation allowed me to scrutinize the interactive landscape of the classroom. From the teacher’s perspective, students conveniently ascribed to cultural/traditional academic practices and discussions.

In regard to the many instances of police brutality, the cultural partnerships entertained a discussion of the DN equivalent to, or slightly more acceptable than, their cultural DN. Sadly, from a teacher’s vantage point, I experienced their buckling surrender. Students cowered and exhibited a loss of self and power. Students discussed this meta-DN with a dual mindset: one that honors the DN Toni Morrison details in her visual documentary (*Toni*) and one that respects the cultural DN and, thus, countered the DN point of view.

I understood and experienced the uncomfortable nature students exhibited when discussing their cultural DN, which often had noticeable traces to the DN. I, however, echoed the “revolutionary transformation” that Carmen Kynard advocates for students (“*All I Need is One Mic*”) and, strongly, encouraged them to find their own activist voice. Adler-Kassner and Harrington assert that “literacy, power, and language are linked” (98) and with my emphasis on “projection,” this aspect of pedagogy guided the curriculum and instruction. Internally, I was challenged to devise assignments, employing pedagogy of rhetorical projection, that aided their counter of the DN.

### **Discovering the Firm Hold of the Dominant Narrative: Student Perspective**

Autoethnography permitted me a unique space, as a student of this study in the classroom, while my students worked through this project. To encourage and complement most students' counter, I learned to communicate more effectively with them. I recognized students expressed same, or related, cultural diction choices and language nuisances, which gave me knowledge about the value of communication, even when devising and revising multimodal assignments and activities.

Through academic practices with cultural influences, students exhibited a "tribal" mentality as earlier. Some even spoke in their native language, which excluded English-speaking students, but their "tribal," or culturally safe decision reflected an intention. I had to exercise a multi-lingual practice, for which I believe many teachers are cognizant, because I wanted my students—as group members and individuals with their own perspectives—to express their own points of view. Students partnered and grouped with those of similar backgrounds—cultural/social; thus, they maintained sacred tribal insight and tribal jargon familiar, and respected, by fellow tribe members who feared ridicule and criticism. I experienced and understood that language barriers and cultural traditions could shape their analyses as well as their voice. I understood that my multimodal activities should include an amalgamation of student "vernacular literacies" as Carter advises (*The Way Literacy Lives* 98) with Kress' "multimodality dimensions" (45) while their project maintained an academic standard and reflected their voice.

I understood that students' cultural influences shaped their interaction. Some lowered their voices as others, literally, huddled in a "tribal" or cultural position to avoid invasion and to maintain what appeared to be a safe and sacred interaction. Importantly, I sensed the heightened

enthusiasm when students discovered similar cultural practices, or even relationship. I experienced their cultural norms and realized a trusted academic culture should be formed to foster their academic prowess. As I transition into engagement, I am reminded of Tamara Isaak's contention that it is tragic to ignore the traumatic experiences of our culture, yet it is significant to plan class sessions with assignments and activities that focus on specific aspects of occurrences to ensure students convey their perspective (326).

### **Engaging Counter Narratives: Teacher Perspective**

The exploration of perspectives served as a significant part of engagement for an instructor. An autoethnographic perspective provided me with much insight. Considering the topics and my commitment to an anti-racist pedagogical model, I wanted to ensure my instructive and assignment "language and literacy" communicated "racial, cultural, and linguistic inequities" with integrity, as Angela Baker-Bell recommends (1). Whenever I experienced resistance from students, I transitioned to a small group to encourage their participation. Therefore, my facilitation required management of students' assignments and activities so that they were effective and productive contributors in building reflections, or representations, of their viewpoints.

In their groups, students shared experiences, and I felt a tense shift. This was a poignant moment as a facilitator because I needed to manage a classroom environment conducive for such learning. I did not want my students to feel a sense of embarrassment or powerlessness that could stifle their discussions. At that moment, I recollected details from Chapter 1. I recalled "Sharon's" different narrative versions and, then, remembered the casual nature the dominant narrative taught by living everyday life, which communicated *it* as the "way things are" (emphasis added). In my own class, I experienced what Lyotard affirmed when the DN appeared:

“one grand narrative excludes another” (4). I experienced my students resolve to normalize the DN instead of vehemently refuting it. They relegated their revulsion to a mere disapproval of the DN.

Soon, I learned the reason for such withdrawal; students recanted most common comments about nothing happening to the police and everybody taking the side of the police. I expressed my concern for students’ resolve to accept the wrongdoing and not proclaim their point of view. Ironically, many of them questioned the authority and importance of having a point of view contrary to the DN, which had controlled them and the media for years. Some mentioned that even juries presiding in obvious cases, like Brionna Taylor’s, could not alter the prevalence of the DN. So, attempting to revolutionize this crippling and, sometimes, fatal DN seemed pointless to mention their points of view.

From my vantage point, students believed discussions about their counter narratives appeared unwarranted and insignificant to them. I experienced a callous nature among students, regarding the rejection of the DN. I hesitated to interrogate their decision to “hold their tongue” about their disapproval of abused authority by the DN. My hyphenated hesitation acknowledged their subdued docility: my students became disciplined recipients of the brunt of the DN. My students taught me, in that one un-telling moment, how they had been robbed of their voice and why it did not matter, now, in our English Composition I course while working through our DN project on “voice”. Their shrugged shoulders, elbowed agreements, unified left-right head gestures, and mumbled words demonstrated how entities—the police departments, the laws, the media, and the DN, itself—communicated celebrated support and judgments that silenced their voice because they countered theirs. This moment consigned confirmed revelations. My students needed to know their voices mattered and that my classroom needed to exude a safe, committed

space for them to relish in expressing their point of view that countered the ever-so-prominent DN.

With this confirmation, I relished in knowing that I had a unique opportunity to examine how my students' employment of multimodal writing can disrupt the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes.

I had to break a pattern this culture supported, and systems echoed, yet I was determined to assure them an academic space to share their countered points of view. To shift the atmosphere in the academic space, I employed interconnectivity. I began to reflect on Shipka's commitment to integrate multimodal measures within the class. I utilized the vehicle of music for transitioning activities. For example, timed peer critiquing was identifiable by stopping the music that played as students worked together. With the inclusion of different types of music and vocals, I experienced a communal feeling among students. Such a slight shift served as a dual pivot in our classroom culture, for it aided my facilitation of their engagement and implementation.

For the next major assignment, I required my students to research two (2) well-known DN occurrences: one within the last five years and the other within the last thirty-forty years. (The span in time warranted significance in their analysis of identifiable circumstances and characters.) With their findings, students were instructed to identify similarities and differences. Upon return to class, students learned they were to share their comparative and contrastive findings in a group before they shifted to a partner; both assigned by me. Shifts were not always revealed prior to class because students would prepare planned, or staged, comments and their responses lacked the spontaneity essential for authenticity. Also, I experienced students shifting groups to foster a communal atmosphere, where students learned to expect a shared environment with controversial views and countered perspectives. A primary goal was to establish comfort in

disagreeing and debating so that discussions were not impeded. Shifting created a familiarity among classmates to discuss the DN, and their counter narratives.

While students engaged with partners, they were instructed to select two (2) DN occurrences; then, they detailed the commonalities and divergences of the chosen events in open discussion. (For example, I shared my own story.) I felt students shuddered as they discussed the similarities about the rampant occurrences of DN incidents. Obvious recollections of similarities were the following: police related, minority (black and brown) victims, inhumane brutality, communal support for perpetrator, monolithic view of incidents—DN, a rush to media backing to shape the DN, an increase in incidents over time, lack of support for victims (even with audio-video evidences).

### **Engaging Counter Narratives: Student Perspective**

As a student, I was able to reflect from an autoethnographic perspective on engagement. I learned that many were unaware of general knowledge about historical occurrences where the DN destroyed lives, communities, generations, like George Floyd, the Rosewood Massacre in Florida and Black Wall Street in Oklahoma. They would have liked more film presentations instead of having to research themselves. Regarding point of view, students tended to accept the popularized perspectives expressed on variant media outlets though they disagreed. When among themselves, however, they identified details with which they disagreed and, sometimes, stated their countered voice. The group discussions were so important because they fostered cultural behaviors and familiarity. However, students were unaware that they could counter the widely expressed DN (even at this phase in the digital humanities project). I felt that somewhere students had been stripped of their voice and the authority it possesses. I understood that students more willing to discuss their ideas about a social issue, as a hate crime, when the offense became

personal. For example, if the victim looked like them or was near their age, the incident resonated with them and became more believable; thus, they expressed opinions about details and felt obliged to express points of view, including countered views. Those accounts, where an obvious abuse of power and an imbalance of duty were exhibited, students demonstrated confidence as they expressed their point of view. As the teacher, encouraging their perspectives, they were less concerned with feeling shame or nervous to talk; they even engaged in debates when insulting remarks were made. I created S3: safety = security to share because I felt students wanted to know our classroom space welcomed tough conversations, countering points of view in the presence of all ethnicities, including white students.

From a teacher point of view, seamless facilitation, not appearing forced, frustrated, or fatigued, was imperative. Students responded, favorably, when I facilitated transitioned activities, organically. Surprisingly, I realized my students displayed a shift in their posture and attitude, regarding the project, based on my demeanor. Students needed stability and security throughout the development of this project. I grew to understand that the lack of humanity that emerged from these topics shifted the feeling in the class. As a teacher, I realized the more inhumane the occurrence revealed the more humane and civil our classroom space needed to be. Those moments of revelation reminded me of the use of connectivity to open the channels of communication with more fervor. Every teacher craves the art of creating a sense of humanity, (S3) to ensure a flow of communication, which facilitated project progression.

As a teacher, in this space, I altered my pedagogical style and some activities to aid my students' construction of their digital humanities project, so I provided a follow-up or second tier assignment/activity. However, there were instances when I instituted an abrupt change that revealed a clear purpose; if it had not, it caused students to question the need or certainty for an

activity or assignment although they grew to expect my interjecting, occasionally, with provocative short activities and/or inquiries.

### **Revealing Multimodal Writing: Teacher Perspective**

Observing from an autoethnographic vantage point heightened my sensibilities. My students were embarking on new territory and developing and designing a different genre of rhetoric. Their level of comfort and confidence, greatly, depended on our interconnectivity while they, still, gained trust to articulate their voice. With a space conducive for development, I instructed them to acquire a free website design to initiate con-structure and construction of their own digital humanities project. Tier 1 of Permission rested on consent, which built students' validation of voice and substantiation of scholarly rhetoric support. Before students asked me questions, I wanted to shape their idea of inquiry and their need for inquiry with a number of consecutive assignments and activities creating their project. Plus, I needed to build their confidence in themselves for assembling their project. Ingenuity, at this point in the project, is underscored; students were encouraged to design their digital humanities projects employing multimodal writing to disrupt the DN, that can limit and shape common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes.

Tiers 1-3 of Permission reflected conversion writing, which converted, or translated, meaning through multiple modes of communication, including traditional text writing, but not limited to it. In the Theory of Semantography, importantly, ingenuity was emphasized at this point in the project. Tier 1a was designed to stretch students' ideology of traditional rhetoric so that it moved beyond a monolithic conceptualization of only employment of diction to multiple modes that expressed meaning, explicitly. So, I challenged students, individually, to provide an adjectival list of seven (7) dictations that describe their hate crime. (Usually, upon reaching

several adjectives, students began to replicate—though slightly—the descriptions. Since students reached, clearly, determined descriptions of their hate crimes, editing was required to omit repetitiousness.) Tier 1b allowed students to share their lists with assigned partners; this collaborative judgment activity, I felt, built confidence and meaning accuracy in students though it allowed fellow partners to question their meaning(s) if they appeared farfetched. This partnership activity enlightened students on their diction choices—somewhat misleading or accurately ascribed. Students were instructed to keep their descriptions in a lexicon technological portal for future utilization. Then, Tier 1c self-assessed students, individually, regarding their assigned lexicon of the chosen hate crime—from 1b—by requiring them to invest in visualizations—two (2) pictorials and two (2) videos—of it. For Tier 1d, students were instructed to place their pictorials on one side of a poster board, which I provided, while the labeled (categorized) hate crime was displayed on the other side of the poster. In a group, Tier 1e required students to ask fellow group members (to evaluate) if their pictorials exuded a symbolization of the name and gravity of their hate crimes.

Tier 1 challenged students' sensibilities because they were accustomed to devoting language to convey their thoughts, ideas, and meanings, as is common within Composition I courses. The employment of multiple modes enlightened them on divergent modes to express themselves. In addition, I experienced students discovering a rhetorical oasis from the traditional text writing to that of multiple styles. These Tiers of permission-seeking established comfort among students, as they explored and implemented multiple modes of meanings, that really helped to build their confidence and expressed their countered voice to the DN. Before students transmitted their visualizations from Tier 1, they sought the approval from rotating peer partners for a minimally timed, music-sanctioned critiquing sessions and from me, if necessary. (The

music-sanctioned critiquing provided a light-hearted and creative method for timing evaluations, which encouraged instantaneous and honest appraising.) Interestingly, with the support and approval of peer partners, students typically did not ask for my consent or my assistance. They, in fact, seemed to gain confidence from peer endorsements and/or constructive suggestions, in which case they altered their content.

Tier 2 of Permission is a continuation of Tier 1. Tier 2a required students to analyze videos, either researched from free online resources or devised by themselves. (If students determined that resources were not accurate representations of their hate crime, they developed their own informative videos—definition, illustration, or otherwise insightful.) As an individual homework assignment, students were instructed to utilize the implementation and placement or proximity for Tier 2b and position their videos, appropriately, on their website. A couple of questions guided their placement: where are the videos most impactful to inform and to entice viewers to continue viewing? Where do the videos serve your message best? Students displayed a healthy rhetorical anxiety, as they entered the space of rhetorical creation, to learn what cooperative group partners would articulate, critically. I capitalized on this anxious energy because I felt students displayed this inquisitive nature that exuded enthusiasm.

Therefore, for Tier 2c, I instructed students to gather in their cooperative learning groups. This time, as viewers of a website, students critiqued the conversion communication of the videos, the necessity of them, and the impact they imparted. I cued music-sanctioned critiquing and obtained an understanding of the value of interconnective learning. They, keenly, viewed peer videos and provided peer notes to fellow classmates. For Tier 2d, a dual-duty assignment, students completed their revisions for homework and emailed their links to classmate viewers for a follow-up evaluation. As peer reviewers of websites, collaborative group members completed a

blind follow-up evaluation for homework to confirm proximity and placement of videos and/or constructive recommendations, concerning omissions, replacements, featured additions, altered content, repositioning, and the like. In addition, students assessed peers' employment of the theory of semantography. Tier 2e required students to complete and forward blind follow-up evaluations for viewers regarding their conveyed message. I felt students appreciated the emailed blind evaluations, with the commentary from peer group members with informed communication of countered points of view of the DN.

Tier 3 of the Implementation reflected a combination of design—aesthetics that reiterated the proximity/placement, and the rhetorical appeal. Importantly, the theory of semantography was applicable to communicate students' countered voice against the DN. Tier 3 embedded intermittent blind peer evaluations, among students, since the digital humanities project was coming to a close. With Tier 3a, a shift in their assignment routine was needed, so this assignment challenged them to complete multiple responsibilities. I charged students to complete an independent comparative analysis of their top 3 websites for aesthetic appeal: color(s), symbols, designs, music, text content, usability, organization, informative structures—graphs, charts, diagrams. Both Shipka and Kress' theories were integrated within these activities. To this end, I reiterated the value of ethos, logos, and pathos from a previous alphabetic text essay. As a result of their independent peer website evaluations, for Tier 3b, I required students to incorporate aural properties that established tone and reiterated point of view: music, voiceover, and/or sounds found or created. Instead of an evaluation, for Tier 3c, I directed students to determine if the inclusion of informative con-structures improved their websites. I instructed students to include enlightening content without overwhelming traditional, alphabetic text. For

Tier 3d, students assessed fellow peer partners' digital humanities project; again, this was a blind peer evaluation.

The autoethnographic perspective allowed me to experience my students' use of the theory of semantography, which included ascribing the meaning(s) of structures and constructions that are both conventional and unconventional and, usually, metaphorically and/or symbolically derived. Visual and aural structures and constructions, already created or writer-formulated, were completed through "graphy," or writing. Therefore, the theory of semantography bestowed the authorial sovereignty upon students, not the institution or a representative of it.

I was mindful of my reflection on how my students dove, bravely, into discussions about the grave social issues we had begun witnessing too frequently. Some had experienced these social issues or know someone who had been negatively affected by such critical concerns in our country, and beyond. Therefore, I contested the, usually, regimented argumentative or persuasive research paper that revealed a debatable topic and their clearly and comfortably expressed position with convincing details and examples and, of course, carefully sound research evidence.

## Chapter 5

## CONCLUSION

This dissertation sought to answer questions about the rhetorical pedagogical method Composition I instructors employ to facilitate students in communicating their voice. Integral to this inquiry was creating an anti-racist model for writing instructors and sustaining a rhetorical classroom space conducive for addressing socio-cultural, political, and racial injustices, reflective of the present climate. This study evolved as the global uprising against systemic racism, following the murders of Ahmaud Arbery, Brianna Taylor, and George Floyd in 2020. Therefore, a key factor for students was taking a “political turn,” referenced by rhetoric scholars (Carter et al. “What *Does* Democracy Look Like?” 125-26). They participated in divergent rhetorical assignments and activities that I devised. I employed anti-racist strategies, “addressing racial, cultural, and linguistic inequities in language and literacy education” as A. Baker-Bell advised (1). Then, I could assess my approaches while students offered a countered voice of the DN. The specific research questions addressed are the following:

- How can multimodal writing disrupt the dominant narrative, that limits and shapes common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes?
- What role does voice play in this process?

#### **General Findings/Argument of Dissertation**

This study revealed how multimodal writing can, in fact, disrupt the DN that limits and shapes common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes. When I required students to employ multiple modalities—including audio, video, images, digital, and others—I felt they expressed their counter narrative. Jody Shipka’s theory of a “goal-oriented” curriculum guided me as I formulated assignments requiring “multiple semiotic resources and language

varieties” (“A Multimodal Task-Based” 278). In addition, the study demonstrated the role of voice in this process. To guide them in “discovering voice,” I had to exhibit instructional agility, especially since I suspected cultural tension that could preclude student collaborations and development regarding difficult projects, like police brutality.

Therefore, I realized that I needed to alter my instructional approach, so I developed an anti-racist model to embed trust within our academic space. I applied “praxis and knowledge that work toward transformation and social change . . . addressing racial, cultural, and linguistic inequities in language and literary education” when devising assignments and activities (Baker-Bell 1). To this end, I developed a rhetorical move—the pedagogy of rhetorical projection—to guide my instructions and materials. (Pedagogy of rhetorical projection is a trilateral approach to rhetoric, interconnecting definition, identification, and application (DIA)). I even became entrenched within the researching process to dispel the apprehension I sensed. I decided the autoethnographic perspective would facilitate my study, and my growth and development as an instructor and as a rhetorical scholar. This method allowed me “to describe and systematically analyze personal experience in order to understand cultural experience” (Ellis and Bochner 739). Thus, I discovered the necessity to view this research process from a dual capacity: instructor and student.

### **Implications**

In this study, I argue that multimodal writing can disrupt the DN that limits and shapes common sense approaches to complex social issues, like hate crimes. Countering the DN offers an opportunity for students to discover and, then, express voice. Students witnessed a racially and politically charged America with a rampage of deaths of African American men. In addition, a previous Administration of the United States, brazenly, verbalized vilifying and racist

comments during televised interviews, and pre-campaign and post-campaign news reports, which were directed towards marginalized people. However, in this study, students find their voice by incorporating multimodal writing to development and design a digital humanities project.

This study contributes to the field by providing an anti-racist model for Composition instructors that employs multimodal writing to help students discover voice. It adds to compositional studies by providing rhetorical activities that reflect equity. To multimodal writing, this study might enlighten Composition instructors on divergent ways to create and incorporate multimodal activities within a syllabus.

The methodology of autoethnography provided me an opportunity to analyze my pedagogical style to ensure my assignments were effective. Autoethnography challenged me to design a rhetorical move that would foster my students' development. This methodology afforded me an opportunity to view my own teaching style and my own rhetorical materials. While evaluating my experience as a Composition instructor, I learned how I needed to alter my pedagogy, design my materials, and nurture my classroom.

This study can be applied to the teaching of composition. When Composition instructors teach voice, they can utilize germane activities from this study to reflect what Elbow declares is a "well-situated voice" ("What Do We Mean?" 27). Instructors teaching multimodal writing might find some of the activities in this study helpful. More importantly, rhetorical strategies provided in this study to aid the development of multimodal writing might be beneficial. To facilitate an anti-racist pedagogy, composition instructors might view findings in this study pivotal for implementing equitable course content and nurturing the classroom space.

### Reflections

Upon embarking on my study, I felt quite disturbed by the revelation that I was viewed equivalent to the dominant narrative. Since I work at an institution, that undoubtedly symbolized the dominant narrative, then, I must be a representative. My understanding of their perception led me to realize their apprehension to feel comfortable enough to share. I was disgruntled because I am a student-centered instructor, but I surrendered to the needs of my students. My class is an academic community, so I make adjustments to aid my students. My study benefitted because their apprehension guided me to autoethnography; my students' trust and a classroom space conducive for learning require my adjusting. This determined research methodology helped me to look at the real need for this study—the instructor and the pedagogy. This methodology worked well because I needed to view my pedagogical strategies, pedagogical praxis, and my instructional “language and literacy” to ensure equity (Baker-Bell 1).

The creation of the pedagogy of rhetorical projection makes me most proud because I designed a rhetorical framework to serve the needs of students and to expand the knowledge base of compositional studies. This rhetorical move lends itself to an anti-racist model so that an equitable learning environment and learning experience is nurtured. The creation of semantography, a theoretical approach to complement multimodal writing and pedagogy for rhetorical projection, makes me feel that I have contributed to compositional studies. The scope of use for semantography makes it a practical rhetorical technique for other rhetorical approaches. If I had my present knowledge and unlimited resources, I would have attempted to create an algorithm that would identify and document the variant utilizations of multimodal writing and what intersectionality appeared to be implicated.

### Future Research

This dissertation presents variant opportunities for future research. The first possibility would be to provide an anti-racist analysis of Composition I syllabi. A textual assessment of the language expressed on syllabi would inform writing instructors of appropriate word choice versus hegemonic diction. In addition, textual evaluations can identify culturally apposite linguistic options that contribute to and foster learning. Feminist, professor, and rhetorical scholar, A. Baker-Bell encourages instructors to “address racial, cultural, and linguistic inequities in language and literacy education” (1). Therefore, a literacy appraisal of the Composition I syllabi would provide knowledge latitude for instructors while establishing expectations regarding the content. Scholarly and curriculum scrutiny of the social and cultural diversification of substantive content and activities would ensure equity in designing an anti-racist Composition I syllabi.

Another anticipated possibility is developing multimodality assignments and activities. I would design a variety of multimodal writing praxis for Composition courses. To demonstrate divergent modalities—audio, visual, digital, images, and others—I would devise strategic specific activities for students to engage in them. As Gunther Kress contends, “multimodality represents “dimensions of . . . mediated-meaning making” with “coded symbols” “that reflect “a community” (45). I, then, would appreciate developing a critical analysis of traditionally devised Composition I monolithic, alphabetic assignments compared to multimodal, poly lithic assignments. To this end, a goal would be to compile comparative analyses of selective traditional assignments and multimodal assignments in a book. Another goal would be to devise a book of only multimodal assignments and activities. The book would include some of the

salient activities from this study. From either of the compilations, my greatest hope would be to have fellow Composition instructors incorporate them within their syllabi.

To extend my study, I would appreciate an opportunity to evaluate rhetorical forecasting, a concept of interest to me while engaged in this study. Rhetorical forecasting—a conceptualization I coined—would provide insightful layers of probable curriculum content and rhetorical topics for Composition courses. Considering the structure of an equitable curriculum, I would develop content that shapes courses with diverse literacy and rhetorical assignments. The content would reflect the world in which we dwell. From a pedagogical perspective, rhetorical forecasting would allow instructors to guide students, especially with the use of pedagogy of rhetorical projection, the new framework I developed to aid students in discovering voice. Research findings from my study could inform feminism studies in the field of intersectionality. A study of the impact multimodal writing might have, regarding analyses of specific intersections or modes of discrimination, would grant feminists a novel lens from which to view. Jody Shipka asserts that “multiple semiotic resources and language varieties, changing shape and meaning, evolving based on existing technologies and mindsets” cultivate diverse interpretations (“A Multimodal Task-Based” 278). Voice scholars might extend this research to study how multimodal writing might aid understanding of the influence intersectionality has on voice. Darsie Bowden’s voice reflects a “personal tone and flavor” (“Voice and Style” 243) that compositional scholars could be interested to analyze as it intersects with various identities.

Scholarship embarked from this study should investigate the effective utilization of the pedagogy of rhetorical projection (DIA). This pedagogical framework can be applied to multimodal writing and to digital humanities projects. An evaluation of the diverse modes this rhetorical move facilitates would encourage Composition instructors to initiate it. Assessing its

communicative “dimensions,” as Kress professes, could provide a number of rhetorical strategies and techniques sustainable for digital humanities assignments and for traditional alphabetic text essays. Integral to this study would be the divergent ways pedagogy of rhetorical projection can be employed to compose variant rhetorical modes. Thus, it is my hope that my study, with the pedagogy of rhetorical projection, can contribute to equity in Composition classrooms across the world and provide helpful insight to Composition instructors.

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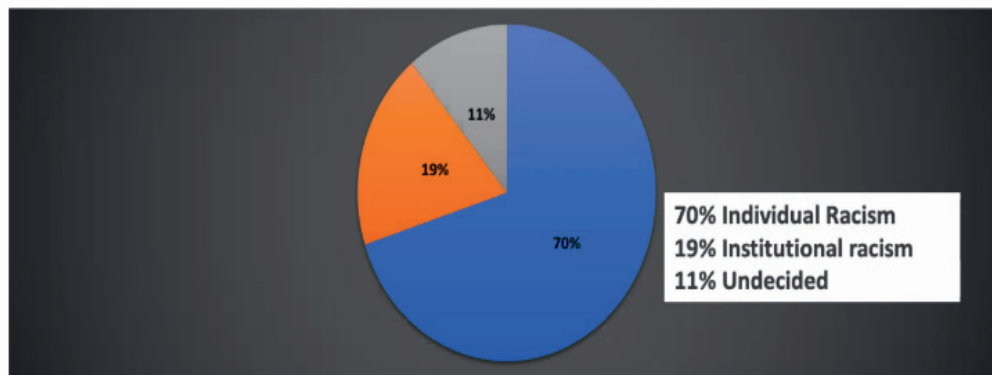
## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

“ON VIEWS OF RACE AND INEQUALITY,  
BLACKS AND WHITES ARE WORLDS APART”

“ON VIEWS OF RACE AND INEQUALITY,  
BLACKS AND WHITES ARE WORLDS APART”

## “On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites Are Worlds Apart”



Pew Research Center

Figure 1.

Additional study shows the Pew Research Center has discovered views on race and inequality indicate diverse perceptions by different ethnicities.

### Work Cited

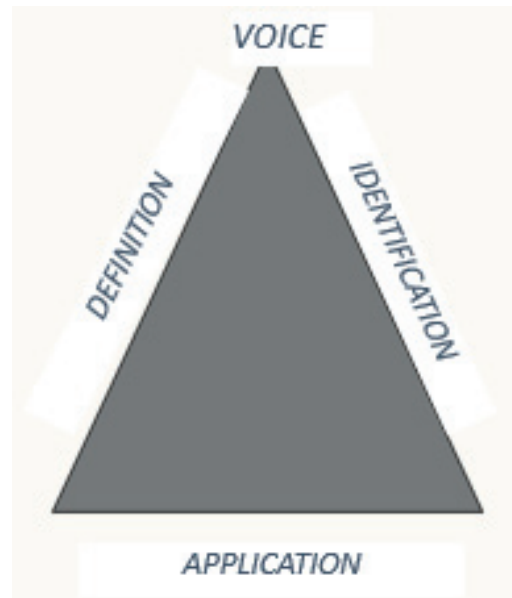
Pew Research Center. “*On Views of Race and Inequality, Blacks and Whites are Worlds Apart.*” <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2016/06/27/on-views-of-race-and-inequality-blacks-and-whites-are-worlds-apart/>.

APPENDIX B

PEDAGOGY OF RHETORICAL PROJECTION:

DIAGRAM WITH LABELS AND DEFINITION

PEDAGOGY OF RHETORICAL PROJECTION:  
DIAGRAM WITH LABELS AND DEFINITION



*Figure 2.*

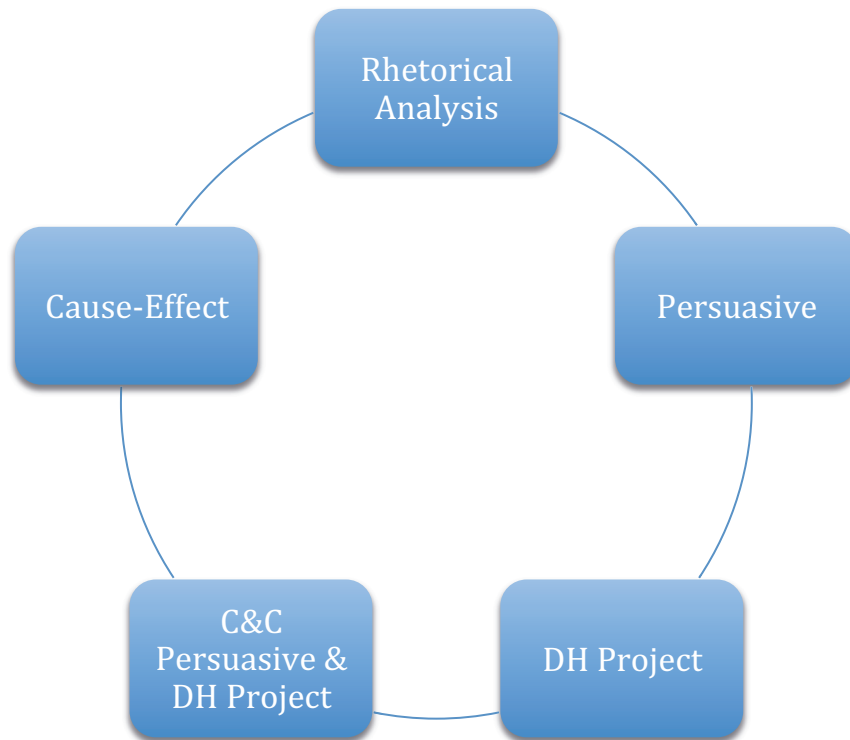
Rhetorical Projection is the new theoretical framework for anti-racist writing instruction—a trilateral approach to rhetoric, interconnecting definition, identification, and application (DIA).

**Work Cited**

Reed, Benita. *Discovering Voice Through Multimodal Writing: An Anti-racist Model for Writing Instructors*. 2021. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Texas A&M Commerce. pp. 6 and 55.

APPENDIX C  
COURSE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS

## COURSE WRITING ASSIGNMENTS



*Figure 3.*

This is an illustration of a series of writing assignments and classroom activities designed as a direct response to the need for counter stories, through voice, to previously silenced stories.

### Work Cited

Reed, Benita. *Discovering Voice Through Multimodal Writing: An Anti-racist Model for Writing Instructors*. 2021. [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Texas A&M Commerce. p. 6.

## VITA

Benita Charla Reed earned her Bachelor of Arts in English from Grambling State University in December 1990. In January 1991, she began her studies in English at Texas Southern University, where she completed her Master of Arts in June 1994. With her degrees in English, Benita has taught in higher education since August 1991. At Texas Southern University from 1991-1998, Benita started as a developmental instructor, and also taught composition and American literature courses. She also gained experience teaching at area community colleges, such as Houston Community College and San Jacinto College, with additional teaching opportunities at University of Houston-Downtown. In Houston, Benita began postgraduate work in English at University of Houston. August of 1998 in Arlington, Texas, Benita began teaching language arts to seventh and eighth graders. She developed the curriculum for and taught a TAKS course for students needing assistance in writing to pass the state standardized examination. In 2001, Benita became a Visiting Professor at DeVry University, where she has taught developmental and composition courses, along with business writing and literature courses. Since 2002, Benita has taught at Tarrant County College; she has taught myriad courses from developmental English to composition, American literature, and World literature. Benita has taught a poetry course at Texas A&M University-Commerce, where she earned her doctorate in English in April of 2021. Her research interests are rhetoric and digital humanities, and she plans to publish works related to multimodal writing and anti-racist pedagogy. Benita Reed can be reached at the below location.

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