



Building on Students' Strengths in Visual Composing



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+ **My current research: A 9-month ethnographic study of a social sorority**

- 22 interviews with founding members
- 12 alumnae/advisers, 7 campus staff members
- 10 months of participant-observation—primarily meetings and events
- Artifacts—minutes, handouts, flyers, emails, handbooks, PowerPoints, website, Facebook, Tweets





Visual Literacy on the Tumblr page



■ Critical Visual Literacy

- “Understand visuals not as a direct representation of reality, but as constructed from a certain viewpoint with a particular intent” (Duffelmeyer and Ellertson 2005)
- With knowledge of how students compose visually using technology, instructors can build pedagogy that draws on their strengths and scaffolds areas for improvement.

■ What is Tumblr?

A microblogging website and social network where users can either create their own unique content—such as artwork, animated gifs, text posts, video, and audio—or share the content other users have originally posted by “reblogging” it

+ A Pedagogical Performance

- “Pedagogical performance” (Delagrangé) of the sorority’s identity to new members
- The women created it almost entirely on their own
- Worked from models (opportunity for DBIs)
- Interviewed “Margo,” the member who created it





Sorority Composers' Processes

Be cool.

Assess, predict, and build associations with what is cool at the moment.

Areas for Scaffolding

Is “cool” the best association for this rhetorical situation? How else might you use arrangement to build associations?

Margo: In this one she looks really active and sporty—the glasses are very in!—and the Color Run is something that really showed up on social media and Pinterest, so if you can tie it into other social media sites, other trends, that type of thing and it's something they can relate to and something that's really popular right now.





Sorority Composers' Processes

Stick to a vibe.

Analyze viewer's emotions and consistently select images that convey that vibe.

Areas for Scaffolding

How can you make room for a variety of emotional responses to this visual composition?

Margo: [Jocelyn and I] came up with our vision when we decided the members we were going to target and how we were going to target—through fun, action photos, really showing how beautiful your chapter is and all the fun activities you do. And then during the summer I just ran with it. At work one day I spent six hours on my laptop . . . pulling pictures from Facebook that were fun and exciting.





Sorority Composers' Processes	Areas for Scaffolding
Be unexpected. Analyze your audience's preconceptions and push back on them.	How can you move beyond just excitement into wonder and wanting to know more?



Margo: There are a few photos on [another sorority's Tumblr page] that were **super-posed** and I honestly think they were in photo shoots. And that's one of the things that I didn't think came off correctly because you can tell that they're posed. And yes, they may be beautiful, but are they someone you can relate to? So that's one of the things that I thought of in creating ours. Yes, they look beautiful, but are they also **relatable**?

+ Super Posed



Relatable





“Conclusions”—What’s interesting?

- “Everyday” social media is an interesting site of visual composing.
- Welcome students multimodal composing processes into the classroom.
- If instructors can’t keep up with technological change, students often can.



Questions and/or thoughts?

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