Trends, Vibes, and Energies: Building on Students' Strengths in Visual Composing

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Abstract: This article examines the composing practices of two members of a social sorority who use visual images on the media of Tumblr and YouTube to teach potential new members about the kind of sorority experience they will have. From interviews with these composers and analyses of the artifacts they create, I distill three composing principles used to create the sorority's collective public image: be cool, stick to a vibe, and be exciting and unexpected. I connect these strengths in visual composing to existing scholarship in writing-across-the curriculum and writing-in-the-disciplines (WAC/WID) and identify areas where WAC/WID instructors might provide more scaffolding for students in the visual composing process.

Back in 2005, Barbara Duffelmeyer and Anthony Ellertson argued that students needed to learn "critical visual literacy," meaning the ability to understand visuals not as a direct representation of reality, but as constructed from a certain viewpoint with a particular intent. In 2005, "critical visual literacy" meant interpreting visuals created by someone else. Now, due to rapid advancements in technology, being critically visually literate also means being able to create and construct one's own visual displays, whether using PowerPoint to make an argument with images, using iMovie to create a photo stream, or using social media blogging sites like Tumblr to display arrangements of photographs. WAC/WID programs, however, have sometimes struggled to keep pace with the technological developments that impact visual composing, due in part to the cost of re-vamping university buildings for greater technological capacity and the "word-based disciplines" that foster WAC/WID (Bridwell-Bowles, Powell, & Choplin, 2009, para. 2).

If WAC/WID programs cannot always keep up with changes in new media, college and university students often can. To create pedagogy that stays up-to-date with technological developments, instructors can look at the visual composing processes students already use in their daily lives as a foundation for developing visual composing pedagogy. With knowledge of how students compose visually using technology, instructors can build pedagogy that draws on their strengths and scaffolds areas for improvement. Susan Orr, Margo Blythman, and Joan Mullin (2005), for example, conducted interviews with art and design students to understand their existing ideas about the differences between visuals and written texts because "an instructor needs insights into the student's position and perceptions so she can help students do something or see something that they were not able to see on their own" (Applications section, para. 1). Asking students to articulate their visual composing practices offers instructors valuable insight into the visual composing process and offers students a valuable experience of metacognition. James Chisholm and Brandie Trent (2014) found that by

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asking student video composers to articulate their compositional choices, "student authors [can] control such compositional devices deliberately, [and] teachers can promote students' metacognition as well as their interpretive reading practices" (p. 316). As a result, students were empowered "as creative authors and critical readers" (p. 316). Beyond simply documenting students' visual composing practices, instructors can use these processes as heuristics and models for developing pedagogies of visual composing.

This article examines the visual composing processes of two members of a social sorority who use visual images on the media of Tumblr and YouTube to teach potential new members about the kind of sorority experience they will have. Young people are increasingly using visual composing technologies not just to record their personal lives, but also to compose and perform group identities to a wider audience. As Anita Harris (2008) found, young women in particular use online spaces to form collective identities and "new participatory communities" (p. 481). Throughout, I focus on how the sorority composers are *performing* their collective identity, which I believe is the most apt and interesting pedagogical question for WAC/WID scholars. I use Susan Delagrange's (2011) work on visual performance and audience interpretation to theorize the sorority composers' work as a pedagogical performance.

Students' extracurricular processes of visual composing are also valuable because they offer messy, real-life alternatives to the linear models of argumentation often privileged in academia. Although scholars have long demonstrated the affordance of new media for multivocality, exploration, and discovery (Duffelmeyer, 2000; Johnson-Eilola & Selber, 2009; Micciche, Rule, & Stratman, 2012; Selfe & Takayoshi, 2007; Rifenburg, 2014), the pedagogy of visual design textbooks has not always demonstrated these affordances. Delagrange (2011) argued that it was necessary to look outside academia for models of visual design because scholarly texts tended to privilege "linear, rational, univocal" argument (p. 128) as well as "transparency and homogeneity and speed" (p. 104). Instead, instructors need principles for visual composing that

> recognize the complex rhetoricity of design, and its importance in constructing the meaning of a multimedia artifact—we need content and design principles that force us to take into account the multiplicities and ambiguities and inescapably visual materiality of our thinking and working lives. (Delagrange, 2011, p. 104)

The three principles I discuss from the women's composing processes capture some of these "multiplicities and ambiguities" because they are extracted from the real-life composing of non-specialists. These sorority composers are not generalizable to all students, but their processes can offer one enlightening narrative of students' visual composing in an extracurricular, self-motivated setting.

This research layers students' experiences in visual composing with existing scholarship on visual pedagogy to create student-friendly terms and ideas about visual composing. As Mike Rose (2010) wrote of his experience writing for public rather than academic audiences: "Caught in the linguistic bubble of our specializations, we are often impervious to our inability to connect with a more general audience of listeners and readers" (p. 285). Important as our own terminology is for critical analysis, specialized terminology can sometimes keep instructors from connecting with students, especially students new to the academy. From interviews with the sorority composers and analyses of the artifacts they create, I distill three composing principles used to create the sorority's collective public image: be cool, stick to a vibe, and be exciting and unexpected. For each term the sorority composers use, I suggest a comparable term from the existing scholarship on visual composing—association (Delagrange, 2011), affect/emotion (Edbauer Rice, 2008), and wonder (Delagrange, 2011)—to build

on the way students already talk about their composing processes with the finer-grained distinctions and nuances that exist in the scholarship.

Methods

The data here are part of a year-long ethnographic study of a social sorority that was new to my campus in 2012.[1] Between September 2012 and May 2013, my graduate assistant and I interviewed twenty-two founding members of the sorority about their paths of participation into the sorority. I attended 52 sorority events over the course of the year, including chapter, executive council, and committee meetings, philanthropic events, and the entire formal recruitment process. I learned in my research that potential new members conduct extensive Internet searches for campus sororities before school starts and/or during their first semester of college, before the formal recruitment process (sometimes called "rush") begins. This research focuses on the two women who conveyed the group's collective identity via a Tumblr page and a recruitment video, which showcase sorority life to recruit new members.

I understand these media experiences as "pedagogical performances" (Delagrange, 2011, p. 65) of the sorority's identity to potential sorority members. To dismantle the dichotomy of the active performer and the passive audience, Delagrange (2011) used the term "pedagogical performance" to express "the bidirectional sense of a performance as mutually constructed between the subject performer (witting or unwitting) and the audience" (p. 72). Theorizing visual displays as pedagogical performances allows the researcher to understand the "ideological constructions and discourses in visual and verbal texts that are primarily intended . . . to teach, insights which we can then apply to our own embodied pedagogical performances in our classrooms and the digital media objects we produce" (Delagrange, 2011, p. 72). In short, the word "pedagogical" reminds us of the rhetorical intentions of a text, while the word "performance" reminds us of the constructed nature of the visuals for an audience. My analysis stresses the rhetorical and persuasive aims of visuals, the reciprocal relationship between performer and audience, and the craft and construction of the performance components. New members approach the Tumblr and the video with a variety of preconceptions about what sorority members are like and what sororities do. The goal of these media is to teach new members what opportunities might await them as members of the sorority and how they might find a role in the existing group.

When a potential new member performs an Internet search for the sorority's name and university, one of the first sites she will encounter is the sorority's Tumblr page. "Margo,"[2] a junior anthropology major and the director of marketing for the sorority, created the Tumblr. Tumblr is 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. Tumblr users follow those who post content related to their interests and reblog this content for their own followers. They view the posts of people they follow on their dashboard; from there, users can either like, reblog, or share to other platforms the content they see. The Tumblr page features women on their own being active outside of campus—playing with animals, playing sports, tubing on the lake, volunteering, running a 5K—as well as some posed group shots, mostly dressed up for formal sorority events. The Tumblr page features approximately 60 photos in five columns. Margo explained to me that the user experiences the page by "scrolling through" it rather than focusing on one or two images.

While the Tumblr is one of the first texts a potential new member will encounter in learning about the sorority, she will also learn about the sorority via the recruitment video. Jocelyn, a junior public relations major and the sorority's director of recruitment, created the video using iMovie. Though

the video is publicly available on YouTube, it is played in a face-to-face setting, on the first day of the five-day recruitment process. The video is a rolling display of photos from the events the sorority holds throughout the year including parties, campus events, athletic activities, movie nights, and retreats. During recruitment, potential new members and existing members sit and watch the video together. Existing members will cheer ("Yeah Sarah! Whoo-hoo!") and explain parts of the video to potential new members ("That was at our frisbee fundraiser"). Thus, the video is experienced collectively, with existing members influencing the interpretations of the video. Previous research on students' digital video composing has focused on personal storytelling (Miller, 2010). This video, however, has the purpose of marketing the sorority, crafting a group rather than an individual identity, and tailoring a representation of sorority life.

I selected the Tumblr page and the recruitment video as points of focus because the women created them almost entirely on their own. Also, other social media platforms—like the sorority's Facebook page and the Twitter feed—represented the sorority to its own members and alumnae, but the Tumblr and the video were designed as pedagogical performances of the sorority's identity to potential new members. These two texts also work in conjunction because Margo and Jocelyn worked closely together to produce them throughout the year. As Margo told me, "marketing and recruitment go hand in hand." Together, Margo and Jocelyn decided on guidelines to convey the sorority's public image, which will be described in detail below.

I worked with an undergraduate researcher, Carolyn German, to better understand the rhetorical and performative functions of these texts. Carolyn was a transfer student, and so had been involved with sorority recruitment at two different schools. She also served in an executive leadership position in one chapter. Based on her experiences with sorority recruitment, Carolyn noted that the texts address some of the anxieties common to prospective sorority members: Will I like these people? Will the sorority be fun and entertaining? Will I fit in and/or will I have to change myself to fit in? By showing new members what the sorority experience will be like at the moment they are deciding whether or not to join, the texts represent a pedagogical performance: teaching the viewer what sororities are, what sororities do, and the kind of collective identity the women can expect if they choose to join. Looking at both texts together, Carolyn and I developed interview questions to highlight the most important choices made in each text (see Appendix). I interviewed each woman separately for approximately an hour within one month of the time she created the text.

Carolyn and I analyzed these interviews using grounded theory (Charmaz, 2010), an analytical method that creates theories "grounded" in the data through a recursive process between reading data and close analysis. Using grounded theory, the researcher works in a process of comparative analysis moving back and forth between data and theory development. In conducting this analysis, Carolyn and I were not interested in creating prescriptive or dogmatic instructions for visual composing, which would not have reflected these composers' recursive and multifaceted composing processes. Instead, we sought out principles that seemed to guide the women as they composed. Table 1 gives an overview of the sorority composers' processes and areas I identify for further scaffolding, described in further detail in the discussion below.

Table 1: Key findings about the sorority composers' visual composing processes and suggestions for scaffolding.

Sorority Composers' Processes	Areas for Further Scaffolding

Assess, predict, and build associations with what is cool at the moment.	Be strategic and reflective about the "arrangement" (Delagrange 2011) of the visuals. Is "cool" the best association for this rhetorical situation? How else might you use arrangement to build associations?
Analyze viewers' existing emotional associations. Select a vibe that addresses these existing emotions and select visuals that consistently demonstrate that vibe.	Parse out immediate affective responses and longstanding emotional associations (Edbauer Rice, 2008). How can you make room for a variety of emotional responses to this visual composition?
Be aware of your audience's expectations for the visuals in this composition, and consider ways to push back on those expectations to keep the composition exciting and unexpected.	How can you move beyond just entertainment and excitement into "wonder" (Delagrange, 2011) to stimulate the audience's interest in knowing more?

Findings: Principles of Visual Composing

Principle One: Be Cool

In adopting new classroom technologies, we need to be cautious and critical of how technology influences our students and our learning goals as well as "how best to educate rather than entertain students in the classroom" (Bangerter, 2010, para. 1). Instructors are rightfully cautious of automatically integrating the next new thing into the classroom; however, knowing what is cool or trendy at any given moment is a key strength that students bring to visual composing. "Cool" as a principle of visual composing was a heuristic and point of pride for the visual composers I interviewed.

Margo was inspired to use Tumblr from a leadership conference run by the international chapter of the sorority and said that her desire to use Tumblr stemmed from its popularity at the time:

> You're supposed to utilize things that are really hot in the social media, because that's the demographic that you're looking at. Tumblr started out being kind of introverted, where people can anonymously post their feelings and thoughts and stuff but sororities and different organizations started using it because it's one place that you can get your image across and target the members you're looking for, just because there are so many pictures. It's very good for visuals and getting the point across that "This is the kind of girl in our chapter."

Because the group uses a "really hot" social media site, the group, by extension, is also cool. Margo had a similar strategy in selecting photos. In our interview, Margo pointed to a photo on the Tumblr page of a sorority member who had just completed a Color Run, a charity 5K where participants are showered with colored powder at different stations. The member is also wearing "bro sunglasses"—black and neon plastic sunglasses with a 1980s look that are also very trendy. Margo pointed out this photo among the Tumblr photos as an example of being cool by association. She said she picked the photo because it showed the woman being both "active" and "trendy:"

> Margo: Another one that you go for is the active photograph and 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.
> Interviewer: How do you decide if something is trendy?
> Margo: Basically it's a trend if you've repeatedly heard it and it's easily recognized by every person that you say it to. Doing half marathons is really popular right now, and I think trends also change with the group that you're in and so the Color Run is going to be trendy to the girls just coming in and to all college kids. Maybe not necessarily to adults but it's definitely something that happened because of Pinterest and social media.

Three steps of Margo's visual composing process are important to highlight because they offer insight into the visual composing process. First, visual composers must be vigilant about keeping up with trends: Margo pays attention to social media sites with visual emphasis, like Pinterest and Tumblr, and she pays attention to what people are saying around her. Second, a visual composer must be able to spot a trend across a wide swath of visual input, understanding what is consistent and what is not. Third and perhaps most challenging, the visual composer must create associations with these emergent trends to perform the group identity. Delagrange (2011) termed this particular affordance of new media composing "arrangement," constructing "an uncanny bridge" to discover how "seemingly disparate and disconnected pieces can be joined and made sensible" (p. 122). Margo's process of arrangement, however, is more than just putting together elements to invent a visually pleasing composition: it relies on her previous vigilance in trend-spotting to associate the sorority with what is cool at the moment.

Jocelyn was also concerned with associating the sorority with coolness in selecting the song to play during the recruitment video. Although the song is aural and not visual, her decision-making process was similar to Margo's in that she was trying to associate the group with something currently cool. I asked Jocelyn how she chose the song for the video, and she told me about the near-mathematical process she used for staying on the cutting edge of music:

> You want to pick a song that's not popular yet. If it's popular when you start making the video, by the time you make the video people are sick of it and don't want to hear it anymore. So you search the iTunes Top 100 and you pick a song that you haven't heard before but it's in the Top 50 and you like… You want something that's new so that by the time you're actually showing the video it will be more popular but not annoying.

Margo and Jocelyn are vigilant participants in popular culture to juxtapose what is cool and trendy (Tumblr, Color Run, bro sunglasses, music) with the sorority's identity. In doing so, they create an association in the reader's mind between "cool" and the sorority, meaning that their visual compositions serve as "pedagogical performances" of the sorority's cool identity. They are aware of the way that popular culture shapes trends, craft associations between their sorority and the trends, and feel empowered to create these texts to represent their sorority.

Discussions of visual composing in the WAC/WID classroom might begin, then, with asking students what is cool, how they learn what is cool, and the different ways they use social media to associate themselves with what is cool. Margo capitalizes on the affordance of new media for arrangements that promote a certain idea ("we're cool"), but there are lots of ideas that could be conveyed with her Tumblr page, like the sorority's seriousness of purpose in raising money for women's heart health or volunteering in the community. Likewise, students may need guidance in exploring the possibilities of arrangement in digital media to make a variety of associations, beyond just what is cool at any given moment. Furthermore, due to the valuation of the "linear, rational, univocal, scholarly article or student essay" in academic culture (Delagrange, 2011, p. 128), students may need coaching in the

value of including multiple perspectives and creating disparate arrangements of images in thoughtful ways.

As much as association was a useful tool for these visual composers, sometimes, in their quest to visually associate themselves with cool trends, they could lose sight of what they are really trying to represent. Students composing visually in a WAC/WID classroom might face this same challenge. Jody Shipka (2013) argued for composing multi-modally not just because it is trendy or attention-getting, but because it was the best choice for the rhetorical situations the writer faces. Shipka thought that instructors needed to ask students to "assume more responsibility for determining the representational systems that best suit the work [students] hope to accomplish, and with this, to ask them to closely attend to and share with others details of their composing practices" (p. 76). Margo was well aware that the Tumblr had to present a desirable group of women, which could sometimes mean playing into "superficial" ideas:

> Margo: What you're presenting is that these are our girls, they're fun, we do lots of things, we're beautiful and when I'm looking at that on the site, what comes over me is that I want to be one of those girls. It seems kind of twisted but I think a lot of marketing aspects are a little superficial. If you break it down, it is—
> Interviewer: What do you mean by that?
> Margo: When you see these photographs of women and they're having fun and they're laughing and they're side by side, yeah, they're having a good time, but when you peel back the layers, we're specifically putting it out there that you do have fun, you are beautiful, and that's what appeals to the masses of women who look at these photographs.

By "when you peel back the layers," Margo means "if you look at it for what it really is." For Margo, the emphasis of visual composing on appearances sometimes meant presenting a widely desirable image instead of selecting images that represent the character of her sorority sisters. And so she concedes that her work on the Tumblr (and her work with other marketing aspects of the sorority) is "a little superficial." In the WAC/WID classroom, students might reflect on their own impulse to associate themselves with "cool things" in visual composing. While their ability to spot trends should be valued, as it is a skill that relies on vigilant visual analysis, students might also need to think about the integrity of what they are trying to represent. As in Margo's case, the visual display of what is cool and desirable could sometimes eclipse the more important question of what is ethical, moral, or appropriate for the rhetorical situation. Students may need to be sure that whatever is cool is also the best, most worthwhile, or most accurate association.

Because the popularity of different forms of social media ebbs and flows so quickly, students might also be challenged to think beyond just the "coolest" medium to consider the best or most effective medium for conveying their message. Arola (2010) and Almjeld (2014) observed that new media spaces like Facebook, MySpace, and Match.com can seem as though they offer the user a variety of options in representing the self, but actually "site design and user conventions force users into prescribed identities and embodiments online" (Almjeld, 2014, p. 72). Similarly, students may not always be aware of the way that either site design or existing genre conventions may implicitly dictate what they are capable of doing in an online space. Students may also need coaching in determining which online platforms allow them to best express their message, even if that medium is not necessarily new.

Principle Two: Stick to a Vibe

New media present exciting ways for WAC/WID instructors to teach the rhetorical power of affect and emotion. Composition scholars have taken an interest in emotion because, as Micciche (2006) has written, "Like it or not, composition is not a self-contained field of study that deals only in student writing and writing pedagogy; it deals in the sprawling reach of meaning, feeling, telling, making, doing and seeing" (p. 267). Emotion, however, is often stigmatized as a rhetorical tool because it is associated with "the irrational, the physical, the particular, the private, the feminine, and nonwhite others" and other "negatively valued categories" (Worsham, 1998, p. 224). For the sorority composers I interviewed, "vibe" or emotional resonance of the visual composition served as a kind of central argument that guided their composing choices. Margo and Jocelyn were faced with thousands of photos to choose from in making selections for the Tumblr and the video. To sort through this tidal wave of amateur photography, they relied on the overall vibe to guide their choices. The vibe was the overarching feeling conveyed consistently from the entirety of the visual composition, encompassing both the immediate affective experience and the lasting emotional resonance of the composition.

Margo and Jocelyn used their knowledge of the medium to determine the selection of the vibe. As Margo explained, the Tumblr is experienced more superficially: the page holds five columns of photos, most of which the user is not expected to study individually. More likely, she will scroll continuously through all of the photos. Unlike a full-fledged website, there are no links to click on or pages to explore; the only text is the heading across the top with the sorority's name and the only option is to scroll downwards. The goal of the Tumblr, as Margo understood it, was to give the reader an overall affective experience with multiple photos adding up to the "vibe" of the site. Because Margo only has her audience's attention for a short amount of time, she is more interested in creating a quick, visceral response to make an immediate impression. Margo referred to this affective experience as "what comes over me" as she scrolls through the photos. In terms of pedagogical performance, the vibe of the visual composition performs an emotional experience of sorority life that will likely be desirable to the viewer, contending that should the viewer join the sorority, she too will have the same experience. This emotional experience, as Margo conceived of it, was a combination of excitement, energy, and desire:

> Â [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.

Figure 1 is an example of one such photo that Margo felt demonstrated the vibe she and Jocelyn had decided on. The women are outside and interacting with each other physically, casually dressed and close to each other. They are acting silly for the camera, conveying the fun and energy of the sorority. According to Margo, a potential sorority member would look at this photo and want to be swept up in the same kind of energy.

Figure 1. Fun activities.[3]

By contrast, Jocelyn's experience in creating the video was less about the immediate affective experience and more about a deeper and more lasting emotional experience of being a part of the sorority. Jocelyn was aware that many women would begin sorority recruitment with negative emotions about sororities based on cultural stereotypes about "sorority girls." For example, viewers might assume that sorority women are competitive with each other or have fake friendships. They might also assume that sorority women pose stiffly for photos, trying to look like fashion models. Jocelyn's goal in the video, then, was to create new emotional associations by performing a contradictory—and to her, more authentic—emotional experience surrounding the sorority. To do so, Jocelyn selected more candid photos:

> I just love the goofy ones where, I guess a non-posed picture, a candid, because those are hilarious, those are the ones where you really get to see what we're like. I wanted a lot of movement in the picture so like we're laughing at each other or dancing…. I wanted to make it more like … pictures that you look at and think that those girls are happy. Like you can't deny, where girls are hugging or like squished together [see Figure 3]. Or they all have their arms around each other … stuff like that where you can really see love and sisterhood, all those emotions.

Figure 2. Squished together photo.

Jocelyn understands how the images work together to create a vibe. In this case, she is looking to create the vibes of happiness, love, and sisterhood, in contradiction to some of the stereotypes the viewer may hold about sorority members as snobby, cliquey, or high-strung.Â Figure 2 is an example of the kind of photo that Jocelyn felt correctly conveyed the vibe she was going for. The women are casually dressed and close together. The photo focuses more on their relationship and intimacy rather than their physical appearance. The sparkly ribbons in their hair also convey a sense of silliness, and while they were likely posing for the photo, it does not feel like a photo from a photo shoot.

WAC/WID instructors can help students make decisions about how to compose with visual media by having students discuss and determine a vibe for their visual compositions. A vibe may be a student-friendly starting place to help students make decisions in visual or multimodal compositions that account for the role of emotion in persuasion. Students can then delve into more complex discussions of the role of affect and emotion in persuasion. Edbauer Rice's (2008) distinction between "affect" and "emotion" helps to explain how Margo and Jocelyn approach the vibe of their visual compositions. Rice (2008) argued that "affect" is an immediate visceral response, while "emotions" are more socially constructed, narrativized, and "crafted by cultural contexts and judgments" (p. 201). On the Tumblr, the immediate feeling of excitement viewers may feel when they see photos of women outdoors is an experience of "affect" because it is a visceral response. Margo adroitly selects photos that trigger this quick, affective response because she knows that her audience is scrolling through the page. In the recruitment video, however, Jocelyn is going for a more "emotional" experience because she is specifically working against the culturally constructed, negatively emotionally charged stereotypes about sororities. Jocelyn is skilled at selecting photos that will contradict these conceptions to create a new, positive emotional resonance with the idea of sorority participation. To nuance the concept of a vibe, students should be able to differentiate how visuals

create an immediate, visceral response (affect) as well as how visuals can respond to and even challenge viewers' pre-existing, culturally scripted emotions to topics and ideas contained in the visual composition.

After students have mastered working with a vibe, they may also benefit from moving away from a unified emotional experience to explore how visual compositions can offer and accommodate a variety of emotional experiences. For example, Margo and Jocelyn could have considered how a shy or introverted person may have interpreted the Tumblr and the video, which focus on highly social group activities. In the WAC/WID classroom, students may need coaching in using the power of new media to perform a widely accommodating range of emotional experiences within their audience. Student might do so by considering how visual compositions that forward a unified emotional experience may affect a viewer who does not share that experience, using the freedom of new media to represent a variety of emotional reactions and responses for their intended audience.

Principle Three: Keep it Exciting and Unexpected

Both interviewees noted that their compositions were meant to spur excitement in the viewer through arrangements and associations that cause the viewer to wonder who she might be as a member of the sorority. Margo and Jocelyn demonstrated aptitude for understanding bodies as modes of composing, another area where students may excel given the abundance of photos they are able to take every day. Micciche, Rule, & Stratman (2012) argued the body itself is one mode of composing by studying video of teachers in front of a classroom, focusing on the messages conveyed in teachers' body comportment and how these messages contribute to or diverge from the teacher's teaching philosophies. They concluded that the body is "a meaningful and dynamic communicative technology central to the rhetorical trajectory of everyday teaching performance" (Micciche, Rule, & Stratman, 2012, The Body as Performative, para. 7). Margo and Jocelyn were aware that audiences bring with them expectations for how bodies will look in the context of sororities and analyze how the body comportment and presentation of sorority women in the visuals contribute to meanings they want to construct about sorority life.

Margo and Jocelyn used images that conveyed excitement and energy to push back on viewers' expectations of what bodies in sororities typically look like: stiff, formal, and posed. Margo wanted to present a different story on the Tumblr: "You want to hang out with girls who are fun and exciting, rejuvenating." For example, Margo and Jocelyn both noted that sorority members are associated with the "S-pose," because the body of the person posing in the photograph looks like an "S." This pose is so common among sorority women posing for photos that it is also referred to as the "sorority pose." Figure 3 presents examples of what Margo identified as a "super-posed" photo and what she identified as a "relatable" photo for the Tumblr page. Margo chose not to incorporate too many posed images because she felt these images created an emotional distance between the viewer and the sorority:

> 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?

The photos are "relatable" because of the postures and appearances of the women pictured, but also because they do not emphasize attractive physical appearance associated with sororities. Her sorority, she noted, was "not those blonde bombshells that get all the male attention. It's more being

content with yourself, personable, having fun with all these women, very centered on sisterhood." Margo hopes that her Tumblr can contradict this stressful image in lieu of the fun and relaxed excitement of the women in her sorority.

Figure 3. Comparison of "super posed" and "relatable" photos.

"Super-Posed" Photo

The woman stands stiffly in an "S-pose." Her hair and makeup are done, and she wears the latest fashion. The energy of the photo is directed outward toward the camera. According to my undergraduate research assistant Carolyn, photos like these are often taken, examined, and re-taken until the person in the photo is happy with her appearance.

"Relatable" Photo

While still posed, this photo is more relaxed and intimate, demonstrating the women's closeness. The outdoor backdrop demonstrates that the women are active, and the women's informal attire adds to the casual and relaxed vibe. This photo shows that the sorority values friendships and social experiences over physical perfection. Margo believes the viewer will identify more with these women than the woman on the left.

Jocelyn was also concerned that viewers would associate sororities with a concern for maintaining an attractive physical appearance. To break this association, Jocelyn incorporated photos that demonstrated comfort, energy, and movement: women casually dressed, being "goofy," moving and dancing, and laughing together. Jocelyn said: "I wanted to keep it goofy and light—I wanted a lot of movement in the picture so like we're laughing at each other or dancing or there ones where we're doing the family stack poses and stuff—I wanted to make it more like—pictures that you look at and think that those girls are happy." Figure 4 demonstrates examples of these photos. The "posed" photo is from a video that Jocelyn said she looked at as a model text in creating her own video.

Figure 4. Comparison of "goofy" photos.

Though this image is intended to show the women "goofing around," the image feels staged because the women are self-consciously trying to look "silly" for the camera. The image emphasizes fashion and style as the women are wearing makeup, they have styled their hair, and they are wearing matching clothes.

This "goofy" pose—what Jocelyn called the "family stack" pose—still conveys a kind of silliness, but also intimacy because the women's bodies are intertwined. The hair, makeup, and outfits are also casual. Jocelyn believes a photo like this one more effectively showcases the happiness of the women in the sorority.

Although the sorority composers deftly chose photos to push back on some of their viewers' negative associations with sororities, there were also times when the stimulation and excitement in the Tumblr and video amounted mostly to entertainment value. The sorority composers chose to include some photos just because the women in them looked like they were having fun rather than thinking about what kinds of associations they wanted to un-pack and re-build with their viewers. As Bangerter (2010) argued, "In educating today's detached learner, we need to make certain that we are not performing an ill-fated balancing act of too many innovative Web 2.0 technologies just for the sake of entertainment" (A Balancing Act, para. 1). Simulating visual excitement may be sufficient to get women excited about joining a sorority, but students might need more guidance in the WAC/WID classroom about making this excitement more purposeful. How might this visual composition contradict viewers' expectations and direct the viewer to new associations or ideas? Beyond just being "interesting," how else can a viewer's interest be stimulated and to what ends?

Furthermore, because of today's entertainment-driven culture, students in a WAC/WID context might need coaching to move beyond just entertainment into thinking about the exploration, curiosity, and possibility of wonder. Delagrange (2011) argued that one of the most promising avenues for multimodal composing was its capacity to spur "wonder" in an audience, meaning that new media allow creators and users "to explore, to move things about, to seek out curious and unexpected connections, and to defer closure and certainty while we consider the possibilities for rhetorical action that different arrangements of our evidence might suggest" (Delagrange, 2011, p. 108). The Tumblr and the video spur excitement in the viewer not by making firm promises about the sorority experience, but rather by offering multiple possibilities that might await her as a member of the sorority: friendships, adventures, social outings, and intimacy. In looking through the photos, the viewer will see some expected images of women having fun and bonding together, but will also

see some relaxed and casual photos that will cause her to wonder further about the sorority. The fun, energetic vibe of Margo and Jocelyn's compositions pushes back on some stereotypes of sorority women as stiffly posed and wearing constricting clothing, but they could have pushed back even more on existing sorority stereotypes to further spur wonder in their viewers. For example, they could have included more photos of the women doing some of their many service activities, like mentoring middle-school girls, or running their frisbee fundraiser. These photos would look more like "work" but would more readily spur wonder by offering myriad possibilities for involvement and avoiding pat conclusions about the meaning of sorority life. In the WAC/WID classroom, students might need to seek opportunities to strategically play into and resist viewers' visual expectations to keep their interest as well as spur wonder.

Because technology enables users to take and re-take and edit images, students composing visually may express a preference for glossy perfection in their compositions and may need coaching in ways to use visual to demonstrate messier realities. Jocelyn, for example, sent out three emails to the sorority specifically requesting candid photos but received very few. Most of the photos the women sent in were very posed and formal and taken at formal sorority events. But both Margo and Jocelyn expressed a preference for the more candid and fun photos.

These kinds of photos would also have helped convey the relaxed vibe of the sorority; however, in an era where photos can be taken and re-taken and edited all from the touchscreen of a cell phone, these photos can be harder to come by. Students may need help determining visuals that may show imperfection but may appeal to a viewer for just that reason.

Conclusion

This research details sorority women's visual composing processes to suggest interventions and scaffolding that can be provided by instructors to supplement students' existing visual literacies, as visual and multimodal composing practices continue to influence the higher education landscape. I have demonstrated the critical visual literacies these composers brought to the composing process: recognizing and selecting among emotionally resonant images; creating a coherent emotional impression; keeping up with the latest "trends" in new media, showcasing a collective identity; and stimulating and exciting viewers through visual performance. The sorority composers I interviewed were strong in these respects, but could have used more guidance in thinking critically about "cool" associations, allowing for a diversity of emotional expression, and moving beyond entertainment into wonder.

Finally, I would call for an increased attention to social media as a site of visual composing, as I believe this research has demonstrated that WAC/WID needs to take social media seriously and think about it strategically (as our students already do). Delagrange (2011) focused on elaborate art pieces by professional artists or on technology that requires specialized training: "hypermeÂdia on the web; interactive CD-ROMs; computer-based image maÂnipulation; animation software like Adobe Photoshop and Flash; and scientific devices for making and manipulating images" (p. 147). But it is important to note that technological change has enabled significant visual composing in people's everyday lives, and this kind of composing, particularly on social media, will likely be the kind of visual composing that is most familiar to our students. In his analysis of composition textbooks, Rice (2007) found that students were asked to respond to new media compositions with linear, textual arguments instead of responding to new media writing with new media writing. When visuals are used in academic writing, they are rarely central to the meaning of the text; instead, they are a "carrot" to keep up the reader's interest, or an "accessory" to contribute to the meaning of the written text (Kinnear, 2013, p. 187). But many of students' most used social media platforms—especially

Instagram and SnapChat—are almost entirely visually driven. I chose to interview Margo and Jocelyn because they take all forms of social media quite seriously, and both will likely seek careers that use their social media savvy. It makes sense, then, to begin with the kind of visual composing students know and include it in our theorizing of visual composing. As Gallegos (2013) has argued, drawing from students' existing literacies "connect[s] students' home places to the classroom, so that the classroom becomes contiguous with other places of comfort and becomes a place where students feel invited and authorized to speak" (para. 8). We need to not only welcome multimodal composing, but also welcome students' processes of composing using multimedia, and the composers themselves, wherever they may be situated at the university.

Appendix

Interview Questions

Questions about the Tumblr

1. How did you decide to make this Tumblr? How does this compare to other social media platforms?
2. What would you say the differences are between the different social media sites as far as purpose and audience?
3. How did you know what you wanted it to look like?
4. Did you work with anyone else in making it?
5. How did they/you know to make a Tumblr for your group?
6. Did you look to other sororities for ideas?
7. What is your overall purpose for the Tumblr page?
8. How did you decide which images to put on the page?
9. Where do you get the images?
10. What are you trying to show through the images?
11. Who do you think is looking at it and why?
12. Why a Tumblr page and not a blog (like Wordpress)?
13. Do you think the Tumblr is a success?
14. Did you get feedback on it?
15. Where do you see it going in the future?
16. How often do you/will you add new images?
17. Is everyone in your group authorized to post photos, or do they have to go through you first?
18. Can you point out a specific image that you like? Can you point out a specific image that you feel really fulfills the goals you have for the page?
19. Overall, do you feel the Tumblr is successful?

Questions about the video

1. How did you decide to make this video?

2. What programs/software did you use?
3. Is this the first time you've done it?
4. Where is the video shown and how?
5. Is it posted online?
6. How did you know what you wanted it to look like?
7. Did you work with anyone else in making it?
8. How did you learn how to make the video?
9. Did you look to other sororities for ideas?
10. What is your overall purpose for the video?
11. How did you decide which images to put on the page?
12. Where do you get the images?
13. What are you trying to show through the images?
14. How did you decide on the music/sound for the video?
15. Who do you think is looking at it and why?
16. Why a Tumblr page and not a blog (like Wordpress)?
17. Do you think the Tumblr is a success?
18. Did you get feedback on it?
19. Where do you see it going in the future?
20. How often do you/will you add new images?
21. Is everyone in your group authorized to post photos, or do they have to go through you first?
22. Can you point out a specific image that you like? Can you point out a specific image that you feel really fulfills the goals you have for the video?
23. Overall, do you feel that the video is successful?

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Notes

[1] The university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this project.

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

[3] The Institutional Review Board requested that I not use the actual photos of the women in order to preserve the confidentiality of my interview participants and the sorority. To make my interpretations of these photos transparent, I chose to include re-enactments of the photos by my undergraduate research assistants. To make sure that the photos were taken respectfully, the research assistants and I analyzed the

original photographs together to understand what parts were most important to recreate, focusing primarily on body comportment, body positioning, and facial expressions. We also discussed the degrees to which the photos emphasized hairstyling and makeup, as these were important ways that the sorority composers assessed the photos. The photos do not attempt to re-create the exact physical appearance of any member. All the women in these photos consented to have their images used in this article.

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