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The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project

A Dissertation Presented to

the Faculty of the

Education Doctorate in Transformational Teaching and Learning Program of

Kutztown University of Pennsylvania

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirement for the Degree Education Doctorate

By Heather Elizabeth Osborn

March 22, 2021

THE WRITING FOR HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

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THE WRITING FOR HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

This Dissertation for the Education Doctorate in Transformational Teaching  
and Learning Degree

By Heather Elizabeth Osborn

has been approved on behalf of the College of Education

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Mark Wolfmeyer, Committee Chair

Dr. Andrew Miness, Committee Member

Dr. Amy Pfeiler-Wunder, Committee Member

March 22, 2021

# THE WRITING FOR HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

## ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project

By

Heather Elizabeth Osborn

Kutztown University of PA, 2021

Kutztown, Pennsylvania


Directed by Dr. Mark Wolfmeyer

As a qualitative action research study, the purpose of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* was to facilitate more inclusive writing strategies and to promote individual and collective healing on issues of social suffering and oppression (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997; Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016) for diverse students at a community college located in the northeastern United States. The 18 participants in the study included students in my English II literature and composition course. The theoretical framework encompassed Pennebaker's (2016) "writing for healing" paradigm, advocating the use of expressivist writing and "social suffering theory," examining how power structures affect social problems (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997). As an intervention, course readings included literature with social suffering themes. Postmodernism and Poststructural Feminism were also central theoretical components of the study, introducing the use of the semiotic strategies of translingualism and multimodalities to examine teaching strategies. The intended results were to engage students as agents of community caregiving for social healing through the publication of a charity book on a social suffering theme chosen by the students and to facilitate inclusive and alternative methods of

## THE WRITING FOR HEALING AND TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

rhetorical expression. The data collected included a recorded book theme discussion, the students' submissions for the book, and semi-structured interviews with three participants. Using open coding, the results demonstrated a number of benefits to students, including increased confidence and poststructural shifts in thinking and writing. Book submissions exhibited a variety of rhetorical styles and semiotic strategies, along with defined solutions for healing on social suffering topics.

*Keywords: Writing for healing, poststructural feminism, semiotics, translanguaging, multimodalities, social suffering theory, college composition and literature, postmodernism, student publishing, education and COVID-19.*

Signature of Investigator  Date 3/22/2021

**Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved husband and soulmate, Gary, to my beautiful son and the light of my world, Sean, to my dad, who sadly passed away while I was writing the last two chapters of this dissertation, and in loving memory of my mom, who always believed in my abilities as a woman-- and gave me wings to fly. This is for you.

### **Acknowledgements**

This journey was made possible through the invaluable support of my family, friends, professors, and students, who have helped to make this one of the most profound, joyous, and transformative experiences of my life.

Without the support of my husband Gary and my son Sean, this degree could not have been possible. Their love, understanding, and unwavering belief in me and this long-held dream fueled my degree and this study, knowing that I was sharing it with those closest to my heart.

I would like to express immense gratitude to the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Mark Wolfmeyer, whose direction, positive feedback, and encouragement helped to ensure that this project took flight and continued to soar through the highs and lows during the process.

In addition, I am grateful for the insights and support of my committee members, Dr. Andrew Miness and Dr. Amy Pfeiler-Wunder, who also gave me the space to express the personal and the creative during our courses and helped to inspire the development of this study.

None of this would be possible, of course, without our greatest cheerleader and ever-present leader, Dr. Patricia Walsh Coates, the Director of our EDD program, whose calm reassurance was a constant reminder that dreams do come true. I feel blessed to have had the benefit of being a doctoral student in the EDD program at Kutztown University and am grateful to all of our professors in the department for such a positive and life-changing experience.

Sadly, during the writing of the final chapters of my dissertation, my father passed away from cancer. I am thankful for the continuous love and support from both of my parents for my educational goals throughout my life. Although neither of my parents are here to see me complete this degree, I know they each continue to walk with me, beaming with love and pride.



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Also, sharing this journey with my Leader Scholar Community (LSC) and our cohort—Dan, Samantha, Nicole, Cathy, Dan (DMC), Brittany, Richman, Liz, and Denise—made this experience all the more heart-felt and life-changing. We did it together.

To my best friends, Brian and MaryLisa, thank you for always being there for me, as well as Sean and Gary, and for your love and patience during my absence to complete this degree. You will both always be family.

Last, but not least, I am immensely grateful to my students who participated in this study—you took *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* to unexpected heights and continue to inspire me every day, with hope and joy for the future.

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## CHAPTER I

### PUZZLE OF PRACTICE

*“We stand today united in a belief in beauty, genius, and courage, and that these can transform the world.” –Jane Addams, 1881*

Social reformer Jane Addams argued for the value of community caregiving, a model for the implementation of social suffering theory today, through concern and activism for our communities and society as a whole (Deegan, 2017; Wilkinson and Kleinman, 2016). With a focus on issues of social suffering and oppression in the college writing classroom within a postmodern context, the purpose of this study is to investigate students’ experience of “writing for healing” on issues of social oppression while participating in what is being termed *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*. The project engages students as agents of community caregiving to promote social healing and justice and entails the publication of student work in an Amazon book of selected writings, multimodal visuals, and translanguaging texts on a social suffering theme chosen by the students. “Writing for healing,” a term coined by psychologist James Pennebaker (2016), is the use of expressivist writing to promote personal well-being, while “social suffering theory” examines how power structures affect social problems (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997). A central purpose of this project is to unite the “Pennebaker Paradigm” used by theorists and practitioners in the psychology and composition and rhetoric fields for writing for healing from an individual perspective within the collective experience of understanding oppression through the cultural and anthropological perspective of social suffering theory. The union of the individual with the social in regard to issues of societal suffering deepens the definition of what “writing for healing” is and provides a theoretical context for the collective creation for the writing project.

From a Poststructural Feminist theoretical perspective, this study also examines how the implementation of semiotic theories on discourse, including the alternative discourse strategies of translanguaging and multimodalities, can be used to facilitate the project. In regard to the central purpose of this project, the study also examines how or if there is a shift for students in writing within individual and social contexts on themes of social suffering and oppression in a way that exhibits poststructuralism by rejecting binaries in thought and hierarchized dualisms. The sample includes college students at a diverse two-year community college who are enrolled in an introductory composition and literature course. The study is limited to this sample. The review of literature includes discourse, educational, and social theories and serves as a foundation for the project and for examining the use of diverse discourse methodologies and practices in the areas of composition and literature for greater inclusion of students who are marginalized by gender, race, ethnicity, class, (dis)abilities, and as emergent bilingual speakers. The intended results are for students to promote social healing and justice by sharing diverse written and visual works for publication in a book created collaboratively on a chosen theme, with the proceeds from the book going to a designated charity.

This chapter will address the central components of my puzzle of practice, focusing initially on my positionality as a researcher in regard to my interest in exploring issues of social suffering and oppression with students enrolled in my English courses. In addition, the research problem and the context at the macro and micro levels for community college students who are diverse in background, race, ethnicity, and learning styles will be examined. Key terminology relevant to the study and its theoretical framework will be defined, and solutions for the research puzzle will be explored to meet the educational concerns for diverse community college students, many of whom are often marginalized and oppressed in the schooling process and find academic

discourse challenging. The intended outcomes of the study will be discussed, as well as the central research questions guiding the study.

### **Researcher Positionality**

When I was nine years old, I returned home from school one day to find my mother in her room, alone and upset. Through the sniffles and tears, she asked me, “Am I a bad mother? Is it all my fault?” I asked her what she meant. “The psychiatrists-- they said that your brother’s problems are my fault!” I reassured her, saying that it wasn’t true, and hugged her tightly to ease her fears until her sobs subsided. It was one of those key moments in life that indelibly shaped my future as an educator. It was also one of many incidents where I witnessed my mother experiencing being the “single mother” who is vilified. My parents divorced when I was two years old. We survived due to welfare and child support from my father, and by the time I was 17 and left for college, we had moved 37 times, sometimes living in unfurnished apartments with minimal furniture and oftentimes with no TV or phone. My mother had numerous health problems, including multiple heart attacks and strokes, exacerbated by the fact that my brother was mentally ill and abusive to us both, sometimes in life-threatening and horrific ways.

As a result, my childhood was spent accompanying my mother and brother to various psychologists and psychiatrists, visiting my brother in mental institutions and hospitals, after several suicide attempts and psychotic breakdowns, as well as visiting him in foster homes after he was removed from our home for his abusive and destructive behavior. Although my schooling process was positive, with the advantage of growing up in a multicultural community with friends of diverse backgrounds, my experience of the fear culture I witnessed in the 1980s was not. While my mother exhausted every avenue available institutionally to receive treatment and support for my brother’s mental illness, the predominant response from these mental health

“professionals” continued to be that she was the cause—because she was a single parent “without a man” to control my brother, fitting of the political rhetoric that predominated the 1980s and is still problematic today.

The destructive level of discrimination and sexism towards women and at the institutional level became even more apparent when my brother was finally diagnosed properly at 33 years old with schizophrenia psychosis, the result of a genetic disorder that runs in males in my mother’s family. But the diagnosis was much too late, after years of emotional damage, contributing to my mother’s early death several years ago at the age of 69, followed by my brother’s death two years later from cancer. My anger towards those psychiatrists was as palpable when I was nine years old as it is today, and I realized at that moment that an education and degrees didn’t make someone “educated” or helpful because of their title or role, but rather, a possible contributor to the problem, instead of a source for solutions. These are the unfortunate effects of institutionalized oppression and the marginalization of those treated as other within our society.

As a woman, who has also faced discrimination for being intelligent, witnessing the institutionalized and social oppression that my mother experienced as a woman and as a single mother solidified my goals in life as an educator, as a writer, and as a spokesperson against oppression. Growing up, I was teased for being the “smart girl,” and as my career blossomed, and I gained public attention for my writing and TV work, my academic credentials were questioned on online forums by critics and stalkers, stating that I was “lying” about being a professor, or that I was “bragging” about the fact that I was a professor, simply by stating my academic credentials—either way, I couldn’t win—while others speculated on my looks in regard to age, eye color, and height. An empowered woman standing in the spotlight is still

unacceptable to many segments of our society, and it has taught me in a very deep way how the publishing of lies and untruths in public forums needs to be counteracted with the positive work of educators and others standing up for truth. These experiences of discrimination and ignorance have simply fueled the fire all the more to educate and to stand up for others who have been oppressed—for many, much worse than I have experienced on my own path.

I further witnessed the depths of oppression in society soon after completing my MA in English, when I began teaching at a two-year college in Chicago. Our diverse student population consisted mostly of young women, first-generation Americans, and international students. Many of our students lived in dangerous neighborhoods, with family members in gangs, and as we began to write our personal narratives, the first paper in the semester for English 101, my students opened up and shared their stories, some for the first time, with a shocking number of them relating traumatic moments from their lives, including experiences of abuse, rape, deaths, and narrow escapes from war-torn countries. Now, as a professor of English who has taught diverse students from all over the world in my thirty-one years as an educator, both in the US and in the UK, I have heard many stories of personal challenges, oppression, and social injustice, experiences that my students have had to overcome while negotiating their schooling process.

Despite my own childhood difficulties, education facilitated my path to success and to overcome hardships, while reading and writing became avenues for personal expression and a means to speak about issues of passion for social change and transformation. It is because of my own obstacles that I feel all the more motivated to ensure inclusion and equity for all students and to provide strategies and methods of learning that can foster not only student confidence, but an interest in literacy as a tool for expression and social transformation on issues of importance to them. Engaging students in conversations and writings about social suffering and injustice in



order to learn about one another's "differences" encourages students to learn from each other and to give "voice" to issues that are often silenced and oppressed, particularly by those who are marginalized within society (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997; Flower, 2008).

### **Definition of Terms**

Since this study has a multilayered theoretical framework, using theories, pedagogies, and teaching strategies from various fields, including composition and rhetoric, higher education, psychology, and sociology, it is important to provide a section for the definition of terms that are relevant to *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* and key components of the study that will be further discussed in the remainder of the chapter.

**Academic Discourse** - A rhetorically formal style of writing preferred by academic institutions for its analytical framework and more elevated vocabulary, providing a thesis supported by logic, reasoning, and evidence (Mlynarczyk, 2014).

**Binary Oppositions** - The binary oppositions between inner-directed and outer-directed pedagogies in writing and thinking in the college composition and rhetoric curriculum (Bizzell, 1992). The binary opposition between academic discourse, or outer-directed, and expressive writing, or inner-directed, is embedded culturally and historically within society, as well as within higher education (Mlynarczyk, 2014).

**Expressive Writing** - A term used by psychologist James Pennebaker (2016) to describe personal writing, used in his clinical trials to promote emotional healing and well-being.

**Interpretivism** - A paradigm for qualitative research, it uses multiple levels of inquiry, with research conducted in natural settings, rather than controlled ones (Rossman & Rallis, 2017, p. 5).

**Multimodalities** - Multimodalities encompass visuals, videos, technology, and alternative symbolic methods of communication that can assist students in the sharing of their stories (Whithaus & Bowen, 2014). Multimodal composition practices in the teaching of English is also derived from semiotic theory and can help to bridge the communication gap for diverse learners.

**Pennebaker Paradigm** - Coined in psychology as the methodology of “writing to heal,” created by psychologist James Pennebaker (2016) in the late 1980s, and based on his clinical trials with college students which demonstrated that, given the opportunity to write expressively about trauma, the overall emotional and physical health of the students improved as a result.

**Postmodernism and Poststructural Feminism** - Postmodern theory and Poststructural Feminism provide the groundwork for this study for unraveling the dualisms and binary oppositions in thinking to foster multiple perspectives and rhetorical strategies (Agger, 1991, p. 112). Poststructuralism identifies that structures or systems are created and joined by binary pairs, which can be counteracted through deconstruction. Deconstructing language through semiotics is of particular focus to Poststructural Feminism, as well as to French feminist theorist and psychoanalyst Kristeva (1985), whose work provides context for incorporating diverse methods of discourse for this study.

**Rhizomatic Learning** - Rhizomatic pedagogy embraces multiplicities in meaning and seeks to avoid hierarchical thinking and power structures (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013). Employing multimodal and translingual pedagogies in the classroom encourages a more rhizomatic pedagogy for learning. A rhizome has “no beginning or end” and is “always in the middle” in order to regenerate, (Adkins, 2015, p. 22), so fostering a rhizomatic pedagogy in a writing classroom means allowing learning to happen organically with multiple experiences.

**Semiotics** - Semiotic theory as elucidated by psychoanalyst Kristeva (1985) refers to a pre-mirror Lacanian stage of language, of signs and meanings, also termed as “writing of the body,” it is the realm of the intuitive and the poetic. In addition, semiotic theory is particularly useful as a tool to examine the misunderstandings common to intercultural communication (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2009).

**Social Suffering** - Social suffering theory encompasses the study of the effects of political, economic, and institutional power on people, as well as how these power structures can oppress and create “social problems,” encompassing welfare, health, legal, moral, and religious issues (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997, p. ix). In a postmodern context, social suffering links the suffering of the individual within the context of society.

**Translingualism** - Translingualism repudiates “monolingualism” or one form of academic discourse for expression. It includes writing in varied forms of English and writing in more than one language and is derived from semiotic theory. Mlynarczyk (2014) explores the relationship between personal, narrative writing, and academic discourse and finds a solution to these binary oppositions within academia through a “translingual” approach.

**Writing to Heal/Writing for Healing** - A form of writing therapy created by psychologist James Pennebaker (2016) in the late 1980s to heal past trauma and to promote emotional and overall health and well-being.

### **Research Context**

For the past seven years, I have taught English courses as an adjunct Professor of English at a two-year community college in a suburban area in the northeastern US, which has the largest and most diverse student population of any college or university in the local region in regard to

race, ethnicity, age, and academic interest. As a result of this rich diversity, students enrolled in my English courses have quite varied literacy abilities, interests, and experiences, signaling the importance for an even greater focus on inclusion to meet the needs and backgrounds of diverse learners with a plethora of writing and life experiences.

According to the American Association of Community Colleges, the diversity of community colleges has been significantly increasing since 2012, with the percentage of Hispanic students reaching 25% of the 7 million students enrolled in community colleges, while 13% of students are African American, 20% of students have disabilities, and the percentage of non-traditional students enrolled who are 22 and up now comprise 47% of the community college student population (*AACC 2019 Fact Sheet*, 2019). With the open admissions policies of 62% of community colleges in the US (*OCTAE Community College Facts at a Glance*, 2019), including the community college where I teach, there are many issues that community colleges will face in the near future. There is an expected decline in student numbers by 2025 because of the decreased population rate from the recession that began in 2007, as well as a decrease in the number of low-income students who qualify for Pell Grants. Another concern is the added state and federal government pressure to improve graduation rates so that more students will enroll in four-year institutions, and as a result of these issues, educational researchers predict that students entering college will be less academically prepared and face a greater risk of dropping out and not completing their degrees (Long, 2016; Smith, 2018). Because of these educational trends and greater risks to matriculation and retention rates, the urgency for ensuring success and fostering inclusion becomes even more apparent in the landscape of the American community college classroom.

With the ever-increasing diversity of community college students, it is imperative to meet the needs of such varied backgrounds, ages, and learning styles, as many students grapple with their connection to literacy and expression, oftentimes unprepared and struggling with expectations at the college level (Long, 2016). As composition and rhetoric theorist Linda Flower (2008) argues, creating a more culturally rich and inclusive experience means providing alternative pathways in the composition classroom that subvert the binary opposition between the expressivist paradigm in writing to “speak up” for individuality and the social paradigm to “speak against something” (p. 78). As a solution, Flower (2008) offers that we as composition theorists, practitioners, and professors must also encourage our students to “speak with” others, meaning those who are marginalized by society by class, race, gender, culture, (dis)abilities, and poverty in order to engage in conversations that encourage learning and sharing about “differences”:

But speaking up in self-disclosure or critique does not support the difficult art of dialogue. Where do we learn how to speak with others? How could we develop an intercultural rhetoric that supports dialogue, deliberation, and collaborative action across differences? (p. 78)

Encouraging the dialogue between students to “speak with” and to learn from one another through classroom discussions, exercises, and writing assignments that are inclusive of personal experiences and issues of societal oppression and suffering will foster an “intercultural rhetoric” and learning about “differences,” particularly for those who have been categorized as “other” by society. Therefore, identifying “how” to harness this rich diversity of backgrounds of the community college students where I teach, while meeting the varied needs of students in the college composition classroom in an inclusive environment is the foundational pedagogical

question, and to determine how individual sharing from students with diverse backgrounds and voices can be encouraged so that students “speak with” and learn from one another in a manner that promotes social healing. By focusing on issues of social suffering and oppression, the intent is that students can move from an individual experience to the social experience of community caregiving through collective sharing and collaborative work as a means to eradicate binary oppositions and thinking and to facilitate learning, inclusion, and understanding.

### **The Research Puzzle**

This interest in providing varied and inclusive classroom and writing experiences for personal expression and social issues has been an on-going focus of my career, having taught a high percentage of international students in both Chicago and London. Yet, I became further intrigued by the issues of literacy experiences after doing writing assessments and assigning the Literacy Narrative essay during my first semester of teaching English I at the college where I currently teach. I discovered that in the assessments and Literacy Narratives, about half of the students wrote about negative experiences and could pinpoint how they lost interest in writing and/or reading because of events in their education process that had negatively affected them. Many of these students were labeled and categorized as “at-risk” during their schooling process and were also somehow “labeled” as being bad writers, whether through grades, comments from teachers, standardized test scores, or course tracking (Brown, 2016). Labels of having “developmental” reading and writing issues tend to stay with the students for the course of their literacy experiences in academic settings. Emergent bilingual writers, as well as students who have been marginalized because of gender, color, special needs, (dis)abilities, and ethnicity also sometimes struggle with confidence in expression, their interest and sense of self-efficacy impacted in ways that are challenging to overcome (Brown, 2016; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017).

Institutional oppression embedded in the expectations of patriarchal discourse by many educational stakeholders can be exclusionary, pushing to the margins those who are not White, male, and middle to upper-class if they do not conform to the “norm” expected in their communication strategies in an academic setting (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). In addition, institutionalized oppression within the community college experience challenges for students who are labeled as “other” to negotiate within the system of higher education:

... the American system of education contains sundry systemic biases that have become inherit and embedded into the very fabric of higher education. This systemic bias (i.e., educational racism) shows itself within the community college as a systemic network of rules, expectations, and cultural norms based on a model of education that caters to a middle- and upper-class White mind-set in America. (Long, 2016, p. 238)

These scaffolding issues of institutional oppression and marginalization have led me to consider the components of my puzzle, questioning within my own practice as an educator and as an English professor what writing strategies could facilitate a more inclusive learning experience for students, as well as a more positive effect on students’ sense of themselves and how they view themselves as writers. Moreover, because of the social justice and oppression issues discussed by my students over the years, I am interested in examining how writing and reading interventions centered on themes of oppression and social suffering can foster a more inclusive and interactive learning experience for students, shifting their perceptions about self and self within the greater context over time, while eliminating dualities that can result from marginalization and issues of social suffering. As sociologist Iain Wilkinson and anthropologist and psychiatrist Arthur Kleinman (2016) argue, “It is widely held that when set to the task of

charting the parameters of social suffering, conventional practices of knowledge production and academic writing are placed under an inordinate strain and are frequently found wanting” (p. 91).

Social suffering refers to the “results from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people,” as well as how these power structures affect “social problems,” including welfare, health, legal, moral, and religious issues (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997, p. ix). In a postmodern context, social suffering links individual suffering of “personal problems with societal problems,” (Kleinman et al., 1997, p. ix), and as a result, provides an important framework for considering how individual student voices can be expressed within a collective context on issues of social suffering and oppression in ways that break the “silence” that can result from suffering:

Silence stands in opposition to every voice, weak or strong, ordinary or unique, prosaic or poetic. The basic opposition between voice and silence matters here because suffering, like pain, with which it so often intermingles, exists in part beyond language. (Morris, 1997, p. 27)

To break the cycle of silence through language requires a multiplicity of voices, “Like silence, voice is really a plural concept,” with representation of diverse groups and varied views (Morris, 1997, p. 30) to remove the exclusionary boundaries of “moral communities” who decide the boundaries of who is “included,” and who is not (Morris, 1997, p. 39). In light of a postmodern context when considering the diverse student population of the community college where I teach, it is important to examine their quite varied literacy experiences and to provide diverse methods and discourse strategies that will promote a more inclusive approach for learning, for encouraging a greater interest in literacy, and for facilitating transformative insights on issues of social justice and oppression to enable a sense of equity in expression for all students.



Within the classroom context, using rhizomatic learning as a pedagogical approach (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987) translates into utilizing varied rhetorical strategies for classroom exercises and writing assignments, including journals and essays, with a focus on specific semiotic discourse methods such as translingualism and multimodalities to foster expression for diverse learners. These exercises, along with a focus on readings and discussions on themes of social suffering and oppression, are intended to create bridges between the personal and the social to create multiple means of expression through varied discourse strategies. The intention is for students to learn from each other and to talk with one another, sharing the rich diversity of their personal experiences within the social context of the classroom, and applying social suffering theory in an innovative way by the creation of a published book together. Each student in the classroom is encouraged to contribute to the discussion to decide on the theme of their book on an issue of social suffering, and thus, enacting and fostering community caregiving. In this way, each student is given a voice in the process and the sharing on social suffering themes, even if they elect not to contribute to the book.

In addition, the process of creating the book collectively facilitates the unique experience for many voices to be honored on the students' chosen theme, an important component of social suffering theory, honoring multiple, diverse voices on an issue, to promote social healing collectively. While students may have the opportunity for personal expression and writing on social issues within the traditional composition classroom, being given the experience to share collectively in the creation and publication of a project for societal healing is special and rare, one that is not often supported within a college English classroom. The project is also unique in that it offers the opportunity to add another component to the Pennebaker (2016) model of "writing to heal" by unifying the healing benefits of the individual writing experience within a

collective one for social healing through the book's collectively chosen focus and the experience of working together to build community caregiving. Writing to heal, then, is being redefined in new ways through this study by examining how individual writing, which can be a healing experience unto itself, can then be shared in a collective experience with a common goal for healing issues of social suffering as a means for community caregiving.

### **The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project**

As a result of my own diverse life experiences, having lived in the US and the UK, in both urban and rural areas, and having taught students from all over the world, my work as an educator has been a diverse continuum of growing and learning. From the stories of my students, I learn about other cultures and perspectives and see new ways each day to meet their needs and expectations, ways to spark that desire to learn, to inspire my students to share their own voices in the global context for greater healing and transformation, particularly on themes of social justice and oppression. This teaching philosophy is not grounded in a local or organizational context, but within a global one, as I consider myself to be a citizen of the world, and, therefore, I have a responsibility globally, even universally. My puzzle of practice is more like an onion, an interconnection of layers that unify self with that which is outside of self in unity in order to examine writing strategies and topics that promote expression, individual, and societal healing within the context of social suffering, and the transformative connection of self with other on issues of social justice in powerful ways.

This perspective of my inherent teaching philosophy in regard to my puzzle of practice is in line with rhizomatic pedagogy, engaging students in ways that are not prescriptive formulas with pre-determined outcomes, but through learning organically about what is "unknown," and by exploring in "this unknown or unearthing of being, a learning takes place" (Humphreys, 2013,

p. 203). Rhizomatic pedagogy, as conceived by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), deconstructs the hierarchical structure of learning in Western thought commonly associated with the image of the Tree of Life, a top-down structure, and instead, conceptualizes learning as its opposite, a rhizome, such as grass or a potato, where its shoots can go in multiple directions, without hierarchy, and with “no clear lines of descent” (Adkins, 2015, p. 22). As a result, a rhizome has “no beginning or end” and is “always in the middle” because to regenerate, “They simply begin again wherever they are” (Adkins, 2015, p. 22). Embracing a rhizomatic pedagogy in a writing classroom means being open to the multiplicities of experiences that may happen, as well as honoring the multiple and diverse voices of the students in their discussions and writings, deconstructing inherent linearities and hierarchies embedded in Western thought and education:

The key to the rhizome, and the reason Deleuze and Guattari take it up as a way of thinking about not only books but things in general, is that the rhizome continually creates the new. It is not predictable. It does not follow a linear pattern of growth and reproduction. (Adkins, 2015, p. 23)

A rhizomatic pedagogical approach is in keeping with Postmodern theory and its focus on honoring multiplicities, rather than hierarchies and dualisms that can silence the voices of those who have been marginalized in society from a social suffering perspective.

Because of my educational philosophy, Postmodern theory, particularly Poststructural Feminism, is a helpful framework for my research of encompassing self within the wider context of local, global, and universal connections for unraveling positionality of self for students, as well as the multiplicities of learning and expression that can be fostered to counteract dualisms and binaries in thinking that can incite the marginalized oppression of other voices in the greater context. As Postmodern theorist Patrick Slattery (2013) argues, “Dualism is the outgrowth of

philosophical traditions that need to be challenged. The attempts to divide the world into “us” versus “them” pervade our society” (p. 5). In addition, embracing a rhizomatic pedagogy diffuses the power structures of dualisms by embracing multiplicities of growth, learning, and meaning (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013). As Adkins (2015) argues, the innovative insights of Deleuze and Guattari’s (1987) rhizomatic learning “follows from a new way of looking at the world, a perceptual semiotics” (p. 20). In “Stabat Mater,” Poststructural French feminist theorist and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (1985) also challenges this notion of linearities and dualities with semiotic theory, demonstrating the value of multiple discourse styles in a gender-inclusive way that counteracts societal oppression of the “feminine” voice that is organic, an expression of the poetic, and birthed from within, rather than from a linearly-constructed notion of language.

Facilitating more diverse, expressive writing strategies and encouraging students to develop their voices on social justice issues are critical components of what I am terming *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, creating not only a “writing for healing” experience in terms of the students’ personal expression of individual identities as writers (Glass, Dreusicke, Evans, Bechard, E., & Wolever, 2019; Pennebaker, 2017; Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016), but also engaging them in a collective experience by sharing writing and artwork on themes that address social suffering, expanding the boundaries of exclusion that “moral communities” and institutions of oppression can enforce (Morris, 1997). Writing for healing within the context of social suffering, then, can be used as a tool that expands these borders to “force us to acknowledge suffering where we normally do not see it” (Morris, 1997, p. 41). Writing can “help to create and to uncreate suffering,” (Morris, 1997, p. 42), yet “under the right conditions, can have healing powers” (Morris, 1997, p. 32). In addition, Wilkinson and

Kleinman (2016) identify the notion of action in response to social suffering as “caregiving” pedagogy, explaining that the “doing of care” is necessary for the “health, well-being, and care of others” (p. 163). Rather than simply promoting care as a social value, “caregiving” is also defined as:

...a practice that is indispensable to the pursuit of social understanding. In this model, caregiving is treated as a method for getting at what holds social worlds together at the level of moral experience. The effort of building and rebuilding people’s lives is taken as a means to acquire knowledge of society. (Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016, p. 163)

This sharing of knowledge and experiences through writing, engaging, and discussion, facilitates rhizomatic learning (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013) and the fostering of caregiving, encouraging the expression of students’ voices, individually and yet collectively, through a writing project that also takes action by broadening awareness on issues of social suffering, while also donating the proceeds made from the publication of the writing project for charity.

Also, building on rhizomatic pedagogy as a model for facilitating inclusion by engaging the diverse voices of students in the college classroom (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013) involves incorporating more inclusive rhetorical styles, such as multimodalities and translanguaging, which are components of Poststructuralist Feminism and semiotic theory. Utilizing methods of diverse rhetorical strategies can also foster the voices of diverse students who have often been marginalized by society and within the schooling process in ways that have impacted their interest and abilities with literacy and expectations for academic writing (Brown, 2016; Gonzales, 2015; Horner, Lu, Royster, & Trimbur, 2011; Kim, 2008; Mlynarczyk, 2014; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). In addition, issues of social suffering,

oppression, and social justice can be emphasized in reading and writing assignments as a means to counteract binaries in thought and hierarchical structures, to create balance in thinking and discourse for expression, and to facilitate cultural healing and overall well-being (Achterberg, 1990; Adkins, 2015; Bruner, 1986; Charbonneau-Dahlen, Lowe, & Morris, 2016; DeSalvo, 1999; Dewey, 1934; Kristeva, 1985; Morris, 1997; Wilentz, 2000; Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016; Wilson, 2014). As Slattery (2013) argues, "...curriculum development in the postmodern era must be attentive to this healing dance, the spiral of creation, and a yearning for wisdom embedded in the interrelationship of mind, body, and spirit" (p. 2). Through this "dance" of integrated components is the continued quest to overcome dualities, divisions, and hierarchies and to strive for unity "in order for learning, healing, and growth to flourish" (Slattery, 2013, p. 2).

While the need for the development of good writers is certainly part of the context of this study, in keeping with the pedagogy of rhizomatic learning and that learning is beyond set timeframes, in an organic process that embraces multiplicities (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013), the emphasis for investigation and data collection is on the students' responses, not only to their overall sense of personal identity, well-being, and connection through their writing, but on their connection and responses to the sharing of knowledge and the healing components of caregiving through action on social suffering issues via the collective implementation and publishing of their writing project for a designated charity.

### **Research Questions**

The components of my positionality and interests as a researcher, the research context, my specific puzzle of practice, and the meaning of the project provide the foundational focus for

the research questions for my study. In order to gather qualitative data for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, I examine the following research questions:

1. What are the students' experiences of "writing for healing" on issues of social suffering and oppression while participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*?
2. How does the intervention of using the semiotic pedagogies of translingualism and multimodalities impact teaching strategies for writing assignments and the creation of the book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*?
3. Do dualities of the self vs. the social shift by writing within individual and social contexts on themes of social suffering and oppression in a poststructural way that rejects binaries in thought and hierarchized dualisms?

The first question serves as the primary focus of the study, with the intent to gather qualitative data on the students' experiences of the project. The second question on translingualism and multimodalities is meant to inform my own teaching practice through the implementation of these teaching strategies. Lastly, the question on dualities examines how or if students' participation in the project shifts binary oppositions in thought by examination of student writing. The investigation of these research questions, then, is grounded in a Postmodern context through Poststructural Feminism, social suffering theory, the Pennebaker Paradigm, and relevant teaching pedagogies, as the next chapter will address.

## CHAPTER II

### PERSPECTIVE ON THE PUZZLE OF PRACTICE

This chapter addresses the critical social theories that are relevant to this study and the postmodern theoretical context of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, applying Poststructural Feminism and semiotic theory through translingual and multimodal pedagogies. In addition, the “Pennebaker Paradigm” and social suffering theory are discussed to provide the framework of studying how “writing for healing” can be examined within both an individual and social context to deepen the theoretical and methodological understanding of healing for community caretaking through writing. A review of relevant theorists, research, and studies support the intended results of the study for promoting a “writing to heal” project focus, using diverse discourse and learning strategies that reject binaries in thought and writing to promote inclusion and an individual yet collective “writing for healing” experience within introductory college composition and literature classrooms. The implications are that by investigating and promoting more diverse and inclusive discourse modes and methods of expression that college students in the sample who collaboratively create a publication for charity will experience a greater understanding of social suffering within society and individual awareness by promoting healing and transformation as a cohesive community.

#### Relevant Critical Social Theories

**Postmodernism and poststructural feminism.** Postmodern theory, with a particular focus on Poststructural Feminism, provides the groundwork for this study for unraveling the dualisms and binary oppositions in thinking to foster multiple perspectives and rhetorical strategies, while encompassing the individual use of language within social contexts, “There is



substantial overlap between poststructuralism and postmodernism... poststructuralism (Derrida, the French feminists) is a theory of knowledge and language, whereas postmodernism (Foucault, Barthes, Lyotard, Baudrillard) is a theory of society, culture, and history” (Agger, 1991, p. 112). As Lather (1991) argues in *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern*:

Philosophically speaking, the essence of the postmodern argument is that the dualisms which continue to dominate Western thought are inadequate for understanding a world of multiple causes and effects interacting in complex and non-linear ways, all of which are rooted in a limitless array of historical and cultural specificities. (Kindle Locations 719-722)

Poststructural Feminism, particularly the French feminist theorists, focuses on concrete empirical studies of discourses and how texts are structured by “gendered themes” (Agger, 1991, p. 125). In defining Poststructuralism, Slattery (2013) states, “Poststructuralism is not a system, but opposition to the structure of understanding as a unified system” (p. 205). In addition, “poststructuralism and deconstructionism share a common purpose with postmodernism: exposing the contradictions and fallacies embedded within the themes of Western thought and Enlightenment rationality” (Slattery, 2013, p. 202). Derrida’s work on deconstruction and the concept of difference, or repression and logocentrism, greatly influenced French feminist poststructuralism, as evidenced by their focus on language and its relationship to the body, as well as the analysis and deconstruction of patriarchal culture like a text (Ferratova-Loidolt, 2005). As Derrida (2013) notes, “It is in the interest of one side and the other to represent deconstruction as a turning inward and an enclosure by the limits of language, whereas in fact deconstruction begins by deconstructing logocentrism, the linguistics of the word, and this very

enclosure itself” (p. 78). Deconstructing language through the use of semiotics is of particular focus to Poststructural Feminism, as well as to French feminist theorist and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (1985), whose work provides context for incorporating diverse methods of discourse for this study.

Semiotics is “the study of meanings in signs and symbols, especially in language and images” and provides a “wellspring of using words and images to write about trauma” (Fox, 2016, pp. 779-780). The fusing of the linguistic study of signs with the field of psychology dates back to Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913), who viewed “semiology” as “the science of the life of signs in social life,” which he considered to be an obvious component of “general psychology” (Bouissac, 1993, p. 733). This fusion is apparent today in modern psychology and literary analysis, as semiotic theory is viewed as an entry-point for honoring and examining diverse discourse modes that facilitate inclusion, healing, and freedom from repression through language (Achterberg, 1990; Bruner, 1986; Fox, 2016; Kristeva, 1985; Wilentz, 2000).

Freedom from repression is a key component in the work of Neo-Freudian psychoanalyst and feminist semiotic theorist Julia Kristeva (1985), demonstrating in her influential article “Stabat Mater” the importance of expression through multiple discourse modes. Writing on the personal theme of becoming a mother alongside an analysis of the image of the Virgin Mary, Kristeva (1985) constructs her article on the history and analysis of the Virgin Mary’s symbology and reclaims the value of “motherhood” in a radical way that forces us to consider varied levels of meaning. On one side of the essay, her writing on the subject of motherhood is a creative, internal dialogue, with poetic language, reflective of the “semiotic,” or the pre-mirror stage of language that is tied to the “feminine” through the expression of “writing of the body,”

incorporating lush images and internal thoughts on becoming a mother herself and the state of motherhood:

The smell of milk, dew-drenched greenery, sour and clear, a memory of wind, of air, of seaweed (as if a body lived without waste): it glides under my skin, not stopping at the mouth or nose but caressing my veins, and stripping the skin from the bones fills me like a balloon full of ozone and I plant my feet firmly on the ground in order to carry him, safe, stable, unprootable.... (Kristeva, 1985, p. 141)

The “repressed,” in Freudian terms, is no longer simply held within the container of our bodies, but it is expressed on the page as a form of communication that challenges the patriarchal norm of discourse of the mind, by writing from the body, from the heart. On the right side of the essay, Kristeva (1985) provides her analysis of Mary as a subsumed “Mother Goddess,” using academic discourse in a way that contrasts with the creative style on the left, and yet harmonizes in common themes for a unity of meaning:

The majestic figure of this woman twisted one way by desire for the male cadaver and the other by a denial of death - a twisting whose paranoid logic should not go unmentioned - is served up in magisterial fashion by the well-known Stabat Mater. All belief in resurrection is probably rooted in mythologies dominated by the mother goddess. (p. 144)

What Kristeva (1985) is modeling is a way to unify disparate means of expression, valuing the intuitive, the personal, and the poetic, as equally as academic discourse, while also providing inspiration as an educator with a vision to reclaim the value of women’s writing and to help others find their voices, freed from the societal constraints of the boxes that are used to repress and to define us. The two stylistic extremes symbolize how the left and right-brained processes

can be unified within the discourses used in one piece of writing. This “integration” in writing, as DeSalvo (2017) terms it, is key for balancing the left and right brain functions (p. 23) and this transformational shift continues for students over time, with improved spirits and a more positive outlook (p. 21). Therefore, Kristeva’s (1985) theories on the semiotic and the multiplicities of meaning, that can be conveyed through varied discourses, provide an important theoretical context for understanding how to overcome societal binaries in language expression and meaning, and to foster inclusion and a sense of greater self-efficacy for diverse writers.

**Social suffering.** Social suffering theory encompasses the study of the effects of political, economic, and institutional power on people, as well as how these power structures can oppress and create “social problems,” encompassing welfare, health, legal, moral, and religious issues (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997, p. ix). In a postmodern context, social suffering links the suffering of the individual within the context of society, and therefore, it is a social problem, “Personal pain is a degrading and dehumanizing experience unless meaning is vested in it. The investment of personal pain with meaning transforms it into suffering, which becomes a social process” (Ramphela, 1997). As Ramphela (1997) argues, the individual gains empowerment and “dignity” through the acknowledgment of pain, and this societal acknowledgment facilitates empowerment “to feel worthy of suffering,” as well as facilitating “the possibilities for healing” (p. 114). Therefore, fostering individual student voices for writing on issues of social suffering and oppression through the publication of a group project such as *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* can provide a collective experience for societal “acknowledgment” that breaks the “silence” that can result from suffering. As Morris (1997) argues, “voice” is a “plural concept.” By representing diverse groups and varied perspectives, the societal power structures of exclusionary boundaries of oppression can be broken down. These power structures are

enforced by what Morris (1997) terms as “moral communities,” and by breaking down these boundaries, the repression and pain of silencing can be countered to foster a sense of equity and inclusion through public acknowledgment.

### **Relevant Pedagogies and Theories on Learning**

**Pennebaker paradigm.** Coined by American psychologist James Pennebaker (2016) in the late 1980s, “writing to heal” or “writing for healing” is based on his clinical trials with college students that demonstrated that, given the opportunity to write expressively about trauma, the overall emotional and physical health and well-being of the students improved as a result. Alternative discourse modes of expression, as proposed by Pennebaker (2016), can be used in the practice for individual well-being and to provide alternative and varied discourse modes that are more inclusive for diverse students and learning styles. In Pennebaker’s (2016) clinical trials with college students, he uncovered the various benefits of expressive writing, from clearing one’s head to overcoming trauma, as well as improving physical and overall mental health and balance:

Writing, then, should be viewed as preventative maintenance. The value of writing or talking about our thoughts and feelings lies in reducing the work of inhibition and in organizing our complicated and messy mental and emotional lives. Writing helps to keep our psychological compass oriented. Writing can be inexpensive, simple, albeit sometimes painful way to help maintain our health. (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016, p. 80)

Expressive writing is not only “enjoyable and meaningful” for many (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016, p. 65), but is also a helpful learning tool. Pennebaker (2016) found that too much lecture can actually replicate a traumatic experience because of the amount of material required to be

processed and recommends using daily writing in class to process ideas for about ten minutes to aid in the learning process, which is also a more inclusive approach for diverse learners (pp. 67-68). Pennebaker (2016) also found that writing and drawing are effective tools for teaching reading and facilitating expression. His work also coincides with that of college educator Peter Elbow (1973), whose freewriting theories have revolutionized college writing classrooms. By freewriting for ten minutes a day, Elbow (1973) has shown how “college students and adults can overcome writer’s block and their general fears concerning writing,” which effectively “jump starts” the brain (Pennebaker, 2016, p. 72).

A follower of Pennebaker’s (2016) work, Louise DeSalvo (1999), who is recently deceased, was a Professor of English at Hunter College, where she used “writing to heal” techniques in her courses, asking students to produce a 30-page publishable memoir for their semester writing projects, with the students choosing the focus of their topics themselves. Her points on the value of writing also emphasized the inclusivity of it, maintaining that it is a myth that “people have it or don’t,” as when it comes to writing skills, “Writing to heal requires no innate talent, though we become more skilled as we write, especially when we pay careful attention to the process of our writing” (DeSalvo, 1999, p. 15). Writing is inexpensive, requiring only paper and a writing tool, it is self-initiated and can be worked into our day in a flexible way. Writing is also portable, and can be done whether we are feeling ill or feeling well; it can be private, or we can share it (DeSalvo, 1999, pp. 13-15), and because of these benefits, writing has a great inclusivity, with positive effects that are comparable to yoga and meditation (DeSalvo, 1999, p. 23). The value for personal well-being and inclusivity of writing emphasize its importance as a vehicle for not only personal expression, but also as a means to enact social “caretaking” through action by sharing diverse voices through writing on important issues of

social suffering and oppression (Morris, 1997; Ramphele, 1997; Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016). Pennebaker's Paradigm assists in understanding and fostering the inclusivity of individuality of expression and lends itself to examining within the greater social context how to eradicate the dualisms of binary thinking and expression within language, while also fostering the use of language for breaking down social constructions of power.

**Translingualism.** Rebecca Williams Mlynarczyk (2014) explores the relationship between personal, narrative writing, and academic discourse and finds a solution to these binary oppositions within academia through a “translingual” approach, or one that encourages rhetorical dexterity while college students develop their writing skills. For many students, academic discourse is outside of their understanding or experience and can be exclusionary for “students in basic or ESL writing courses, community college students, first-generation college students- all of the students for whom what is commonly referred to as ‘academic discourse’ is something of a foreign language” (Mlynarczyk, 2014, p. 4). The embeddedness of academic discourse within academia became all the more apparent to Mlynarczyk (2014) when meeting with textbook publishers, as she was told that college educators still preferred academic writing in the textbooks, and the publishers then attempted to shift the content of her book away from using too much student writing, as well as narrative and expressive writing discussion. Bruner's (1986) description of the binary opposition between the “narrative” and “logico-scientific” thinking, then, is still readily apparent in the academic preferencing of the logico-scientific model, as Mlynarczyk (2014) asserts:

This preference is based on the idea, still commonly accepted in many disciplines even in this postmodern, poststructuralist era, that knowledge is generated through logical reasoning or empirical studies of phenomena that can be directly observed and measured

rather than apprehended through intuition or introspection. Thus, the kind of writing that has been privileged in the academy is writing that attempts to articulate general truths and to support these truths with evidence that can be shared. (p. 8)

The emphasis on left-brained, logical processes and discourse is still very much a part of the American education focus, negating expressive, poetic, and intuitive right-brained semiotic processes (Bruner, 1986). Mlynarczyk (2014) also points out how Common Core values non-fiction over fiction and pushes this academic discourse agenda. As a result of this preferencing of academic discourse and “logico-scientific” thinking, Mlynarczyk (2014) argues that for bilingual college students in basic writing or ESL courses, their native languages are seen as a liability and that their stories are not valued, demonstrating how exclusionary the higher education process can be to those of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and ways of thinking and communicating:

Clearly, these students had gotten the message that their home language, their mother tongue, was "broken," not at all suitable for use in the academy. If this attitude finds support in the courses that students take, if teachers insist that students begin by writing only "academic discourse," that they should never use the word "I" in an essay, that their stories and their languages are not appropriate in college, they will get a very clear and discouraging message: Your language is not valued here, and your stories don't belong. (p. 10)

Therefore, as a result of this divide within education between academic discourse and personal expressive discourse, Mlynarczyk (2014) argues that a translanguaging approach provides a solution to the dichotomy between academic discourse and expressive writing by the mixing of discourse styles that ignores prescribed discourses and the either/or use of it, cultivating a



“rhetorical dexterity” to adapt language to various audiences and styles (p. 4). Mlynarczyk’s (2014) solution coincides with the work of Bruner (2003), who in his book, *Making Stories: Law, Literature, Life*, argues that he now sees his interest in language not as dichotomies, but as a form of translating from “one world of mind to the other” (p. 101) and how it is essential to use narrative and storytelling along with academic discourse (p. 102). Bruner (2003) believes that encouraging a diversity of stories is what is most important in understanding the real world and our rich diversity, “The tyranny of the single story surely led our forebears to guarantee freedom of expression.... Let many stories bloom” (p. 103). As Mlynarczyk (2014) asserts, by widening our scope of academic discourse and embracing the stories of our diverse students, we enrich not only their experiences, but also that of our colleges and universities, sharing in learning from our students’ experiences (p. 19).

Yet, what exactly does translingualism, a derivative of semiotic theory, entail as a methodology and practice in the college writing classroom? According to Horner, Lu, and Trimbur (2011), the translingual approach sees difference in language as an asset, rather as a barrier, as Mlynarczyk (2014) also argues. Horner et al. (2011) also point out that, according to the Conference on College Composition and Communication of 1974, students have rights to their own use of language and their variations. Yet, the traditional teaching of English in the United States expects a monolingual standard, despite the natural variations that occur in language, particularly with a growing population who speak more than one language:

They take as the norm a linguistically homogeneous: one where writers, speakers, and readers are expected to use Standard English or Edited American English imagined ideally as uniform to the exclusion of other languages and language variation. (Horner et al., 2011, p. 303)

Language is fluid, yet monolingualism ignores interaction among and within languages, as well as across languages, and treats language like it is static (Horner et al., 2011, p. 306). Monolingualism also fosters exclusion and discrimination “against individuals and groups, who may be designated as failing to produce what those in power deign to recognize as ‘English,’ or ‘true English’ or ‘Standard English,’ or ‘Edited American English,’ or ‘English without an accent’” (Horner et al., 2011, p. 309). As a result, Horner et al. (2011) argue that these monolingualistic policies:

...operate as faux-linguistic covers for discrimination against immigrants and minorities: in place of discrimination on the basis of presumed national, ethnic, racial, or class identity, discrimination is leveled on the basis of language use. (p. 309)

Also, despite the monolingualistic expectations in the traditional teaching of English, Horner et al. (2011) argue that, “virtually all students who are monolingual in the sense that they speak only English are nonetheless multilingual in the varieties of English they use and in their ability to adapt English to their needs and desires” (p. 311). None of us are truly monolingual in our use of English, and as has been examined, is contrary to the natural working of our brains and ways of communicating by preferencing a left-brained, one-sided style of communication that is antithetical and exclusionary to the human experience in the sharing of our stories with others (Bruner 1986; Bruner 2003; Wilson, 2014). As a result, all students, whether native speakers or multilingual, would benefit from a translingual approach, creating a more inclusive approach in the teaching of English for the benefit of each students’ diverse linguistic background, with a “disposition of openness and inquiry that people take toward language and language differences” (Horner et al., 2011, p. 311). Therefore, using different discourse styles, encouraging/teaching varied rhetorical modes, and fostering individual expression and voice can all be included as

components of this study, facilitating the inclusion of all students through a translingual methodology.

**Multimodalities.** In addition to the use of expressive writing and diverse discourse strategies, multimodal composition practices in the teaching of English, which, like translingualism, is also derived from semiotic theory, can help to bridge the communication gap for diverse learners, assisting in the writing process. Multimodalities encompass visuals, videos, technology, and alternative symbolic methods of communication that can assist students in the sharing of their stories (Whithaus & Bowen, 2014). Influenced by Maxine Greene's (1995) theories on the value of art and storytelling in education, Whithaus and Bowen (2014) argue that, "Multimodal student writing is doing something new—it's reshaping genre boundaries and changing what counts as academic knowledge" (p. 4). By implementing what Whithaus and Bowen (2014) term as "multimodal composing," students consciously interact through varied sensory experiences, including visually, textually, verbally, aurally, as well as in a tactile sense as multileveled processes for reading and producing texts (p. 7). This dynamic method of expression, Whithaus and Bowen (2014) argue, embodies Paulo Freire's (1970) notion of praxis in that, "the interactions and relationships between different expressive modes is integral to understanding the composing processes and enabling students to develop their own writing techniques fully" (p. 7).

By having students incorporate the use of multimodalities into their writing assignments for literature readings, Reiss and Young (2013) have discovered that expanded sense of knowledge sharing with others that Greene (1995) advocates, "From the students' visual and oral linked selections, we all discovered personal, intercultural, literary, and historical connections no single one of us could have made on our own" (p. 178). In addition, researchers have

successfully implemented the use of multimodalities as a tool for healing on personal and historical social suffering issues. Charbonneau-Dahlen, Lowe, and Morris (2016) examined the use of multimodalities in their use of the Native American Dream Catcher-Medicine Wheel as a storytelling tool for healing on the historical abuse issues for survivors of Native American boarding schools. Similarly, Fox (2011) explored the use of photos and pictures as instruments for his students to express stories of trauma in multisensory ways. Multimodalities can also be effectively implemented in combination with translanguaging and varied rhetorical strategies. In “Multimodality, Translanguaging, and Rhetorical Genre Studies,” Gonzales (2015) examined how rhetorical genre studies, or RGS, which is defined as a focus on less restrictive genres, can be used with translanguaging and multimodal composition practices with diverse college students. The findings suggested that the translanguaging practices of students can help create bridges of connection to incorporate multimodality with RGS applications in order to make the teaching of composition more fluid, less linear, and more inclusive for diverse students.

**Rhizomatic learning.** From a postmodern perspective, rhizomatic learning embraces multiplicities in meaning and seeks to avoid the hierarchical, top-down approach of Western learning and power structures that foster binaries in thinking (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013). Employing multimodal and translanguaging pedagogies in the classroom encourages a more rhizomatic pedagogy for learning that is less linear by providing students alternative means of expression, in keeping with the semiotics of poststructuralist feminism by “deconstructing” patriarchal power structures of language. Because a rhizome has “no beginning or end” and is “always in the middle” in order to regenerate, (Adkins, 2015, p. 22), fostering a rhizomatic pedagogy in a writing classroom means allowing learning to happen

organically, with multiple experiences and honoring diverse voices through writing and discussion in the classroom.

In Figure 1, a concept map details the theoretical framework of the study, including the relationship to rhizomatic learning. As an organic learning and thinking strategy, it embraces growth in a non-hierarchical way (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013) and is another foundational component of the cyclic interrelationship of the theories and pedagogies of the study.



Figure 1. Concept Map: Theoretical Framework of Relevant Theories and Pedagogies

## **Binary Oppositions: Inner-Directed vs. Outer-Directed Pedagogies in the College Composition and Rhetoric Curriculum**

The binary opposition between academic discourse and expressive writing with diverse discourses is embedded culturally and historically within society, as well as within higher education. Historically, the organization of college composition as a specialized field of study began in the 1970s, with college educators recognizing that in order to teach academic discourse successfully to students of diverse backgrounds that two things needed to shift: “our understanding of the students' writing processes; and the relationship between the academic discourse community and the students' discourse communities” (Bizzell, 1992, p. 108). The first wave of composition studies rejected the emphasis on academic discourse, with theorists like Elbow (1972) in his innovative book, *Writing Without Teachers*, emphasizing the importance of the student’s “authentic voice,” a pedagogy embraced by many other theorists who followed. Another forerunner in expressive discourse theory, Murray (1984) wrote the popular *Write to Learn* text, a textbook used in many first-year college composition courses, including my own during my initial years teaching as a Graduate Assistant.

The emphasis on expressive writing and varied forms of discourse became mainstream in college classrooms as a solution for students unfamiliar with the expectations for successful academic discourse, with an added purpose of including marginalized students from varied backgrounds and discourse communities. Elbow (2000) also argues against the usefulness of academic discourse, stating that its power is not only lacking outside of academia and its particular audiences, but that it can also be a hindrance to students in jobs that require a different type of discourse for effective communication. Paralleling the arguments made by Bruner

(1986) and Wilson (2014), Elbow (2000) states that the more empowered discourse is actually a more natural one:

In academic discourse, better tends to mean longer and more complex, but these qualities are usually vices in the discourse of power. It's my sense that the discourse of power in society is sometimes quite natural and personal. (p. 232)

However, in contrast with Elbow's (2000) expressivist pedagogy are those college composition theorists, such as Bartholomae (1995) and Lazere (2015), who uphold academic discourse as the solution to attain a critical understanding necessary for students' college careers and beyond, which, historically, is a central theoretical conflict within the field of composition. In "Writing with Teachers: A Conversation with Peter Elbow," Bartholomae (1995) argues that, "academic writing is the real work of the academy" (p. 63). Similarly, academic discourse theorist Patricia Bizzell (1992) argues:

It is to attain this sort of critical understanding that politically oppressed students need to master academic discourse. They need composition instruction that exposes and demystifies the institutional structure of knowledge, rather than that which covertly reintroduces discriminatory practices while cloaking the force of convention in concessions to the "personal." (p. 112)

While Bizzell (1992) and other outer-directed theorists argue that "the rejection of academic discourse expectations has failed" and that "initiation into the academic discourse community may be just what oppressed students need to gain the critical distance on their experience provided by an elaborated code" (p. 113), inner-directed theorists such as psychologists Pennebaker and Smyth (2016), healing practitioner Marinella (2017), as well as Professors of

English, DeSalvo (1999), Hanauer (2012), and Fox (2016) uphold the value of expressive and narrative forms of writing for healing and for more inclusive student engagement. Each of these theorists present compelling methodologies to find solutions for student concerns and the writing path through expressive discourse. Fox (2016) perhaps resolves these binary dichotomies in discourse theories and methods of language instruction by acknowledging that expressive language is our birthplace for language, in a semiotic sense, the foundation for all of our discourse styles and modes of communicating:

Expressive language is the “matrix” from which all other forms of language are born—from academic and scientific reports to business contracts and poems.... The main reason is this: Before you can write in language that is manipulated and cast in specific ways for a specific audience... you have to be able to explain it first to yourself or to a close, trusted friend.... Its uncensored, trusting, and informal qualities are what make it malleable, flexible. This, in turn, allows us to generate more and different thinking. (p. 464)

Therefore, expressive writing can benefit students as an inclusive approach in the teaching of writing by connecting to our pre-language processes as humans in a semiotic sense and as a more natural mode of communication. Expressive and narrative modes of writing help to avoid binaries in thought and the marginalization of minority groups in the education process as a gateway or entry-point to academic discourse that helps to eliminate oppositions (Bruner, 2003; Mlynarczyk, 2014). More varied discourse styles can provide a humanistic connection through the sharing of individual and cultural stories, allowing us avenues for understanding within the context of social suffering and giving voice to oppression (Morris, 1997; Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016).



### **Relevant Research and Studies**

As researchers such as Pennebaker (2016), DeSalvo (1999), Marinella (2017), Glass et al. (2019), Fox (2016), Pipher (2006), and Kristeva (1985) elucidate, repression of our stories can have negative effects, and oftentimes, as the result of individual fears and social suffering and oppression from “fear culture,” students are not given the opportunity for much-needed expression. Self-fear can rule in the repression of personal expression in writing because of fears of embarrassment, disapproval, or inability to find the appropriate audience (DeSalvo, 1999, p. 24), but fears can also affect us at the macro level.

To examine the value of expression of individuals sharing their stories, researchers Glass, Dreusicke, Evans, Bechard, and Wolever (2019) had positive results utilizing Pennebaker’s (2018) expressive writing paradigm. In their article, “Expressive Writing to Improve Resilience to Trauma,” the authors identified that trauma affects 90% of the U.S. population, with long lasting emotional and health effects. Using James Pennebaker’s (2016) “writing to heal” model, which they described as the “Pennebaker Paradigm,” the authors created a six-week writing course at an academic outpatient clinic. The 39 participants in the study had experienced trauma within the past 12 months but were not allowed to have experienced a recent traumatic event, within four weeks, out of concerns of exacerbating a trauma. The study also built upon Pennebaker’s Paradigm by including six different styles of writing, beginning with the expressive writing prompts advocated by Pennebaker (2016), and progressing then to transactional writing to facilitate compassion for others, followed by poetic writing, and then affirmative writing to find positive personal strengths. The fifth style of writing was legacy writing to consider what participants wished to gift to the world, and lastly, mindful writing was used to express awareness and acceptance from a therapeutic distance. Participants in the

program greatly improved their emotional resilience, symptoms of depression, and perceived stress. The low cost and ease of implementing the program were also seen as a positive result. Therefore, the program can be easily used in healthcare settings for diverse populations.

This study confirmed the inclusiveness for diverse populations of the “writing to heal” approach and its simplicity in application. In addition, it expanded upon the methodological construct of the Pennebaker Paradigm by including other various styles of creative and expressive writing beyond the stratification of academic discourse, styles that are also effective for the writing for healing process, demonstrating how variances in writing styles can also be effective. The fact that all of the participants experienced emotional and physical benefits from the writing to heal experience elucidates how Pennebaker’s (2016) research can be implemented within the college composition classroom to facilitate positive benefits for well-being and identity of self through writing that will also be inclusive of diverse students. Varied writing styles used can also be integrated into future research, by examining what writing techniques, exercises, and modes of expression can be incorporated into writing classroom curriculum.

The value of storytelling, as Achterberg (1990), Banks (2012), Pipher (2006), and Wilentz (2000) argue, is key for both personal and cultural healing of historical oppression, which is evident in the study conducted by Charbonneau-Dahlen, Lowe, and Morris (2016) with Native Americans who had suffered trauma during their government-sanctioned boarding school experiences. In “Giving Voice to Historical Trauma through Storytelling: The Impact of Boarding School Experience on American Indians,” Charbonneau-Dahlen et al. (2016) examined the historical trauma and resulting health challenges experienced by Native Americans in mission boarding schools, which Native Americans were required by the government to attend. Using snowball sampling, the participants included nine women from two Plains Indian tribes,

including Chippewa and Sioux, averaging 63 years old, and all of whom attended the same American Indian boarding school.

Using the model of a “Dream Catcher-Medicine Wheel” (DCMW) and grounding ceremonies as cultural tools to facilitate storytelling, participants were asked to share traumatic events that occurred at the boarding schools. Employing a descriptive exploratory qualitative method, thematic analysis of the “DCMW” for the responses was used with taped and written sessions of storytelling. The data was broken down into themes, including “Breaking and silencing the spirit,” with the cruelties of sexual abuse and concentration camp living conditions, and “Survival of the spirit,” where survivors shared their survival strategies, their negation of Catholicism because of the mistreatment from the nuns and priests, and their return to Native American spiritual traditions. Lastly, all the participants appreciated the use of culturally traditional methods to assist with their storytelling and stated that they experienced healing and a feeling of release by being able to share their stories. The limitations of a small sampling with one culturally specific group suggested that further research needed to be conducted using comparable cultural models like the DCMW for other minority populations to promote understanding and healing from historical trauma that results from members of the dominant culture.

The stories shared by the women in this study were compelling and heart-wrenching, stories of abuse, rape, and horrific cruelties, including punishment for runny noses and bed-wetting, with humiliating public shaming. As a result of the physical and mental trauma experienced, the women suffered from various health and life challenges. Parents who did not send their children to the Indian boarding schools were incarcerated, some even sent to Alcatraz, and this historically government-sanctioned abuse had long-term repercussions on the

participants. The use of the Medicine Wheel and Dream Catcher were effective tools for multimodal sharing to enable storytelling and healing, as all of the participants not only experienced healing, but also felt a stronger sense of connection to their cultural heritage and identity. The multimodal and storytelling techniques, as a result, can be considered as helpful components in the college writing classroom for students of diverse backgrounds. Within the context of this study, the use of culturally relevant symbols for students in their own storytelling for narratives and journals can facilitate inclusion, healing of historical suffering from a social suffering theoretical perspective, as well as honoring the voices of students from varied backgrounds and experiences (Kleinman et al., 1997; Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016).

When “fear culture” rules and conveys disapproval of specific marginalized groups, resulting in oppression, it in effect silences individuals (Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016), and combatting this silencing is central to the reasoning behind this study. Within the schooling and higher education process, when academic discourse is solely preferred over other modes of expression, students can have a feeling of nowhere to go with their stories and feelings that are repressed, leaving them further distanced from an honest and open connection to writing and the process of self-discovery, affecting their identity as writers, as well. While there is definite merit to the importance of teaching academic discourse to all students, regardless of the background, overcoming binary oppositions in thinking can be explored by utilizing both inner-directed theories that emphasize expressive writing and outer-directed theories that focus writing on social issues and academic discourse, in order to provide more effective writing experiences for diverse learners with varied backgrounds and interests (Bruner, 1985; Mlynarczyk, 2014). As discussed earlier, Mlynarczyk (2014) explores the relationship between personal, narrative writing, and academic discourse and finds a solution in a translingual approach with varied

rhetorical strategies to boost the confidence levels of college writers. However, not all college composition curricula embrace expressive discourse and personal narrative writing, much less a blended approach to these discourse styles, and although many colleges leave the choice of pedagogical focus to the discretion of the professor, there is still resistance to incorporate expressive writing or varied rhetorical modes for use or exploration in writing assignments (Mlynarczyk, 2014).

The inclusive value of incorporating a translingual approach combined with Pennebaker's "writing to heal" strategies proved to be successful in the research of Kim (2008). In a study of 89 Korean-English and Spanish-English bilingual students, Kim (2008) applied Pennebaker's model in a multilingual approach, having participants write expressively for four consecutive days in either their native language, English, or both languages, as well as participating in the non-writing control group. According to Kim (2008), the study was needed because no research up until that point had specifically focused on how writing in different languages could influence health and behavior. To collect data, participants were asked to wear a computerized tape recorder, an EAR, an electronically activated device that recorded the participants for 30 seconds every 12.5 minutes for two days before the experiment, and for one month after, in order to measure social behaviors (Kim, 2008, pp. 43-44). Additionally, data was collected from questionnaires given to the participants that focused on their emotional adjustment. The findings revealed that the students "who wrote on alternating days between their native language and English reported the greatest benefits and, at the same time, exhibited the most beneficial social changes" (Kim, 2008, p. 46). Continuing to use the EAR for recording of participants one month after the study, the findings revealed that significant behavior changes also resulted from the

expressive writing, with “measurable changes” in the way the participants socialized, reinforcing the value of expressive writing for bilingual students:

The findings of increased interactions with others and, at the same time, drops in time spent alone suggest that one of the active ingredients of expressive writing might be changes in social support – something that health psychologists have agreed is critical to the health behaviours [sic] of people. (Kim, 2008, p. 46)

The findings demonstrate the value of a translangual approach with bilingual and multilingual students for individual expression, as well as the importance from a social suffering perspective of finding a means of expression that can facilitate social acknowledgment, healing, and inclusion (Morris, 1997; Ramphela, 1997). In addition, the results also reinforce the importance of honoring varied discourses through expressive writing techniques, rather than solely emphasizing a monolingual approach, or the teaching of writing being solely focused on “standard” English in an academic voice.

Incorporating multimodalities in teaching practices, meaning the inclusion of visuals, technology, videos, and artistic forms of expression, is another method for promoting inclusion in the classroom that has been successfully employed by a number of researchers. Exploring multimodalities and using Pennebaker’s “writing for healing” paradigm, Roy F. Fox (2011), Professor of English at University of Missouri, examined the use of writing and image with his graduate students in his “Teaching Therapeutic Language, Literature, and Media” course. Creating ten projects that used both language and various forms of imagery, the 15 master’s and doctoral students in the class included 11 American students and 4 international students. Course readings included DeSalvo’s (1999) *Writing as a Way of Healing*, and data was collected through transcribed audio-recordings of three interviews with each participant, video-recordings

of each class meeting, analysis of all writings and visuals students produced during the course, and discussions and field notes produced by the instructor and participant-researcher (Fox, 2011, p. 88). In an assignment called “Fixing the Photo,” students were asked to bring an original photo and then to rework the image to illustrate the reality of “how things are” versus “how things should be” and then to write about the images in order to work through personal feelings of trauma.

For the second assignment, “The Monster and the Angel,” students were asked to write a letter to a personal monster, as well as to an angel to work through a traumatic event or feelings. Students were asked to create images of the monster and then to reconstruct the image into the form of an angel. The results were successful for the majority of the students, with the revelations of traumas such as family drug use and the ravages of cancer. The powerful images that the students created, as well as the “healing” described by the students in interviews, demonstrated a significant level of success in the implementation of both the use of writing as a tool for healing and expression. In addition, the successful use of multimodal images to facilitate expression provides foundational support for the use of multimodal practices for my own study for the generating of assignments and students’ submissions for their published book.

The study of multimodalities by Gonzales (2015), titled, “Multimodality, Translingualism, and Rhetorical Genre Studies” examines how rhetorical genre studies, or RGS, which focuses on less restrictive genres, is also helpful for crafting my own study in using translingual and multimodal composition practices with diverse college students. The sample included 17 students from two state universities, with seven who speak English as a first language, the L1 group, and ten students who speak English as a second language, the L2 group, with eight different native languages being represented in the L2 group. Building on theories of

translingualism, Gonzales' (2015) purpose was to incorporate multimodal and translingual practices and pedagogies into the composition classroom to meet the changing societal needs of our culture, with technology and our ever-growing global communications. As a result, focus group data was collected from the students at both universities who were taking composition courses that incorporated rhetorical genre studies approaches with conventional print and multimodal composition strategies. Using multimodal expressions such as videos and drawings was particularly successful for the L2 students, who layered meaning and expressions through multimodal techniques, while the L1 students tended to use the multimodal techniques for reiteration of points they had made in print. The use of semiotic expression in the focus groups was also coded, noting hand gestures and body movements in addition to verbal responses, of particular use by the L2 group to convey meaning. The study was limited to analysis for specific composition practices to avoid cultural essentialism. The findings suggest that the translingual practices of L2 students can help create bridges of connection to incorporate multimodality with RGS applications in order to make the teaching of composition more fluid, less linear, and more inclusive for diverse students.

Gonzales' (2015) study contributes to my research to build on the application of multimodal and translingual pedagogy and to add more components of fluidity to the classroom experience for diverse learners. The findings provide theoretical scaffolding for the multimodal concept of the published book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* as a dissertation focus, to create a more inclusive writing experience for students for a social justice project. The project embraces incorporating various styles and genres, as well as the use of artwork and visuals. In addition, it encourages students to write in both their native language and English, if they choose, to embrace translingualism and the possibilities of expressive and poetic



expression. Also, creative journaling practices are incorporated with multimodal and translingual expressions, with students being encouraged to do multimodal presentations with visuals of their choosing to talk about a media text of interest to them. Birthed from semiotic theory, translingualism provides an important bridge in the exploration of the healing of the personal and the social through writing and to support the theoretical framework for how writing to create transformational change on issues of social suffering can be incorporated into the classroom to include diverse learners with varied literacy experiences.

Also, Hanauer's (2012) practice of publishing the students' writing through public sharing is an important added multimodal component and supports the methodology of the proposed *Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* for this dissertation study, with the publication of diverse student writings in an Amazon book. Technology is another significant multimodality by preserving "story" through publication, for both individual and cultural healing, as Tsui and Starecheski (2018) argue in their article, "Uses of Oral History and Digital Storytelling in Public Health Research and Practice." The purpose of their study was to examine the use of oral history and digital storytelling in the health field and how these methods have contributed to areas of public health. Methods included a narrative review of articles from PubMed that related to the themes of oral history and digital story telling. As a result, 102 articles were found from the search results, and common themes were analyzed. The data revealed that oral history and digital storytelling were important components for research and interventions to benefit the health and well-being of participants.

Specifically, the use of oral history and digital storytelling was helpful in examining health experiences and risks, educating and engaging populations, particularly those who are marginalized by society, educating health care practitioners and institutions, and providing

information on the practices of public health. Tsui and Starecheski (2018) found that oral history and digital storytelling were two of the most powerful methods for qualitative research in providing insights into how issues like race, racism, and social class can affect health, influencing multiple risks to health that can last a lifetime. Therefore, the digital recording of stories preserves oral history and storytelling, promoting inclusion and long-term health benefits (Tsui & Starecheski, 2018), which are both critical to provide insights not only for individual health and healing, but also for larger socio-economic and historical issues of culture (Achterberg, 1990; Banks, 2012; Charbonneau-Dahlen et al., 2016; Morris, 1997; Ramphele, 1997; Wilentz, 2000).

Although Tsui and Starecheski's (2018) work focuses on methods of sharing story within the health field, it asserts the value of oral tradition and the use of digital storytelling for the storage, honoring, and posterity of these stories to identify not only: 1. Personal issues in need of healing, but also, 2. Cultural concerns that result from marginalization in regard to both current and historical issues. From a social suffering theoretical perspective, Ramphele (1997) argues for the acknowledgment of personal and cultural "pain" or suffering, which is part of the social process and needs to be outwardly acknowledged in order to attain healing or to make a transformative difference on both a personal and social level, "Their private suffering needs to be made visible as social suffering, enabling to stake their historical claims and thereby restore their dignity" (p. 114).

The significance of public storytelling on social suffering issues through print publication is also evident in Duchin and Wiseman's (2019) study, "Memoirs of Child Survivors of the Holocaust: Processing and Healing of Trauma Through Writing," focused on "the experiences of writing and the meanings that child survivors attribute to writing their memories about their

traumatic past,” with 13 child survivors of the Holocaust who were between the ages of 77 to 91 as participants (p. 280). Using a narrative approach, Duchin and Wiseman (2019) examined the published memoirs of the Holocaust survivors for “the processes of writing and publishing in relation to processing and healing from massive trauma” in their books, found in bookstores and/or libraries (p. 280). The study also examined the writings of each survivor for common themes. Three primary themes emerged, including, “first, the dialectic between the wordless space and self-narration; second, between aloneness and loneliness and the quest for connectedness; and third, between the personal space and the public space” (Duchin & Wiseman, 2019, p. 280). One of the interesting issues revealed was the tension between writing for self in diaries and the publishing of their writing on a traumatic experience that had happened 60 years before, which was helpful for the construction of my own study in the negotiating the dialectics between self and other for expression and meaning, “The process of writing is discussed in relation to writing a diary versus bearing testimony and as are the implications of the study in relation to expressive writing and the processing and healing from massive trauma” (Duchin & Wiseman, 2019, p. 280).

The value of storytelling through diverse multimodal and rhetorical strategies, inclusive of expressive and academic voice, and the ability for students to publish their writing in a public forum through a published book facilitate a unique opportunity in this study by providing a vehicle where students can take their private work of writing within a college classroom into the public sphere so that issues of oppression and social suffering, both personally and from a social justice perspective, can be acknowledged and honored within a social context. As clinical psychologist Mary Pipher (2006) argues, “Many writers who have suffered great sorrows write memoirs for cathartic reasons. They also write to document their experiences, to express outrage

at injustice and unnecessary suffering, and to help others to see and feel what can happen to people like themselves” (p. 26). Additionally, Greene (1995) states that the multimodal experience of unifying the arts with storytelling provides “connection points” between students and teachers and that by gifting students more time “for telling their stories, or dancing or singing them” that an ever-expanding sense of community can be created that honors diversity and speaks to social injustices, “Students can be provoked to imaginatively transmute some of their stories into media that can be shared in such a fashion that friends can begin looking together and moving together in a forever expanding space...” (42). “Writing for healing” within the context of this study, then, can be redefined as not simply writing our personal stories, but writing as a social process that facilitates community and the inclusion of diverse voices for societal healing.

Through the collective creation and publication of a book, the action-based solution of community caregiving advocated by social suffering theory can be manifested through the students’ writing as a social justice initiative, who decided together on the book’s thematic focus in regard to issues of oppression and social suffering (Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016). The research for this study fulfills a unique and needed component within the landscape of college writing for social justice initiatives. It not only includes the application of recent multimodal and translingual pedagogies from semiotic theory, providing additional modes of expression for storytelling and sharing of diverse student voices, but it also encompasses the creation and publication of a book for a socially-themed, action-based curriculum, which instructors can then adapt and implement in varied college courses, even beyond English courses and the college composition classroom.

By self-publishing the writing project, students' voices are saved for posterity to lend to the discussion of important social issues. The added benefit of donating the funds from the project for publication to charity is another critical component of the project that differs from the national K-12 to college, teacher-led professional development writing initiatives such as *The National Writing Project* and *Writing for a Change* (2006), sponsored in tandem with the Centre for Social Action in the U.K., and provides college students in higher education with the opportunity for direct agency and empowerment for their caretaking of the world from a social suffering perspective through their writing. Embracing an outer-directed context through social suffering theory and inner-directed writing pedagogy through the Pennebaker Paradigm of "writing to heal" combats binary oppositions in thinking, deepening the definition of what "writing to heal" can mean in a new way within a personal and social context without defined boundaries or linearities. Honoring multiple voices and outcomes through rhizomatic learning (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013) and unifying the importance of the collective experience with the value of individual writing provides the unique opportunity to understand, embrace, and put into practice "writing to heal" in a socially transformative way.

### CHAPTER III

#### CLEAR DESIGN OF CONTEXTUALIZED INVESTIGATION

The advent of COVID-19 affected the original design of investigation for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, changing the formats of teaching and data collection for the study. In response to the dangers from the pandemic, in March 2020, while the students were on Spring Break, the college where the study was conducted made an administrative decision to extend the break and to give professors at the college the time and training to convert all courses to an online format, using the college's existing online software, Blackboard Collaborate, as the primary tool. This resulted in a number of changes to the implementation of my course and the data collection. Rather than three weekly in-person meetings, students in the course were given the option of synchronous online meetings. Also, in terms of data collection, all assignments originally planned to be submitted as hard copies had to be shifted to online assignments. Journal entries were converted to discussion board post assignments, and essays were submitted online through the college's software and through email attachments. In addition, online tools, such as Blackboard Collaborate and Zoom, became the vehicles for recording and communicating with the students for data collection, and an addendum was made and approved for the IRB of the study to accommodate the needs of data collection as a result of the pandemic. Despite these technical challenges, the original intent and purpose of the study remained intact.

This chapter will discuss the focus on action research for the study, the interventions that were employed, and the Interpretivist research methodology for the collection and examination of data, acknowledging its subjectivity in interpreting meaning as part of the research process to discover multiple truths. Sample studies are examined to uncover parallels in research strategies, with studies focusing on themes of "writing for healing" with historically oppressed groups and

individuals, as well as studies focusing on multimodal and translingual writing interventions. This study, however, differed in focus and data collection and was novel in its examination of the “writing to heal” paradigm within the context of social suffering, the application of writing strategies and styles to shift binary oppositions in thinking and writing, and the shared group experience of creating a book for publication.

### **Action Research**

Action research involves the study of “ongoing actions” in a setting where the participants are a part of the research, rather than being viewed as “subjects” being acted “on” in the research process (Herr & Anderson, 2015, pp. 1-3). The ongoing actions or interventions involved with this action research study related to the research questions outlined in Chapter I and included:

1. The use of writing assignments to practice the methods of translingualism and multimodalities, as components of semiotic theory.
2. Introducing a more focused approach to readings, writing assignments, and discussions centered on the theme of social oppression and suffering.
3. The publication of a book through Amazon, created by the students with writings and visuals, including multimodal and translingual submissions, and centered on a theme of social oppression and suffering which the students chose.

The researcher positionality in the action research process was that of an insider, as an English professor employed by a community college who was studying my own practice and informing my knowledge base for professional development, transformation, and sharing, in collaboration with research participants, my students, who were also insiders, enrolled in an introductory

composition and literature course (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 40). Action research is “fundamentally about questioning the status quo and working toward change” (Herr & Anderson, 2015, p. 151), and was appropriate for the student creation of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* for this study, a project that focused on creating healing and transformative change through multimodal writings on issues of social suffering and oppression.

### **Research Methodology**

The research design for this study was the Interpretivist paradigm for qualitative research. The Interpretivist perspective of “knowing and reality” is based on relativist ontology, that meanings and understandings are created through social experiences and that reality is developed in intersubjective ways. Although subjective, the Interpretivist paradigm also acknowledges subjectivity, as “transactional or subjectivist epistemology, meaning that the researcher and the subject of research are intrinsically linked and cannot be separated” (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). In the quest for knowledge and knowing, the Interpretivist believes that there are many “truths” and not simply “one truth,” which was a fitting paradigm for a phenomenological investigation of the “writing for healing” methodology employing social suffering theory, honoring that students had multiple truths, diverse voices, and methods of expression that were collectively shared on social suffering through the publication of a group project, the published book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*.

More specifically, as Rossman and Rallis (2017) argue in *An Introduction to Qualitative Research: Learning in the Field*, the Interpretivist paradigm that lends itself best to the investigation of writing for healing and inclusion of diverse voices on issues of social suffering is that of “Critical Humanism,” which is based on the view that individual consciousness is “the means to empower, transform, and liberate groups from dominating and imprisoning social



processes” (p. 34). In addition, “Radical change occurs at the individual level, transforming social relations locally” (Rossman & Rallis, 2017, p. 35), which was reflective of the ultimate goals for healing and transformation as a result of the project. The Interpretivist researcher who is guided by critical humanist perspectives is participatory with the subjects of the study, in keeping with the sharing of the writing for healing methodology, and the theoretical framework also derives from critical theory, postmodern perspectives of multiple truths, as well as including critical perspectives of feminist theory (Rossman & Rallis, 2017, p. 35), which this study also encompassed through the investigation of methodologies deriving from semiotics and poststructural feminist theory.

The study was limited to students who were enrolled in one section of my English II introductory composition and literature course at the community college where I teach. The data collection focused on the application of multimodal and translingual methods from semiotic theory and how students responded to participation in the creation of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, a collaborative book of writings and visuals by students. Using qualitative research and following an Interpretivist paradigm for the conceptual framework, my study encompassed social suffering theory from sociology and anthropology and the Pennebaker Paradigm from the field of psychology to examine “writing to heal” through this collective project with students on their chosen theme of social suffering and oppression as its central methodology for implementation in the research. In addition, in order to create a more inclusive learning environment and writing experience for diverse learners and to counteract binaries in thinking and writing, semiotic discourse theory was utilized, with a foundational basis in the work of French feminist and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva (1985). As derivatives of semiotic theory, the methodologies of multimodalities and translingualism are components to employ in

order to encourage diverse writing styles and discourses that are not dependent upon a monolingual perspective or a singular style of academic discourse for writing. These writing methodologies were employed for journals, discussion board posts, and essay writing assignments, culminating in the opportunity to use these diverse writing methods in the publication of the book on a chosen social suffering theme as the students' group project.

### **Sample Studies**

Several studies reviewed in Chapter II have key components that have been inspirational for the “writing for healing” theme on issues of social suffering for this research study and its examination of the use of multimodalities and translanguaging. In this section, I will briefly revisit prior studies examined, but this time highlighting research methods that I adapted for my own project. As discussed in Chapter II, Charbonneau-Dahlen, Lowe, and Morris (2016) examined the historical trauma and resulting health challenges experienced by Native Americans in mission boarding schools. The multimodal methods of expression used in the study informed my own practice in employing multimodalities. The study was inspirational in its use of a “Dream Catcher-Medicine Wheel” (DCMW) to coincide with narrative storytelling for individual healing and expression on an historical cultural issue of social suffering and oppression. Similarly, during the course of the study for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, with journals, essays, and discussion board posts, students were encouraged to use culturally relevant symbols, pictures, and language with their own storytelling for personal expression.

A recent study using Pennebaker's (2016) writing for healing paradigm also provided a helpful model for data collection. Glass, Dreusicke, Evans, Bechard, and Wolever (2019) examined the effects of trauma and the long lasting emotional and health effects through a

writing intervention that included six varied rhetorical styles of writing, including expressive writing. As the focus of my study included the use of varied rhetorical methods, such as translingualism and multimodalities, in addition to the Pennebaker Paradigm, data was collected from written submissions for the book to code for the use of diverse writing strategies and the emergent effects of participating in the project. In addition, another recent study by Gonzales (2015) examined how rhetorical genre studies, or RGS, which focused on less restrictive genres, can be used with translingual and multimodal composition practices with diverse, multilingual college students. Gonzales (2015) used the coding of layers of meaning and expression in student writings and their use of multimodalities for expression in order to analyze data. The focus of the study and its methods of analysis were helpful as a model for analyzing the use of combined rhetorical strategies of multimodalities and translingualism of the diverse participants in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*.

In regard to the application of social suffering theory, an informational study was conducted by Duchin and Wiseman (2019), which focused on the published memoirs of 13 Holocaust survivors and examined processes of writing and how publishing affected the processing of healing from trauma. Using coding for themes, their examination of the writings revealed three primary themes, including the tension between writing for self in diaries and the publishing of their writing on a traumatic social suffering experience (Duchin & Wiseman, 2019, p. 280). This study was particularly helpful in recognizing the relationship between “writing for self” versus publishing and “writing for others” in a public forum on an issue of social suffering. This focus informed my own study to examine the data for similar issues, particularly in regard to answering Research Question 3 and issues of binaries in thinking and writing for individual and social contexts.

## The Research Process

Data collection for the research process involved a number of components for examination, with the majority of the data collection focused on the creation of the published book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* as the study's central question. In addition, data collection focused on how the intervention of using the semiotic pedagogies of translingualism and multimodalities impacted teaching strategies for writing assignments and the creation of the book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*. A third component of data collection focused on the additional sub-question of how dualities of the self and the social shift by writing within individual and social contexts on themes of social suffering and oppression in a poststructural way that rejects binaries in thought and hierarchized dualisms.

**Teaching interventions.** In the first week of the Spring 2020 semester, the concept of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* was discussed. This included a discussion of the focus on social suffering and oppression themes in the literature for the course, and the writing strategies of multimodalities and translingualism were introduced. The students were invited to practice the use of these rhetorical strategies in their journals and in the drafting of their essays. Data from students' writings on the use of these rhetorical strategies was collected. After midterm, when the course had shifted to an online format due to COVID-19, students were asked to volunteer to participate in the group discussion to choose the theme for the book on an issue of social suffering and oppression related to readings covered in the course. Those volunteering for the discussion who had signed the release form were recorded during the online discussion using Blackboard Collaborate, the college's software for online learning. After midterm and up until the last week of the semester, students were invited to voluntarily submit works for the book project for publication. After the students' submissions for the book

publication had been collected in May 2020, the submissions were edited and formatted by the researcher, and the completed manuscript was published by Amazon in October 2020. After the publication of the book in October, three student volunteers who had submitted work for the book were interviewed via Zoom in semi-structured interviews in regard to their experience and reactions to the project.

**Selection of participants.** Participants in the project were students in one section of my English II introductory literature and composition course at the community college where I teach, and all non-minors in the class were invited to participate. Information about the research study was shared and discussed with the students in the second week of the course. A consent form was then shared and discussed with the students with a list of the data to be collected and a timeline for the study, including information about the book theme discussion and the semi-structured interviews, explaining that interviews would keep to the prompts, and only additional open-ended questions asked to elicit further depth. Students were given time to read and to ask questions about the study and the consent form. Student participation in the book theme discussion, the submissions for the book, and interviews was voluntary and did not affect the students' grades for the course. It was made clear to students that they could elect to remove themselves from participating in the study at any time with no affect to their grade. Those electing to participate were able to keep a copy of the consent form.

After a prolonged Spring Break, the course shifted to an online format due to the pandemic, and the book theme discussion was scheduled for two weeks after midterm, when the theme for the book would be decided by the volunteer participants. Students were reminded again that participation was voluntary for the discussion and for submitting their work for the book project. Because of COVID-19, the students were also informed that voluntary

participation in the book theme discussion would occur via Blackboard Collaborate, the college's software for online learning, and that the discussion would now be recorded online, rather than being videotaped in person, as was originally planned. Those who chose not to participate in the recorded discussion and who had not signed the consent form for participation in the project were excused from the remote online class meeting on Blackboard Collaborate without any penalty, and students' grades in the course were not affected if they chose not to participate in the book project. In addition, after the completion of the manuscript for the book publication, an email was sent to students with an attached copy of the manuscript, along with requests for participation in the semi-structured interviews via Zoom. Students were reminded of their voluntary participation without penalty, and interested participants responded via email to set up an interview time.

**Data collected.** The data collected related to the content of the project and specifically to the three research questions from Chapter I. The avenues for data collection related to the contents of the research outlined in Chapter II and in this chapter. The first point of data collected for the study included a recorded online discussion through Blackboard Collaborate about the selection of the book's theme. The participants were voluntary, and the recorded discussion occurred two weeks after midterm. In addition, the submissions for the book project from student volunteers were collected in May 2020, at the conclusion of the Spring semester. Lastly, semi-structured interviews were conducted via Zoom in October 2020, after the publication of the book, with three students who had voluntarily submitted their work for the project.

**Validity and reliability.** Validity and reliability were ensured through a number of measures during the study. As the researcher participant and "part of the researched world"

(Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018, p. 247), to ensure validity in responses, I made it clear to participants that they were free to participate or not. I also kept to the prompts in the semi-structured interviews, asking only questions to clarify or elicit more depth, such as “Can you clarify?” and “Say more about that.” The students were not be coerced by me as the instructor during data collection. The fact that this was an Interpretivist study must also be considered (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The limitations of the study were that students’ responses may have been informed by their association with me as their professor in their English II course. However, student participation was voluntary, and those volunteering to participate had the freedom to respond how or if they chose without fear of penalty. In addition, “thick description” of the context and data collected in the study ensured validity for understanding “meanings that subjects give to data and inferences drawn from the data” in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 247).

Validity and reliability were also ensured through triangulation of the research, with multiple methods of data sources for each research question collected over an extended period of time (Cohen et al., 2018; Rossman & Rallis, 2017). Therefore, to triangulate the data, a number of methods of collection were used, and data was collected from three different sources, including the book theme discussion, the submissions for the book, and the semi-structured interviews. Reliability through consistency in the data was also determined by whether the data was collected over a longer period of time (Cohen et al., 2018). Collecting data over the course of ten months, from January of the Spring 2020 semester to October 2020, increased the reliability for consistency of the results and the transferability of the findings to implement *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* in other college composition and literature classrooms.

**Intercoder agreement and member checking.** The process of intercoder agreement was used during the analysis of the data to ensure greater validity and reliability in the data results of the study. Transcribed data and a codebook were given to three colleagues, which Rossman and Rallis (2017) term as a “community of practice” in order to “engage in critical and sustained discussion with valued colleagues in a setting of sufficient trust” (p. 56). A community of researchers participating in collaborative coding for interrater reliability is what Saldaña (2016) terms a process of “intercoder agreement,” where “Team members can both code their own and others’ data gathered in the field to cast a wider analytic net and provide a “crowd-sourcing reality check” for each other” (p. 37).

In addition, member checking was used with student participants from the data collected. Member checking is defined as a process to “consult with the participants themselves during analysis...as a way to validate the findings thus far” (Saldaña, 2016, pp. 37-38). Member checking occurred at three points after data collection. The opportunity for member checking of data points included: A group email sent to student participants with the recording and summary points of the book theme discussion; an email with the attached completed manuscript sent to participants for them to check for errors or changes before publication; and individual emails to each of the three participants with their transcribed and coded semi-structured interview attached were sent to check accuracy and for feedback.

**Data analysis.** In this section, I will describe the data collection process in relationship to the three research questions, focused on participation in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, the use of translingualism and multimodalities, and shifts in binary thinking in regard to writing for self and writing for others on a social oppression theme through a collective experience.



*Student work and submissions for the book.* Data was collected and analyzed from the students' submissions for the book, which were developed from various writings and visuals created during the course, including essays, journals, discussion board posts, personal writings, and presentations, some of which encompassed multimodal and translingual expressions. The data was coded using open coding, with a focus on: The use of multimodalities and/or translingualism in the submissions for the book; the use and variety of discourse methods and writing strategies to examine shifts in binaries in thought and composition; and the choice of topic focus for each student's submission for the book within the context of the book's social suffering theme.

*Discussion of book theme.* After midterm break in the Spring 2020 semester, the students were presented with the opportunity to discuss and to reach consensus on the theme for the book project on an issue of social suffering and oppression as part of their collective experience in participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*. This discussion on the choice of theme for the book was recorded on the Blackboard Collaborate software for the college. The recording was downloaded and then coded, using open coding, looking for relevant themes that emerged from their discussion (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). The recorded online discussion lasted for one class session of 50 minutes, with voluntary participants who had signed the informed consent forms prior to the discussion.

*Semi-structured interviews.* Three volunteer students were interviewed in October 2020 via Zoom, after the completion of the book. The open-ended questions focused on: Students' experiences in participating with the book; their understanding of writing for healing within the context of self and other in a collective experience of writing on a social suffering theme chosen by the group; and how or if students felt that their thinking and writing have shifted in ways that

counteract dualities as a result of participating in the group project. These semi-structured interviews were completed after publication of the book to gain insights into students' reactions to seeing their work published and publicly available in book form. The results were coded and analyzed only by me as the sole researcher.

The focus of the study was primarily on the group experience of participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, which made this a particularly unique study because it examined how “writing for healing” for the individual could be expanded to a social context through a shared group experience on a common theme of social suffering. In addition, the examination of rhetorical interventions through translingual and multimodal interventions harmonized with the intent of inclusion of marginalized students, while allowing students alternate methods of expression to counteract dualities and the formal divisions of thinking and expression that can happen in composition and literature classrooms. Triangulation of the data through the book theme discussion, semi-structured interviews, and the analysis of the students' submissions for the book helped to ensure validity of the study with more accurate data collection via several measures. In addition, reliability was ensured by collecting data during the four months of the Spring 2020 semester, completing the data collection after ten months in October 2020. As a result, the data findings are transferable for implementation of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* in other college-level composition and literature classrooms. The design of the study and methods of data collection provided an Interpretivist opportunity for learning, both in my role as the researcher, and for the students, in how “writing for healing” could be negotiated in a social context for community caregiving and action to facilitate transformative change.

## CHAPTER IV

### ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The implementation of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* began in January 2020 of the Spring semester in one section of my English II class and took an unexpected turn with the onset of COVID-19 at midterm. With increasing concerns for the safety of students and staff, all college courses went online for remote learning after an extended midterm break for the professors to prepare for converting their courses to an online format. As a result, the implementation of the study shifted, as mentioned in Chapter III, with a revised IRB, to accommodate the changes from an in-person to an online experience. While the original plan for the first major data collection point was to videotape students in the classroom for a discussion of their book project's theme, title, and charity, the meeting happened online through a synchronous recorded discussion via the college's Blackboard Collaborate software. In addition, all journal writing assignments for the course had to be converted to discussion board posts, and rather than meeting three times a week for in-person instruction, online class meetings happened synchronously weekly for discussion of the literature and writing assignments. The online format shifted the engagement of some students, who then had to negotiate technology problems, the challenges of learning from home, family responsibilities, and changes to work and personal schedules because of the pandemic. As a result, participation in synchronous meetings was sparse, and deadlines for writing assignments were relaxed, as we all struggled to negotiate this new format for our class.

Despite these challenges, the collective social suffering experience as a result of the pandemic also deepened the resolve of the students to create a book that would provide a light of healing amidst bleak and uncertain times. The powerful thing about the data collected is that it

captured an historical moment of social suffering and the individual perspectives of healing that the students gifted to *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*. The fact that this project continued and that our book was successfully published is in and of itself a miraculous example of the students' commitment and how much they valued this project as a healing, historical moment. Their determination to provide positive solutions for the social suffering and oppression issues they were addressing in the literature—and living personally—added to the unexpected and compelling results of the study, as they fused the theoretical foundations and practices of the study to create their own theoretical perspective of *Healing Social Suffering*.

In the following chapter, the participants, the data collected, the coding process, and the coding results will be explored in detail before discussing the culminating results of the patterns of codes, categories, and themes that emerged for examining each of the three research questions. In addition, each of the works submitted by the students to the published book will be examined and discussed for inclusion and to honor each of the student's contributions to the project. In this chapter, the results for each of the research questions will focus on the patterns from the coding, while the results of the connections between the coding and the theoretical framework will be examined in further detail in Chapter V. In this way, the coding results can be more thoroughly analyzed in Chapter IV, and the complex, multilayered connections between the coding results and the theoretical components of the study can receive appropriate emphasis separately in Chapter V, along with a discussion of further implications for research and practice.

### **Participants**

The participants in the project included 18 students in one section of my English II introductory literature course at a two-year community college in a suburban area in the northeastern US, which has the largest and most diverse student population of any college or

university in the local region in regard to race, ethnicity, age, and academic interest. The diversity of the college was reflected in the participants, with 9 women, 9 men, and students self-identifying from multiple marginalized populations and backgrounds, including African American, Latinx, LGBTQIA+, international students, multilingual students, and students with varied learning abilities.

### **Data Collected**

The research study began in January 2020, at the beginning of the Spring semester of my English II introductory literature course, and the study was completed at the end of October 2020 with the final data collection of conducting the semi-structured interviews after the publication of the book project. Information about the research study was shared during the first week of the course, and a consent form was distributed and discussed with the students with a list of the data that would be collected, as well as a timeline for the study. Students were made aware that participation in the study, including videotaping, and interviews, was voluntary and did not affect the students' grades for the course. This action research Interpretivist study involved examination with ongoing actions in a setting where the participants were a part of the research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). As mentioned in Chapter III, the ongoing actions or interventions involved with this action research study related to the research questions and included:

--The use of writing assignments to practice the methods of translanguaging and multimodalities, as components of semiotic theory.

--Introducing a more focused approach to readings, writing assignments, and discussions centered on the theme of social oppression and suffering.

--The publishing of a book through Amazon, created by the students with writings and visuals, including multimodal and translingual submissions, and centered on a theme of social suffering and oppression chosen by the students.

**Table 1**

*Data Collection Table*

Data Set	Participants	Date Collected	Number of Transcribed Pages	Duration / Length
Discussion of Book's Theme	6	4/17/2020	16	50 minutes
Submissions for Book	16	5/1/2020 - 5/15/2020	92	92 published pages
Semi-Structured Interviews	3	10/1/2020; 10/26/2020; and 10/29/2020	20	20 minutes per interview

The data collected for the study, as shown in Table 1, included:

1. Discussion of Book's Theme: An online discussion on the selection of the book's theme was recorded at midterm of the Spring 2020 semester. The discussion was recorded online using Blackboard Collaborate. The recording was then transcribed for coding.
2. Submissions for Book: The students' submissions for the *Unity and Healing* book project were collected via email in May 2020, at the end of the Spring semester.

3. Semi-structured interviews: Interviews were conducted with three students in October 2020, after the publication of their *Unity and Healing* book, with questions focused on their participation in the project.

The triangulated data collected was analyzed using open coding, as outlined in the next section, to determine patterns of categories and themes in relationship to the three research questions.

### **Data Analysis**

**Coding.** The data collected was coded using an open coding process, as defined by Cohen et al. (2018) as being done “line-by-line, phrase-by-phrase, sentence-by-sentence, paragraph-by-paragraph, unit-of-text-by-unit of text (e.g. section) basis or a semantic unit” (p. 671). Open coding is also identified as “Initial Coding,” which is an “open-ended approach to coding the data” by breaking it down qualitative data into parts from close examination (Saldaña, 2016, p. 115). As a result, open or initial coding is not formulaic in method, but it leaves open the possibility for the “researcher to reflect deeply on the contents and nuances of your data and to begin taking ownership of them” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 115). It is also helpful for examining a wide variety of data through the use of line-by-line coding (Saldaña, 2016, p. 115). In application, the first step of the coding process was to do an initial line-by-line coding in July 2020 of the transcription of the book theme discussion that was recorded with participants at midterm during the Spring 2020 semester. A preliminary codebook was created from this first cycle of coding, identifying 18 initial codes with descriptions, definitions, and examples from the data source.

*Focused coding.* After completing a preliminary codebook, a two-page descriptive memo was then completed, examining the codes, looking for patterns, relationships, and making

insights. Next, for the second step of coding, Cohen et al. (2018) suggest that “the codes can be grouped into categories, giving the categories a title or name, based on criteria that the researcher decides” (p. 671). Therefore, in the second cycle of coding, the codes were examined again, refining, and adding categories and themes, a step also defined by Saldaña (2016) as “Focused Coding,” which “categorizes coded data based on thematic or conceptual similarity” (p. 235). According to Saldaña (2016), this second cycle of coding has a more focused purpose in understanding relationships within the data in application to the study’s theoretical foundations, “The primary goal during second cycle coding is to develop a sense of categorical, thematic, conceptual, and/or theoretical organization from your array of first cycle codes” (p. 234).

*Axial coding.* “Axial coding” specifically identifies the coding process for categories, “An axial code is a category label ascribed to a group of open codes whose referents (the phenomena being described) are similar in meaning” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 671). Rossman and Rallis (2017) state that through the patterns in the codes, categories and themes emerge, defining a theme as “a declarative phrase or sentence describing a process, a connection, or an insight” (p. 240). Also, the categories were examined and re-examined during the coding process in regard to their connections to the codes. Additionally, the categories and themes are drawn from the theoretical or conceptual framework in response to the questions the researcher wishes to understand more clearly (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

Therefore, after examining the emerging patterns of categories and themes and their relationships to the theoretical framework, a second cycle codebook was then created, adding four categories to encompass the 18 codes, and these four categories were assigned to one or more of the four themes that related to the theoretical context of the study. An analytic memo was then completed to discuss the patterns of relationships between the codes, categories, and



themes and how these relationships provided insights into answering the research questions of the study.

*Intercoder agreement.* In addition, the second cycle codebook and five pages of data from the transcription of the book theme discussion were given to the three colleagues in my Leader Scholar Community in the EDD doctorate program, which Rossman and Rallis (2017) term as a “community of practice” in order to “engage in critical and sustained discussion with valued colleagues in a setting of sufficient trust” (p. 56). Researchers participating in collaborative coding for interrater reliability is what Saldaña (2016) terms a process of “intercoder agreement,” where “Team members can both code their own and others’ data gathered in the field to cast a wider analytic net and provide a “crowd-sourcing reality check” for each other” (p. 37). The results of the intercoder agreement demonstrated a 90% reliability between the coding of the group members and my own coding of the sample.

After the positive reliability results of the intercoder agreement within my community of practice, a first and second cycle of coding were then completed on the participants’ submissions for the book and the transcriptions of the three semi-structured interviews. The second cycle codebook was used as a reference, and an additional 16 codes and one additional category were added to the codebook, making it a total of 29 codes, 5 categories, and 4 themes.

*Theoretical coding.* Using the third iteration of the codebook, all three data sources were coded a third and then fourth time, applying what Saldaña (2016) terms as “theoretical coding,” as a “culminating step” in the coding process to examine relationships between categories and “specifies the possible relationships between categories and moves the analytic story in a theoretical direction” (p. 251). This process assisted in an additional examination of the categories and themes of the coding in relationship to the theoretical framework, validating the

emergence of an “original theory,” as Saldaña (2016) terms it with the revelation of the *Healing Social Suffering* theme that the coding produced, adding a new theoretical perspective to the existing themes related to the theoretical framework of the study. In addition, the fourth coding of the three data sources then produced two more codes to define components of the *Healing and Semiotics* categories in more detail, resulting in 31 codes total. The fourth version of the codebook was segmented into two more concise charts for easier reference. Appendix C, Table 2 lists all 31 codes, providing descriptions, as well as listing their relevant categories, themes, and research questions. The second table, in Appendix D, Table 3 lists each code and a data source with a sample quote to provide further definition and an example of how each code was identified within the data. This fourth version of the codebook was used for a fifth and final coding check of all three data sources for reliability.

*Member checking.* Member checking is defined as a process to “consult with the participants themselves during analysis...as a way to validate the findings thus far” (Saldaña, 2016, pp. 37-38). Immediately after the book theme discussion was completed, an email was sent to all participants in the study, including a link to the recording of the discussion and a summary of the main points, citing the name of the book chosen by the students, the chosen charity, and highlighting suggestions made by students in regard to the types of submissions and rhetorical styles. The students who were present for the discussion were asked to verify the main points and to add any further comments if they wished. For those students who were not present for the discussion, the email provided a summary of points which they could respond to with additional comments and suggestions, if they chose. Next, a discussion board was set up on the Blackboard Collaborate class shell for participants in the study to add any further points related

to the book theme discussion and to share submissions for the book with each other, which eight of the participants used for submissions and sharing.

After compiling the students' submissions for the book, editing and formatting their work into a Word document manuscript for publication, a copy of the manuscript was sent to each student participant. The students were asked to check their submissions for correctness and were asked for any feedback on the format and cover design before moving forward with publication. Six students responded, remarking about how pleased they were with the manuscript. Lastly, copies of the transcribed and coded interviews were sent to the three participants of the semi-structured interviews, who were asked to check for correctness and any other insights or comments.

**Codes.** The codes which follow are not an exhaustive description of all 31 codes found within the data points; however, these codes are five of the most frequently found within all three data sources and are key to answering the three research questions of the study. For a complete list of the 31 codes, Table 2 in Appendix C provides descriptions of the codes and references the relevant data points and research questions for each code. Additionally, Table 3 in Appendix D can be referred to for example quotations from the data points for each of the codes. The codes are signified in lower-case with italics, while categories and themes are identified with upper-case titles in italics for easier identification within the discussion.

***Social suffering and oppression.*** Social suffering and oppression is the theory that encompasses the study of the effects of political, economic, and institutional power on people, as well as how these power structures can oppress and create "social problems," including welfare, health, legal, moral, and religious issues (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997, p. ix). As a code, it is one of the most prominent of the data points, with 142 references in all three data sources, and

can be broken down into the 22 different identifying types of *social suffering and oppression*, as specified in Table 2 in Appendix C. The *social suffering and oppression* code is a component of the category of *Healing* and the theme of *Healing Social Suffering*, and it is evidenced in all three of the central data points, including the book theme discussion, the submissions for the book, and the semi-structured interviews, as described with examples in what follows.

*Book theme discussion.* During the book theme discussion, one of the central *social suffering and oppression* issues discussed was the recent *effects of COVID-19* on the students' lives and that of their families, identified 23 times in the coding of the transcribed discussion. The 50-minute discussion, held on April 17, 2020, occurred only three weeks after our college had converted to online learning for all courses in response to the pandemic. As a result, the students were still processing the newfound changes to their lives and expressed concerns not just for themselves, but for our nation and our world, gripped by a communal social suffering experience, and the pandemic, which had an effect on their perspectives in regard to the book's theme, purpose, and potential benefits. An example of the code *social suffering and oppression: effects of COVID-19* was evident during the students' discussion of how to approach the introduction for the book, when one student stated how strongly she felt about tying the issue of social suffering and oppression with the pandemic in the intro, "I was actually thinking about the connection to how what we're going through right now and like the struggles that we're going through right now." In addition, during the book theme discussion, the students identified other *social suffering and oppression* issues to address, including *racism, sexism, gender roles, government oppression, and racial oppression in the media* as examples of topics for submissions that would coincide with the theme and title of the book, *Unity and Healing*, and its purpose.

*Unity and Healing book*. Addressing *racism* is a central *social suffering and oppression* issue of the book, with 48 instances of this code. In addition, *historic oppression* identifies historical themes of *social suffering and oppression* discussed within the literature that was assigned as an intervention for the study and occurs 46 times in the coding results. It is apparent in Garrett's essay on *racism* and *historic oppression* that these issues of *social suffering and oppression* are still applicable to today, "Racism towards minorities has been evident for centuries, and these issues have been addressed by a number of authors through literature, from the discussion of slavery in 1619 in Virginia, to the mistreatment people who are minorities experience today." Also, *gender roles* is the most discussed topic of the *social suffering and oppression* code, with 6 of the 16 participants focusing on gender roles as a topic for their submissions and with 70 examples of the *gender roles* code within the book. Alessandra elucidates the issue of *gender roles*, and also highlights the overlapping issues of *historic oppression* for women:

Women of the 1800s had basically no choice but to find someone to 'care' for them, or else they would have no home, income, or safety. Women were often heavily coddled and pampered unnecessarily, as they were considered to be weak and easily affected by mental illness. Hysteria was a very common diagnosis used for any woman who fell out of line with society's expectations of them, mentally ill or not.

In addition to issues of *racism*, *gender roles*, and *historic oppression*, Lily discusses the issue of *racial oppression in the media*, as well as the *beauty standards for women*, demonstrating a complex overlap of codes necessary to identify the multiple layers of *social suffering and oppression* issues within the text of the book:

During the 1990s, when “Volar” was written, minorities were underrepresented in the media, including fictional pieces of media, such as comics. An example of this is in the protagonist’s dream, where she dreams about being like Supergirl, a white superhero, as at the time, there was little diversity in the depiction of superheroes. The young girl who narrates the story says, “I had a recurring dream... that I had long blond hair and could fly....” (Cofer, 1993, p. 145)

While *racism*, *historic oppression*, and *gender roles* were the most common social suffering and oppression issues addressed in the book, there was also often a complex overlap with discussions of other significant social suffering issues, as well as many other identified issues. For example, more recent issues of oppression are also discussed by the students, here identified in a multilayered *social suffering and oppression* discussion of *gender roles* and *racism* in the literature, as well as *oppression due to Trump*, exemplified in Christopher’s analysis of the increasingly racist treatment of ethnic young women, “Many young Indian American women express difficulty wearing bindis while going to school because they fear looking too ethnic, and it’s only getting worse, as the number of hate crimes since Donald Trump’s presidency has skyrocketed (“Trump Effect”).” Therefore, the coding of *social suffering and oppression* issues discussed in the book often revealed a multi-level and non-linear discussion that encompassed a number of 22 varied descriptors for types of social suffering to address historic and contemporary concerns.

*Semi-structured interviews.* The concerns of the students over both historic and contemporary issues of *social suffering and oppression* were also evident in the semi-structured interviews, with a focus on the *effects of COVID-19* and *political oppression*, as one student stated, “We just encountered something horrible... with the COVID-19, and political issues, and

everything is just so crazy right now, and we have to find that light....” Similarly, the third student interviewed identified his concerns about the experience of *2020 overall*, along with the *effects of COVID-19 pandemic and political oppression*:

...something that even surprised me is that, not just the pandemic like can be like with the whole healing, but like politically, we're just so, I don't know-- it's such a mess, and like I think I never thought it would be messier than 2016, but it is, and like it's really hard to think like how we can come together politically and like just do something about what's going on, but it's like another thing that adds to our book for us.

The layered identifiers of the *social suffering and oppression* code provided insights into the complexity and breadth of issues discussed by the participants in all three data points, triangulating the data as a foundation for analysis and the results of the study in regard to the three research questions.

**Multimodalities.** *Multimodalities* encompass visuals, videos, technology, and alternative symbolic methods of communication that can assist students in the sharing of their stories (Whithaus & Bowen, 2014). The *multimodalities* code is under the category of *Semiotics* and the theme of *Poststructural Feminism* as a central component of the theoretical framework, and the code is found in all three data sources. Examples of *multimodalities* in the *Unity and Healing* book include the students' submissions of photography and artwork. During the book theme discussion, one student emphasized the importance of including *multimodalities* in the book by discussing her intended contributions, “I wanted to add pictures. Because I do photography, and I was thinking with whatever theme we chose I can add in some photography photos I have.” The value of *multimodalities* to the students during the course of the study was evident, with 64 instances of the code within the three data sources, demonstrating a triangulation of the data.

The student's response during the book theme discussion, along with the following quote of a student from the semi-structured interview, provide examples of how *multimodalities* facilitate alternative methods of expression that coincide with the students' chosen theme and title for the book of *Unity and Healing*:

I used my photographs, which other people used, maybe a poem, which is another form of expression. Other people used photographs to help set the tone and the mood of the story that we were trying to portray, so I think each was a direction to go in that still in the end result led to the bigger part of the story of the theme which is unity and healing.

Therefore, the *multimodalities* code is triangulated between all three data sources, providing, in particular, important insights for addressing Research Question 2 and the use of multimodal expression as a teaching tool.

***Non-binaries in thinking and writing.*** *Non-Binaries in thinking and writing* is defined as complex thinking and writing that encompasses the individual and the collective in a Postmodern sense and may also demonstrate layered insights with varied rhetorical strategies, such as combining the expressive rhetorical strategy of personal expression and experiences along with research, academic discourse, and analytical insights in regard to a larger context. The code is predominantly evident in the book, with 109 instances of the code in the *Unity and Healing* book, although it is also apparent in the book theme discussion with 18 instances and 13 examples of the code in the semi-structured interviews, totaling 140 instances of the code in the three data sources. *Non-binaries in thinking and writing* is a component of the category *Non-Binaries*, which is also a component of two of the central themes and critical theories of the study, *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism*. Since the code encompasses complex thinking that deconstructs traditionally accepted dualities and binary oppositions both in thinking



and in writing, it must be subsumed under the theme of *Postmodernism* for exhibiting thinking that embraces the individual within the collective without defined lines. In addition, the codes related to *Non-Binaries* as a category are also subsumed under the theme of *Poststructural Feminism*, for representing writing that defies rhetorical divisions of the personal versus the social and exhibits variances in discourse and rhetorical style. In the coding of the three data sources, *non-binaries in thinking and writing* was also applied with additional code identifiers to signify more specifics of what was evidenced in the data, including:

*Shifts.* This code identifies a stated shift in thinking or a realization that the student participant signifies. An example of this is evident in the book when Alessandra states, “My first analysis of the story, I have realized, was completely misguided. Understanding the historical context brought to me a whole new narrative that I had completely overlooked.” Her shift in thinking and expression of that in writing is clearly identified.

*Personal insights and connections.* For this code, it identifies discussions of personal experiences, realizations, and insights into the topics being analyzed within the literature. Here, Lily makes a personal connection to her cultural heritage with that of the central character in the short story, “Volar,” and notes the continued *social suffering and oppression* issue of *racism in the media* through a lack of Latinx representation, “Even though today there is a lot more diversity in cartoons, video games and even comics than there was during the time of “Volar,” I still feel a little dissatisfied, since most of the characters I see are not Puerto Rican like me.”

*Cultural encounters and insights.* With this code, the student participants are making individual connections between a culture and experience, through personal experience and the literature being analyzed. Making a comparison to the story “A Pair of Tickets” and the protagonist Jing-mei’s first experience of traveling to China, Eric discusses his own cultural

encounters with travel and how his thinking shifted in similar ways to Jing-mei, “The trip to Cuba was just one of the most amazing and culturally expanding for me and my understanding of the world, especially for my first trip out of the country, and I would do it again any day, any time.”

Since *non-binaries in thinking and writing* falls under the category of *Non-Binaries* and the themes of *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism*, this code provides important data for Research Question 3 in regard to shifts in binary methods of thinking and writing and the blurring of dualisms between the individual and the collective.

***Unity and healing.*** *Unity and healing* is a significant code because it is the theme and title chosen by the students during our discussion of the book’s theme. It encompasses the students’ individual voices unified for a collective purpose of healing on issues of social suffering and oppression for the book’s theme. The students’ discussion of the book’s theme, along with their submissions for the book, and the semi-structured interviews after the publication of the book reveal their unified intent to facilitate a collective sense of unity and to strive to heal social suffering issues in a global context. The *unity and healing* code falls under the categories of *Healing* and *Non-Binaries* because it not only includes issues related to promoting healing, but it also demonstrates complex thinking beyond divisions of self vs. other. Therefore, this code also has a connection to multiple themes that are central to the theoretical framework of the study, as the category of *Healing* and all of its codes related to healing issues is subsumed under the theme of *Writing for Healing*, sharing healing through personal expression, as well as *Healing Social Suffering* by providing solutions for healing on social suffering issues. In addition, the codes identifying complex thinking and writing strategies that are subsumed under the category of *Non-Binaries* are connected to the themes of *Postmodernism* and

*Poststructural Feminism*, as discussed earlier in the chapter. An example of *unity and healing* was apparent during the book theme discussion and the choice of its focus, when one student stated, “Yes, something with unity and healing that includes students,” and a second student responded, “I agree.” In the “Introduction” to the book, Cynthia defines the meaning of *unity and healing* as the focus for the students’ published text:

This period in time shows how much we need unity and love. This is the moment of separation that humanity needed to change our outlook on life and to come back to what we are. We can see now that we are beginning to win against the virus and many people have started to heal-- and that is all because of our unity.

Cynthia’s definition of *unity and healing* is set within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on us individually, and yet as a world community, in a very postmodern way.

This demonstrates again how the *unity and healing* code fits not only with the *Healing* category, but it also coincides with the *Non-Binaries* category in the way that it encompasses the individual and global perspectives and unity of purpose for healing in combatting the pandemic.

***Healing social suffering.*** Within the context of the book theme discussion, the students made it apparent that they believed that there must be positives or solutions presented in the book, so that the focus of it was not solely on highlighting the negatives of *social suffering and oppression*, but also to provide healing and solutions, with one student specifically asking us in the group during the book theme discussion, “How would we focus on the positive from these things?” The students continued to discuss the answer to this question during the book theme discussion, with 7 instances of the code, in addition to resolving the issue through their submissions for the book, which has 47 instances, and providing further insights during the semi-structured interviews, where the code is evident 18 times, bringing the total to 72 examples of the

code in all three of the data sources. As one of the predominant codes of the study, *healing social suffering* is defined as the ideas and solutions for healing social suffering and oppression that were generated by the participants. The code is a component of both the *Healing* and *Non-Binaries* categories and resolves the dichotomies of the individual healing through Pennebaker's (2016) paradigm of the writing for healing theory and societal issues of healing encompassed by social suffering theory. As a result of this erasure of divisions between the individual and collective for the benefit of healing, the *healing social suffering* code and its more specific qualifiers discussed below is a component of the themes of *Writing for Healing* and *Healing Social Suffering*, for its healing focus from the personal and collective perspectives, and the themes of *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism* for the complexity in thinking in writing strategies that defy binary oppositions of self and other. Therefore, this code with its qualifiers and connecting categories and theme is central to answering both Research Question 1 and Research Question 3 to reflect on how the students reacted to participating in the project and how the thinking and writing of the students shifted because of their experience.

*Healing collectively.* This qualifier for the code of *healing social suffering* emphasizes the value that students placed on healing through collective experiences. For example, Cynthia states in the "Introduction" of the book, "This helps to strengthen the bonds of love in society. It also supports the foundation of peace in all respects."

*Healing through children.* This code is another solution for *healing social suffering* and focuses on educating and supporting children to pave the way for collective healing of social suffering issues for our future. During the book theme discussion, one student elucidated this purposeful and powerful focus for social healing, "Because like everything in the world now is just crazy.... And like, truly the only way to get past it is with our kids, or the kids growing up

now. I think government's messed up. I think everything's so messed up. So, kids are kind of like a way to push past that."

*Healing through love.* A number of students identified "love" as being a critical component for healing, and, as discussed with the *unity and healing* code, the book begins in its "Introduction" with Cynthia's assertion on the power of love to heal social suffering and to create unity, "And with love, humans win. This period in time shows how much we need unity and love."

*Standing in truth and personal power.* Embracing personal identity and a sense of one's self and power is another component of *healing social suffering* that Christopher also identifies in one of his essay submissions for the book, "Most of the world continues to pressure women to stay object-like because they want them to be easy to control. Unfortunately for the rest of the world, women have a bigger role to play than to sit and look pretty for everyone else."

*Speaking out.* The importance of speaking out, whether through writing or verbally, is another important solution suggested by the students for *healing social suffering*. Using one's voice to combat suffering and oppression is evident in Larissa's essay submission for the book, as she states, "From my own experiences, I learned that we must speak and express ourselves and to help at least by expressing our voices. We must impose our strength, so we can help the women who still suffer injustice and discrimination."

The codes discussed in this section are some of the most commonly used in the three data points and provide important information for answering the study's research questions.

Although all 31 codes provide important pieces of the puzzle, the codes presented here stand out for their proliferation throughout all three of the data sources, with some having layered and

complex connections to multiple categories and themes. The codes, categories, and themes reveal important patterns of insights to unravel the three research questions of the study. In the next section, the categories and themes will be identified so that the results for each research question can be discussed and further understood for greater clarity on the outcomes of the study.

**Categories.** The categories for the study were ascribed labels through a process called “axial coding,” where categories were identified based on “a group of open codes” that were “similar in meaning” (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 671). After identifying 18 codes in the first cycle of coding, the codes were examined for emerging patterns of categories and themes and their relationship to the theoretical framework. For example, a number of codes described actions and processes of “healing,” and because healing is an essential component to the theoretical framework, both for Pennebaker’s (2016) paradigm and for social suffering theory, the codes related to healing processes were grouped under a category titled as *Healing*. As discussed earlier in the chapter, Rossman and Rallis (2017) state that through the patterns in the codes, categories and themes emerge, defining a theme as “a declarative phrase or sentence describing a process, a connection, or an insight” (p. 240).

After examining the existing codes for similarities and patterns in meaning, a second cycle codebook was then created, adding four categories to encompass the 18 codes, and these four categories were assigned to one or more of the four themes that related to the theoretical context of the study. Once the second cycle codebook was completed, I wrote an analytic memo to discuss the patterns of relationships between the codes, categories, and themes that I was identifying in order to think through how these relationships provided insights into answering the research questions of the study. It was apparent that *Healing* was relevant to two components of the theoretical framework, and that a complex and interwoven pattern was evolving that linked

the two theories together in the way that the students discussed and approached the solutions and processes of healing, both individually and collectively. Similarly, the codes that demonstrated shifts and non-binaries in thinking and writing could be grouped under a category of *Non-Binaries*, yet, theoretically, this category could relate to both *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism*, demonstrating again the complexity of the patterns evolving, which were weaving together the theoretical components of the study through the categories and themes.

Therefore, the codes were examined multiple times during the coding process, resulting in five categories that were also re-examined in regard to their connections to the codes, and how the themes related to the theoretical framework in response to the research questions (Rossman & Rallis, 2017). In Figure 2, Themes and Categories, the five categories revealed through the open coding process, including *Healing*, *Social Suffering and Oppression*, *Identity*, *Semiotics*, and *Non-Binaries*, are shown beneath their corresponding themes of *Healing Social Suffering*, *Writing for Healing*, *Poststructural Feminism*, and *Postmodernism*, with the categories of *Healing* and *Non-Binaries* corresponding to more than one theme.

As Figure 2 demonstrates, the *Healing* category corresponds to the theme of *Writing for Healing* in regard to codes related to the individual experience of healing, as identified in Table 2: Coding Chart in Appendix C. In addition, the *Healing* category also corresponds to the theme of *Healing Social Suffering* in regard to codes that identify solutions for healing issues of social suffering and oppression through a collective experience. Also, Figure 2 shows the relationship of the category *Non-Binaries* to both the themes of *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism*. As mentioned, the codes revealed patterns that showed both shifts in thinking relevant to *Postmodernism*, as well as shifts in writing and the use of complex rhetorical styles identified with *Poststructural Feminism*, making *Non-Binaries* an essential category for both themes.



Figure 2. Themes and Categories of the Theoretical Framework of the Study

**Healing.** The category of *Healing* comprises all of the codes related to the concept of “healing,” whether in an inward or outward sense, such as emotional or physical, or whether in an individual/personal or collective/social sense. There are 17 codes under the category of *Healing* which identify that healing can be done through writing, speaking, or actions. The unique component of this category is that it encompasses both social suffering theory and Pennebaker’s (2016) writing for healing paradigm. As a result, the *Healing* category becomes a unifying point in itself within the study, providing solutions for the themes of *Healing Social Suffering* and *Writing for Healing*, as depicted in Figure 3, and delineates the relationships for the category of *Healing*, listing all of the codes associated with it.





Figure 3. Themes and Codes of Healing

***Social suffering and oppression.*** This category comprises the extensive codes related to issues of social suffering and oppression, including the types of suffering and oppression that are identified within the three data points. There are 11 codes within this category that are associated not only with identifying issues of social suffering but also with healing solutions that involve a social or collective component through connection, to differentiate it from the individual healing practices of personal expression signified by *Writing for Healing*. Therefore, the category of *Social Suffering and Oppression* and its subsequent codes are subsumed under

the theme of *Healing Social Suffering*, for its focus on identifying issues of social suffering and finding solutions. In Figure 4, the related theme and codes are identified visually.

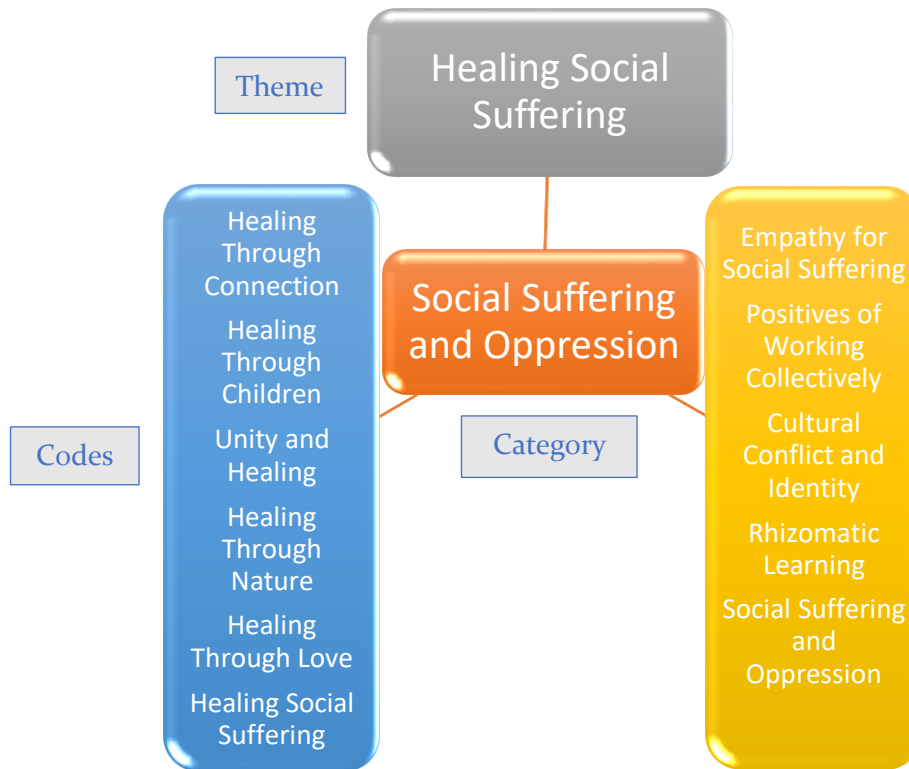


Figure 4. Theme and Codes of Social Suffering and Oppression

**Identity.** The category of *Identity* includes 9 codes relevant to individuality, identity as a writer, and personal expression, and as a result of this focus on the individual, it is relevant to the theme of Pennebaker's (2016) paradigm and the theme of *Writing for Healing*. This category is helpful to understand patterns of individual responses to the project for Research Question 1, insights into how the students found the use of semiotic writing strategies individually helpful in a personal, healing sense in their identities as writers for Research Question 2, and how the participants negotiated writing and thinking issues of self and other for Research Question 3. In

Figure 5, the relationships between the category *Identity* with its related theme and codes are signified.

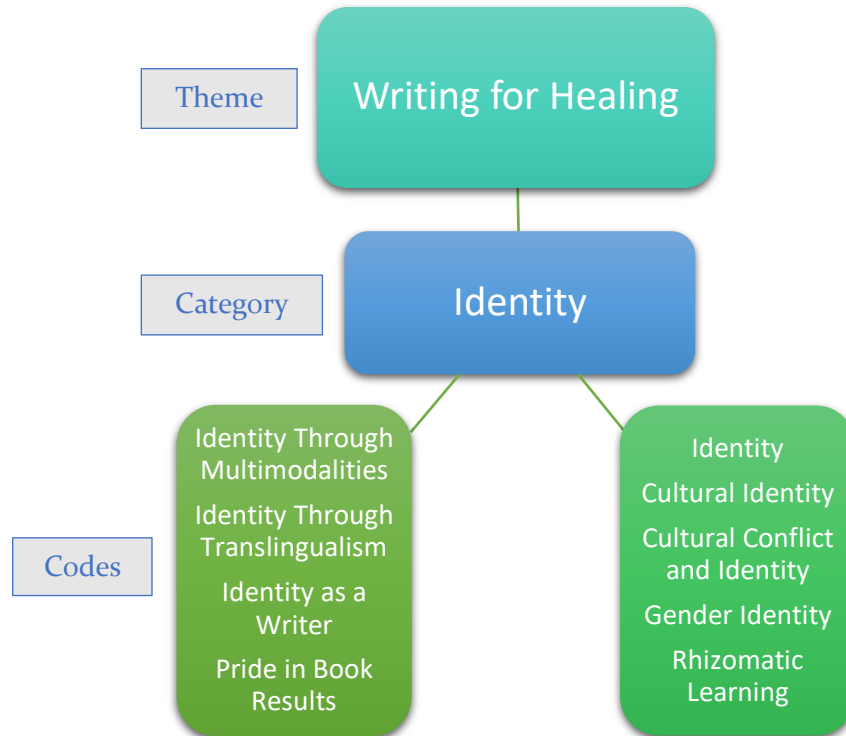


Figure 5. Theme and Codes of Identity

**Semiotics.** As a category, *Semiotics* includes 9 codes related to use of the semiotic strategies of *translingualism* and *multimodalities*, components of the theme of *Poststructural Feminism*, and relevant to Research Question 2 on the use of these teaching strategies. The related codes reveal the value of *Semiotics* for student identity, expression, learning, and more inclusive rhetorical strategies. Figure 6 details the relationship of *Semiotics* to its codes and theme.

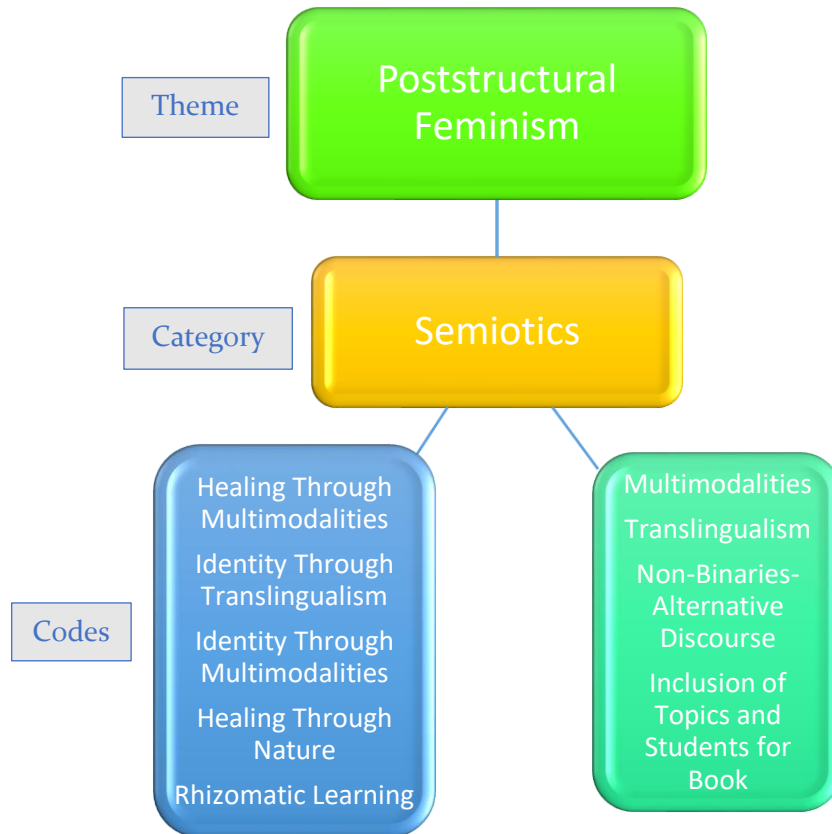


Figure 6. Theme and Codes of Semiotics

*Non-binaries.* The category of *Non-Binaries* encompasses 9 codes that identify complexity in thinking and writing, including a layering of ideas, insights, shifts in thinking or writing, and an application of the personal within the collective in a postmodern, poststructural, non-linear way. As a result, *Non-Binaries* is a component of the *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism* themes, as critical components of the theoretical framework of the study, emphasizing the unity of the individual within the collective and breaking down binary oppositions in writing and thinking. This category and its relationships to its codes and its two themes are central to answering Research Question 3, and Figure 7 depicts these relationships.

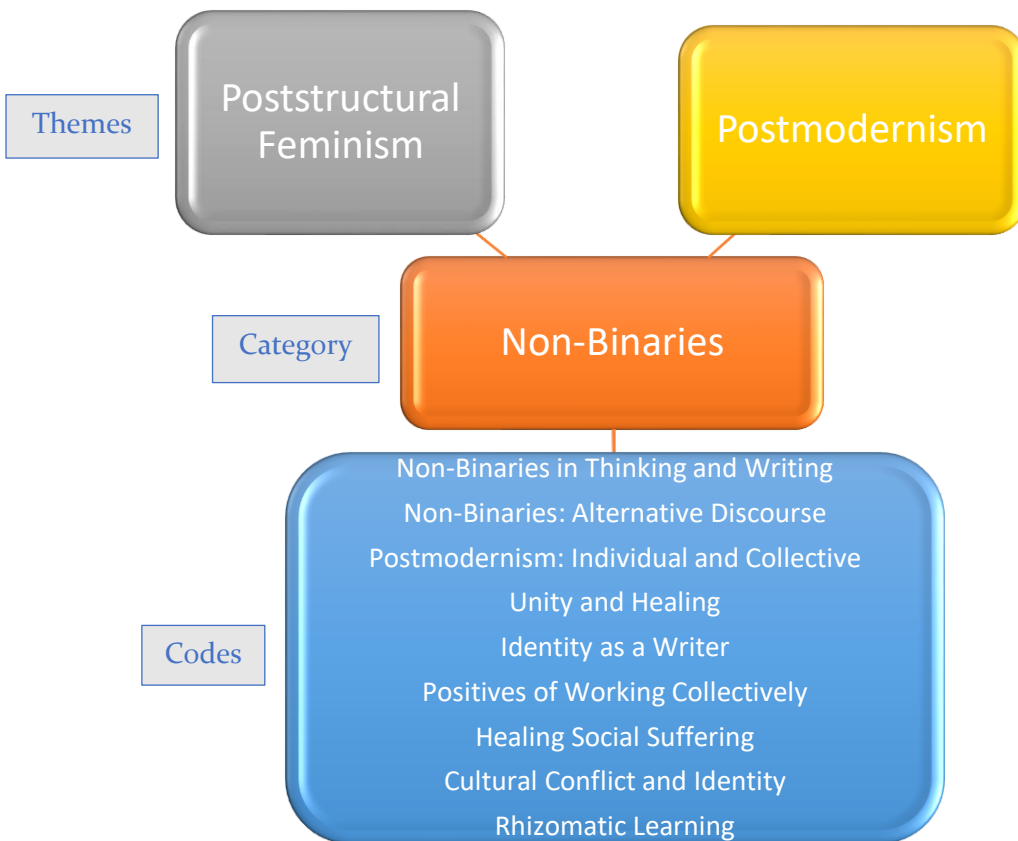


Figure 7. Themes and Codes of Non-Binaries

**Themes.** After completing the first cycle codebook, the initial 18 codes were examined for categories and themes in respect to the theoretical framework of the study for the second cycle of coding, using focused coding (Saldaña, 2016). For the next step, axial coding was helpful in grouping codes with similarities for the categories (Cohen et al., 2018). Next, using the third iteration of the codebook, all three data sources were coded a third and then fourth time, applying “theoretical coding” as a final step to verify relationships between categories and themes and looking for an “analytic story” of a “theoretical direction” (Saldaña, 2016, p. 251). This process validated the emergence of an “original theory,” as Saldaña (2016) terms it, with the revelation of the *Healing Social Suffering* theme that the coding produced. This fourth theme

added a new perspective to the three existing themes related to the theoretical framework of the study. The theoretical coding process not only validated the connections of the codes and categories to the themes, but also revealed the pattern of connections between Pennebaker's (2016) writing for healing paradigm and social suffering theory through coded solutions from the categories of *Healing* and *Social Suffering and Oppression*.

Therefore, the four themes revealed through the coding process include *Healing Social Suffering*, *Writing for Healing*, *Poststructural Feminism*, and *Postmodernism*, with the latter three themes corresponding to the theoretical framework of the study. As discussed, *Healing Social Suffering* emerged as a new theoretical component of the study, and each theme is detailed further in what follows.

***Healing social suffering.*** The categories of *Healing* and *Social Suffering and Oppression* unify in a unique way as components of this theme that resolves the dichotomy of the individual healing focus of Pennebaker's (2016) writing for healing paradigm and social suffering theory's focus on the collective experience of suffering. The unification of these categories and their corresponding codes provide solutions and insightful perspectives from the participants on healing the individual and the collective, through writing, unity, and action. The results of this will be specifically addressed in the results section for Research Questions 1 and 3.

***Writing for healing.*** Pennebaker's (2016) paradigm of writing for healing provides the theoretical context for this theme, encompassing the categories of *Healing* and *Identity* to identify insights and perspectives on individual healing, identity, and the benefits of writing. This theme provides essential insights for answering all three research questions, including how the students benefited individually from participation in the project, how the students benefited

from the use of semiotic strategies, and how their writing strategies and thinking shifted individually and collectively as a result of the study.

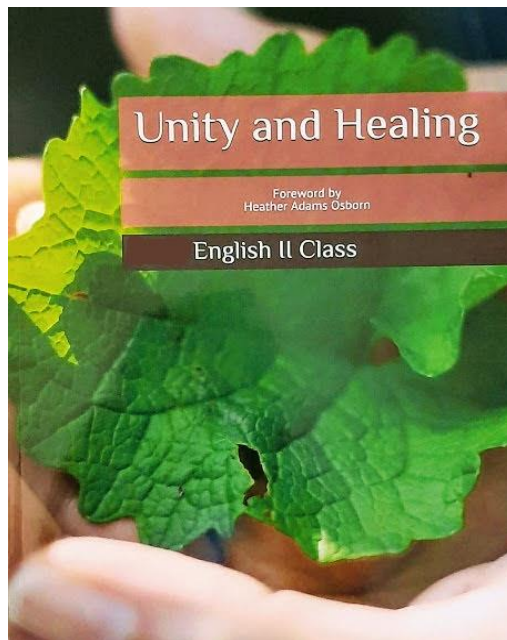
***Poststructural feminism.*** This theme encompasses the categories of *Non-Binaries* for the deconstruction of dualisms and binary constructions in writing and thinking, as well as *Semiotics*, the codes related to translanguaging and multimodalities within the data, as components of the theoretical foundation of *Poststructural Feminism*. In both a theoretical and a practical sense, this data provides insights to the usefulness of these teaching strategies for more inclusive modes of communicating for diverse student learners in order to answer Research Question 2. In addition, *Poststructural Feminism* provides the theoretical foundation for answering Research Question 3, by examining the patterns of multilayered thinking and writing in ways that reject binary oppositions and power structures of expression that can be exclusionary and marginalizing.

***Postmodernism.*** Embracing the individual within the collective, this theme is theoretically significant to all of the research questions of the study in terms of how the students posit self and other and embrace varied methods of expression. Yet, the theme is particularly helpful for answering Research Question 3 and its examination of the rejection of binaries and dualisms in thinking and writing. Therefore, this theme includes the category of *Non-Binaries* and its relevant codes that provide data on shifts in thinking and writing in regard to individual and collective experiences of social suffering and oppression and healing.

## **Results**

Of the 18 participants in the study, 16 submitted work for their published book. The published charity book which the students created, *Unity and Healing*, was 92 pages in length, in

a glossy, 8 ½” by 11” format and is now available on Amazon. During the recorded book theme discussion, the students decided that the book’s profits would be donated to the college’s student fund that benefits students in need, particularly as a result of COVID-19. Figure 8 depicts the photography submitted by one of the participants with the completed cover artwork for the published *Unity and Healing* book.



*Figure 8. Cover for Unity and Healing*

The 25 submissions included research essays, journal entries, poetry, photography, artwork, and a musical score, written to coincide with the book’s theme. Open coding of the submissions revealed predominant themes and categories related to the research questions and the interventions of the study, with the coded topics identified in italics. *Social suffering and oppression* issues related to *gender roles* was one of the most common topics of the essays submitted for the book, with 4 students discussing *historic oppression of women*, 2 discussing personal *gender roles*, and 1 discussing *transgender issues*. Culture was another common topic,



with 3 discussing personal *cultural encounters*, 2 discussing *cultural identity*, and 1 discussing *historic cultural issues*. In addition, 2 students focused on *racism* as another key topic, with 1 student sharing some personal experiences with racism, and 1 student focused on issues of *political oppression* in an historic context, as delineated in Figure 9.

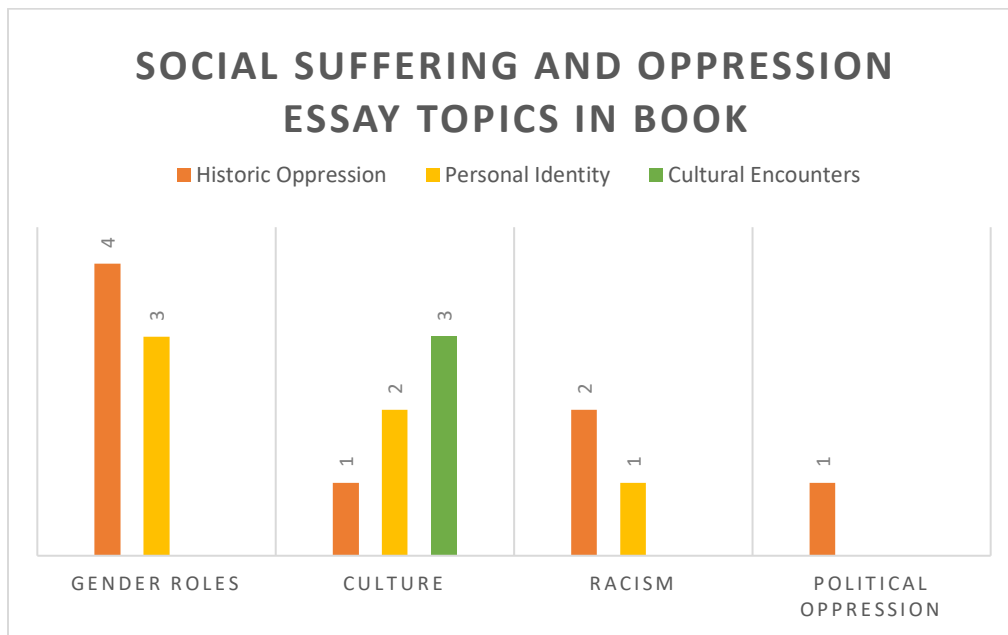


Figure 9. Social Suffering and Oppression Essay Topics

Figure 9 reveals some important insights about the focus of the topics for submissions for the published book, including how the students examined issues of social suffering and oppression using varied stylistic methods of discourse. The students who used solely academic discourse and research for *historic oppression* issues are designated by the topics highlighted in orange. The students who also incorporated personal, expressive writing about social suffering and oppression topics through comparative discussions of *personal identity* and *cultural encounters* are designated by the topics highlighted in yellow and green; therefore, these students shared individual experiences in comparison to the literature discussed, rather than solely focusing on analyzing the literature through research with academic discourse. This data revelation on the

diverse, multilayered approaches of the students, by combining expressive, personal writing and academic discourse on social suffering issues, is a helpful foundation for answering the research questions on the writing and thinking strategies employed by the students in the discussion that follows in this chapter.

### **Data Analysis Outcomes**

Open coding of the students' submissions for the book, essays, semi-structured interviews, and book theme discussion revealed:

1. The 16 participants who submitted to the book felt strongly about the emphasis on “unity and healing,” which they chose as the published book’s title and theme.
2. The 6 participants in the book theme discussion and the 3 students interviewed after publication of the book expressed the value of working individually yet collectively to help others, particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.
3. The semiotic importance of multimodalities and translanguaging for more inclusive and creative methods of expression beyond academic discourse was evident in the students’ use of these methods in the book, as well as in their responses during the interviews and book discussion. In regard to translanguaging, 2 students used another language in their submissions, while 5 students used some form of multimodalities.
4. The students appreciated poststructural writing opportunities, to be able to write in varied styles, and to use other forms of creative expression, including visuals, music, and poetry in the creation of the book was also evident in their submissions, interviews, and book theme discussion.

5. The participants expressed a perspective reflective of postmodernism, finding benefits individually and collectively in generating social healing through a collective project for the broader community.

These data analysis outcomes are helpful signposts for discussing the results in regard to each of the three research questions. The results elucidated the effects that COVID-19 had on the students' experience of participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, and how profoundly important the experience of creating the book became to the students, individually and collectively. By providing solutions for the social suffering issues they were addressing through their published book, the students felt they were making a positive, healing contribution to society amidst a pandemic that collectively engaged them in an historic social suffering moment.

**Research Question 1: What are the students' experiences of "writing for healing" on issues of social suffering and oppression while participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*?**

The primary question of the research study was to examine the students' experiences of participating in the study through the creation of their *Unity and Healing* book, and the students' feedback was overwhelmingly positive. While some students expressed feeling a greater individual shift in confidence as a writer and a sense of identity, all of the students discussed the value of collectively participating in a project that benefits the broader community, particularly because of the global experience of COVID-19, unifying the individual with the collective in a postmodern way. Triangulation of the data with all three data sources provides support and insights for answers to Research Question 1, with codes from the data sources again signified by

italics, and categories and themes identified with italics and capitalization to provide the results of the patterns that emerged.

**Discussion of the book theme.** Originally, our discussion of the book's theme had been planned to occur in the classroom right after midterm with the 18 participants in the study, a discussion that would be videotaped, and students who were not participating in the study would be excused from attending class for the day. Because our college made the decision to shift to remote learning over midterm break as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, extending our break for a week to prepare for this shift, our discussion was postponed until April 17, 2020 in order to give us the opportunity to become accustomed to remote learning and the technology for attending online synchronous classes. In addition, our discussion had to occur via our college's software for online learning, Blackboard Collaborate, which was somewhat slow when webcams and microphones were used, especially for those with slower Internet connections. However, Collaborate had a recording function that enabled the recording of our discussion, with the students going back and forth between using the chat box, microphones, and webcams in order to communicate. Also, because of technology challenges, students' work schedules shifting because of the pandemic, and family responsibilities, only 6 participants out of the 18 who originally volunteered to participate in the study were present for the discussion, although five other students had communicated with me via email that they wished they could be there to participate. As a group, we decided that to ensure that all participants could be included in what we discussed, so a link to the recording was emailed to all participants to view, along with a summary of the points we discussed, and a discussion board for the participants was opened after our meeting so that those who were not present could share ideas and submissions with others in the group. Despite all of these unexpected challenges, we had a productive 50-minute

discussion, and while the pandemic shifted the planned implementation of the discussion, it also became the spark to incite some interesting insights in regard to the direction of our project.

Within the first few minutes of our discussion of the book's theme, the students began sharing issues affecting their lives as a result of COVID-19. The coding revealed patterns of how the students' experiences of participating in the study and the creation of the book were becoming interwoven with a first-hand experience of social suffering as a result of the pandemic. The need for healing in their own lives incited a greater motivation to provide healing to others in light of COVID-19. The *social suffering and oppression* code—the *effects of COVID-19*—was evident in the analysis of the conversation, and after asking the students if they wanted to have an introduction that mentioned COVID-19 as one of the purposes of the book, the students agreed, with one acknowledging, “I actually think that that's a really good idea—when you started the chat, I was actually thinking about like the connection to like how what we're going through right now and like the struggles that we're going through right now, so I think that's actually a really good idea.” As the discussion continued, students shared details of how the pandemic had shifted their daily lives, a true social suffering experience that we were going through together, and codes emerged about healing in response to how they were coping, including *healing through connection*, *healing through creativity*, *healing through multimodalities*, *physical healing through self-care*, *healing through reading and research*. These personal experiences of coping with the pandemic by connecting with loved ones, as well as participating in multimodal creative endeavors and favorite hobbies formed a foundation for further decisions about the book. The students agreed that the proceeds from the publication of the book should be donated to the college's student fund devoted to those students who were suffering from the health and/or financial effects of COVID-19.

As the discussion continued, the students asserted that they wanted a theme that addressed the issues of *social suffering and oppression* that we had focused on in our literature studies in the course, but emphasized that they wanted a theme that was inclusive of the work in the course from all of our participants, and they also questioned how they could provide *positive healing* to others as a result of their book. One student felt that issues of *social suffering and oppression* like *racism* were the result of “ignorance and fear,” as another student asked, “How can we focus on the positive from these things?” Ultimately, the students all agreed that *Unity and Healing* would be the appropriate theme and title for the book because it is a theme that would encompass their varied voices, experiences, and rhetorical styles on issues of social suffering and oppression, but while also offering a positive perspective to counteract these issues they were addressing, as one student asserted, “Yes, something with unity and healing that includes students.”

Inclusion through unifying their diverse voices and providing positive solutions to suffering through their collective work, then, became coding components of *healing social suffering*, with aspects of the solutions offered broken down in the coding of the submissions for the book, falling under the category of *Healing* and the theme of *Healing Social Suffering*. This unexpected development was another *rhizomatic learning* moment in the coding of the students’ experiences, and which will be discussed further in the results for the third research question on the shifts of thinking the students exhibited. There is definite overlap between the first and third research questions, and this is one of those particular areas where the students’ experiences of creating the book were not only of benefit to them personally, but their contributions were creating a new theoretical foundation on which to build this union of social suffering theory with the writing for healing paradigm. This new perspective that synthesizes the theories embraces

the expressions of the individual within the collective on suffering experiences, but also recognizes the value of enabling *Healing*, the category that encompasses pro-active *positive healing* solutions to *social suffering and oppression* issues for the benefit of all, in unity.

As the book theme discussion continued, this emphasis on creating solutions for what was being coded as *healing social suffering* expanded to include the code *healing social suffering through children*, and one student expressed that this was a way of healing the social suffering problems of the current state of our world, “Because like everything in the world now is just crazy... And like, truly the only way to get past it is with our kids, or the kids growing up now. I think government’s messed up. I think everything’s so messed up. So, kids are kind of like a way to push past that. Do you know what I mean?” While identifying a number of *social suffering and oppression* issues here relevant to the coding—from *overall suffering in 2020* to *governmental oppression*—the student then continued to emphasize how children were a key component in the solutions for this thematic perspective of *Healing Social Suffering and Oppression*, “So, I think the best way is to educate our kids, and then give them self-confidence to push them forward. In this time and all times, too.” While there were many mind-blowing moments of this study in my roles as teacher, researcher, and confidant, this was one of the most memorable and powerful. This conversation came at the end of our book theme discussion, and it was a culminating moment because I realized that this insightful young man and his fellow participants in the study were providing the solutions, the answers for community healing and caregiving in ways that Jane Addams had advocated that made her a central role model for sociology and social suffering theorists (Deegan, 2017). The solutions suggested by the students were forward-reaching and beyond the realms of this project, and it became evident during the discussion how deeply meaningful the creation of the book was for so many of its participants. I

hoped that with the continuation of the project and the book's publication that the students would still feel just as inspired and continue a transformational path of social healing.

**The published book.** While the completed, published *Unity and Healing* book created by the students does not itself specifically answer the first research question in regard to the students' experiences of participating in the project, the "Introduction" to the book does provide some further insights because its theme and focus was decided upon during our discussion of the book's theme. As the students had decided that the introduction should mention COVID-19, the code of *social suffering and oppression* through the *effects of COVID-19* pandemic is prevalent, with three instances in the introduction, overlapping with the five examples of the code for the book's title of *Unity and Healing*. As Cynthia states:

Unity includes a lot of meanings, witnessed by the recent spread of many awareness campaigns that called for the need to support the foundations of unity to limit the spread of COVID-19. Cities have turned into stone without human beings. Equally, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the politician and the citizen can be susceptible to the virus. In a single trench, all of humanity faces an invisible enemy not killed by rockets and bombs. During moments of tragedy, people find unity in what they face and what they must do.

*Unity and Healing* is provided as one of the solutions tied to the category of *Healing* and the theme of *Healing Social Suffering*, which the students had asserted during their book theme discussion was a crucial purpose for the book. Adding to the solutions for *Healing Social Suffering*, Cynthia emphasizes the values of *healing through love* and *healing collectively*, "The unity of individuals within community is the foundation of a strong nation. It is unity that establishes the value of goodness and equality. This helps to strengthen the bonds of love in



society.” This emphasis on unity, healing collectively, and healing through love reveals the deep connection that is felt for the purpose of this book and its meaning to enact change from a heart-centered place, as Cynthia writes in her conclusion, “And with love, humans win. This period in time shows how much we need unity and love.” After writing the introduction, Cynthia shared it with the other participants on our discussion board dedicated to the book. Several students stated how much they loved the introduction and its meaning and were deeply touched, so there was consensus amongst the participants that it captured their intent and message to the book’s audience. Cynthia’s introduction demonstrates the overlap between the themes of *Writing for Healing* and *Healing Social Suffering*, using expressive writing and speaking from the heart to provide healing to others amidst a pandemic that has affected us all in this shared social suffering moment.

**Semi-structured interviews.** In the three semi-structured interviews, three of the most common codes are *identity as a writer*, *pride in book results*, and the *positives of working collectively* in regard to students’ experiences with creating the book. The numerous instances of these three codes reveal how positive the overall experience was for the participants, both individually and collectively, and that the positive feeling towards the experience continued even after we shifted from the in-person classroom experience to remote learning. When asked, “What was your experience of participating in the creation of the Amazon book which we ended up calling *Unity and Healing for The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project?*” one student responded that the experience was positive in both an individual and collective sense:

It was a great experience being on campus especially it was great to have involvement with everybody, and it's always great to hear other people's ideas and see where they go with, you know, the topic. I had something in mind and other people had others, and, you

know it was hard off campus to continue to try to be a part of it, but you know there was great discussions on the discussion board on Blackboard, and there was great shareable content, and I think everybody did a great job, and in the end I'm very happy, and I'm very proud of all of us and what we accomplished.

The student's response also reveals, once again, the overlap in the coding and results between the first and third research questions, as the student demonstrates *non-binaries in thinking and writing* by expressing the power of the Postmodern experience of honoring individual voices within the collective experience, removing boundaries in thinking between self and other, as Research Question 3 addresses. The joy of the experience in working collectively is clearly expressed and honoring the individuality and "difference" in positive ways within the group.

When I asked the second student the same question about his experience of participating in the project, he responded with how strongly it had affected his *identity as a writer*, and specifically how it helped him to overcome his fears, in such a profound way that he intends to write a book about his life in the coming years to share his experiences with others, "I know that I was nervous because like I've never been in a book before. I was never asked to write something, so I was nervous, and I was just asking my dad what am I going to write to put into the book. So, you know what, maybe just be real, let me just tell people your story. That's it." The depths of the effects on this student and his *identity as a writer* and his collective experience with the project were further revealed when I asked him, "Do you feel that working together and writing on a common theme for a collaborative book affected the meaning of your writing or your work for the book?" His response was memorable, "Well, I feel special!" His personal relationship with writing and his identity had not only shifted as a result of participating in the project, demonstrating *non-binaries in thinking and writing*, but he emphasized that he had

realized how important *sharing writing with others* was as a component of the writing experience, and that sharing meant not only teaching others about his life and cultural experience, but also sharing his writing with his future children one day, again emphasizing how some of the students viewed this experience as creating a legacy for future generations as a component of *healing social suffering through children*, “Yeah, I feel special, in 25, 35 years I may get order [order the book]; I can just go back and buy the book and see my essay you know that's, that's special, you know. See my essay that I wrote maybe 10 years ago and after that show my kids. That's fun.”

While the second student's *identity as a writer* shifted by overcoming his fears, for the first student, who already identified herself as a writer who loved writing, the experience of participating in the study deepened her understanding of how her writing could affect others and gained added meaning through a collective experience, identified with the codes of *positives of working collectively* and the power of affecting others for *healing social suffering*. When I asked her, “What is your understanding of yourself and your experiences as a writer after participating in this group project and seeing your work in print?” she responded:

I like writing about things that will easily make sense to others, and sometimes that, that's exactly what life is when you write about it. When we did this project, it was writing about, you know, unity and healing, and that's something that we're all going through this time, and we will always go through in this lifetime. You'll always be that because there's always struggle in life. And still like, when there is struggle unity and healing comes out of that, as well; I think that writing about stuff like that is about the real world.

The *positives of working collectively* was also emphasized by the third student who was interviewed, and when I asked him the initial question in the interview about what his experience was of participating in the project, he responded:

My experience was really good. I thought it was really cool that like as a class we all had one main theme, but we all had such different experiences. Therefore, we all wrote about really different things that all kind of came together to have the same concept of healing and togetherness and even like the whole thing's been over for like, you know, almost a whole another whole semester and a few months, but like it's just the way the world is going in the way that we as students are now kind of struggling again in a different way. It's still just being even more and more meaningful almost every month that we continue to go through this.

As with the first student, the third student expressed not only how positive it was to work collectively, but also how important it was to include their varied, individual experiences and submissions within their book on a common theme that also unified them. As with the first student, he pointed out the *social suffering and oppression* experience of the *effects of COVID-19* that we are all experiencing, adding that the struggles added to the meaning of the project. Therefore, the COVID-19 experience became interwoven into the students' experiences of the book, and although the pandemic presented additional challenges, it also deepened their experience and purpose for *healing social suffering* because of the unified suffering they were experiencing together during the creation of the book.

When I asked the third student the question of whether his identity as a writer had shifted as a result of the project, once more, like the first student, he expressed that he had always loved writing and identified himself as a writer and as a creative person. But as with the prior two

students who were interviewed, he, too, felt that sharing writing with others and putting his work into print added to the depth of his experience and understanding of himself as a writer by seeing the value of *sharing writing with others* in new ways, “It was a very different experience 'cause I wasn't used to it, and now it's like other people can read it, too, and that's, but it's really cool.” In addition, the *positives of working collaboratively* have added meaning through the publication process, as the prior two students also noted, because their works and potential for *healing social suffering* are widened to a larger audience beyond that of their professor and fellow students in the microcosm of a classroom:

So, I think it, definitely, it's a lot more powerful like when it's all together and it's in print, and like it can be anyone can buy it anywhere and it have it in their hand and have all our stories. It's not just like, oh, we did it for the class, and like you're just the only one who's reading it, and it was something like a lot of people can be helped by this.

The *effects of COVID-19* also meant to him that the potential for providing healing to others was even more significant and timely, “so this book is like, it's doing a lot more good than I think we ever thought it would, even in the beginning.”

**Triangulation of the data.** The analysis of the data revealed how strongly the codes related to the categories of *Healing, Social Suffering and Oppression*, and *Identity* predominated in the triangulation of the data from the three sources. The code, *effects of COVID-19*, based on the students' personal experiences with the pandemic, was clearly a guiding issue, as a component of the *Social Suffering and Oppression* category, and contributed to the choice of the *Unity and Healing* title and theme for the book. The numerous codes related to the category of *Healing* reflected not only their discussion of healing from an individual standpoint in response to the pandemic, but also encompassed the value of *Healing Social Suffering*, a central theme

resulting from their belief in the value of healing individually and collectively on social suffering issues that they had been addressing through the literature of the course. Particularly in regard to the book theme discussion and the introduction to the students' book, numerous *Healing* solutions were suggested for the *Healing Social Suffering* theme, including *healing collectively*, *healing through children*, and *healing through love*.

While individually, students developed a sense of confidence and a sense of self as a writer, with codes related to the category of *Identity*, the codes overlapped in identifying *Healing* related to self, as well, and the use of writing and creative expression as vehicles, with both categories connected to the theme of *Writing for Healing*. The positive individual experiences the students had during participation of the project coincided with their positive views on the value of working collectively together and uniting their voices for the benefit of transformational change and *Healing Social Suffering* through their published book. The students' expressed concern for future generations and the legacy of their work through the book and future possible writing endeavors demonstrated the timeless value of the project for them, transcending the boundaries of their individual, present experience to encompass far-reaching goals for the future. In Chapter V, the associations to the theoretical framework for these patterns of codes, categories, and themes will be discussed and connected in further detail to the relevant theorists and studies examined in Chapter II to provide insights to the theoretical implications of these results.

**Research Question 2: How does the intervention of using the semiotic pedagogies of translanguaging and multimodalities impact teaching strategies for writing assignments and the creation of the book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*?**

The second question of the study is focused on the impact to my teaching through the implementation of multimodalities and translanguaging, semiotic applications of Poststructural Feminism. The relevance of *multimodalities*, with 64 instances, and *translanguaging*, with 26 instances as codes were identified in all three data sources for the study, including the discussion of the book's theme, the book itself, and the semi-structured interviews conducted after the publication of the book. *Multimodalities*, *translanguaging*, and related codes were identified earlier in the chapter in Figure 6, showing how the codes related to the category of *Semiotics*, which fits within the larger theoretical theme of *Poststructural Feminism*. The patterns and results of the coding are analyzed in what follows for each of the three triangulated data sources. Each of the three data sources revealed the value of these semiotic strategies for the students' expression and the importance of the continued use of semiotics in teaching practice.

**The intervention and the COVID-19 experience.** The intervention of introducing multimodal and translanguaging pedagogies began in the first week of the 2020 Spring semester of my English II class. The assignments that were introduced incorporated options for multimodal and translanguaging expression in writing assignments such as journals and essays. The terms “multimodalities” and “translanguaging” were defined for the students, using examples from our textbook that incorporated visuals or the use of writing in another language. An appropriately anonymized schedule of assignments, taken from the course syllabus, is attached in Appendix E, as well as each of the three paper assignments from the course, with Paper 1: Response Essay attached in Appendix F, Paper 2: Literary Analysis Essay in Appendix G, and Paper 3: Research Essay in Appendix H. The first essay assignment was a 3-page Response essay that asked students to provide their personal insights and/or personal comparisons to a chosen short story that we had read for class. The students were told that they were free to incorporate visuals

and writing in another language if they felt that these strategies might contribute to their essay. This first essay assignment produced the most popular results for submissions for the text, as 11 of the participants chose to submit this first essay for the book, and 4 of these submissions included multimodal and/or translingual methods of expression, which these same students had used in their earlier writing assignments, including journals, discussion board posts, and rough drafts. Although the data collection for coding and analysis for this study did not include rough drafts, journals, discussion board posts, or presentation assignments, it is important to point out that these assignments provided a foundational experience for exploration and experimentation. Students could choose to build upon the use of multimodal or translingual expressions that they had experimented with in their journals, discussion board posts, rough drafts, or presentations and to incorporate these methods of expression into their essays and submissions for the published book. Several students expressed appreciation for being able to incorporate visuals into their assignments during the course.

In addition, before the switch to online learning at midterm due to COVID-19 and while we were still meeting in person, students were assigned Greek Drama group presentations that required the use of the computer and any other visuals of their choosing, including PowerPoint or Google Slide presentations, videos, and relevant architectural drawings, charts, photography, and artwork. For example, after completing the group Greek Drama presentation, a presentation that featured lush visuals of the Greek pantheon of Gods and Goddesses in a PowerPoint shared with the class, I discussed with a student how impressive and colorful the graphics were. He stated that he enjoyed creating the presentation because he is a visual learner, and he felt that the energy spent on the graphics would assist fellow students with understanding their group's topic of Greek Spiritual Beliefs. Also, during the book theme discussion, one student pointed out how



much she enjoyed incorporating visuals into discussion board post assignments, particularly after we went from in-person instruction to remote learning after midterm break due to COVID-19. As a result, our journal assignments that were only shared between professor and student before the pandemic were then converted into online discussion board posts that were shared with the entire class, and as we discussed this shift during our book theme discussion, one student expressed her joy in the multimodal visual sharing experience, “Yeah, I really like that, the putting in pictures... it makes you like look up online, and I like that. I like the adding photos.”

The shifts in teaching strategies as a result of the COVID-19 experience highlights how the students’ understanding and use of these two semiotic pedagogies of *multimodalities* and *translingualism* was a *rhizomatic learning* experience that was unique to each participant, an experience that shifted when we converted from an in-person class to an online remote learning environment because of the pandemic. Yet, through their online sharing and the collective creation of their book, they also learned from sharing in the entirety of this experience with one another, from the microcosm of our class experience to the macrocosm of the realities of the outer world and the pandemic. Although I introduced and defined *multimodalities* and *translingualism* for the students as optional strategies, their experience with the implementation of them was organic and came from themselves as individuals who were contributing to a collective experience of creating a book together. As one student pointed out during her semi-structured interview, the varied methods of expression used by the students showcased their individuality, while each student’s submission provided an important puzzle piece for the overall theme:

...other people used, maybe a poem, which is another form of expression. Other people used photographs to help set the tone and the mood of the story that we were trying to

portray, so I think each was a direction to go in that still in the end result led to the bigger part of the story of the theme which is unity and healing.

One of the interesting and unexpected revelations of the study as a result of COVID-19 was how significant the use of varied *multimodalities* of expression were to some of the students to provide comfort and healing amidst the sudden shifts to their lives in quarantine. During the discussion of the book's theme, the students discussed the relevance and meaning of their creative and multimodal endeavors. Students described using painting, drawing, listening to music, and binge-watching shows on TV as coping mechanisms that produced a *healing through multimodalities* code within the study, providing unexpected insights into the value of the multimodal experience in personal space beyond the classroom experience. Although it is evident we are a technology-based society, the sudden influx of an online world experience into the home space, with frequent video meetings for class and being devoid of an in-person learning experience, was stressful and disorienting for the participants, who each shared their individual stresses, worries, and traumas that were a result of the pandemic. This, too, however, in addition to creating the book together, became a first-hand collective experience of *social suffering and oppression* to unify them because, since, as the students mentioned during the book theme discussion, we were each vulnerable to contracting the coronavirus.

In addition, the *identity through multimodalities* code was significant to the discussion of the book theme and to the semi-structured interviews. During the discussion of the book theme, one student discussed how photography was a focus in high school, when she took a class, and it became her focus, "That was like kind of my major," so it was a mode of creative expression and a skill set with which she still strongly identifies. In the semi-structured interviews, this love of photography was expressed again, with the student providing details of photos completed for

assignments for her prior class, along with photos done for herself. This sense of identity and joy found in alternative modes of expression such as *multimodalities* and *translingualism* are also apparent in the results of the book. While these semiotic strategies of expression may not appeal to all students, the results of the book demonstrate the value of these modes to a significant number of participants in the study for more inclusive and diverse methods of expression—and sharing for their diverse audience, as well.

**The book results.** The results of the use of *multimodalities*, *translingualism*, and various rhetorical styles in the published book provide important insights into their pedagogical value to promote inclusion for diverse learners and the variances of students' backgrounds and culture. Of the three essay assignments, the first being a personal Response to the literature, the second being an Analysis to one of the works of literature, and the third being a Research Project on one or more works of literature we had read, the first essay, the personal Response, produced the most examples of the use of *translingualism* and *multimodalities* in the submissions for the book. In total, 5 of the 16 participants used *multimodalities* and 2 used *translingualism* for the book. The students asserted the importance and value of using these methods of expression in interviews and during the book theme discussion, particularly for those who were more visual learners and who speak more than one language. In addition, the students demonstrated how the use of alternative methods of expression through *multimodalities*, *translingualism*, and alternative forms of discourse could be used to connect self with the literature read during the course and then shared that internalized understanding with others for their benefit, healing, and growth, as well. Figure 10 provides a breakdown of the use of multimodal methods of expression, with 5 students using multimodalities, 2 using translingualism, 3 students using *non-binaries: alternative discourse*, with alternative rhetorical styles of expression, including: 1

student submitting poetry, 1 student submitting a specially written musical score to coincide with the book's theme, and 1 student submitting a personal quote with analysis of this mantra and its intended meaning for the audience.

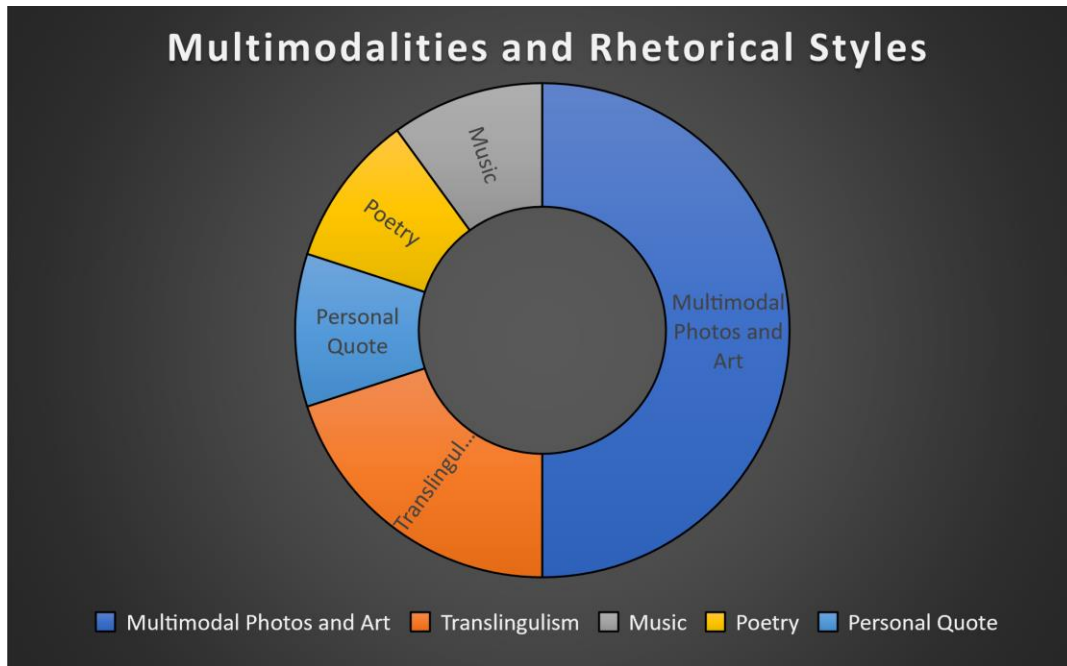


Figure 10. Multimodalities and Rhetorical Styles

Of the five students who used *multimodalities* in the book, their submissions focused on photography and artwork that fit with the *Unity and Healing* theme. In Figure 11, the photographic images from the book include a hand holding a leaf, a nature scene with a rainbow, a group of boys who are friends playing soccer in the street in a local community in Africa, a family photographing and feeding birds, and a photo of a generational and multicultural family gathering.



Figure 11. Photographs from *Unity and Healing*

The photographic images revealed some interesting codes, including *identity through multimodalities*, *healing through multimodalities*, *healing through connection*, *healing through nature*, and *healing through love*. As a result, the images are connected to a number of categories, including *Semiotics*, *Identity*, and *Healing*, demonstrating the multilayered and non-linear purpose and message that each conveys individually for each student through *non-binaries in thinking*, while still being tied to the book's theme of *Unity and Healing* in a collective expression. Therefore, all of the themes of the study, including *Healing Social Suffering*, *Writing for Healing*, *Postmodernism*, and *Poststructural Feminism* are connected to these

categories, reinforcing the theoretical groundwork for the study and the intent to explore more inclusive means of expression for diverse students.

Also, one student chose to write a Classical music score specifically for our book with the title of *Together* to harmonize, literally and figuratively, with the book's theme. The sound of the score when played has a melodic sound reminiscent of Mozart, joyful and gentle in tempo and intended to invoke a sense of "togetherness" through sound, a unique and special addition to the book. The coding of these varied multimodal expressions reveals the connection to the category of *Healing*, again emphasizing the code of *healing through connection* with others in community, and the significance of *healing through love* and bonded relationships. The combination of images and modes of multimodal expression overall emphasize the value of defining a space for *Unity and Healing* that encompasses people and our natural world in a global sense that transcends nationality or location with natural and familial symbols of hope, love, and community.

Another multimodal submission includes artwork submitted for the book, a postmodern self-portrait of a divided and yet unified self. The student, Tempest, used this image of a divided self to coincide with an essay where she discussed issues of her upbringing with her parents and the effects on her understanding of self through the mother-daughter relationship in comparison to the conflicting relationship of the mother and daughter characters in Jamaica Kincaid's (1978) short story, "Girl." The student specifically asked that the image be placed with the essay, an image she had originally done with her written journal assignment about the story, and then uploaded the picture to the discussion board to share after our class went online due to the pandemic. After deciding to submit the drawing for the book, Tempest then drew a completed version for submission to the book, depicted in Figure 12.



*Figure 12.* Artwork for “Crooked by Nature” in *Unity and Healing*

By being given the option to use multimodalities in her assignments, Tempest not only included the artwork in her journal and then shared it on the discussion board, but it was also submitted with her essay assignment. Lastly, she then chose to submit a revision of the image for the book to visually represent her words in her essay. This demonstrates the value of incorporating multimodalities on various levels within the classroom and for assignments by building on learning and expression skills and providing alternative means of expression for diverse learners. Tempest “revised” her image in the same way that she “revised” her writing, adding to the layers of meaning that she wanted to convey with her essay submission, an expression of “self,” coded

as *identity through multimodalities* and *healing through multimodalities*, codes that comprise the *Identity* category, but also with an intended message that she wished to share with others, demonstrating *non-binaries in thinking through shifts* and *personal connections and insights*. Tempest's example provides an interconnected moment where theory and the practice of *multimodalities* take form through the *Semiotics* category of the *Poststructural Feminism* theme. In addition, the use of images for personal expression of *Identity* and *Healing* in practice are components of the *Writing for Healing* theme. Additionally, Tempest's visual representation of the conflicts of *gender roles* from the *Social Suffering and Oppression* category provide a model for *Healing Social Suffering*, while the dichotomy of fractured unity of self with other in her expression of *Non-Binaries* demonstrates *Postmodernism* in context. As a result, Tempest's powerful artwork with multilayered meanings signifies not only the importance of providing alternative modes of expression in the classroom, but shows how thinking about self and other can be shifted by her engagement with the social suffering issues of *gender roles* in the story, "Girl," an insight also relevant to the third research question of the study to examine shifts in dualistic thinking and binaries.

Similarly, Maritza used *multimodalities* for expression of self and *cultural identity* in her essay on the story, "A Pair of Tickets," by beginning her essay with a multigenerational photo of members in her family that was also meant to emphasize their Ecuadorian and American multicultural unity. In addition, Maritza was one of two students who employed *translingualism* in the book, using Spanish to show conversations within her multilingual family that paralleled the experience of the central character of the story, Jing-mei, a young Chinese American woman who has traveled to China for the first time to meet her family. Maritza successfully internalized



her understanding of the story's *cultural conflict* theme through self-reflection about her own *cultural conflicts and identity* and the use of language:

One major element in the story was the language. When Jing-mei meets with her family, she feels overwhelmed by the rapidly spoken Chinese. She says, "I only understand Mandarin but can't speak it that well " (Tan 136). With my experiences, it is a little different, as I know mostly how to speak Spanish. Although, when my family from Ecuador comes to visit us, they speak fast, so at times it gets me overwhelmed. When that occurs, I ask them to slow down a little, which in Spanish is "habla más despacio por favor."

Maritza then concluded her essay by pointing out what she learned about *culture* and *identity* by reading "A Pair of Tickets" and how its key themes affected her:

The story "A Pair of Tickets" by Amy Tan helped me to open up more about my own cultural background. The story's themes of re-identification, appearance and reality, and the theme of transformation taught me a lot, and made me realize that I can relate to it. The story also made me feel a connection with the character of Jing-mei, as she struggles with the language spoken by her family, and as we witness her journey of finding family connection after losing a loved one.

Clearly, the issue of language and speaking in more than one language is one that resonates with diverse students from multicultural and multilingual families. Issues of *self and others*, *cultural conflicts*, and *cultural identity* expressed in some of the literature we read during the course spoke to the students, with six students submitting essays on the topic of *cultural identity*, while two of those students used language to discuss issues of *identity through translanguaging*. In

Philippe's case, his essay used *translingualism* to discuss his experience with living in Japan, a culture other than his own, as he focused on issues of *cultural conflict* and issues of learning about his *identity* through *cultural encounters* in his comparative essay on "King of the Bingo Game." In sharing his experience of being "other" within a culture that is foreign or unfamiliar, Philippe used *translingualism* to give us insights into the local color of Japanese culture, while demonstrating how, even if we use a common language to communicate, in this case English, it does not erase cultural differences of *historic oppression* and memories of that history:

Language is also important in creating community and connection, and it is the biggest cultural difference that I experienced while in Japan. When I first arrived there, I was waiting for a taxi, also known as a "honcho." As I got into the honcho, the driver surprisingly spoke English well enough for us to communicate. That was my first ever experience with a Japanese local. I thought to myself, "Maybe it won't be as hard to communicate. I mean, I am in a location, where a significant amount of the population is American." But was I wrong.

Although Philippe was hopeful that communicating in English would make his cultural encounter easier, he realized that the *social suffering and oppression: historic oppression* from the viewpoint of the Japanese as a result of the World War II conflict with the U.S. was more deeply ingrained in people's consciousness than he expected. However, despite being marginalized by some, he persevered by learning some Japanese words, "such as "arigato," which is thank you, and "konichi wa," which is hello," and participated in a local festival, where he learned about how deeply community is valued by Japanese culture and how welcoming most of the locals were, despite some negative experiences. As with Maritza's essay, the use of *translingualism* became a center point for examination of *identity* of self, but it was also a bridge

to understand through *writing for healing: self and other* to express issues of *cultural conflict and identity* as an American, and how that *cultural identity* fits within the context of others, whether within their families or a culture other than their own, demonstrating *non-binaries in thinking and writing* and the diffusion of these boundaries of binary divisions. The above codes identified alongside the use of *translingualism* in these two student essays revealed the connections to the categories of *Semiotics, Identity, Social Suffering and Oppression, Non-Binaries, and Healing*. As a result, all four of the themes of the study are connected to the examples of *translingualism*, demonstrating what an important semiotic tool for expression it is for diverse students. As we see in Maritza's and Philippe's essays, the use of alternative languages can also open doors for students to discuss their own identity and cultural encounters, while demonstrating for others the value of cultural sharing and communicating in varied ways to honor diversity and to build bridges of connection.

In Charles' essay, there is a similar focus on the issue of *cultural identity* and gaining important life lessons through *cultural encounters*. By sharing his childhood experiences growing up in Africa and speaking various languages, he highlights how central his multilingualism is to his *identity through translingualism*:

As a young kid, I grew up in multiple countries because my mother and my father both grew up in different countries, and they both have different cultures. For example, my mom is from Burundi, and my father is from Congo. That resulted in the push to move and to live in multiple places around Africa, and most of the time, I always found myself having fun around other people, and even making them happy. I have also learned various languages. For example, in Burundi they speak only Kirundu, and in Congo they

have about 200 languages, but Swahili was a commonly used language in the place where I grew up. Yet, I had to learn my mom`s language of Kirundu, too.

Although Charles does not write in one of the primary languages that he speaks in his family or the many diverse languages he learned from frequent moves during childhood, he elucidated another aspect of *translingualism* by sharing his personal experiences of how playing soccer with his friends while growing up in various countries in Africa became a language of its own, another way of communicating that bonded their friendships. In addition, Charles used *multimodalities* by sharing a photo of friends playing soccer in one of his local neighborhoods where he once lived, explaining along with the photo the importance of this outdoor playtime with friends:

Another way we communicated was through soccer. I grew up playing soccer, and it became a favorite habit, no matter where I lived. If I wanted to play soccer with other people, I had to try to speak the same language so we could understand each other. We used to play soccer in the street. Most of the time, we would find that we actually knew every kid on our street, and even the next street.

Charles' expressive and personal *writing for healing: self and others* is used rhetorically to reflect with fondness on his childhood and his sense of *cultural identity*. Also, the photo symbolizes for him personally, as well as symbolically, his collective message in his essay, with the purpose of *healing social suffering by healing through connection, healing collectively, and healing through children* to assert the value he learned from his own culture of giving children the freedom to play and to learn from one another through their own *cultural encounters* for growth. Charles' ability to see the importance of honoring personal individuality and yet the unique qualities of diverse cultures demonstrates *non-binaries in thinking and writing*, as he

provides solutions for building community and growth. In addition, with his focus on *translingualism* and his use of *multimodalities* as components of the category of *Semiotics*, thus revealing *Poststructural Feminism* as the overarching theme, we can see an interesting alignment of the theoretical themes within Charles' essay and how *Semiotics* provide an opportunity for inclusive, layered expression that captures the cultural experience of the individual to share collectively for the positive benefit of *Healing Social Suffering* through *Writing for Healing* with the perspective of *Postmodernism*, by honoring the individual and the collective.

**Triangulation of the data.** In the book theme discussion, as well as the semi-structured interviews, the value of *multimodalities* for *Healing* and *Healing Social Suffering*, particularly as a result of the *effects of COVID-19*, were evident and central to the discussion of the students' personal healing practices. In addition, *multimodalities* and *translingualism* were effective modes of expression for student *Identity* and *Writing for Healing* in the submissions of the book, and a number of students expressed in the book theme discussion and interviews how much they enjoyed using these semiotic methods. The ability to use photos, artwork, and the multiple methods of discourse of *Semiotics* and *Poststructural Feminism* was something that they valued individually and yet acknowledged the importance of these diverse strategies of expression to honor each of their voices within the collective experience of the project and creating the book together, demonstrating a perspective of *Postmodernism*. The positive results of the study are encouraging, and these semiotic teaching strategies became an even more helpful teaching tool after the onset of the pandemic. Students found using images with their discussion board posts after switching to remote learning to be an engaging and enjoyable sharing experience, a teaching practice that deserves further investigation and creative implementation. The interwoven methods of using *translingualism* and *multimodalities* by some students also

demonstrated the value of these strategies for diverse learners, including those who identify themselves as visual learners or multilingual. Ultimately, all four themes are present in the results, reinforcing the overwhelming positives of continuing to explore how to incorporate multimodalities, translanguaging, and alternative styles of semiotic expression in my teaching practice to provide a more inclusive and layered means of expression for diverse students.

**Research Question 3: Do dualities of the self vs. the social shift by writing within individual and social contexts on themes of social suffering and oppression in a poststructural way that rejects binaries in thought and hierarchized dualisms?**

Of the three research questions, this one delves into the deepest theoretical layers of the study in regard to the theories and themes of *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism* and the examination of how the students applied these concepts in their submissions for the published book, at least with its original intent. However, as the study evolved, as discussed with Research Question 1, the results revealed that the students had powerful *rhizomatic learning* moments, individually and collectively. As will be discussed, the results showed how the students created new perspectives on how to unify *Social Suffering and Oppression* issues they were addressing in the literature that they were reading and analyzing with personal expression and insights through issues of *Identity* and *Writing for Healing*. Their union of theoretical perspectives and strategies produced solutions for the social issues they were addressing with a newly evolved theoretical perspective for the study of *Healing Social Suffering*. In addition to the complex rhetorical methods of expression and their use of *Semiotics*, each student represented multilayered rhetorical and thinking strategies in their own individual way, demonstrating *Non-Binaries* and *shifts* in their thinking and writing as a result of participating in the study. In what follows, the results of the coding for each of the three triangulated data sources are explored and

the fascinating way that Research Question 3 comprises all of the central categories and themes of the study.

**The book theme discussion and the COVID-19 effect.** During the book theme discussion, the students expressed the importance of the individual yet collective healing experience of participating in the project and that the book's profits were being donated to the student fund for fellow college students in need because of the pandemic. The students chose to feature a discussion of the pandemic as an *historic social suffering* moment in their introduction to the book to emphasize the importance of the book's theme to honor individual voices within a collective purpose to benefit others. As a result, the students themselves successfully negotiated a solution of unifying "writing for healing" with "social suffering theory," while overcoming dualities of self vs. other through a collective experience with a healing purpose.

One of the unusual discoveries when coding the book theme discussion was how the *non-binaries in thinking* code often overlapped with the *social suffering and oppression: COVID-19* code because of the students' reflections on how their thinking about their lives, their world, and the focus and purpose of our book had shifted as a result of the pandemic, something beyond the expectations for the scope of this study when it was first conceived. One student stated:

I don't think any of us really expected like to go through this, so I think that a lot of it opens up a lot of people's eyes to like, you know, new things like just basic things, like washing your hands for longer and just remembering that there are diseases out there, not even just the Corona, but everything that you can get sick. There's just a whole bunch more, I think, things that open people's eyes.

This conversation led to the decision about the book's theme and title of *Unity and Healing*, along with the decision to have an introduction that addressed the purpose of the book and its theme amidst the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the coding, an interesting overlap became apparent between the categories of *Healing* and *Non-Binaries*, which correspond to the themes of *Healing Social Suffering*, *Writing for Healing*, *Poststructural Feminism*, and *Postmodernism*, demonstrating how the students were thinking about social suffering issues and solutions on many levels in making the decisions about the creation of their book. On a personal level of healing and well-being, the basics of daily living with COVID-19 as a social suffering issue were being considered, as other codes within the book theme discussion were revealed, including codes such as *physical healing*, *healing through creativity*, *healing through multimodalities*, *healing through reading and research*, as students shared how they and their families were learning to cope with the daily life of quarantine. For example, one of the students stated she was reading Philosophy to help her deal with daily stress from the pandemic, using reading, research, and higher-level thinking as a means of personal self-care for *healing through reading and research*, adding another level to the category of *Healing* and its theoretical theme of *Writing for Healing* through the processes of reading for healing, as well. At a community level, the students were considering issues of *social suffering and oppression: effects of COVID-19* on fellow students by deciding that they would donate the profits from the published book to the student fund at our college, demonstrating problem-solving and engagement, creating their own solutions for *Healing Social Suffering* by *Writing for Healing* individually, yet unified for a collective purpose. Additionally, the students were thinking beyond the scope of the individual and the local to encompass the global community, demonstrating how *Postmodernism*, by



embracing these multiple layers in unity in their thinking and writing purpose, removes divisions of self vs. other, and can provide solutions for community care and *Healing Social Suffering*.

Also, during the coding of the book theme discussion, it became evident that the students were also shifting their thinking in terms of means of expression, embracing alternative forms of discourse beyond the traditional expectation of academic discourse. As discussed in regard to the second research question, for some students the use of *multimodalities* added to the layers of *Identity*, meaning, and expression, as well as the use of *translingualism*. However, other rhetorical strategies were mentioned during the book theme discussion, as well, with one student discussing the idea of adding poetry to the book to coincide with the book's theme and the value of poetry dedicated to teaching children for our future. As a result, the code *healing social suffering through children* identified that the power of the submissions for the book was not simply something for our present, but something to consider in a more timeless sense for its purpose, resulting in more evidence of *non-binaries in thinking and writing* on the part of the students. Again, as this non-binaries code is part of the category *Non-Binaries*, and thus, a component of the themes of *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism*, the codes help reveal the alternative and multilayered thinking and writing strategies of the students with the intent to encompass an audience of those who extend far beyond them personally in the present, in both age and time. Additionally, we see in these examples *rhizomatic learning* strategies, where the students are taking concepts of *social suffering and oppression* from the literature in the class and allowing that to grow organically, individually, and yet collectively unified by their common purpose of creating the book for social healing. The codes, categories, and themes reveal the patterns of thinking for the students, discussing the current context of social suffering and applying that on multiple levels in varied ways for healing solutions.

**The book and historic oppression.** The *Non-Binaries* code was one of the most widely applied within the students' book, with 109 instances within the 92 pages of the book's text, revealing the complexity of multilayered thinking strategies. In addition, the *social suffering and oppression* code of *historic oppression* had 46 instances within the submissions from the book, making it one of the most common topics for discussion within the text. One powerful example that combined the code *non-binaries in thinking and writing: with shifts in thinking and personal insights and connections* with the code of *historic oppression* occurred in Alessandra's essay on Kate Chopin's (1894) "The Story of an Hour," discussing her personal realizations about her initial misreading of the story and its levels of meaning on the coded issues of *social suffering and oppression: gender roles and historic oppression*, "My first analysis of the story, I have realized, was completely misguided. Understanding the historical context brought to me a whole new narrative that I had completely overlooked." In addition to the relevance of the historical context, Alessandra then discussed how the stylistic strategies of the story also added to the complexities for understanding and interpretation, "Unfathomable irony is just the tip of the iceberg on why I had to put in a little more work than usual in understanding this story and its themes." She continued her essay by tracing her understanding of the symbols and plot events in the text and her confusion in regard to their meaning, revealing the layers of her personal journey with the text after a deeper look at its historical relevance to issues of *historic oppression*:

The woman almost immediately dies from shock at the sight of her, very much alive, spouse. As a first-time reader, I believed that she did, in fact, genuinely die from happiness. It eventually came to my attention that I should re-read the story from the perspective of a woman in the 1800s. It was ridiculous of me to read this story from a modern-day point of view, based on current day privileges. This contextual ignorance

led me to completely misunderstand the entire story and its events. A woman in this time period would have had few choices but to marry, whether she loved that man she was betrothed to or not. Women of the 1800s had basically no choice but to find someone to ‘care’ for them, or else they would have no home, income, or safety. Women were often heavily coddled and pampered unnecessarily, as they were considered to be weak and easily affected by mental illness. Hysteria was a very common diagnosis used for any woman who fell out of line with society's expectations of them, mentally ill or not.

Alessandra has documented for us the *shifts in thinking* she undergoes, relevant to the category of *Non-Binaries* because she was no longer reading the text through the lens of herself and her own personal experiences in a modern-day context, where women in the United States now have choices beyond the expectations of marriage. Rather than reading Chopin’s (1894) story in a duality of self vs. other, Alessandra internalized the protagonist Louise’s experience by gaining an understanding of her *social suffering and oppression* in a marriage that was neither love nor hate, but a blending of complexities that was without choices or freedom. Once Alessandra understood that Louise does not actually die from joy at seeing her husband alive, after spending an hour believing he was dead, but dies from the deep sorrow at the loss of her freedom, it shifted her thinking about the world around her, the comparative advantages of a modern woman, and that sometimes we must understand the experiences and suffering of those in the past to gain an appreciation of our present-day world:

Though my beliefs about this story were completely wrong at my first attempt at understanding the narrative, I believe that the misunderstanding has added to the impact of this work of literature, at least for me personally. Because of the values and practices of modern-day Western culture that I have taken for granted, I had misinterpreted just

about every aspect of the text. I placed modern ideas about life and love and placed them where they did not make sense. It didn't even matter that I was confused while reading; I forced these ideas anyway, just so it would make sense to me. It is humbling to recognize these changes in the world around me have not always been such a given. The story of a woman dying from happiness at the sight of her not-actually-dead husband never actually existed. It existed purely based on my own ignorance.

The coding of Alessandra's realizations with the *shifts in thinking* also demonstrates the relevance of her realizations for the *Non-Binaries* category, of moving beyond dualisms and hierarchies in thinking. The lines between self vs. other as a woman, as well as modern vs. historical experiences as a woman have become blurred and integrated, demonstrating how *Non-Binaries* are a significant category for the theoretical themes of *Postmodernism and Poststructural Feminism*, breaking down traditional viewpoints of womanhood and embracing the complexity of self and other within both a personal and global context of women, while also transcending the divisions of time to gain an understanding of how the suffering of prior generations can also lead to *Healing Social Suffering* in our modern world.

As with Alessandra's essay, Elizabeth's focus in her essay was grounded in her personal perspective and background as a foundation for her insights revealed in the essay. While neither Alessandra nor Elizabeth were using personal discussions of expressive writing, typified by the theme of *Writing for Healing* for other students' expressive rhetorical approaches in the book, the depth of thinking, analysis, and learning was evident in her essay, coded with *non-binaries in thinking and writing making shifts*, and *personal insights and connections* in relevance to discussions of the literature. Focusing on the Greek Classical era play, *Antigone*, Elizabeth identified issues of "light" and "dark" with the context of *social suffering and oppression*:

*historic oppression* and *political oppression* through the characters of Antigone and Creon.

While Antigone represents the “light,” striving for justice, Creon represents the “dark” forces of oppression, misusing his political power to sentence Antigone to death for defying his edict and burying her brother. Elizabeth’s analysis demonstrated how these seeming dualities of light and dark in the play are two contrary but necessary states of life from a philosophical perspective, particularly as they are timeless issues that have affected the past and still affect us today:

One of the things I really enjoy about this play is the recurring theme of light vs. dark elements coexisting together, with light being an example equal to life, happiness, and goodness, etc., and dark being equal to chaos, death, and suffering. *Antigone* has a way of splitting things in half, having the good on one side and the bad on the other, and this is where the idea of the light and dark elements come into play. In the play, the light and dark go hand in hand, which provides a parallel depiction of society today, as well.

Elizabeth’s insightful approach to the play demonstrated her connectedness to the issues presented, making modern-day parallels, as well as utilizing philosophical theories to support her analysis of contraries of light and dark within the play:

Nietzsche points out that we as humans have both Apollo and Dionysus in us, and even though they are opposite, we need both of them to succeed. Apollo would fall under aspects of the light, and Dionysus would fall under aspects of the dark. He believes that turning away from Dionysus is not a good thing and that we need to learn to accept that darkness in us to reach our full potential of intelligence.

Therefore, Elizabeth’s solution to overcome dualities and binary oppositions in thinking was acceptance, and through this acceptance, we “reach our full potential,” so that we are *standing in*

*truth and personal power* as a means of *Healing*, and thus, *Healing Social Suffering*. In order to accomplish this, Elizabeth made an argument infused with *Postmodernism*, pointing to the play as an example of the lesson of accepting and unifying these dualities of self within the greater collective, “Every day in life we experience “Good” and “Evil” or “light” and “dark.” *Antigone* is a Greek play that exemplifies this theme of light and dark elements coexisting together. I believe we need both in life to experience everything and be able to understand certain ways to live, such as the play *Antigone* demonstrates.”

Similarly, Garrett’s essay focused on the issues of *social suffering and oppression*, including *historic oppression* and *racism* in his analysis of Harlem Renaissance literature, and identified that these concerns are ones present in contemporary society:

Racism towards minorities has been evident for centuries, and these issues have been addressed by a number of authors through literature, from the discussion of slavery in 1619 in Virginia, to the mistreatment people who are minorities experience today.

Literature written about the inequalities people face because of their skin color tries to bring awareness to the rest of the world.

Garrett argued that the works of Harlem Renaissance writers such as Ralph Ellison (1944) and Langston Hughes (1932) are still relevant to provide solutions for *Healing Social Suffering* through *healing collectively, healing through reading and research, standing in truth and personal power*, and *speaking out* within our modern context:

In today's world, people of color or different ethnic backgrounds are still confronted with racism. Everyone should be treated equally and have equal opportunities in the United

States we live in today, no matter what race you are. Just like Langston Hughes said, “I, too am American.”

The *shifts* in Garrett’s thinking are evident, arguing for embracing *Postmodernism* in his emphasis of embracing that *individually and collectively*, from a perspective of *non-binaries in thinking and writing* and *personal insights and connections* by reiterating the relevance of Hughes’ (1932) stance in our modern context. Racism, historically and today, marginalizes self from other for people of color, and Garrett demonstrated how crucial it is for these dualities, which have had a long history within our society, need to be resolved and healed.

**Self and other: The multiple layers of social suffering and writing for healing.** One of the interesting insights from the coding for Research Question 3 is how the students blend analysis with personal insights that are relevant to self and also other, while mixing forms of discourse, as well, demonstrating shifts in thinking and writing. For example, in Lily’s essay, she addresses issues of *social suffering and oppression: racism and racial oppression in the media* by discussing the effects that the lack of Puerto Rican representation in the media has on the young girl in Judith Ortiz Cofer’s (1993) story, “Volar,”:

During the 1990s, when “Volar” was written, minorities were underrepresented in the media, including fictional pieces of media, such as comics. An example of this is in the protagonist’s dream, where she dreams about being like Supergirl, a white superhero, as at the time, there was little diversity in the depiction of superheroes.

In addition, Lily identifies the multilayers of *social suffering and oppression* that the young protagonist in the story is experiencing, including *gender roles* and the *beauty standards for*

women that the young girl has internalized in her desire to be blonde and to look like a Barbie doll, rather than embracing herself:

The societal preference for women with blonde, straight hair is evident, judged as being more attractive than women with curly, dark hair. Historically, this beauty standard has been upheld by the white majority to encompass people who were descendants from European countries where blonde hair and blue eyes were common. The story represents this context of racism and bigotry and how rampant it has been and is within society in ways that further solidified this Barbie doll image as a beauty standard for women.

Lily effectively identified key issues categorized in the coding for the category of *Social Suffering and Oppression* that are societal problems, resulting from Euro-centric standardized expectations for women's beauty and the media representations solidifying this image as the ideal. However, Lily's discussion added another, personal layer, as a young, Puerto Rican woman, and how she identified with the experiences of the protagonist in the story, demonstrating *non-binaries: shifts in thinking and writing*, as well as *personal insights and connections*. Lily's shifts in thinking are evident in how she has internalized learning about herself and the societal problems of oppression in the larger context as a result of the story:

Like the main protagonist of "Volar," I enjoy things that would be considered as "nerdy," such as her interest in comic books, yet I also look for media and images that represent my own interests and my cultural background... Even though today there is a lot more diversity in cartoons, video games and even comics than there was during the time of "Volar," I still feel a little dissatisfied, since most of the characters I see are not Puerto Rican like me.



In addition, Lily discussed the issue of *social suffering and oppression: poverty* for those in the Latinx community who feel economically disenfranchised from the myth of the “American dream” and the realities that the protagonist is experiencing:

Today, even though minorities are often paid the same amount as white people, a lot of them still experience issues of poverty, from not having much money to living in impoverished neighborhoods. The setting of “Volar” reflects this, as they live in a barrio, a Spanish-speaking neighborhood or district in the United States, which has small apartments and refuse covering the alleys that has been thrown out the windows.

Because of this poor treatment, her mother wishes to go back to Puerto Rico, a place that oddly enough ended up being better than mainland America.

Lily’s discussion continued with a powerful personal comparison, giving specific details of financial struggles within her family that parallel the experiences of other Latinx families within her community, some of whom, however, she pointed out, have it much worse, “there are other Puerto Rican people and other minorities who have it worse than me, like the next door neighbors who have to live in a crowded house, or my aunt who lives in a small house where two out of her four children have to share a bedroom.” Lily’s brave sharing of expressive writing focused on her personal struggles with racial inequities, using *Writing for Healing*, and is shared alongside her more analytical discussion of the broader context of inequities in the Latinx community, as well as her academic discourse with literary analysis of these social suffering issues within the story. As a result, the categories from the coding of Lily’s essay revealed how the personal sharing and expressive writing of *Healing and Identity* overlapped with the academic discourse and analysis of numerous *Social Suffering and Oppression* issues and demonstrated *Non-Binaries* in thinking and writing. In her conclusion, Lily addressed these

issues with hope and solutions for *Healing Social Suffering* collectively, both for herself and for her community, “I hope to see more representation of Puerto Rican people and better jobs for minorities so that those who are suffering from poverty will no longer be poor. I will stay optimistic for the future and that things will get better for us than it is now.” Therefore, in Lily’s essay we see a congruence of the four main themes of the study, with the codes of social suffering issues and solutions for *Healing Social Suffering*, the personal sharing of *Writing for Healing*, and the *Non-Binaries* category of multilayered thinking and writing on racial inequities and discrimination, components of the *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism* themes. Through her mix of rhetorical styles and by analyzing issues of societal oppression in the literature and then making comparisons to self, to her community, and to the global context, Lily demonstrated shifts in thinking and internalized learning that blurs the lines between self and other in a postmodern sense that also builds bridges of connection and overlap between the theoretical components of the study.

Addressing *cultural identity* and *social suffering and oppression: gender roles* were two of the most common topics in the book. Cynthia’s essay on Jamaica Kincaid’s (1978) short story, “Girl,” also focused on issues of self and other in ways similar to Lily’s essay. Also, as with Alessandra’s essay, she revealed that reading and analyzing the story took her on a journey of discoveries about the historical context for women’s issues and gender role expectations that continue today:

When I read this story for the first time, I read it as an outside reader, having only a little knowledge about her Antiguan culture. I did not know anything about the rules and expectations for women that pertained to her culture and era. But what became clear in

the story is that the list of rules expected of the girl links to all women, and how women are expected to portray themselves to the outside world.

Cynthia's *rhizomatic learning* experience of exploring more about *historic oppression* and *gender roles* led to her sharing personal insights about gender roles and her own Middle Eastern culture:

When I read this story, I tentatively construed it as an outline of how women are seen in society and how it is easy for some people to portray them as a slut. I can see that from my own culture, the Arabic culture, where people judge women based on what they wear, the way they talk, and who are seen with, to judge whether women are acting like a slut. Throughout the story, I can easily see that the mother is controlling her daughter's life by telling her what she can do and what not to do, what kind of food to cook, what to do in the house, and how to act outside the house.

Ultimately, Cynthia concludes with concrete solutions for the category of *Healing* and the theme of *Healing Social Suffering* through *healing collectively*, *healing through love*, *standing in truth and personal power*, *speaking out*, and *healing social suffering through children*:

I think "Girl" was interesting for me to read because of the portrayal of how culture can bind people to certain beliefs. By publishing the story "Girl," Jamaica Kincaid shows the experience and feelings of being a young "girl" in a different cultural society, and that attracted me to write my response about it because the story speaks about the woman being oppressed. Teaching young girls that it is okay to bow down to patriarchy by shaming them into following these rules of hypocrisy is pure insanity. Therefore, we need to teach girls to love themselves and not to fall victims to oppression. From my

own experiences, I learned that we must speak and express ourselves and to help at least by expressing our voices. We must impose our strength, so we can help the women who still suffer injustice and discrimination.

Again, there is a multilayered understanding and approach to the story that encompasses a mix of rhetorical and analytical approaches. Societal definitions of binaries in the identification of *gender roles* are questioned, both historically within the context of the story, as well as within contemporary society and the student's personal experience of Middle Eastern culture. Rather than simply identifying these issues of oppression, Cynthia provides solutions, including teaching children for the healing of future generations as a collective goal for society, and that individually that means speaking out and standing in one's power. The coding culminates in a layering, once again, of the categories of *Healing with Non-Binaries* in addressing *Social Suffering and Oppression* issues, so that there is a thematic overlap of *Writing for Healing with Healing Social Suffering* and *Postmodernism*, where the integration of reading literature on social suffering themes with writing about these social issues produces personal expression on issues of oppression, analytical insights about the societal impact of the oppression, and solutions that unify writing, thinking, and acting, personally and collectively for healing.

As examined in the results of the second research question, alternative forms of expression or discourse, codified as *non-binaries: alternative discourse* under the category of *Semiotics* and the theme of *Poststructural Feminism* for its theoretical basis, were also thoughtfully used by students to add to the thematic understanding of *Unity and Healing* for the book. Rather than submitting one of his essays completed during the course, James decided to write a poem to include that emphasized *healing social suffering through children*. This more expressive mode of poetic discourse, written in the form of a speaker giving life wisdom to a

young child, emphasized the value of individual difference and *identity*, while also demonstrating that the child still has a connection to family and loved ones, embracing difference within the collective in a unified expression of *Postmodernism* with the non-traditional rhetorical modes of expression of *Poststructural Feminism*:

It's okay if you don't have your brother's height because we will always be within your reach.

It's okay if you look different than your sister because you are just as beautiful when you smile.

It's okay if you don't have mom's smarts yet because you will always have her heart.

And it's okay if you lose something because you can always find us within you.

The poem addressed issues of *cultural identity* and the understanding of self within the context of family. Specifically, the coding emphasizes how the speaker reassured the child in how to handle the challenges of the greater world because that individual *healing through connection* to family is a source of *healing through love* and provides a foundation for the theme of *Healing Social Suffering*. James's poem represents how he engaged with the *social suffering and oppression* themes of the literature in the course in complex ways, internalizing and processing what he had learned in order to create and to submit a poem dedicated to helping children as a way forward for collective healing.

In addition, Cody was another strong writer in the course who deeply engaged with the *social suffering and oppression* themes in the literature, yet he, too, decided to write something special and unconventional for the book, writing a piece of Classical music, which he titled, *Together* to coincide with the book's theme of *Unity and Healing*. The score was written for

flute, horn, and grand piano, demonstrating that it is a score meant to be played by very distinct instruments in unity, once again exhibiting the *Postmodernism* theme of inclusion of the *individual within the collective*, additionally made evident by the score's title of *Together*. The emphasis of *healing through multimodalities* also theoretically coincides with Pennebaker's (2016) paradigm on *Writing for Healing*, which encompasses other creative forms of expression, such as music, art, and dance. Therefore, Cody's musical score is a wonderful intersection of all of the study's themes, including *Writing for Healing*, *Healing Social Suffering*, *Poststructural Feminism*, and *Postmodernism*, demonstrating complex thinking and engagement through the symbolic, layered meanings of expression and purpose for this elegiac piece of music for the book.

Another student, Jake, also chose to write something special for the book to coincide with its theme, deciding to write about a personal quote that has become his life's mantra and to share this wisdom with others. Therefore, as with James and Cody, a shift in learning was apparent, as the code *non-binaries in thinking and writing* identifies, and through *personal insights and connections*, he demonstrated the value of *Healing Social Suffering* by using *non-binaries: alternative discourse* to communicate his message of *standing in truth and personal power* in the face of social oppression:

I want readers of this book to know that your brain wants to have the experience of life that it needs. Yes, it can hurt. Yes, it can be sad, but the way I see it, you can either ignore the chances, or take them and learn. If you end up in a place that you don't like, you can either run from it, fight it, or the best option in my eyes, deal with it. The sooner you deal with it, the sooner you can overcome it and grow from it. Take the chances as a choice to learn, as a choice to grow, understand, and experience.

By specifically addressing the audience with his advice, Jake demonstrated how strongly he valued *Healing Social Suffering* as an important purpose for his work to coincide with the book's theme, encouraging others to never give up in the struggles to overcome life's challenges.

**Gender roles and unifying self and other.** One of the many fortunate events that unfolded during the study was that one of the participants was also a student in my English I introductory composition course in the prior Fall 2019 semester. As a result, I had the benefit of watching Christopher's growth with his learning, writing, and sharing over the course of a full year during two back-to-back semesters. This confidence in sharing his writing was evident in his choice to include a personal essay from our English I course that discussed key moments from his growth during his senior year in band class, including challenges with the *social suffering and oppression* issue of *transgender oppression*. The other two essays he chose to include also focused on issues of *gender roles* and the oppression of women, thematically representing a trifecta of lenses that encompassed the personal, academic research, and insightful perspectives of the literary characters and their challenges with *historic oppression*, as well. Christopher addressed this *historic oppression* by analyzing the gender role issues presented by two different women authors, divided by a century, and yet still united by the gender constraints they faced:

In the story "Girl" by Jamaica Kincaid, a nameless young girl is listening to the advice given by her mother and is based on Kincaid's personal experiences growing up in Antigua, yet the story is relatable for many women. Unlike "The Story of an Hour," which was written in 1894, "Girl" was published in 1978. The two stories were written almost a century apart, and it's undeniable that many things had changed for women positively in that time frame, some of the most significant including the right to vote, the

right to serve on a jury, workplace protections, and the right to an abortion. However, there are many more things that haven't changed at all. While "The Story of an Hour" doesn't dive too deeply into the specifically harsh gender roles women were experiencing at the time of the 1800s, we know women were expected to be wives and mothers first before anything else.

In addition to identifying issues of *historic oppression* in the literature, in his next essay submission, Christopher discussed the women of color and those of the LGBTQIA+ community whom feminism had left behind, providing research and added perspectives to the readings of an Indian American girl's experience of *racism* in "Dothead," by Amit Majmudar (2011) and the effects of racism, identifying current issues of marginalization that have become increasingly disturbing, "Many young Indian American women express difficulty wearing bindis while going to school because they fear looking too ethnic, and it's only getting worse, as the number of hate crimes since Donald Trump's presidency has skyrocketed." Additionally, Christopher's discussion of Native American poet Joy Harjo's (1983) poem, "The Woman Hanging from the Thirteenth Floor Window," is supported with research on the *historic oppression* of Native American women with some disturbing facts, "Out of all races, Native women face the highest rates of sexual assault, domestic violence, and even murder." Also, the challenges presented to Latinx women are identified in Christopher's discussion of the *beauty standards for women* in Judith Ortiz Cofer's (1993) "Volar," and the young protagonist's dream of being a blonde Supergirl:

The young daughter dreams of being "Supergirl" and of her hair turning blonde and straight. Then upon waking up, she's sad to see she still has dark and curly hair. We find out in the poem that her family had at some point moved from Puerto Rico, where her



dark and curly hair were probably normal features that were seen quite often. It probably didn't take long for her to realize that she was a bit different compared to other American girls. Women of color face a lot of pressure to live up to Euro-centric beauty standards. Many women of color find they have a harder time finding professional jobs when they wear their natural or protective styles, such as Afros, braids, cornrows, etc.

Having identified these varied issues of *social suffering and oppression* evident in these three works of literature that focus on concerns for women of color, Christopher reasserts again the importance of including "ALL women" in the conversations for women's rights as a solution for *Healing Social Suffering* in a way that embraces difference and individuality within a collective experience for healing, identifying modern feminist groups who are actively engaged in solutions to defeat this exclusion, "What these modern feminist groups and the feminist literature of women who have been marginalized by society remind us is that, while many underprivileged women find strength and do a lot of good in coming together to help themselves, they shouldn't be alone in the fight for their rights and the rights of all women." While clearly exhibiting *non-binaries in thinking and writing* in his layered discussion of contemporary and historic issues for women, Christopher has also identified how *postmodernism: individual and collective* is a key component to resolve issues of exclusion through *Poststructural Feminism*, and its theoretical emphasis on embracing the unique, individual voices of all for equity and inclusion.

Similarly, in her essay on women and literature, Alyssa also discussed the attempts to marginalize women authors through a focus on *social suffering and oppression* with *gender roles*. Alyssa identified the multiple layers of oppression and exclusion that women writers experienced and the *historic suffering* that is evident in women's literature throughout the centuries. For example, author Audre Lorde experienced not only *gender roles* oppression, but

*racism, sexism, and homophobia* for defying the norms of society, “Not only was she a black woman writing in the 1970s, she was a working mother and a lesbian, all aspects of herself that defied the norms of what women’s roles and expectations for being a caretaker should be.”

Identifying issues of oppression through *gender roles* historically in literature and understanding the challenges women authors have experienced are a means to force us to question whether we can ever be free of *gender roles*, “Overall, gender role definitions have existed since the beginning of time, and the literature forces us to question whether these gender expectations will continue till the very end of the world.” While Alyssa’s essay did not make personal connections, her insights demonstrated *non-binaries in thinking and writing*, as a central code of the category of *Non-Binaries* and the theme of *Postmodernism* by asking us to question our historicity with *gender roles* and how or if we as individuals and as a global collective from the perspective of *Poststructural Feminism* can escape these roles that have defined us in a timeless and disturbing way.

The variety of writing styles and insights within the book on the issue of *gender roles* provide the individual yet collective experiences of varied perspectives that characterize the theoretical theme of *Postmodernism* and achieve the goals of *Poststructural Feminism* to be inclusive of diverse voices. For example, Christopher’s third essay on *gender roles* issues added a deeply personal perspective and voice to the book. Christopher’s three essays, when read together, added to the layering of perspectives within the book that removed the division of binaries and hierarchized dualisms between self and other. In his third essay, which Christopher wrote in my English I composition class during the Fall 2019 semester prior to the study, he opened up in a profound way by sharing about his experience of transitioning from being a young woman to a young man during high school. Christopher felt strongly that this was an

experience that was important to share with others, exhibiting *writing for healing* in his sharing for *self and others*. His personal sharing of his experience with *social suffering and oppression: transgender oppression* encompassed not only mistreatment by peers but institutionalized oppression by the school board:

Even then, with a steady director and the band giving it our all, there were some bumps in the road. I came out as being transgender the summer before senior year and started presenting male at school from the first day. My school gave me many problems, the biggest of which was the flip-flopping between allowing me to use bathrooms, and then telling me months into the school year that the school board said I couldn't.

However, despite this, he found support through his fellow band members, the new band director, and the staff, demonstrating how *Healing Social Suffering* can be experienced through *healing collectively* and the power of *positive healing – shared through individual experiences*. These two codes are components of the category of *Healing*, encompassing both the themes of *Healing Social Suffering* through solutions to oppression and suffering, as well as the theme of *Writing for Healing*. Christopher's experience demonstrated the value of writing about one's personal traumatic experiences, but also the value of sharing his individual experience for the purpose of *healing collectively* for those who can also relate to being oppressed in similar ways. As Christopher stated, the *individual and collective* experiences that the marching band group experienced that year embodied both an individual journey of highs and lows and ones that they shared together, adding to the meaning and relevance of their experience as they awaited the results of their final marching band competition as a group, "After reflecting about all we had experienced, individually and collectively as a group, this final moment, waiting to hear who has won our last marching band competition of the year means that much more." In the end, their

group won the award, and upon reflection, Christopher realized that his perseverance through the hardships resulted in greater rewards and lessons that he could share with others, demonstrating *non-binaries in thinking and writing through shifts and personal insights and connections* and the connections of self with other, thematically demonstrating *Postmodernism* with his separate but unified experience.

The depths of personal sharing on the part of my students was a particularly compelling and touching part of the study, and the connections that the students made between self and other in response to the literature that we read continued to demonstrate a pattern in the coding of how the themes of *Healing Social Suffering* in a collective sense and *Writing for Healing* from an individual perspective blended to weave together in a seamless theoretical union. Earlier, we examined Tempest's artwork that expressed this unity and division through her symbolic portrait. This understanding of *identity* of self, alongside the *social suffering and oppression: gender roles* issue was explored by Tempest in her essay on Jamaica Kincaid's (1978) short story, "Girl." Tempest explored her own relationships with her mother and father in a comparative discussion of the mother-daughter relationship in "Girl," stating that:

Throughout the story, the girl's mother repeats certain phrases that create an almost nagging or resentful tone. When the mother tells the girl to keep herself "from looking like the slut you are [she was] so bent on becoming" (Kincaid 324), it almost mirrors what my mother tells me about becoming my father, even during the slightest argument. For context, my father is a drug-addicted alcoholic who disowned me over a petty reason and has a terrible attitude, practically that of a child. Even though our mothers seem to be acting malicious with their advice, I believe their motivation for doing so is to prevent us from becoming something we would regret, or something that would hurt them to see

as a mother. They are motivated by the fear of our unhappiness, and so they feel that using a form of reverse psychology by bringing up something we don't want to have us steer clear of that path. In the end, my mother and the girl's mother both genuinely care about us and only want the best for us.

Tempest's understanding of her own *gender identity* was shared through the lens of her experiences with her parents. She blended *writing for healing* by sharing for *self and others* about her own wounds from childhood with an analysis of *social suffering and oppression: gender roles* through the slut-shaming of the young girl in the story. By the end of the passage, Tempest has shifted to internalize new realizations in a *rhizomatic learning* experience about her own relationship with her mother and that of the girl's, exhibiting *non-binaries in thinking and writing* that included *shifts* and *personal insights and connections*. The boundaries of dualisms between self and other have been removed, demonstrating thematic constructs of *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism* in the individual and yet collective experience of mothers and daughters and how that shapes *identity* and *gender roles*. In the conclusion, Tempest argued that, despite the frustrations and difficulties, the solution can be found in *healing through connection* with mothers and *healing through love* because their concerns reflect how much they care:

Although it may not seem like our mothers have our best interests at heart based on the way they show it, when I really look at it closely, I can see how much both my mother and the girl's mother care enough to want to put us on the right path. Mothers can be repetitive and forceful, but they are also teachers for life. And even with the generational age difference between the girl's mother and my mother, as well as where they grew up, and their varied life experiences, they both care for their daughters immensely. It took

me a long time before I could see that myself, but I came to the realization that I would rather have a mother that cares “too much” than a mother that doesn’t care at all.

Tempest’s sharing of her issues with her mother through her *Writing for Healing* experience resulted from her deep engagement with the *gender roles* presented in the story “Girl,” and her internalized realizations enabled her to connect outwardly not only to the young girl of the story, but to a collective understanding of the potential complexity of mother-daughter relationships. Through the sharing of her own personal experiences and insights about the wounds and challenges that childhood can present, she grants a healing opportunity to her audience collectively for *healing social suffering through love*.

**Culture, identity, and healing.** One of the most common topics for the book revolved around issues of *cultural identity*, *cultural conflict and identity*, and *cultural encounters*, topics that seemed to create a wider doorway for the openness of personal sharing and expressive writing about the students’ experiences in comparison to the work of literature they were analyzing. As discussed in the results for the second research question, the codes relating to *culture* and *identity* often coincided with the use of *multimodalities* and *translingualism*. Maritza demonstrated how the use of these two semiotic strategies added meaning and depth to the cultural understandings of self through personal comparisons to the literature. The meaning of Maritza’s family photo that she includes with her essay was correlated to the family photos of Jing-mei in the story, “A Pair of Tickets”:

At times, I would feel lost without seeing any of my grandparents. The best thing to do, though, is to keep moving on, but to still keep the memories alive, as Jing-mei does in the story. She looks through photographs of her mother and still unites with her family because family love is what is important.

Through Jing-mei's issues of *cultural identity* and *cultural conflict and identity* with her Chinese heritage and the loss of her mother in the story, Maritza found personal parallels to her own experiences and missing her grandparents from Ecuador. Not only was Maritza demonstrating *non-binaries in thinking and writing through shifts and personal insights and connections to social suffering issues*, but she is also emphasizing the importance of *healing social suffering through love*. The codes of *cultural identity* and *cultural conflict* are components of the category of *Healing* and the theme *Writing for Healing* for the personal writing that is shared. The *Writing for Healing* theme coincides with the theme of *Healing Social Suffering* once again, demonstrating how Maritza and the other students are unifying these theoretical strategies through their writing and thinking in ways that transcend divisions of self and other—and using the *Semiotic* strategies of *multimodalities* and *translingualism* to write in multilayered ways beyond traditional academic discourse. Therefore, through the use of *Semiotics*, the theme of *Poststructural Feminism* interconnects with all of the themes of the study, including *Postmodernism*, with Maritza demonstrating how analysis can successfully be combined with expressive writing, multimodalities, and translingualism in a way that is personally reflective and yet examines issues of social suffering-- and how others might be healed as a result of her own personal revelations about love, connection, and culture through these issues in the story.

Similarly, Eric also discussed the story, "A Pair of Tickets" and found comparisons between his own experiences traveling to other countries and the sense of *cultural identity* that the protagonist Jing-mei discovered by traveling to China with her father. Erasing the dividing line between self and other by embracing cultural difference was a critical focus of Eric's essay. He exhibited *non-binaries in thinking and writing, with shifts, personal insights and connections, and cultural encounters and insights*, portrayed in his essay in ways that allow his audience to

experience his journeys with him, and using expressive writing as a component of *Writing for Healing* to see his personal growth and insights:

“A Pair of Tickets,” by Amy Tan, is a story about a young woman named Jing-mei / June and how she is trying to find her roots and to reunite with her family. There are many conflicts in the story, but in the end, meeting up with her sisters in China is a positive resolution, even though her deceased mother wasn’t there to share in the reunion. As a result of the journey to meet her sisters, June adopts a new life and new understanding of her Chinese culture. I myself didn’t have much conflict from my own “pair of tickets” from my travels, but it made me think a lot more about my life. I had to adapt to new cultures, and, like Jing-mei, I learned by taking in everything that was in front of me.

In order to create *unity and healing* for the *Healing of Social Suffering*, Eric advocated the value of experiencing other cultures for individual learning and growth that leads to *healing collectively*, “Exploring new places and embracing a new culture is unforgettable and can make a huge impact on your life.” His realizations about the value of travel and *cultural encounters and insights* in comparison to the story harmonized with Charles’ essay on his own realizations about “A Pair of Tickets” and the wealth of his cultural experiences.

Charles’ essay also focused on *cultural identity*, and his *non-binaries in thinking and writing* are revealed through *shifts, personal insights and connections*, and *cultural encounters and insights* with a discussion of his experiences growing up in various countries in Africa and then moving to the United States. As discussed earlier in regard to Research Question 2, Charles shared these experiences to teach the value of cultural connection, and, thus, his essay demonstrated how *Writing for Healing* on individual experiences can coincide with *Healing Social Suffering* to provide solutions for the betterment of society through cultural experiences:



Exchanging cultures is one of the best ideas and is really important for everyone to experience. Sometimes it helps to learn new experiences and even to try new things that you have never done before. For most people, the exchanging of culture, values, and beliefs over time is important in society, because in this way, the environment can be shaped for the better for our future.

Like Maritza, Charles also created a comparison between his own cultural experiences and those of Jing-mei in “A Pair of Tickets,” and her journey to China to meet her family. The value of *Healing Social Suffering* by *healing collectively* is again emphasized in his discussion of his ability to adjust to the United States as a result of his multicultural experiences in childhood:

Even when I moved to the USA, it was much easier for me because I just used to play soccer with so many different people growing up. Even though the culture was different, I was able to bounce easily into my new surroundings. Why is cultural exchange so important in my life? Sometimes our mindsets are limited by a geographical setting, and we may not even know it, but exchanging cultures is important because then you can see things from many angles to which you would otherwise be oblivious. This helps to shape your mind and to improve the perspective of how you view the world you live in. Also, it is important because you start to think, this is how it is done here, and the beauty in diversity is so amazing—you are more tolerant, more accepting, and in general, a more rounded individual.

Charles’ solution for *Healing Social Suffering* is also grounded in *Postmodernism* theoretically in his emphasis of the *individual and the collective*, and that by internalizing an understanding of others and differing cultures, individual learning and betterment results in being a more rounded person who sees and participates in the collective in new ways that embraces the beauty of

diversity. Embracing this beauty is surely a pathway to *Healing Social Suffering* and demonstrates thinking that avoids dualisms and binary oppositions to find paths to the book's theme of *Unity and Healing*.

The level of personal discussion by the students who focused their essays on topics related to culture varied in interesting and diverse ways that reflected their backgrounds and individuality. Comparatively, Luis' essay is less personal than Maritza's or Charles' in rhetorical approach, with a greater focus on an analytic discussion of *cultural conflict and identity* issues related to not simply one, but four of the short stories read during the course. Yet, a greater or lesser use of expressive writing in the essays did not affect the level of *non-binaries in thinking and writing* in the works the students submitted for the book. Luis exhibited *rhizomatic learning* in his unique and successful analysis of the stories, using the theme of culture as a common thread for discussion and for a personal comparison to his own Puerto Rican cultural heritage, "The way I can relate to these stories is through my Puerto Rican culture, because for us, it is very important to maintain and is what truly defines us." Luis' insights into the positives and negatives of culture in the stories demonstrated the complexity of his thinking beyond these dualities of good and bad, or self and other, in terms of how culture affects us personally, as evidenced by the protagonists of the short stories:

The stories examined depict many differences in regard to culture and vary greatly, but at the same time, these short stories relate in so many ways. Each story focuses on some aspect of the experience of culture and its effect on us. It is truly powerful how cultural influences can affect us and can make us consider: What are the norms of the dominant culture, as with Lipsha in "Love Medicine," or what are our cultural expectations for connection, as with June in "A Pair of Tickets." These stories touch upon more than

what is said on the page and reveal truths of the human experience that make it so impactful for readers to understand. In the end, we all are affected and shaped by some sort of culture that develops us as a person and, good or bad, affects the course of our lives, just as with all of these characters in these stories.

The varying degrees of the effects of culture that Luis identified demonstrate *non-binaries in thinking and writing: shifts and personal insights and connections*. His journey with internalizing the meaning of the stories embraced the extremism of *cultural conflict and identity*, from issues of *social suffering and oppression: cultural social oppression* of the Native American culture and its effects on the gentle character of Lipsha and his family in the story, “Love Medicine,” to the maniacal desire for revenge of Montresor in Edgar Allan Poe’s (1846) “The Cask of Amontillado” for the sake of protecting family honor:

These connections to culture, family, and heritage help me to relate and to understand the stories I read. Even if it's as crazy as “The Cask of Amontillado” or as oppressive as “Love Medicine,” I can relate and in some ways understand the effects of what culture can do to people, how it can affect their lives, and what it can mean to them. These stories really touch on the roles of culture in people’s lives—how it can shape individuals and how it can be oppressed by society.

Although there are no easy answers for the healing of cultural conflict complexities, Luis identified the value of *Healing Social Suffering* from the effects of *cultural conflict and identity* and *cultural social oppression*, codes which comprise the category *Identity*, through the example of his own cultural connection to his family in Puerto Rico, “Another thing is that whenever I am in Puerto Rico, it's a party island in my eyes because of how we celebrate being all together to have fun, especially with family. It's important to celebrate when we gather because sometimes

we can't all get together, especially if I visit just once a year.” *Healing collectively, healing through connection*, and *healing through love* are suggested by Luis as the means to culturally connect self with other, unifying the *individual and collective* for the themes of *Postmodernism* and *Healing Social Suffering* to find solutions and strengths in the positives of love and family in the wake of the challenges that cultural conflict and oppression can present.

**Semi-structured interviews.** The semi-structured interviews had two specific questions geared towards finding answers to the third research question to discover the students’ insights, based on their experience of participating in the study and seeing their work in print. The first of the two questions that I asked the students in regard to the third research question was: “Do you feel that working together and writing on a common theme for a collaborative book affected the meaning of your writing or your work for the book?” The first interviewee responded that while it didn’t affect her individual approach or style for her writing, that the collective experience helped to unify the students through the common theme that they chose, having a common purpose, and yet still being able to express themselves as diverse individuals:

So, I think it affected it in the sense of that we had to go get ourselves in a certain direction because we had a theme as opposed to being all over the place and everybody going in this direction, but then at the same time I feel like we did also go in our own directions and that was great, too.

While the *Unity and Healing* book theme united them together and gave them direction, she felt that they successfully expressed themselves *individually and collectively*, representative theoretically of *Postmodernism*, by embracing their individual voices within a collective journey.

When I asked the second interviewee this same question, he responded with, “Well, I feel special!” As discussed in the results for Research Question 1, this student expressed the newfound sense of self in his *identity as a writer* that *shifted as a result of the book*, discovering a *love of writing* and the importance of *sharing writing with others*. Part of that sharing meant that he could look back at the book with his children and family one day to share with them the work that he and his classmates had collectively created. While the first student had less of a personal shift and more of a verification of her values of her love of writing for self and sharing in that experience with others, for the second student, there was a greater personal shift because he gained confidence in his abilities and *identity as a writer*, resulting in a newfound realization of the power of sharing writing with others, particularly with loved ones.

For the third interviewee, he expressed that the importance of the work he had submitted developed his *identity as a writer*, and how the book succeeded in terms of *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism*, in that the book was *individually and collectively* inclusive of diverse voices:

If it did affect it, I think it was in a good way because I feel like I, like I said, everyone has different experiences; therefore, like everyone has their own take on the concept of the book, and I felt like I had a very different kind of experience that not a lot of people even like talking about sometimes, and they have good reason to sometimes, but I felt comfortable enough to like share that personal aspect of myself in a lot of the stuff that I wrote about.

For each of the three students, they expressed that their *identity as a writer* was key to what they submitted, feeling “different” or “special” in positive ways that enabled their individual voices to be expressed within the collective group, yet unified by their purpose and theme that they could

share with others, demonstrating *non-binaries in thinking and writing*. Rather than feeling “other” or in a self vs. other situation in creating the book, each of the students expressed the value of the working *individually and collectively* for the creation of the book, demonstrating how theoretically it represents a *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism* experience, with diverse voices individually honored in varied ways and yet unified in purpose.

The next related question that I asked each of the three students was, “Do you believe that your thinking about writing for self, versus writing for others, has shifted as a result of participating in the creation of the book?” The first student responded that she definitely felt that she was “in” her writing and that her *identity* was there in her writing with her perspectives, interests, and insights. Her *identity as a writer* was already a component of how she viewed writing for others because of her love for writing, “I think that my writing has usually just been the same for myself and for others. I think that they both go hand in hand because I love writing, and so I feel like whenever I write, even if it's about a political text when political science, even if it's about English, philosophy, I was in there.” The student is demonstrating *non-binaries in thinking and writing* in that she feels that her *identity as a writer* comprises not only a *love of writing*, but also the importance of *sharing writing with others*. In addition, she emphasized the importance of the *individual and collective*, a code that corresponds to the theme of *Postmodernism*, as she discussed the significance of the use of *multimodalities*, different rhetorical strategies, and topics chosen by students, yet within this diversity was the unified experience of creating a book with a common theme, “Other people used photographs to help set the tone and the mood of the story that we were trying to portray, so I think each was a direction to go in that still in the end result led to the bigger part of the story of the theme, which is unity and healing.” Therefore, ultimately, the individuality of the students’ voices, their varied uses of

rhetorical strategies of *Semiotics*, as a component of the *Poststructural Feminism* theme, merged together through their collective purpose of *Unity and Healing* for their book, transcending issues, once again, of self vs. other for the higher collective good of the project and its social justice purpose.

When I asked the second interviewee this same question about any recognizable shifts in writing for self as opposed to writing for others, he responded with, “I don't know. I don't know for right now, but I think I may write for myself. I might write with other people, but pretty much myself because I feel like I have so much to explain.” For the second interviewee, he felt that being published in the book, as discussed in the results of Research Question 1, opened up a window of *identity as a writer* that left him feeling that he had much more to say and to teach others about his culture in comparison to that of the United States, such as the advent of playdates in American culture, something that was unheard of within his culture and that he felt interferes with children's opportunity for learning:

You woke up in the morning, oh, man, let's do this, but in most of United States you don't do stuff like that. You have to make an appointment always, and if you're playing the street, people have to call for the police, you know stuff like that. [Both interviewee and researcher laugh.] I know you feel like you're living the Bible, but at home we're definitely free, you know, just call your friend that's playing. You know, and it's, it's pretty good for everyone else to actually understand what life it is, you know. Yeah, and that's explaining of my own experience in my book, and I guess, you know, put out, and everyone can learn from it.

As a result of participating in the project, he embraced his difference of being from another culture, feeling that he has another lens to share about his life growing up in comparison to his

experiences in the United States for sharing with others as both a *Writing for Healing* experience of personal expression, as well as a *Healing Social Suffering* thematic purpose, and *Healing* through educating about *stereotypes* and *healing through connection*. Therefore, the second interviewee's positive experience not only shifted his *identity as a writer*, but it gave him the confidence to want to express more about his *cultural identity* with others for *Healing and Unity*, and to remove cultural barriers and divisions amongst the *individual and the collective* to promote a perspective of *Postmodernism*.

In response to the same question, the third interviewee stated that the experience of writing collectively didn't shift so much how he wrote, but it shifted the purpose and meaning of what he wrote, knowing that his work would be shared with others and wouldn't just be for the class or for me as the professor, and that it also deepened the meaning for himself as a *Writing for Healing* experience in the works that he shared, "When I would write just a normal English paper, it wasn't like for myself, but this actually was, but it was also, like I was able to connect it and do it for people, as well." With all three of the interviewees, their *identity as a writer* was a key component in their answers, with all three expressing a deepened meaning and shift in themselves knowing that their work was being shared with others for a common goal for publication. The second and third interviewee both expressed how the experience was beneficial individually as a *Writing for Healing* experience, and all three expressed the benefits of the collective *Healing Social Suffering* purpose, with *non-binaries in thinking and writing* and *shifts in perspectives* in a way that embraces the power of writing beyond self in an outward way.

Towards the end of the interview with the third interviewee, he pointed out the issues of *social suffering and oppression of 2020*, from *COVID-19*, to *political oppression* and that the



depths of suffering that we had undergone nationally added to the meaning and importance in the timeliness of the book's publication:

...something that even surprised me is that, not just the pandemic can be like with the whole healing, but like politically, we're just so, I don't know-- it's such a mess, and like I think I never thought it would be messier than 2016, but it is, and it's really hard to think how we can come together politically and just do something about what's going on, but it's another thing that adds to our book, like us.

This was an incredibly powerful summation of the “mess” that was 2020 and how it affected us in the meaningful experience of creating this book together. Demonstrating *non-binaries in thinking and writing*, the third interviewee pointed out the value of *writing for healing for self and others*, while also *Healing Social Suffering* and all that had occurred in 2020. The third interviewee summed up the book's meaning, “This book is like, it's doing a lot more good than I think we ever thought it would, even in the beginning.” This was perhaps the most profound and unexpected aspect of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* for all of us. While participation in the book itself resulted in *shifts for non-binaries in thinking and writing* for all three interviewees, the experience of a global pandemic and national political unrest in deeply disturbing ways tested the fabric of our external world and deepened the meaning of the *Unity and Healing* theme of the book, with all three interviewees expressing a profound belief in *Healing Social Suffering* through their words and participation with classmates in this collective project, promoting a greater good amidst an historic year for social suffering.

**Triangulation of the data.** The three data sources each provided important insights to the third research question. The book theme discussion revealed the importance of personal and collective healing strategies in response to the students' experiences of the pandemic. Sharing in

a collective social suffering experience deepened their commitment to the book project and expanded their multilayered thinking and writing strategies from the thematic theoretical perspectives of *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism*. The analysis of the submissions for the book revealed *Non-Binaries* in thinking and writing in each of the works the students submitted, as the students unified components of *Healing* and *Writing for Healing* from personal spaces of expression with *Social Suffering and Oppression* issues for discussion and analysis. As a result of this complex blending of theories, a new theoretical perspective for the study emerged, providing solutions for *Healing Social Suffering* in ways that embraced the rhetorical traditions of personal *Identity* with *Semiotics*, the paradigm of *Writing for Healing*, and the collective concerns addressed by *Social Suffering and Oppression*, unifying the individual within the collective for a global social healing purpose. The semi-structured interviews validated the commitment of the students to their purpose, revealing not only their growth in thinking and individual *identity as a writer* with increased levels of confidence, but also the transformative experience of creating the book together, unifying their unique and yet thematically unified voices to enact healing for the greater good of society during challenging times. In Chapter V, the results of the study will be further discussed, identifying the implications of theory, practice, and policy, to examine how *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* can incite continued work, research, and transformative change.

## CHAPTER V

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

When I embarked on this journey of applying a novel theoretical approach, combining social suffering theory with the writing for healing paradigm, little did I realize that my students would gift me, themselves, and those who may be touched by their words and creative endeavors, such unique and powerful perspectives that are at once practical and yet provide solutions for unifying these disparate strands from varied theoretical traditions. As I began this Interpretivist study, I discussed my intent to be open to rhizomatic learning (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), and the bulb of learning that had been planted certainly grew, spiraling in inspirational beauty. Through the literature assigned in our English course, I explored social suffering theory with my students, teaching them to investigate issues of historical oppression and to gain an understanding of the situational perspective of the characters through their experiences and insights from the authors into racism, sexism, cultural conflicts of identity, homophobia, and economic and political oppression. With this elegiac unity of spiraling perspectives and experiences, my students shared insights of personal experiences of oppression, identity, and cultural connections, linking their experiences to the literature, its history, and our protagonists, while voicing concrete solutions for societal shifts for healing in our present-day reality. As a result, the students engaged with the theory as an entry point to the literature and created their own theoretical perspective that embraces in a postmodern way the belief of unity of diverse, individual voices for a common purpose of social healing, by healing social suffering through writing for healing—individually and together.

In this chapter, the implications of the results of the study are discussed, in regard to theory, practice, as well as personal practice, and policy. In addition, the limitations are

examined and concluding perspectives of the value of the study are discussed for continued exploration and implementation in personal practice, as well as the possibilities of creating curricular and policy changes by incorporating *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* through college-wide initiatives and transference to other academic institutions.

### **Implications for Theory**

The creation of the *Unity and Healing* book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* produced some important theoretical insights about the value of this type of project in regard to the three research questions embarked upon by the study. The Pennebaker (2016) paradigm of *Writing for Healing* organically evolved in its use by the students as a component to “heal” the issues of *Social Suffering and Oppression* that were presented to them in the literature, demonstrating rhizomatic learning (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987). *Writing for Healing* gave students the option of an in-road from a personal perspective that they could choose to share or not in a more public space like our published book. The meaning of the publication deepened for the students after our lives were turned topsy-turvy with the COVID-19 pandemic, and for some students, the political issues and unrest in the country were additional sources of stress that motivated them further to provide a spark amidst the darkness of 2020 and to put into practice *Healing Social Suffering* through their work.

In Chapter IV, I examined the coding results for each of the three research questions, making connections and insights in regard to what the codes, categories, and themes revealed. However, the relationships between the coding results and the theoretical framework were only minimally discussed in order to emphasize a more in-depth discussion in Chapter V. In this chapter, the results of the theoretical connections and relevance for each of the study’s research questions are examined, along with theoretical implications for further research. Since the

theoretical framework is complex and multilayered, it seemed appropriate that the results of these connections should be given a separate space for discussion. In what follows, the theoretical implications of the results are examined, in addition to referencing relevant theories and studies discussed in Chapter II in regard to each of the three research questions of the study.

**Research Question 1: What are the students' experiences of "writing for healing" on issues of social suffering and oppression while participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*?**

One of the most compelling experiences for the students who participated in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* was the change to the students' understanding of self, as identified through the codes related to the category of *Identity*, and their expression of themselves through their writing, demonstrating the significance of the writing for healing paradigm advocated by Pennebaker (2016), but also in new and intriguing ways through the thematic focus of writing on issues of social suffering and oppression. In addition, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic hitting in the middle of our semester, the collective experience of a global pandemic brought to the fore many more relevant codes on *Healing* through the social suffering experience that they were all undergoing. Although individually, their experiences may have differed, as in their approaches to the writing and methods of expression for the book, the students overwhelmingly expressed a feeling of unity through this shared experience, particularly in their discussion of the book theme, which happened just a few weeks after our lives in quarantine had begun. The Chapter IV results of the data charting the students' remarkable and inspiring experiences with participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* are referred to here, in connection to the theoretical framework and

relevant pedagogical theories delineated in Chapter II to better understand the implications for continued implementation and research.

**Rhizomatic learning.** A particularly fascinating result of the study was the *rhizomatic learning* experience that evolved organically, and how the students processed what they were learning from the social suffering emphasis on the literature and coursework in combination with their COVID-19 experience and their evolving feelings of purpose for the book. This *rhizomatic learning* experience was evidenced in the multilayered way that the students combined Pennebaker's (2016) paradigm of writing for healing with social suffering theory through individual expression, which became unified in purpose through the book. From a postmodern perspective, rhizomatic pedagogy embraces multiplicities in meaning and seeks to avoid the hierarchical, top-down approach of Western learning and power structures that foster binaries in thinking (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013). While this issue overlaps with the third research question about shifts in thinking in regard to binary oppositions, it demonstrated the invaluable learning experience for the students, as they negotiated and internalized their experience of participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* in ways that were individually unique, and yet exhibited a sense of unity through their collective experience and pride in creating a charity book that would provide healing, solutions, and a light of hope amidst a global pandemic in a year that some of the students termed "a mess."

**Healing social suffering.** As the "Introduction" written for the *Unity and Healing* book signified, the students believed in the importance of sharing healing through their words, expressions, and the purpose of their book, "The unity of individuals within community is the foundation of a strong nation. It is unity that establishes the value of goodness and equality. This helps to strengthen the bonds of love in society." *Healing through love* and *healing collectively*

were common codes related to the students' solutions for the *Healing* category and the resulting theme that evolved of *Healing Social Suffering*, as Cynthia concluded in the book's introduction, "And with love, humans win. This period in time shows how much we need unity and love." This is a powerful commentary on the direction that the students chose for the project, highlighted, as well, during their discussion of the book's theme. The students discussed many relevant social suffering issues from their writing that they were considering for submission to the book, including issues on sexism, racism, gender role, poverty, cultural identity, homophobia-- an extensive list. During this discussion, an important question was raised that helped to guide their healing purpose for the project, as one student asked, "How would we focus on the positive from these things?" So, although the students were very aware of the value of sharing personal experiences and insights through the expressive writing advocated by the Pennebaker (2016) model, there was also an awareness of others and directly engaging in questions of how their work could create healing benefits to others through positive solutions.

**Social suffering and oppression.** Speaking out as a means of community caregiving is a component of social suffering theory, as Morris (1997) argues, "voice is really a plural concept," and through representation of diverse groups and varied perspectives, the societal power structures of exclusionary boundaries of oppression, enforced by what Morris (1997) terms are "moral communities," the pain of silencing can be broken to foster a sense of equity and inclusion through public acknowledgment (p. 39). In the semi-structured interviews, the students expressed clearly how important they felt their participation and collective contributions were as components of the process to unify their voices for the benefit of others who were suffering from the issues they addressed. Three of the most common codes identified in the semi-structured interviews were *identity as a writer*, *pride in book results*, and the *positives of working*

*collectively* in regard to students' experiences with creating the book. The numerous instances of these three codes revealed how positive the overall experience was for the participants, both individually and collectively. From a collective sense, the students engaged in identifying "moral communities" on social issues of suffering for the purpose of speaking out, as Morris (1997) argues is so important, by bringing these issues to the forefront, addressing solutions, and enacting the principles of social suffering theory. From an individual standpoint, the students also directly engaged with issues of identity and the positive experiences that writing can induce, coinciding with Pennebaker's (2016) theories on the benefits of personal expression, stating that expressive writing is not only "enjoyable and meaningful" for many (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016, p. 65), but is also a helpful learning tool.

**Writing for healing.** The value of writing as an meaningful tool for learning, as Pennebaker (2016) argues, was evident in the students' responses to their experiences of participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* during their semi-structured interviews. In addition to the relevance of social suffering theory as the foundation for the students' *Unity and Healing* purpose for the book, the impact to their individual journeys were also revealed. All three students during the semi-structured interviews expressed not only a sense of pride in the group and the overall book results, but also a sense of pride in themselves and an individual understanding of who they are, their relationship to writing, and their identities as writers. One student had a particularly profound experience in the shift of his *identity as a writer* and his self-confidence, and when asked how participation in the creation of the book had affected him, stated, "Well, I feel special!" By overcoming his fears about writing and sharing his writing, in addition to the personal benefit from writing about his cultural experiences



growing up, he felt a profound shift of importance in the sharing of his writing with others.

Overcoming fears about sharing our stories is an important component of *Writing for Healing*.

As researchers such as Pennebaker (2016), DeSalvo (1999), Marinella (2017), Glass et al. (2019), Fox (2016), Pipher (2006), and Kristeva (1985) elucidate, repression of our stories can have negative effects, and oftentimes, as the result of individual fears and social suffering and oppression from fear culture, students are not given the opportunity for much-needed expression. Self-fear can rule in the repression of personal expression in writing because of fears of embarrassment, disapproval, or inability to find the appropriate audience (DeSalvo, 1999, p. 24). Therefore, this personal shift for the student was a positive outcome of the experience of participating in the study. In addition, another student expressed his own individual shift in confidence that resulted from writing and sharing about his personal journey with issues of gender role oppression, feeling that his experience was a unique and important addition to the book, while a third student expressed that the book gave her a forum of expression to further her journey as someone who enjoys writing and sharing with others, “I like writing about things that will easily make sense to others, and sometimes that that's exactly what life is when you write about it... when there is struggle unity and healing comes out of that, as well, I think that writing about stuff like that is about the real world.” Overcoming individual fears of writing and writing for others benefits personal well-being, while also benefiting others by sharing our stories.

Therefore, each of the participants interviewed expressed a personal journey of *identity as a writer*, a growth and a shift in some way personally that resulted from participating in the project, whether that was confidence, overcoming fears, or finding a forum to share with others on issues of personal importance to them as individuals. From a perspective of Pennebaker’s (2016) paradigm of *Writing for Healing*, their experiences replicate the results of his studies,

where students expressed a feeling of well-being and personal benefits from personal, expressive writing on issues of meaning. In clinical trials with college students, he uncovered the various benefits of expressive writing, from clearing one's head to overcoming trauma, as well as improving physical and overall mental health and balance, "Writing, then, should be viewed as preventative maintenance. The value of writing or talking about our thoughts and feelings lies in reducing the work of inhibition and in organizing our complicated and messy mental and emotional lives" (Pennebaker & Smyth, 2016, p. 80). Unlike Pennebaker's (2016) studies, however, not every student was necessarily writing about personal issues of trauma or wounding; yet, the benefits of personal expression, of writing from the self about issues of personal concern and interest were clearly evident. Overwhelmingly, the results demonstrated a positive collective experience, empowering individual students' voices through a unified purpose.

**Honoring diversity and creating a legacy.** As Achterberg (1990), Banks (2012), Pipher (2006), and Wilentz (2000) argue, storytelling is valuable as a key for both personal and cultural healing of historical oppression. Clinical psychologist Mary Pipher (2006) states, "Many writers who have suffered great sorrows write memoirs for cathartic reasons. They also write to document their experiences, to express outrage at injustice and unnecessary suffering, and to help others to see and feel what can happen to people like themselves" (p. 26). The students also recognized this value, and during the semi-structured interviews, one student summed up their individual yet collective experiences, "I thought it was really cool that like as a class we all had one main theme, but we all had such different experiences. Therefore, we all wrote about really different things that all kind of came together to have the same concept of healing and togetherness." The positive reaction of each of the three students interviewed demonstrated the importance of collective work on issues of social suffering and oppression and how the honoring

of individual voices empowered them as individuals, yet provided a collective experience of shared healing that was unique, as one student stated, “I think everybody did a great job and in the end I'm very happy, and I'm very proud of all of us and what we accomplished.”

As another student remarked, the meaning of the students' published book will continue to grow throughout the months to come and the collective social suffering experience of the pandemic, “It's still just...even more and more meaningful almost every month that we continue to go through this.” Similarly, Hanauer's (2012) study about publishing students' writing through public sharing, as well as Tsui and Starecheski's (2018) study on the recording of oral history and digital storytelling, are two powerful examples on the lasting legacy of the public sharing of personal stories. In addition, Tsui and Starecheski's (2018) study also provided insights into how issues such as race, racism, and social class can affect health, influencing multiple risks to health that can last a lifetime. As a result, their digital recording of stories preserved oral history and storytelling, promoting inclusion and long-term health benefits (Tsui & Starecheski, 2018), which are both critical to provide insights not only for individual health and healing, but also for larger socio-economic and historical issues of culture (Achterberg, 1990; Banks, 2012; Charbonneau-Dahlen et al., 2016; Morris, 1997; Ramphela, 1997; Wilentz, 2000). In addition, in a study utilizing Pennebaker's (2016) writing for healing paradigm, Glass et al. (2019) explored various expressive modes of writing, including legacy writing to consider what participants wished to gift to the world. Participants in their study greatly improved their emotional resilience, symptoms of depression, and perceived stress. Therefore, there are definite parallels to the experiences of the participants in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* and the benefits they expressed from the publication of their work. During the book theme discussion and the semi-structured interviews, the students also expressed the value of

sharing their stories and insights, which was an integral part of the students' reactions and realizations about the longevity of their work. As one student noted in his semi-structured interview:

Now I see and understand that my story, it might be fine for someone else to listen. I can even actually write a book that people can read and maybe I see and be able to relate to different parts of like another life, you know. I should be able to, like, enjoy my story... See my essay that I wrote maybe 10 years ago and after that show my kids. That's fun.

For the students, their *Unity and Healing* book represented an important snapshot in time for posterity and to share with others, even with their own children one day. The students felt that their purpose was not only to share in the experience of the pandemic, but to encapsulate their personal stories, and to promote continued healing on important social issues. As they honored their individuality, they also gifted solutions of healing and unity on social suffering issues of our past, present, and future, with their book as a testament of their legacy to meet whatever the challenges are before us.

**Research Question 2: How does the intervention of using the semiotic pedagogies of translanguaging and multimodalities impact teaching strategies for writing assignments and the creation of the book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*?**

The use of the semiotic pedagogies of *translanguaging* and *multimodalities* as teaching strategies for writing assignments and for the creation of the book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* had positive results that coincided with results from prior studies and theories on their use. The results reflected the theoretical significance of *Poststructural Feminism* with its semiotic emphasis on honoring diverse voices and validated the importance of

the practical application of these strategies in the classroom. Poststructural French feminist and semiotic theorist Julia Kristeva (1985) argues for the value of multiple discourse styles in a gender-inclusive way that counteracts societal oppression of the “feminine” voice that is organic, an expression of the poetic, and birthed from within, rather than from a linearly-constructed notion of language. Examples of this organic expression that defies linear language constructs were evident in the students’ submissions for the book. Of the 16 students who submitted works for the book, almost half used semiotic strategies for expression, with 5 students using multimodalities, and 2 students using translanguaging.

**Semiotics.** With 7 out of 16 students in the study using translanguaging and multimodalities as alternative strategies for expression, the theoretical and practical value for this semiotic intervention as a teaching strategy is evident, by facilitating more diverse and inclusive methods of expression for students with varied backgrounds and learning abilities. Traditional academic discourse can be exclusionary for some students, as semiotic theorist Mlynarczyk (2014) argues, “students in basic or ESL writing courses, community college students, first-generation college students- all of the students for whom what is commonly referred to as ‘academic discourse’ is something of a foreign language” (p. 4). The diversity of backgrounds of the participants of the study were reflective of the student population of the community college they attend, and the participants expressed appreciation for these alternative methods of communication, as one student noted during the semi-structured interviews:

...other people used, maybe a poem, which is another form of expression. Other people used photographs to help set the tone and the mood of the story that we were trying to portray, so I think each was a direction to go in that still in the end result led to the bigger part of the story of the theme, which is unity and healing.

This expression of *identity through multimodalities, translanguaging*, and alternative forms of expression also included music, a personal quote, and poetry, which provided the students with the opportunity for individuality in expression, while finding common ground in their chosen theme for the book. This inclusive approach through semiotic teaching strategies is theoretically supported by the work of Mlynarczyk (2014), who argues that a translanguaging approach provides a solution to the dichotomy between academic discourse and expressive writing by the mixing of discourse styles that ignores prescribed discourses and the either/or use of it, cultivating a “rhetorical dexterity” to adapt language to various audiences and styles (p. 4). Mlynarczyk’s (2014) solution coincides with the work of Bruner (2003), who argues how it is essential to use narrative and storytelling along with academic discourse (p. 102). As the results of the book demonstrated, 10 of the 17 essays on topics of social suffering and oppression submitted by the students incorporated elements of personal expression and storytelling alongside academic discourse, successfully negotiating the personal with the analytical within each of these pieces of writing, rather than being structured or defined by one rhetorical style.

**Translanguaging and multimodalities.** Additionally, Horner et al. (2011) argue against monolingual policies for standardized English expectations in the classroom, stating not only how unrealistic this is because each of us speak in varied forms of English, but also highlighting its exclusionary expectations for diverse populations because these policies, “operate as faux-linguistic covers for discrimination against immigrants and minorities: in place of discrimination on the basis of presumed national, ethnic, racial, or class identity, discrimination is leveled on the basis of language use (p. 309). In addition to the wide mix of rhetorical styles used by the students within the *Unity and Healing* book, the majority of students layering expressive and academic writing or used alternative forms. Two of the participants used alternative languages

they either spoke or had been learning to speak from a cultural encounter. Yet another student wrote about his knowledge of many languages and how that knowledge made him culturally more prepared for connecting with others of diverse cultures. These examples support what Horner et al. (2011) argue in regard to the teaching of English with more inclusive methods that honor the diverse language knowledge of our students with a “disposition of openness and inquiry that people take toward language and language differences” (Horner et al., 2011, p. 311).

In addition to the use of *translingualism* and diverse rhetorical styles, *multimodalities* became a key component to the book, with students using artwork and photographic images that reflected aspects of personal identity, culture, and symbolic representations of what the book’s title of *Unity and Healing* meant to them, individually and collectively. Whithaus and Bowen (2015) state that multimodalities encompass visuals, videos, technology, and alternative symbolic methods of communication that can assist students in the sharing of their stories. In terms of implementing multimodal strategies, researchers such as Fox (2011) and Gonzales (2015) had successful results with the use of multimodalities in their studies. Fox’s (2011) exploration of the use of photos and pictures as instruments for his students to express stories of trauma in multisensory ways was inspired by Pennebaker’s (2016) writing for healing paradigm and had positive results. Similarly, in the *Unity and Healing* book, Tempest’s artwork provided a personal visual that coincided with her essay, “Crooked by Nature,” focusing on issues of self, identity, womanhood, and parental relationships, combining artwork and writing to share about her personal journey in comparison to one of the stories in the course. Other multimodal expressions in the book included photographs, using multimodalities as a form of self-expression to showcase themes of identity, cultural and family connections, healing through nature, and an

overall connectedness that enhanced their chosen theme for the book of *Unity and Healing*, while honoring their diverse voices, cultural backgrounds, and personal experiences.

Gonzales' (2015) study produced similar positive results by using less restrictive genre styles and multimodal composition practices with diverse students, providing more varied and inclusive strategies for student expression. Similarly, Maritza's successful mixing of rhetorical modes and multimodalities is emblematic of this approach, using analytical and personal expression, as well as translingualism by writing in Spanish, and including a family photo to symbolize her cultural heritage. Maritza successfully layered meaning within her essay through these varied rhetorical strategies and multimodal forms of expression to explore identity in a way that provided a wider lens of perspective for the audience. Her creative and multilayered forms of expression enabled a greater understanding her personal experience in comparison to the protagonist in her discussion of her chosen short story. As Greene (1995) states, this multimodal experience of unifying the arts with storytelling provides "connection points" for an ever-expanding sense of community to be created that honors diversity and speaks to social injustices, "Students can be provoked to imaginatively transmute some of their stories into media that can be shared in such a fashion that friends can begin looking together and moving together in a forever expanding space" (p. 42). Therefore, translingualism and multimodalities successfully enabled more varied avenues of creative expression, with each student's unique approach adding to the collective tapestry of their *Unity and Healing* book.

**Continued practice.** The results of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* validate the significance of using the semiotic strategies of multimodalities and translingualism in practice, supporting the theoretical foundations of *Poststructural Feminism* and its emphasis on deconstructing power structures and methods of expression that can be exclusionary and



silencing. In addition, Pennebaker's (2016) argument for the value of expressive writing coincide with the results of this study, as evidenced by the students' expressions of identity, community, and unity in our world for the purpose of healing. In the book theme discussion, book submissions, and the semi-structured interviews, students demonstrated a clear interest and appreciation for these alternative strategies and believed that these semiotic means of expression were vehicles to support their individuality, honoring their diverse voices and background in inclusive ways within their unified project. Moving forward, these strategies will continue to shape my teaching practice, assignments, and interactions with students. The study provides evidence to inform my practice and that of other educators, while reasserting the significance of *Poststructural Feminism* as a theoretical foundation and its value for reminding us as educators to continually question power structures and preferences for language expression, as we continue to strive to honor inclusion and equity in the classroom and beyond.

**Research Question 3: Do dualities of the self vs. the social shift by writing within individual and social contexts on themes of social suffering and oppression in a poststructural way that rejects binaries in thought and hierarchized dualisms?**

All four coding themes, related to the theoretical framework of the study, are evident in the data results for Research Question 3, including *Healing Social Suffering*, *Writing for Healing*, *Postmodernism*, and *Poststructural Feminism*, revealing a fascinating and complex fusion of foundational theories and learning strategies in application. The students demonstrated clear shifts in thinking and writing within the context of self and other, with definitive evidence in the coding of the three data sources of a rejection of binaries in thought and hierarchized dualisms. This included the layering of rhetorical strategies through the complex use of *Semiotics* from *Poststructural Feminism*, blurring the lines between self and other from a perspective of

*Postmodernism*, and incorporating the personal expression of *Writing for Healing*. In addition, the students offered solutions for *Healing Social Suffering* on social issues amidst a pandemic that unified them in purpose through their collective social suffering experience. These shifts in thinking and multilayered rhetorical strategies demonstrated the students' engagement with identity, individuality, and inclusivity in their writing as a vehicle for not only personal expression as defined by Pennebaker's (2016) paradigm, but also as a means to enact what is defined within social suffering theory as social caretaking by taking action (Morris, 1997; Ramphela, 1997; Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016), by sharing their diverse voices through writing on important issues of social suffering and oppression.

**Healing social suffering, postmodernism, and rhizomatic learning.** As discussed in regard to the first research question, one of the profound revelations of the coding and analysis of the data was the way in which the students negotiated writing for self and writing for others in ways that belied a dualism in thinking of self vs. other. In fact, demonstrating *rhizomatic learning* by embracing multiplicities in meaning without adhering to hierarchical thinking or power structures (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013), the students created their own method of resolving a dichotomous split between the two with the *Healing Social Suffering* theme that emerged from the coding. By unifying the theory of social suffering and oppression with Pennebaker's (2016) paradigm and the theme of *Writing for Healing* they provided their own solutions for societal healing with collective and yet individualized perspectives. These shifts in thinking became apparent from the first data major collection point at midterm with the book theme discussion. The coding of the book theme discussion produced a number of codes related to personal actions and creative endeavors involving reading, writing, and artwork, and perspectives conducive to *Healing*, generating a key category for the *Writing*

*for Healing* theme that encompasses Pennebaker's (2016) theoretical perspective on the value of personal and creative expression for the individual benefits of well-being. The students' perspectives on healing, not only for themselves but for others, were particularly influenced by their experience of the pandemic.

As a result, the students developed an understanding beyond the individual sense of self to encompass their collective purpose by choosing the title of *Unity and Healing* for the book to promote healing for the social suffering issues they addressed. Also, during the book theme discussion, another example of *rhizomatic learning* became evident because the students were organically shifting their thinking in regard to rhetorical modes in multilayered ways to encompass alternative methods of expression (Adkins, 2015; Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Humphreys, 2013). The students discussed including submissions that embraced alternative forms of discourse, rather than solely focusing on academic discourse, including the use of multimodalities, translanguaging, and poetry. These alternative forms of discourse, coded as components of the category of *Semiotics* and the theoretical theme of *Poststructural Feminism*, demonstrated how even during the process of creating the theme of the book, the students' concepts of writing and expression had shifted beyond the binary split of self and other, the individual versus the social, or personal writing versus academic discourse. As Slattery (2013) argues from a postmodernist perspective, "dualistic thinking is dangerous. Dualism is the outgrowth of philosophical traditions that need to be challenged" (p. 5). The data from the study demonstrated how the students had moved beyond the traps of dualistic thinking, and, instead, they viewed themselves as individuals who were diverse, and yet unified within a collective project. Therefore, the students' writing and thinking reflected a perspective of *Postmodernism*,

while embracing inclusive alternative and diverse methods of discourse and expression as components of *Poststructural Feminism*.

**Postmodernism and poststructural feminism.** During the coding of the book, one of the primary patterns that emerged was the code of *non-binaries in thinking and writing*, with 109 instances, revealing the depths of shifts in the multilayered thinking of *Postmodernism*, as well diverse writing styles advocated by *Poststructural Feminism* that the students exhibited in the submissions for their publication. This complex layering was evident in the students' combined use of personal expression, research, and academic discourse, while others utilized alternative discourse strategies, including music, quotation, and poetry, in addition to the inclusion of multimodal and translingual strategies that were addressed earlier in the chapter in the discussion of Research Question 2. These diverse writing strategies exhibited by the students and coded for the study are components of the category *Semiotics* and the theme *Poststructural Feminism*, as a central foundational theory to the study. *Poststructural Feminism* and semiotic theory support the value of deconstructing traditional language constructions to embrace more inclusive and alternative forms of expression beyond academic discourse, which can sometimes be repressive and marginalizing for diverse students.

Freedom from this repression is a key aspect of semiotic theorist Kristeva's (1985) work, arguing that through semiotics and varied discourse strategies that multiplicities of meaning can be conveyed. Demonstrating the importance of freedom in language in her seminal work, "Stabat Mater," Kristeva (1985) states, "Let a body finally venture out of its shelter, expose itself in meaning beneath a veil of words. WORD FLESH. From one to the other, eternally, fragmented visions, metaphors of the invisible" (p. 134). Kristeva's (1985) example assists in understanding the theoretical context of *Semiotics* and *Poststructural Feminism*, striving for

freedom of repression from power structures and the control of language. Overcoming societal binaries in language expression and meaning fosters inclusion and a sense of greater self-efficacy for diverse writers, as evidenced by the study. In addition to the multiple instances of alternative discourse use within the completed book, the students also expressed their positive reactions to the ability to layer their discourse strategies through these varied methods, as Kristeva (1985) advocates, which they felt added to the meaning of expression individually and yet collectively to their publication.

**Writing for healing and social suffering.** In addition to *Poststructural Feminism*, Pennebaker's (2016) *Writing for Healing* paradigm is another key theme that comprises the theoretical framework of the study and assists in understanding how personal expression can facilitate the inclusivity of individuality of expression of poststructural feminist theory. Combining the writing for healing paradigm with social suffering theory also lends itself to examining within the greater social context of how to eradicate the dualisms of binary thinking and expression within language, by fostering the use of language for breaking down social constructions of power addressed in social suffering theory (Kleinman, Das, & Lock, 1997). Ramphela (1997) argues that the individual gains empowerment and "dignity" through the acknowledgment of pain, and this societal acknowledgment facilitates empowerment "to feel worthy of suffering," as well as facilitating "the possibilities for healing" (p. 114). This empowerment of the individual within a social context for the purpose of healing was fostered through participation in the project and the publication of the book. Within the *Unity and Healing* book, the students successfully exhibited not only many examples of *non-binaries in thinking and writing* within the coding, but they also unified these strategies of personal

expression with writing on issues of social oppression to create their own solution to this dilemma of dichotomies with the theme of *Healing Social Suffering*.

For the code of *social suffering and oppression*, there were 97 examples identified within the book, with 22 descriptors of various types of suffering and oppression that the students addressed within their submissions. In addition, 141 codes related to the category of *Identity*, revealing the complexity and variety of issues within the context of the book that unified issues of self and other within the book's theme of healing. Furthermore, there were 47 examples of specific solutions for *Healing Social Suffering* also coded within the book, demonstrating the importance the students felt to provide solutions to the social issues they addressed, not solely focusing on identifying issues of oppression within their work. The solutions coded included *healing collectively, healing through children, healing through love, standing in truth and personal power, and speaking out*. These codes show that the students' perspective on *Healing Social Suffering* was not something simply to be done by and for individuals, but that it was also a collective process, done through connection, collective work, love, and consideration for our children and their future. Also, the codes relevant to the category of *Healing* were identified 177 times within the submissions for the book, almost double that of the social suffering issues that were discussed. While Chapter IV discussed the coding of each of the students' submissions to their book in detail, the examination of these overall results within the context of the categories, themes, and theoretical framework provided insights into how clearly the students were focused on examining social suffering issues in the broader context, while also finding connections to self, and offering solutions for healing for the social issues they were discussing, unifying in multilayered and applicable ways the central theoretical components of the study's framework.

These results are also parallel to those of studies discussed in Chapter II, including the study of Charbonneau-Dahlen et al. (2016), who examined the historical trauma and health challenges experienced by Native Americans in mandated government mission boarding schools. Using the model of a “Dream Catcher-Medicine Wheel” and cultural tools to facilitate their storytelling, participants experienced the benefits of individual healing, while participating in healing historic oppression from the traumatic events that occurred at the boarding schools. The significance of personal storytelling on social suffering issues through print publication was also evident in Duchin and Wiseman’s (2019) study, focused on the writings of child survivors of the Holocaust, again providing a vehicle for personal and collective healing on an historic issue of oppression. Similarly, the students participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* used their own culturally relevant symbols through multimodalities, language through translingualism, and varied methods of discourse advocated by *Poststructural Feminism*. These tools for storytelling and addressing issues of social suffering and oppression facilitated inclusion, and the *Healing of Social Suffering* from a social suffering theoretical perspective, while honoring the voices of students from varied backgrounds and experiences (Kleinman et al., 1997; Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016).

**Finding unity, honoring difference, and removing boundaries.** The semi-structured interviews provided the final data source for tracking and unraveling how or if the students’ thinking and writing had shifted as a result of participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, with the students expressing how they valued that their work would achieve a common good as their goal for the project. Also, for each of the three students, they expressed that their *identity as a writer* had shifted or deepened as a result of being a part of project, feeling “different” or “special” in positive ways, with a clear sense of themselves being

imbued into the works they submitted, reflecting important outcomes of Pennebaker's (2016) *Writing for Healing* paradigm that is grounded within the theoretical fabric of the study. This confidence, the participants asserted, made them each feel that their individual voices were valuable contributions to the collective group and the book's theme, guided by social suffering theory. This sense of individuality being honored within the collective, yet unified by their purpose for social healing with their chosen theme, demonstrated their shifts in perspectives with the code of *non-binaries in thinking and writing*, no longer feeling a division of self and other in regard to writing through the creation of the book.

The value of working individually and collectively is representative of the themes of *Postmodernism* and *Poststructural Feminism*, with diverse voices individually honored and yet unified in purpose in the publication of the book. This positive outcome of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* defies the dualisms and binaries in thinking created by institutionalized divisions and power structures. Warning of the dangers of dualities in thinking, Slattery (2013) states, "The attempts to divide the world into "us" versus "them" pervade our society" which "divides human beings and inflicts tremendous pain and suffering on all of us" (p. 5). Acknowledging the dualistic divides ingrained into the power structures of our culture is a stark reminder of how invaluable educational experiences are which support thinking to counter these divisions. During the semi-structured interviews, the three students expressed how transformative the experience of participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* had been because they felt the project had honored each participant's individuality and yet unified them, a unique and healing experience of breaking down barriers and working collectively for a healing purpose. All three students expressed how beneficial the collective *Healing Social Suffering* purpose of the project was, pointing out how the challenges and social



suffering we had undergone globally as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and as a nation throughout 2020 had added to the meaning and importance in the timeliness of publication of their *Unity and Healing* book. For the students, the added component of donating the funds from the book to the college's student fund to assist those struggling because of the pandemic was an important part of the solutions for *Healing Social Suffering*, feeling that their individual efforts were unified to collectively help those in need and to ease their own sense of helplessness during a horrific and historic year. It became evident that the students had achieved new perspectives about writing, themselves, and their roles in benefiting society by embracing the power of writing beyond self in a socially transformative outward way through their common pandemic experience.

As a result of the students' experiences, insights, and evident shifts that rejected traditional binaries, dualisms, and hierarchized ways of thinking and writing, writing for healing within the context of this study can be redefined as not simply writing for and about self for personal benefit, but writing as a social process that facilitates community and the inclusion of diverse voices for societal healing through social suffering theory, creating a new theoretical perspective crafted by the students for *Healing Social Suffering*. The creation and publication of the students' *Unity and Healing* book provided an action-based solution of community caregiving advocated by social suffering theory (Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016). The students' writing for healing journey, individually and yet as a collective initiative, will continue as a testament to their dedication for social justice and healing.

### **Implications for Practice**

#### **Action Plan and Curriculum Policy Goal**

Important insights in the data have been revealed through open coding of the three data sources for the study, including the students' submissions for the book, the semi-structured interviews, and the book theme discussion. From the data analysis, what has been revealed is how strongly the students felt about the emphasis on *Unity and Healing* as the book's central theme, to work collectively to help others, particularly amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, and the value of the book for their creative expression that went beyond the linear confines of a mandated form of academic discourse. The students appreciated being able to write in varied styles and to use other forms of creative expression, including visuals, music, and poetry in the creation of the book. The students also strongly expressed their belief in the value of gifting healing through this collective experience with positive feedback and a commitment to making a difference in our world, each stating that they appreciated and enjoyed being a part of the project.

Therefore, because of these encouraging results, it seemed appropriate that the study continue to evolve into an action plan for a book project that includes other students at the college, with additional professors who teach English courses, along with the departmental support from the deans and other administrators. This would expand the project to provide more opportunities for other students to participate. The results demonstrated the value of "Writing for Healing," as symbolized by the birthing of the students' creations and their expressed concerns for societal healing with the successful publication of their charity book. Therefore, it is exciting to explore further possibilities that can evolve by expanding the project.

**Implementation.** The implementation would include expanding the project to provide more opportunities for other students to participate and to give other professors the opportunity to add the project to their course syllabi. Other professors at the college have expressed interest in participating *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, and additional recruitment

could occur through faculty emails, the English department Facebook page, as well as informational Zoom meetings, to incite interest. Using the prior study's book, *Unity and Healing*, as a sample would also provide a visual of the primary goal and objective of the project for the benefit of our students at the college and the wider community. Once other professors are recruited, participants can then meet to ensure we will implement the same methods of data collection for the study and submissions for the Amazon book. The culminating goal is to produce a charity book together from our students' submissions and to then analyze the benefits to our students and to the outer community from the project.

**Continued research and implementation.** The evaluation of the project would occur at specific data collection points throughout the semester. Continued research using data collected would be coded and analyzed, looking for common themes, categories, and insights that can then be evaluated by the professors and administrators to discuss the outcomes of the project. The evaluation of data results would provide insights in regard to the benefits to the students, to our teaching, to the department, and to the larger community as a social justice initiative. With enough interest and participation from professors and students, as well as significant evidence from the data of the benefits of the project for the students, professors from other disciplines could be recruited, incorporating students in other courses who might be interested in the project. The implementation and research cycle could be repeated for subsequent years, analyzing the data to determine how or if the project could be expanded further, to incorporate students in other divisions in the college, and to conduct a college-wide recruitment for professors from all areas to participate with their students as a long-term college initiative. This cross-curricular cooperation is advocated as a postmodern solution to meet the needs of diverse students with a multifaceted approach to education, "Curriculum development in the postmodern era emphasizes

discourses that promote understanding of the cultural, historical, political, ecological, aesthetic, theological, and autobiographical impact of the curriculum on the human condition” (Slattery, 2013, p. 200). Ultimately, *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* could be incorporated into the syllabi of not only courses taught in the English department, but also into courses in other departments for professors who may wish to provide a cross-curricular, social justice experience in their course curriculum that is representative of a postmodern approach. This would provide more inclusive opportunities of varied means of expression on a multitude of important social issues for diverse learners to contribute and to have an impact on the broader community.

**Long-term goals.** In the long term, I see *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* as being the foundation for my continued research and work, a project that could be implemented at other colleges and universities, particularly after I obtain a full-time position and have more input into curricular decisions within an English department. Another central goal is to write articles on how to implement the project and to publish a book on the values and methods of incorporating writing for healing with social suffering theory, demonstrating how to engage students in that process. Participating in conferences and presentations would also be a key component of how to share the results and rewards of implementing the project with students. Although this dissertation study is a product of my intellectual endeavors, it is also heart-work, and I look forward to the future and broadening the horizons of possibilities from these initial seeds of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*.

### **Impact on My Practice**

While many interesting revelations resulted from the study, one striking realization is how challenging speaking publicly on issues of social suffering and oppression can be for some

students, particularly when they are issues that involve them personally. For a number of students in the course of marginalized populations, issues of racism in particular were tackled in essays and journals during the course, sharing both detailed research on influential African American authors and the historical context of racism, particularly in regard to “King of the Bingo Game,” as well as personal experiences. However, some of the students chose not to share their writings on this issue, though well-researched, personally inspiring, and insightfully written, and decided to share alternative submissions. The question for educators in these instances and for further examination is to also understand how and why some students may have an experience of feeling like a sacrificial lamb as a solitary voice to represent their culture in an unfair way. In addition, a sole focus in a course on “social suffering” itself runs the risk of feeling like a continued reminder of past abuses, with no hope of moving forward, and I was thankful that I had made the decision to suggest some related but alternative topics on cultural conflicts and personal identity, as well as initiation or coming of age themes in writing assignment suggestions so that students felt they had a broader spectrum of issues to discuss from the literature we examined, although all topics related to the literature were welcomed.

Also, it was clear in the discussion of the book theme, as we discussed the challenges of racism, sexism, homophobia, and other instances of marginalization within society, along with the stressors of COVID-19 in their daily lives, that the students were looking for a way to provide hope, solutions, and healing. As one student stated in her interview, knowing that we were compiling this book to publish as a positive offering for the world made dealing with the pandemic and the political and racial issues of oppression in 2020 that much easier to bear. The book itself, therefore, provided the students with the opportunity to engage in a positive solution, which is an important end note when considering examining issues of social suffering and

oppression. If we reconsider the emphasis of Jane Addams' purpose in her work, identified in the introduction in the first chapter, her focus was on community caregiving and providing solutions, an inspirational model for the foundational principles of sociology and social suffering theory (Deegan, 2017). If we are meant to engage in social suffering theory in totality, it seems a requirement to engage in the next step of some sort of social justice initiative of engagement with community and the broader global context beyond self and the individual to make a difference for healing in some form. As a result, the *Writing for Healing* paradigm can also provide a helpful solution for this engagement of the individual to bridge the gap to the broader context. The distancing of studying literature also enables students to interact with the social suffering themes of the literature at their own level of personal comfort—whether making personal analogies or focusing on an issue of interest for formal analysis and discussion because of direct personal experiences or observations.

In addition, the results demonstrated the varying degrees that students chose to use expressive writing, typical of the *Writing for Healing* paradigm and alternative forms of rhetorical styles, as opposed to more formal academic discourse approaches to their submissions. Although some students felt comfortable discussing personal issues and experiences in comparison to the issues, themes, and characters depicted in the literature, and some mixed in a paragraph or two of personal comparisons in between their formal analysis, others preferred to analyze the literature from a stance of academic writing, leaving out the personal from their writing altogether. However, as revealed in the book theme discussion and semi-structured interviews, even if the students did not use personal, expressive writing in their submissions to discuss the literature, that did not mean that the writing wasn't personal to the students—they still identified a sense of self as being infused within their work. Based on responses, some

students still regarded a foundation of personal interests and insights for their works as being an expression of self and their individuality that made their work unique, and yet a contributory part of the collective work of the book with its common theme and purpose. These results are, indeed, heartening, because it revealed that giving students a variety of rhetorical options leaves open more avenues for methods of expression that are still personalized and inclusive to the individuality of diverse students. While some feel more comfortable sharing what they have to say through more formalized discourse, others prefer the option of mixing discourses, and still others prefer more creative and/or personally expressive forms of discourse. No matter the form, each participant, as a result, had the opportunity to express in a variety of ways, and the book provided the vehicle for this inclusiveness of expression that, in turn, is helpful to us as educators. Honoring diverse voices and rhetorical styles and leaving space for those means of expression facilitates a more inclusive learning environment and ability to share with others with a variety of levels of expression and topics of interest.

As discussed in regard to research question two, the use of multimodalities and translanguaging provided more inclusive opportunities for student self-expression and honored the needs of those with diverse learning skills and backgrounds. In addition, after the switch to online remote learning, the students expressed that they enjoyed doing discussion board posts that included visuals, videos, and links in response to the literature they were reading, adding another component of sharing and expression to the assignments. The positive reaction from the students, who enjoyed having the freedom of choice to include visuals and to write in more than one language or rhetorical style of language within one essay, demonstrated the value of these semiotic strategies in my teaching practice, which I will continue to explore in new and creative ways for further investigation and implementation with writing assignments and presentations.

Providing students with the opportunity to publish their work is an ideal often discussed by instructors of English as a way for students to take their work to the next step beyond the classroom. In the book theme discussion and the semi-structured interviews, the students overwhelmingly expressed the value of participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* as a collective experience that unified them in purpose and yet honored their individual voices, perspectives, and means of expression. The opportunity to have their work published also affected their confidence and identities as writers, as well as inspiring a feeling of being contributory participants to society and its healing through the social suffering issues that they addressed. The results of this study were personally inspiring, as well, and there were many times when my students responses and commitment to giving back to others brought tears of joy. This unique and inspirational experience is one that I intend to continue in my personal practice, with a view to educating and encouraging others to organize collective publishing opportunities for their students as a social justice initiative that engages them beyond the classroom and facilitates the value of community caregiving that social suffering theory inspires.

### **Implications for Policy**

The results of the study produce some important implications for departmental English policies and curricula. As discussed in Chapter II, within many English departments and in college composition courses across the country, there can sometimes be an inherent divide between the valuing of expressive and academic discourse and its place in the composition classroom that shapes departmental policies in regard to their introductory composition and literature courses. In contrast with Elbow's (2000) expressivist pedagogy are those college composition theorists, such as Bartholomae (1995) and Lazere (2015), who uphold academic



discourse as the solution to attain a critical understanding necessary for students' college careers and beyond, which, historically, is a central theoretical conflict within the field of composition. In addition to the arguments of Bartholomae (1995), Lazere (2015), and other outer-directed theorists, Bizzell (1992) also argues that "the rejection of academic discourse expectations has failed" and that "initiation into the academic discourse community may be just what oppressed students need to gain the critical distance on their experience provided by an elaborated code" (p. 113). In contrast, inner-directed theorists such as psychologists Pennebaker and Smyth (2016), healing practitioner Marinella (2017), as well as Professors of English, DeSalvo (1999), Hanauer (2012), and Fox (2016) uphold the value of expressive and narrative forms of writing for healing and for more inclusive student engagement.

The results of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* coincide with the arguments of these expressive writing theorists and researchers, as well as researchers such as Bruner (1985), Kim (2008), Horner et al. (2011), Mlynarczyk (2014), and Gonzales (2015), who advocate for a multiplicity of discourses, rhetorical styles, and learning strategies that are more inclusive of diverse students from varied backgrounds and cultures. In order to re-envision curriculum development for the postmodern era, Slattery (2013) argues, "Whether critics like it or not, society has become a global plurality of competing subcultures and movements where no one ideology and *episteme* (understanding of knowledge) dominates" (p. 19). This "postmodern shift" (Slattery, 2013, p. 19) requires shifts in how we think, how we teach, and how we meet the needs of diverse students, from diverse cultures to embrace multiple methods and modes of expression.

When fear culture rules and conveys disapproval of specific marginalized groups, resulting in oppression, it in effect silences individuals (Wilkinson & Kleinman, 2016), and

combatting this silencing is central to the reasoning behind this study. Within the schooling and higher education process, when academic discourse is solely preferred over other modes of expression, students can have a feeling of nowhere to go with their stories and feelings that are repressed, leaving them further distanced from an honest and open connection to writing and the process of self-discovery, affecting their identity as writers, as well. While there is definite merit to the importance of teaching academic discourse to all students, regardless of the background, overcoming binary oppositions in thinking can be explored by utilizing both inner-directed theories that emphasize expressive writing and outer-directed theories that focus writing on social issues and academic discourse, in order to provide more effective writing experiences for diverse learners with varied backgrounds and interests (Bruner, 1985; Mlynarczyk, 2014).

Therefore, while academic discourse is not precluded, but an essential component of embracing these varied discourses and rhetorical styles for diverse learners, as discussed in Chapter I, policies and curricula promoting a more inclusive approach in composition and literature classes is particularly important for community colleges, whose diversity is projected to continue to grow exponentially within the next few years and to meet the needs of marginalized and multilingual students (Brown, 2016; Long, 2016; Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017). With further research and efforts to provide social justice initiatives through collective projects that are engaging and inclusive with a variety of rhetorical approaches, we as educators can continue to make inroads to meet the needs of college-level students for greater academic success. The students' responses in regard to their experiences of participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* demonstrated the value of the project to them individually as writers, as well as to their identity, developing their voices and confidence by participating in a group project with a social healing purpose, and enabling them to feel that they

were making a difference within a larger community. Continuing to develop this sense of identity and community caregiving from a pluralistic, postmodern perspective fulfills the theoretical basis of the project and provides a foundation to build upon for continued work. Through departmental and college-wide policies and curricula that embrace diverse discourse strategies and social justice group projects like *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*, whether in English or other relevant departments, writing and creative expressions can be used for individual and collective expression for a shared purpose within a broader context that parallels the needs of our students in a swiftly changing postmodern world. As Slattery (2013) contends, “In curriculum theory, crossing the border necessitates a commitment to postmodern democratic reform where subject-area disciplinary boundaries are traversed” (p. 29). Moving beyond the edges and borders that define our traditionally held concepts of education within our respective fields can expand our purpose and resolve. *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* can serve as a catalyst to take us beyond those defined borders, facilitating learning beyond the classroom for positive rewards for self and for the broader community.

### **Limitations**

While the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in the middle of the study provided the students with a common experience to undergo an issue of social suffering together and within a global context, it definitely resulted in some limitations to the study. Because we were required to move to online remote learning after spring break, the students and I could no longer experience the face-to-face interaction in the classroom that would allow for a more complete understanding of the students’ experiences of participating in the study. Discussions online of the literature and during the book theme discussion were more limited because of the technology,

with some students unable to use their cameras or microphones at times, and many relying on chat, whether due to technology issues or discomfort with communicating in a new forum. In addition, slow and unreliable Internet connections also interfered with discussions and the ability of students to connect. Also, as a result of the pandemic, the schedules of many participants shifted, whether because of work or family responsibilities, forcing some to be unable to participate as much as they would have preferred, whether in terms of online engagement, or having more time to work on and revise submissions for the book which they might have considered submitting before the pandemic. However, despite these challenges, the satisfaction in overcoming them and contributing a charity book that would benefit students at the college who are suffering from the economic and health effects of the pandemic was positive compensation for the students in their experience of creating the book.

In addition, the fact that this was a qualitative, Interpretivist study must also be considered, and that, as with all qualitative studies, the positionality of the researcher was tied to the analysis and interpretation of the data. An additional limitation of the study was that students' responses may have been informed by their association with me as their professor in their English II course, but student participation was voluntary, and those volunteering to participate had the freedom to respond how or if they chose without fear of penalty. This qualitative study was also limited by a small student sample of 18 participants, meaning that it is not generalizable. However, triangulation of the data through three sources, including the book theme discussion, the submissions for the book, and the semi-structured interviews, along with collecting the data over an extended period of time, over a span of ten months, increased reliability of the findings and the transferability of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* to other classrooms and institutions (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).

## Conclusion

*The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* was a journey of twists and turns that produced transformative results for the students, for my own work as an educator and researcher, and for the broader community. The unexpected onset of the pandemic not only shifted the implementation of the study but resulted in limitations to the students' ability to participate through an in-person shared experience. However, despite these challenges, the resulting *Unity and Healing* book that the students published is a testament to their commitment to the cause of Healing Social Suffering, unifying their individual voices, perspectives, and varied rhetorical strategies for a collective purpose reflective of Postmodernism. Demonstrating rhizomatic learning (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987), complex thinking, and multilayered writing styles, the students embraced the use of multimodalities and translingualism as semiotic methods of expression that challenge a monolingual and linear dogma for composition strategies in support of Poststructuralist Feminism's theoretical emphasis of inclusion through linguistic diversity.

Perhaps the most unexpected revelation of the study was the manner in which the students unified personal, expressive writing strategies of Pennebaker's (2016) paradigm of writing for healing with their in-depth discussions of issues of social suffering and oppression to provide solutions that encompassed the individual and the collective for a new perspective of "Healing Social Suffering." The positive experiences with writing and freedom from repression through expression can be developed and built upon as a foundation for healing and literacy success by providing students the opportunity to find their voices and to express them through diverse writing experiences and multilayered discourse modes. As a result, varied learners from diverse backgrounds can feel included and encouraged to communicate, feeling that they are

contributing to the betterment of society through the sharing of their work. Creative approaches to teaching writing and expression, such as the possibilities that *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* provided, can enable more effective ways to build student self-efficacy, learning strategies, and interest levels that encompass diverse student learners in more inclusive ways, rather than solely preferencing academic discourse, while encouraging students to use their voices for the community caretaking that social suffering theory advocates. Psychologist Jerome Bruner (2003) powerfully sums up the critical importance of valuing the stories and diversity of our students, “The tyranny of the single story surely led our forebears to guarantee freedom of expression... Let many stories bloom” (p. 103).

Moving forward, further research and implementation of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* can expand the possibilities of student engagement, perspectives, and personal and social transformation. While the COVID-19 experience provided a unique moment in history to conduct this study, further research can provide more data without the limitations of options from an online remote learning format. By pursuing the implementation of the project as a departmental project and even as a college-wide experience, in addition to expanding the project to other colleges, the seed of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* has the opportunity to take flight, guided by its participants to promote individual and collective healing in positive and transformative ways as a source of pride and a lasting legacy for social change through the students’ published work.

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## Appendix A

### CONSENT FORM

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted through Kutztown University. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before you decide whether or not you want to participate in the study. The University requires that you give your signed agreement if you choose to participate.

This study is being conducted by Heather E. Adams Osborn, Graduate Student in the EDD, Education Doctorate in Transformational Teaching and Learning program

#### **Title of the Study:**

*The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*

#### **Purpose of the Study:**

The purpose of this research study is to gather data on the students' experiences of participating in the creation of an Amazon book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* and on the supporting writing assignments and classroom exercises. The research questions include: 1. What are the students' experiences of "writing for healing" on issues of social suffering and oppression while participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*? 2. How does the use of rhetorical strategies, including translanguaging and multimodalities, in journals and writing assignments impact teaching strategies and the creation of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*? 3. Do dualities of writing for self vs. writing for social contexts on a collaboratively chosen theme shift in a way that rejects these binaries?

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things: The data to be collected for the study includes three open-ended surveys distributed in the last two weeks of the semester, videotaping a discussion on selection of the book's theme from voluntary participants at midterm, and semi-structured interviews after the publication of the Amazon book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* with three to five students who have voluntarily submitted their work for the project. In addition, data will be collected from students' journals, which includes homework and in-class writing assignments, and students' essays written throughout the course of the semester. The submissions of work by students volunteering to participate in the Amazon book project will be collected at the end of the semester for publication and for data. All data collected will be coded using open coding and analyzed for the study.

#### **Risks or Discomforts, and Benefits of Being in the Study:**

The study has the following risks and/or discomforts. As I am studying interventions in my teaching practice, and these interventions exist in most classroom settings, there is little to no risk to students. The videotape of the classroom discussion is unlikely to be obtained, as the researcher will keep this on one disk in a locked cabinet at home, with the only key being held by the primary researcher, and the videotape recording will be erased at the conclusion of the study. Should a breach occur, there is little to no damage, since the participants will be putting forth their best efforts in their classroom discussion for selecting the Amazon book's theme.

The benefits to participation are: Providing students with the opportunity to create and to publish an Amazon book on a collaboratively chosen social suffering theme is a unique experience within a college English course. There is little research on this type of intervention and examining the benefits of writing using varied rhetorical styles, strategies, and multimodalities for individual expression within the context of a collaborative project to promote social healing and transformation. The benefits of the research outweigh the minimal to low risk level, as outlined above.

**Confidentiality and Anonymity:**

Records will be kept private and will be handled in a confidential manner to the extent that all records, including consent forms, raw data from journals, essays, open-ended surveys, semi-structured interviews, coding of data, and videotape recordings will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home office, to which I have the only key as the sole researcher in the study. At the conclusion of the study, all paper records will be shredded, and videotape recordings will be erased. In any report or presentation, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a research study participant. You will remain anonymous.

**Voluntary Participation:**

Your participation is voluntary; refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled, and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The data collected is not graded material. Participation in the study is voluntary and does not affect your course grade. All students in the class will participate in the activities as a normal part of class proceedings; however, the data from the study will only include information, for example, from essays, journals, student submissions for the Amazon book, video recording of discussion of book's theme, open-ended surveys, and semi-structured interviews from those who consent to participate in the study.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is: Heather E. Adams Osborn, Adjunct Professor of English, [REDACTED]. The contact information for the advisor of this study is: Dr. Mark Wolfmeyer, Department of Secondary Education, Kutztown University, Kutztown, PA 19530, [REDACTED].

You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later regarding the research study, you may contact the researcher listed above. If you have any questions or concerns about the rights of research participants, please contact the IRB Committee at Kutztown University at 484-646-4167.

**Compensation:**

No financial compensation for the study will be offered, and participation is strictly voluntary. For students providing submissions for the Amazon book on the chosen social suffering theme, 25 points extra credit will be offered. For students who elect not to participate in the study or who choose not to submit work for the Amazon book, a comparable amount of 25 points extra credit will be offered by completing 5 extra journal entries at 5 points each. Participation in the study and in written work for extra credit is voluntary, and grades will not be affected.

**Future Research Studies:**

Identifiers might be removed from the identifiable private information or identifiable biospecimens and that, after such removal, the information or biospecimens could be used for future research studies or distributed to another investigator for future research studies without additional informed consent from you if this might be a possibility.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the information described above and have received a copy of this information. I have asked questions I had regarding the research study and have received answers to my satisfaction. I am 18 years of age or older and voluntarily consent to participate in this study.

---

Signature of Participant

Date

*Thank you for your participation.*

## Appendix B

### Semi-Structured Interview: Protocol and Questions

Heather E. Adams Osborn

**Introduction:** Brief background info given to participants about my work as a graduate student in the EDD program at Kutztown University.

**Overview and Purpose:** To gather data about voluntary participants' experiences of *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* and their reactions to seeing their work submitted for the Amazon book in print form. The focus of the study is primarily on the group experience of participating in *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project* and examines how the understanding of "writing for healing" can be expanded in new ways from an individual context to a social context with a shared group experience on a common theme of social suffering.

**Participants:** 3-5 volunteer participants who are students in my English II, [REDACTED] course who have submitted their work for publication in the Amazon book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*.

**Informed Consent:** Remind participants that they have already signed informed consent forms and remind them how the data collected will be used, along with assurances for privacy. Participants will be told once again that their participation is voluntary, that they can end the interview at any time, and that their grades in the English II course will not be affected. Participants will also be reminded that all data collected will be securely kept in a locked filing cabinet in my home office until the conclusion of the study, when all data will be shredded.

**Ownership of Content:** Ensure that participants understand that the data collected will be used for the research project, that all paper data will be shredded and destroyed at the conclusion of the study, and that their identities in the study will remain anonymous.

### Semi-Structured Interview Questions

**Question 1:** What was your experience of participating in the creation of the Amazon book for *The Writing for Healing and Transformation Project*?

**Question 2:** What is your understanding of yourself and your experiences as a writer after participating in this group project and seeing your work in print?

**Question 3:** How does seeing this work in print affect your views of using writing collaboratively to facilitate social healing and transformation?

**Question 4:** Do you feel that working together and writing on a common theme for a collaborative book affected the meaning of your writing/your work for the book?

**Question 5:** Do you believe that your thinking about writing for self vs. writing for others has shifted as a result of participating in this group project?

## Appendix C

Table 2

*Coding Chart*

Codes	Description	Data Points	Categories	Themes	Research Questions
Social Suffering and Oppression	**The descriptors for the varied issues related to Social Suffering and Oppression found in the three data sources are listed at the end of the table.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing and Social Suffering and Oppression	Healing Social Suffering	1 and 3
Multimodalities	The use of pictures, photos, artwork, technology, and media for more varied forms of expression.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Semiotics	Poststructural Feminism	2
Unity and Healing	Theme chosen by students for book.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing, Social Suffering and Oppression, and Non-Binaries	Writing for Healing, Healing Social Suffering, Post-modernism, and Post-structural Feminism	1 and 3
Healing Through Creativity	Providing healing through creative expression.	Book, Discussion of Theme	Healing	Writing for Healing	1, 2, 3
Healing Social Suffering Through Children	Educating others and supporting children to pave the way for collective healing.	Book, Discussion of Theme	Healing and Social Suffering and Oppression	Healing Social Suffering and Writing for Healing	3

Codes	Description	Data Points	Category	Theme	Research Questions
Non-binaries: Alternative Discourse	Poetry and alternate forms of writing.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Non-Binaries and Semiotics	Poststructural Feminism and Postmodernism	2 and 3
Cultural Conflict and Identity	The conflict between culture and understanding self.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Social Suffering and Oppression, Identity, and Non-Binaries	Postmodernism, Writing for Healing, and Healing Social Suffering	1, 2, 3
Cultural Identity	The understanding of self, based on culture.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Identity and Healing	Writing for Healing and Healing Social Suffering	1, 2, 3
Identity	Understanding of self.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Identity and Healing	Writing for Healing	1, 2, 3
Gender Identity	Understanding of self through gender.	Book, Interviews	Identity and Healing	Writing for Healing and Healing Social Suffering	1, 3
Identity Through Multimodalities	Understanding of self through visual media.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Identity, Semiotics, and Healing	Writing for Healing, Post-structural Feminism	1, 2, 3
Identity Through Translingualism	Understanding of self through alternative language use.	Book, Discussion of Theme	Identity, Semiotics, and Healing	Writing for Healing, Post-structural Feminism	1, 2, 3
Identity as a Writer: --Love of Writing --Sharing Writing with Others --Shifted because of Book --Overcoming Fears	Understanding of self as a writer and the expression or shifts of that.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Identity, Healing, Non-Binaries	Writing for Healing, Healing Social Suffering, Postmodernism	1, 2, 3
Pride in Book Results – Self and/or Group	Positive response to book publication.	Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Identity, Healing, and Non-Binaries	Writing for Healing, Healing Social Suffering, Postmodernism	1 and 3
Translingualism	Writing with more than one language or one style of “English.”	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Semiotics	Poststructural Feminism	2
Positives of Working Collectively	Value of working with a group for a common goal.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing, Non-Binaries, and Social Suffering and Oppression	Healing Social Suffering, Postmodernism	1, 3

Codes	Description	Data Points	Categories	Themes	Research Questions
Inclusion of Topics and Students for Book	Encompasses everyone's essay topics from the class.	Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Semiotics and Healing	Poststructural Feminism, Writing for Healing, and Healing Social Suffering	1, 3
Positive Healing – Shared Through Individual Experiences	Sharing of individual experiences about issues of social suffering and oppression.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing	Writing for Healing and Healing Social Suffering	1, 3
Healing Through Connection	Healing through family and personal connections to others.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing and Social Suffering and Oppression	Writing for Healing and Healing Social Suffering	1, 3
Empathy for Social Suffering	Acknowledging the suffering of others.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing and Social Suffering and Oppression	Healing Social Suffering	1, 3
Emotional Healing	Finding emotional relief and healing from trauma.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing	Writing for Healing And Healing Social Suffering	1, 3
Physical Healing	The need for healing in a physical sense in response to an illness, trauma, or disability.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing	Writing for Healing And Healing Social Suffering	1, 3
Healing Through Multimodalities	Finding methods of healing through media, visuals, and technology.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing and Semiotics	Writing for Healing And Post-structural Feminism	1, 2, 3
Healing Through Reading and Research	Finding personal healing through reading and research.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing	Writing For Healing	1, 3
Writing for Healing – Self and/or Others	Pennebaker's (2016) theory of healing through expressive and personal writing.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing	Writing For Healing	1, 2, 3



Codes	Description	Data Points	Categories	Themes	Research Questions
Rhizomatic Learning	Organic learning that leads to more complex operations of understanding.	Book and Interviews	Non-Binaries, Healing, Semiotics, Identity, and Social Suffering and Oppression	Healing Social Suffering, Writing for Healing, Poststructural Feminism, and Postmodernism	1, 2, 3
Healing Through Nature	The value and symbolism of healing that nature and images of nature provide in an individual or a collective sense.	Book and Interviews	Healing, Semiotics, and Social Suffering and Oppression	Healing Social Suffering, Writing for Healing, and Poststructural Feminism	1, 2, 3
Healing Social Suffering: --Healing Collectively --Healing Through Children --Healing Through Love --Standing in Truth and Personal Power --Speaking Out	Ideas and solutions for healing social suffering and oppression.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing, Non-Binaries, and Social Suffering and Oppression	Healing Social Suffering, Writing for Healing, and Postmodernism	1, 3
Healing Through Love	Healing solution for personal issues of trauma.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Healing and Social Suffering and Oppression	Writing for Healing and Healing Social Suffering	1, 3
Non-Binaries in Thinking and Writing: --Shifts --Personal Insights and Connections --Cultural Encounters and Insights	Examining issues beyond dualities and encompassing individual and collective perspectives.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Non-Binaries	Postmodernism	1, 2, 3
Postmodernism: Individual and Collective	A perspective that encompasses the individual and collective.	Book, Discussion of Theme, Interviews	Non-Binaries	Postmodernism	1, 2, 3

\*\*Social Suffering and Oppression Coding Descriptors: Racism, Sexism, Homophobia, Gender Roles, Transgender Oppression, Political Oppression, Cultural Social Oppression, Religious Oppression, Poverty, Democracy, Equality, Stereotypes, Media Representation/Racial Oppression in the Media, Historic Oppression, Governmental Oppression, Beauty Standards for Women, Equity, Effects of War, Cultural Misappropriation, Effects of COVID-19, Oppression due to Trump, 2020 overall

## Appendix D

**Table 3**

*Codes with Example Quotations*

Code	Data Point for Example	Example
Social Suffering and Oppression	Book	“Native Americans in general also have the highest rate of suicide by race, as well as the highest rates of addiction. All of these issues are remnants of historical trauma that Native people have been forced to live through for the past almost five hundred years.”
Multimodalities	Interviews	“I used my photographs, which other people used, maybe a poem, which is another form of expression.”
Unity and Healing	Book	“The unity of individuals within community is the foundation of a strong nation. It is unity that establishes the value of goodness and equality. This helps to strengthen the bonds of love in society. It also supports the foundation of peace in all respects.”
Healing Through Creativity	Discussion of Theme	Researcher: “How have you guys been dealing with all of this? [Referring to COVID-19] Have you found like some coping mechanisms have you used? Student in chat: “Listening to music. Much more in painting.”
Healing Social Suffering Through Children	Discussion of Theme	“So, I think the best way is to educate our kids, and then give them self-confidence to push them forward. In this time and all times, too.”
Non-binaries: Alternative Discourse	Discussion of Theme	“I am going to put the poem in the chat really quick.”
Racial Oppression in the Media	Discussion of Theme	“Can I do something about representation in media as in video games cartoons movies, shows?”
Cultural Conflict and Identity	Book	“A Pair of Tickets,” by Amy Tan, is a story about a young woman named Jing-mei / June and how she is trying to find her roots and to reunite with her family. There are many conflicts in the story, but in the end, meeting up with her sisters in China is a positive resolution, even though her deceased mother wasn’t there to share in the reunion. As a result of the journey to meet her sisters, June adopts a new life and new understanding of her Chinese culture.”
Cultural Identity	Book	“Personally, I see my grandmother in my mother and with my mother’s three sisters. They all have the same smile and eyes, which reminds me of my grandmother. Therefore, I relate to what the author infers in the story, of how they are all similar, yet not, but they all come from the same roots.”

<b>Gender Identity</b>	Book	“I came out as being transgender the summer before senior year and started presenting male at school from the first day. My school gave me many problems, the biggest of which was the flip-flopping between allowing me to use bathrooms, and then telling me months into the school year that the school board said I couldn't.”
<b>Identity Through Multimodalities</b>	Interviews	“Yeah, I definitely wanted to come up with more photos, and I apologize that I didn't. I love photography-- it's such a way of expression, and I wanted to be a photography major and we had different activities not the same activities, but we had a different assignment each week, and we had to go out and take these pictures, and the pictures that I added was I think for my own benefit.”
<b>Identity Through Translingualism</b>	Book	“In addition, my abuela and abuelo live in Ecuador, and the last time they visited was six years ago. At times, I would feel lost without seeing any of my grandparents. The best thing to do, though, is to keep moving on, but to still keep the memories alive, as Jing-mei does in the story.”
<b>Identity as a Writer: --Love of Writing --Sharing Writing with Others --Shifted Because of Book --Overcoming Fears</b>	Interviews	<p><i>Love of Writing and Sharing Writing with Others:</i> “I think that my writing has usually just been the same for myself and for others. I think that they both go hand in hand because I love writing, and so I feel like whenever I write, even if it's about a political text when political science, even if it's about English, philosophy, I was in there.”</p> <p><i>Shifted Because of Book:</i> “Now I see and understand that my story, it might be fine for someone else to listen. I can even actually write a book that people can read and maybe I see and be able to relate to different parts of like another life, you know. I should be able to, like, enjoy my story.”</p> <p><i>Overcoming Fears:</i> “I know that I was nervous because like I've never been in a book before. I was never asked to write something, so I was nervous, and I was just asking my dad what am I going to write to put into the book. So, you know what, maybe just be real, let me just tell people your story. That's it.”</p>
<b>Pride in Book Results – Self and/or Group</b>	Interviews	“My experience was really good. I thought it was really cool that like as a class we all had one main theme, but we all had such different experiences.”
<b>Translingualism</b>	Book	“Although, when my family from Ecuador comes to visit us, they speak fast, so at times it gets me overwhelmed. When that occurs, I ask them to slow down a little, which in Spanish is “habla más despacio por favor.”
<b>Positives of Working Collectively</b>	Interviews	“So, I think it definitely it's a lot more powerful like when it's all together and it's in print, and like it can be anyone can buy it anywhere and it have it in their hand and have all over stories.”
<b>Inclusion of Topics and Students for Book</b>	Discussion of Theme	“Yes, something with unity and healing that includes students.”

Positive Healing – Shared Through Individual Experiences	Discussion of Theme	“How would we focus on the positive from these things?”
Healing Through Connection	Discussion of Theme	“Oh-- it's OK if you don't have your own grandad's accent because you always have his stories; it's OK if you don't have Grandma's sense of humor because you can always make her laugh; it's OK if... what was that... it's OK you don't have your brother's height because it will always be in your reach; it's OK if you don't have dad's courage yet because you always have his strength; it's OK if you don't have your sister's look because you can, um, when you when you smile, it's just as beautiful...”
Empathy for Social Suffering	Discussion of Theme	“It is very hard to watch the news.” [Speaking in regard to COVID-19.]
Emotional Healing	Book	“And it's okay if you lose something because you can always find us within you.”
Physical Healing	Discussion of Theme	Researcher: “So, what are some other things you guys are doing?” [To deal with the effects of COVID-19.] Student chat response: “Sleeping.”
Healing Through Multimodalities	Interviews	“I don't think that was edited at all, but I definitely think that those photos were the ones that I found that went with the theme because a rainbow is usually after a storm, and I think that's how, it is we're growing right now.”
Healing Through Reading and Research	Discussion of Theme	Researcher: “Do any of you use reading, as kind of like a way of escape, therapy?” Student responds in chat: “Yes!” Student then writes that she is reading philosophy. Researcher: “Philosophy, that's awesome! Are you taking a philosophy class right now, or is it stuff that you learned about before that you're exploring further?” Student responds in chat that she is exploring it further for her major.
Writing for Healing – Self and/or Others	Book	“When the mother tells the girl to keep herself “from looking like the slut you are [she was] so bent on becoming” (Kincaid 324), it almost mirrors what my mother tells me about becoming my father, even during the slightest argument. For context, my father is a drug-addicted alcoholic who disowned me over a petty reason and has a terrible attitude, practically that of a child. Even though our mothers seem to be acting malicious with their advice, I believe their motivation for doing so is to prevent us from becoming something we would regret, or something that would hurt them to see as a mother. They are motivated by the fear of our unhappiness, and so they feel that using a form of reverse psychology by bringing up something we don't want to have us steer clear of that path. In the end, my mother and the girl's mother both genuinely care about us and only want the best for us.”
Healing Social Suffering:	Book	<i>Healing Collectively</i> : “This helps to strengthen the bonds of love in society. It also supports the foundation of peace in all respects.”

<p>--Healing Collectively</p> <p>--Healing Through Children</p> <p>--Healing Through Love</p> <p>--Standing in Truth and Personal Power</p> <p>--Speaking Out</p>	<p>Discussion of Theme</p> <p>Book</p> <p>Book</p> <p>Book</p>	<p><i>Healing Through Children</i>: “Because like everything in the world now is just crazy.... And like, truly the only way to get past it is with our kids, or the kids growing up now. I think government’s messed up. I think everything’s so messed up. So, kids are kind of like a way to push past that.”</p> <p><i>Healing Through Love</i>: “And with love, humans win. This period in time shows how much we need unity and love.”</p> <p><i>Standing in Truth and Personal Power</i>: “Most of the world continues to pressure women to stay object-like because they want them to be easy to control. Unfortunately for the rest of the world, women have a bigger role to play than to sit and look pretty for everyone else.”</p> <p><i>Speaking Out</i>: “From my own experiences, I learned that we must speak and express ourselves and to help at least by expressing our voices. We must impose our strength, so we can help the women who still suffer injustice and discrimination.”</p>
<p>Healing Through Love</p>	<p>Book</p>	<p>“The story touches on the loss of culture and what it can mean to us, but as the end of the story shows, when Grandpa’s ghost returns, love is the best medicine that can help us get through things, no matter what, and give us a better perspective.”</p>
<p>Healing Through Nature</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“...because a rainbow is usually after a storm, and I think that's how it is we're growing right now.”</p>
<p>Rhizomatic Learning</p>	<p>Interviews</p>	<p>“Other people used photographs to help set the tone and the mood of the story that we were trying to portray, so I think each was a direction to go in that still in the end result led to the bigger part of the story of the theme which is unity and healing.”</p>
<p>Non-Binaries in Thinking and Writing:</p> <p>--Shifts</p> <p>--Personal Insights and Connections</p> <p>--Cultural Encounters and Insights</p>	<p>Book</p>	<p><i>Shifts</i>: “My first analysis of the story, I have realized, was completely misguided. Understanding the historical context brought to me a whole new narrative that I had completely overlooked.”</p> <p><i>Personal Insights and Connections</i>: “Even though today there is a lot more diversity in cartoons, video games and even comics than there was during the time of “Volar,” I still feel a little dissatisfied, since most of the characters I see are not Puerto Rican like me.”</p> <p><i>Cultural Encounters and Insights</i>: “The trip to Cuba was just one of the most amazing and culturally expanding for me and my understanding of the world, especially for my first trip out of the country, and I would do it again any day, any time.”</p>
<p>Postmodernism: Individual and Collective</p>	<p>Book</p>	<p>“What these modern feminist groups and the feminist literature of women who have been marginalized by society remind us is that, while many underprivileged women find strength and do a lot of good in coming together to help themselves, they shouldn’t be alone in the fight for their rights and the rights of all women.”</p>

**Appendix E****Class Schedule of Assignments from English II Spring 2020 Syllabus**

M, Jan 13	Introduction to course and review of syllabus
W, Jan 15	Read “Fiction: Reading, Responding, Writing” pp. 16-19; “Understanding Text: Plot,” pp. 48-50; and “The Shroud,” pp. 50-51.
F, Jan 17	Read “Character,” pp. 94-101 Read “King of the Bingo Game,” Ralph Ellison, pp. 56-63 <u>Journal</u> : Write a critical response to the reading (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed), sharing your thoughts and insights about the themes in the story.
M, Jan 20	Martin Luther King, Jr. Day – NO CLASSES
W, Jan 22	Read “Narration and Point of View” pp. 77-81. Read “Girl,” Jamaica Kincaid, pp. 324-25 and “Volar,” Judith Ortiz Cofer, pp. 144-46 <u>Journal</u> : Write a critical response to “Girl” or “Volar,” and include, if you choose, a discussion of your own upbringing and culture, including visuals, such as pictures or drawings. You can also choose to write your journal in your native language or a second language and translate (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).
F, Jan 24	Read “The Cask of Amontillado,” Edgar Allan Poe, pp. 81-87 <u>Journal</u> : Write a critical response to “The Cask of Amontillado” (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).
M, Jan 27	“The Cask of Amontillado” discussion continued
W, Jan 29	Read “Setting,” pp. 122-24 Read “A Pair of Tickets,” Amy Tan, pp. 130-44 <u>Journal</u> : Write a critical response to “A Pair of Tickets,” and, if you choose, discuss your own cultural connections or travel experiences. You

may use visuals of the region/country you are discussing and/or also write your journal in another language you speak and then translate the entry (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).

- F, Jan 31 "A Pair of Tickets" discussion continued
- M, Feb 3 Read "Reading and Responding to Fiction," pp. 20-27 and "Sample Writing," pp. 39-47
- W, Feb 5 Read "Symbol," pp. 147-49  
Read "The Story of an Hour," Kate Chopin, pp. 265-67  
Journal: Write a critical response to "The Story of an Hour" (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).
- F, Feb 7 Read "Love Medicine," Louise Erdrich, pp. 279-94  
Journal: Write a critical response to "Love Medicine" (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).
- M, Feb 10 "Love Medicine" discussion continued
- W, Feb 12 Rough Draft of Paper #1 Due  
Peer Group Workshop-- Bring printed copies of rough drafts of Paper #1 for peer review by your group and be prepared to participate in reading and responding to drafts. (10 points total possible for drafts and effective participation.)
- F, Feb 14 Paper #1 Due – place your completed, typed essay in a pocket folder, along with all prior rough drafts, written comments from your peer group, prewriting, and memo question responses.  
Read "Drama: Reading, Responding, and Writing," pp. 650-52; "Sample Writing," pp. 673-75; and "Basic Moves," pp. 1042-45
- M, Feb 17 Review for Midterm Exam
- W, Feb 19 Midterm Exam – Fiction

- F, Feb 21                    Read “Antigone,” Sophocles, pp. 1005-37  
Prepare Presentations
- M, Feb 24                    Conferences—failure to appear for your conference appointment counts as one class absence.
- W, Feb 26                    Conferences—failure to appear for your conference appointment counts as one class absence.
- F, Feb 28                    Conferences—failure to appear for your conference appointment counts as one class absence.
- M, March 2                    Continue “Antigone,” pp. 1005-37 and Presentations
- W, March 4                    Continue “Antigone” and Presentations
- F, March 6                    “The Literature Research Essay,” pp. 1079-89 and “Quotation, Citation, and Documentation,” pp. 1090-1119  
Continue “Antigone”
- M, March 9 – F, March 13: Spring Break – NO CLASSES
- M, March 16                    Continue “Antigone” – Film and discussion  
Journal: Write a critical response to “Antigone” (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).
- W, March 18                    Continue “Antigone” – Film and discussion
- F, March 20                    Rough Draft of Paper #2 Due  
Peer Group Workshop-- Bring printed copies of rough drafts of Paper #2 for peer review by your group and be prepared to participate in reading and responding to drafts. (10 points total possible for drafts and effective participation.)



- M, March 23 Paper #2 Due – place your completed, typed essay in a pocket folder, along with all prior rough drafts, written comments from your peer group, prewriting, and memo question responses.  
Read “Poetry: Reading, Responding, and Writing,” pp. 398-401
- W, March 25 Read “Sample Writing,” pp. 425-27 and “Sample Research Essay,” pp. 1120-29
- F, March 27 Group presentations on poetry
- M, March 30 Read “Speaker: Whose Voice Do We Hear?” pp. 428-33, “Barbie Doll,” Marge Piercy, pp. 615-16; “cream of wheat,” Lucille Clifton, p. 439; and “I, Too,” Langston Hughes, p. 608  
Read on Blackboard: “Cinderella,” Anne Sexton and “A Litany for Survival,” Audre Lorde  
Journal: Find images that you feel are stereotypes and oppress others in society in ways that coincide with the themes of today’s poems. Include the image(s) in your journal and discuss your image(s) in relation to one or more of today’s poems (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).
- W, April 1 Poetry discussions continue and group presentations
- F, April 3 Read “Situation and Setting,” pp. 442-43  
Read “Daystar,” Rita Dove, pp. 443; “The Woman Hanging from the 13<sup>th</sup> Floor,” Joy Harjo, pp. 500-2; “History,” Adrienne Rich, p. 626; and “Easter 1916,” W. B. Yeats, pp. 632-34; and “Humanity 101,” Denise Duhamel, pp. 444-45  
Journal: Write a critical response to one of today’s poems (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).
- M, April 6 Poetry discussions continue and group presentations
- W, April 8 Read “Symbol,” pp. 503; 506--9  
Read “London,” William Blake, pp. 482; “The Lamb,” “The Tyger,” and “The Chimney Sweeper,” William Blake, pp. 588-90; “The Road Not Taken,” Robert Frost, pp. 511-12; and “The World is Too Much With Us,” William Wordsworth, p. 571

- Journal: Write a critical response to one of today's poems (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).
- F, April 10      Read "External Form," pp. 555-59
- Read "My Father's Norton Introduction to Literature, Third Edition (1981)," Hai-Dang Phan, pp. 10-12; "Elena," Pat Mora, p. 613; "Dothead," Amit Majmudar, pp. 495-96
- Read on Blackboard: "The Powwow at the End of the World," Sherman Alexie; "Immigrants in Our Own Land" and "As Children Know," Jimmy Santiago Baca
- Journal: Adding visuals and/or writing using another language you speak if you choose, discuss the themes of culture and social conflicts in one or more of the poems and be prepared to discuss (1 page minimum if hand-written or ½ page if typed).
- M, April 13      Poetry discussions continue
- W, April 15      Library Visit
- F, April 17      Rough Drafts of Proposals Due
- Peer Group Workshop—Bring copies of rough drafts of Proposal.
- M, April 20      Proposals Due: Be prepared to present and discuss your Final Research topic in class.
- W, April 22      Review for exam
- F, April 24      Poetry and Drama Exam
- M, April 27      Rough Drafts of Final Project Research Essay Due
- Peer Group Workshop—Bring copies of rough drafts of Final Research Essay.
- W, April 29      Revision Workshop and MLA check of source citation on Final Research Project—Bring copies of Final Project drafts with MLA citation completed for feedback from myself and your peer group.

- F, May 1                      Revision Workshop on Final Research Project—Bring copies of Final Project drafts for feedback from myself and your peer group.
- M, May 4                      Last day of class  
Final Research Project—Bring copies of Final Project drafts.
- W, May 6                      Final Research Project due by NOON today. Late research projects will NOT be accepted under any circumstances and become a ZERO if not submitted by 12:05 p.m. today.

## Appendix F

### Assignment Sheet for Paper 1 for English II Spring 2020 Course

#### **Paper #1 – The Response Essay**

**Rough Drafts Due: F, Feb 14<sup>th</sup>**

**Papers Due: M, Feb 17<sup>th</sup>**

In this 3-page Response Essay, you will select one or more of the texts we have examined so far in the course and write an essay that focuses on a particular reaction you had to your chosen text(s). Your focus might be on a particular character or characters, theme, or setting, perhaps using some of the literary elements we have learned so far to help create a focus of interest. Your response should reflect your own reactions and analysis, using examples from your own life perspective and experiences, so that we clearly see your experience and understanding of the work of literature. In addition, your essay should also pull examples from the text(s) you are using to support your focus and the thesis you are trying to convey. All examples from the text(s) should be cited using MLA citation, both within the body of your essay and with a Works Cited page at the end for your chosen work of literature. When choosing the text for your focus, think about the work we've read that affected you the most, or perhaps had a theme or character that you felt conveyed something of the human condition that struck you as being an important life lesson.

Here are some possible ideas to get you thinking. You are not limited to these topics, but these themes may help you narrow your focus to something of interest:

--All of our stories relate in some way to themes of social suffering or oppression, including racism, gender roles, cultural divisions, economic divisions and oppression, the oppression of women, and marginalization because of racial and cultural heritage. Choose one of those themes to focus on from one of our stories to discuss your reactions and to analyze the meaning and significance of the theme in the story. Make sure to use textual examples and quotes from the story. If you wish, you can relate the story to an event or events from your own life that parallel the story's theme and be sure to use details to show that specific moment for comparison to the text, explaining how/why they are similar. Discuss why you think your theme is an important societal issue that both you and the author can help bring to light for transformational change.

--Examine the theme of 'initiation' or 'coming of age' from one of our stories, where the character experienced an identity conflict with culture and felt 'different' from others because of it, but then made some personal realization about acceptance of self, culture, and identity. Focusing on the journey of a specific character, provide textual examples to discuss what they learned and how and make a specific comparison with examples to show how you could relate to

this character's experience. Make sure you 'show' your audience a clear comparison of what you and the character realized for discussion through both personal and textual examples.

--Several of our stories focused on the issues of gender roles and gender expectations from family and society. Focus on one or more of these stories and discuss how your own experience of gender role expectations is similar and/or different from the beliefs and expectations expressed in your chosen story. Use specific examples from your life and from the text for discussion and support to examine how or if things have shifted historically since your chosen story was written and why this is still an important issue.

--In a few of our stories, we saw how setting, being in a new environment, and travel could affect the development of the characters and themes and how language was tied to identity and cultural experiences. Discuss how setting and language were important components of one of our stories, whether for the character's development and/or for one of its central themes. Then, make a personal comparison to one or more of your own experiences with being in a new setting, travel experiences, or a personal connection to the languages you use. Use specifics both from the text and from your experiences for your comparison. If you enjoy using visuals and/or if you can speak more than one language, consider using those skills and interests in your essay by including photos, artwork, or showing key events in a mixed use of language for expression.

Make sure all completed essays are handed in by the first 10 minutes of class on the due date to avoid late penalties, placed in a pocket folder, along with any prewriting, rough drafts, and your memo question responses to the questions listed below.

**Memo Questions (½ page total if hand-written, ¼ page if typed)**

- 1. Discuss your writing process with this essay and how easy or difficult it was in creating it.**
- 2. What if your intended focus of the essay and meaning you want to convey to the audience?**
- 3. What do you like best about your essay, and what would you like to do to revise it?**

## Appendix G

### Assignment Sheet for Paper 2 for English II Spring 2020 Course

#### Paper #2 – Literary Analysis

Paper Due: F, April 3<sup>rd</sup>

#### Upload to the “Paper 2 – Uphold here” folder in Blackboard Learning Content

This second paper should be a Literary Analysis, in which you take a specific focus in regard to the work or works of literature you are examining and showing how these parts relate to the whole for the overall meaning of the work. The essay should be 3 pages in length, and you are required to use at least 1 outside research source, in addition to using examples from the text. MLA citation should be used to cite your research sources and your chosen text of literature within the body of your essay and at the end with a Works Cited page. You are not limited by these topics, but here are some ideas, both broad and specific, for you to consider a topic, although how you choose to focus your Literary Analysis is up to you:

--Do an in-depth Analysis of the use of a specific theme, character, or symbols in the play, a poem, or short story we have read. Or, do a Comparison and Contrast of specific themes, characterization, or symbols in more than one piece of literature we have examined. Make sure you provide concrete examples from the literature and expert discussion and/or quotes from outside research in regard to the literature you have chosen.

--Provide an Analysis of one of our works of literature and the film that was based upon it for a specific thematic meaning. Discuss the original story and the story of the film and then analyze how the author/director borrows from, changes, or adapts the film version to emphasize the meaning and themes from the written version in a more visual way. Use research to assist you in the discussion of the author’s themes and intent, and your research might include expert analysis for support.

--Write an Analysis that focuses on issues of social suffering or oppression that the author is trying to bring to light in a specific work we have read. Analyze how specifics in the story are helpful to showcase the particular issue from a social justice perspective. Additional resources can add to the interpretation to support your analysis.

--Discuss the historical context of a particular work we have read and write an Analysis discussing how the author is addressing an important issue from the time period, whether that is in regard to gender, race, government, spiritual beliefs, etc. But focus on a specific issue of concern that the author is bringing to our attention and why it is significant. Use outside resources to assist you in your historical analysis.

--Write an Analysis of Antigone—is she a tragic heroine, a victim of political oppression, a feminist role model, or all of that? Using the elements of Aristotle’s definitions of tragedy and

what a tragic hero is, give your own perspective on her character. Use outside resources to develop your analysis and/or support it.

--Write an Analysis discussing political issues in 'Antigone,' in terms of Creon's behavior. Consider issues of democracy, political power and oppression, the roles of leaders, dictators running amok, and where Creon weighs in as a leader. Use research and examples from the text.

--Write an Analysis focusing on the theme of Fate vs. Free Will in 'Antigone' and how Greek spiritual beliefs play a central part in Sophocles' purpose for the play. Use research and examples for support.

--Write an Analysis discussing how or if 'Antigone' is effective as a Greek Tragedy, using elements of Katharsis that make us feel better about our own lives through a 'purging' of emotions, as Aristotle defined it. How was Greek drama, like 'Antigone,' a tool for community and healing, bringing the individual together with community for a group experience? Use research and text examples for support.

**Memo Questions (½ page total if hand-written or ¼ page if typed, handed in with essay):**

- 1. How and why did you choose your paper topic and its focus?**
- 2. What is your favorite part of the essay?**
- 3. How would you like to revise it further?**

## Appendix H

### Assignment Sheet for Paper 3 for English II Spring 2020 Course

#### Paper #3 – Research Essay

**Final Essays Due: Wed, May 6<sup>th</sup> by NOON, NO EXCEPTIONS**

For this final essay, write a 5 to 6-page essay that incorporates research from outside sources and uses preferably more than one work of literature we have read during the course of the semester. You should use at least 4 resources for your research, in addition to citing the literature, and all resources, as well as the literature you are examining, must be cited using MLA citation in the body of the essay and with a Works Cited page at the end of your essay.

You are welcome to create your own topic and focus for this essay, as always, but here are some possible themes/ideas to develop further as topics to get you thinking, which relate to specific works of literature we have examined:

--Social Suffering and Oppression—Analyze one of the social issues we have discussed during the semester, such as racism, sexism, homophobia, economic, political, or cultural oppression, using one or more of our works of literature. You can combine poems, short stories, and/or the play however you wish. I would recommend using no more than 3 works of literature to be able to discuss the works more fully. You may want to tie the literature to historical research and issues relevant to the works at the time, and/or you may want to use research to demonstrate how your chosen issue you are analyzing within the context of the literature still needs to be examined and discussed today.

--What Is It to Be a Woman? —Analyze, compare, and discuss depictions, roles, societal expectations, and issues of womanhood presented by various authors and the literature we have examined. For example, you might choose from works by Rita Dove, Audre Lorde, Jamaica Kincaid, Marge Piercy, Anne Sexton, Joy Harjo, etc. Use outside resources on gender, the literature, the authors, etc., to help support your analysis of this issue.

--Gender Roles Then and Now—How Far Have We Truly Progressed? —Using historical references, research, and the literature for discussion, argue this question of gender role constructions. Possible literature to consider might be works by Anne Sexton, Audre Lorde, Jamaica Kincaid, Marge Piercy, etc.

--Family Conflicts and the Parent-Child Relationship—Analyze how specific authors tackle the issue of family conflicts and identity and what can be learned from that, using outside resources for further development. Some works to consider might include those by Jamaica Kincaid, Amy Tan, or Sophocles, etc.



--The Significance of Cultural Heritage and Identity—Analyze the issue of cultural conflict and understanding of self and what can be gained from those realizations, particularly when confronting issues of marginalization, as discussed in the works of authors such as Amy Tan, Ralph Ellison, Langston Hughes, Joy Harjo, Judith Ortiz Cofer, Lucille Clifton, Hai-Dang Phan, Amit Majmudar, Edgar Allan Poe, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Sherman Alexie, Sophocles, etc., using research to develop your discussion further.

--The Conflicts of War—Focus on one or more of our works that relate to historical issues of war and conflict to analyze the themes presented and how the central characters were affected. Some authors to consider are Amy Tan, William Butler Yeats, Adrienne Rich, and Sherman Alexie.

--The Effects of Political and Social Oppression and Hubris: *Pride Go-eth Before the Fall?*—Analyze the theme of political oppression and how the tragic flaw of human hubris results in some sort of downfall for others, discussing the authors' purpose in focusing on this common human quality. Some authors to consider might be Ralph Ellison, William Butler Yeats, Edgar Allan Poe, Sophocles, Denise Duhamel, Jimmy Santiago Baca, Sherman Alexie, and Adrienne Rich.

These are simply options to consider. Choose your focus based on what you would like most to research and to write about for a longer essay and the works of literature that seemed to speak to you the most on a particular issue of interest. You need not discuss all of the works related to a common theme or issue for analysis, but these are suggestions to get you thinking.

**Memo Questions (¼ page total if typed and turned in with your essay)**

- 1. Discuss how you chose your topic and why.**
- 2. Discuss what you liked best about your essay.**
- 3. Discuss your writing this semester, and if you had a favorite essay you wrote this semester, explain what you liked about your essay.**
- 4. Did you have a favorite work of literature that we read this semester and/or one that you could relate to best? If so, explain why.**