

Using Assessment to Activate Student Agency and Advance Equity

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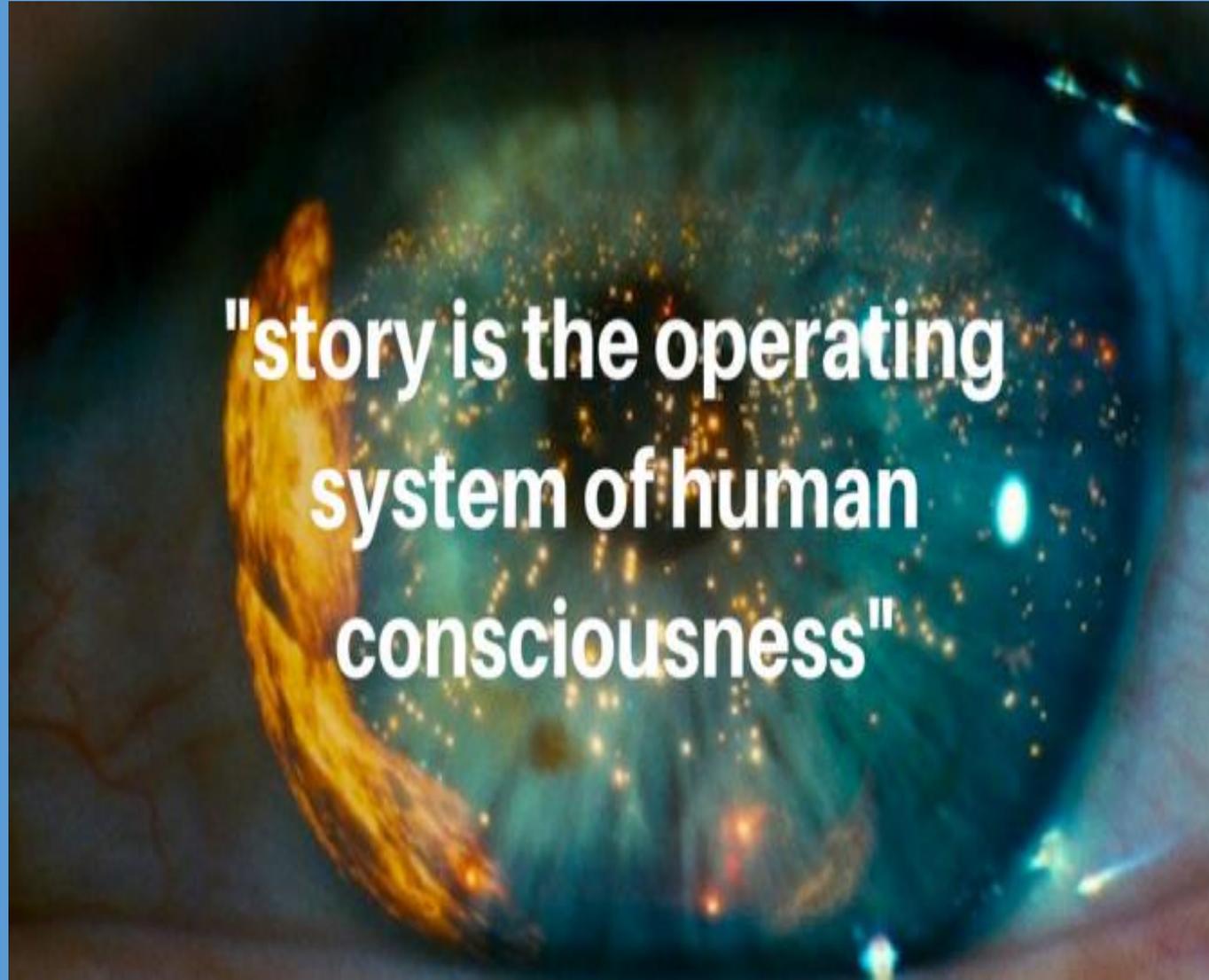
Center for Engaged Teaching and Learning at UC Merced

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Why do narratives matter?





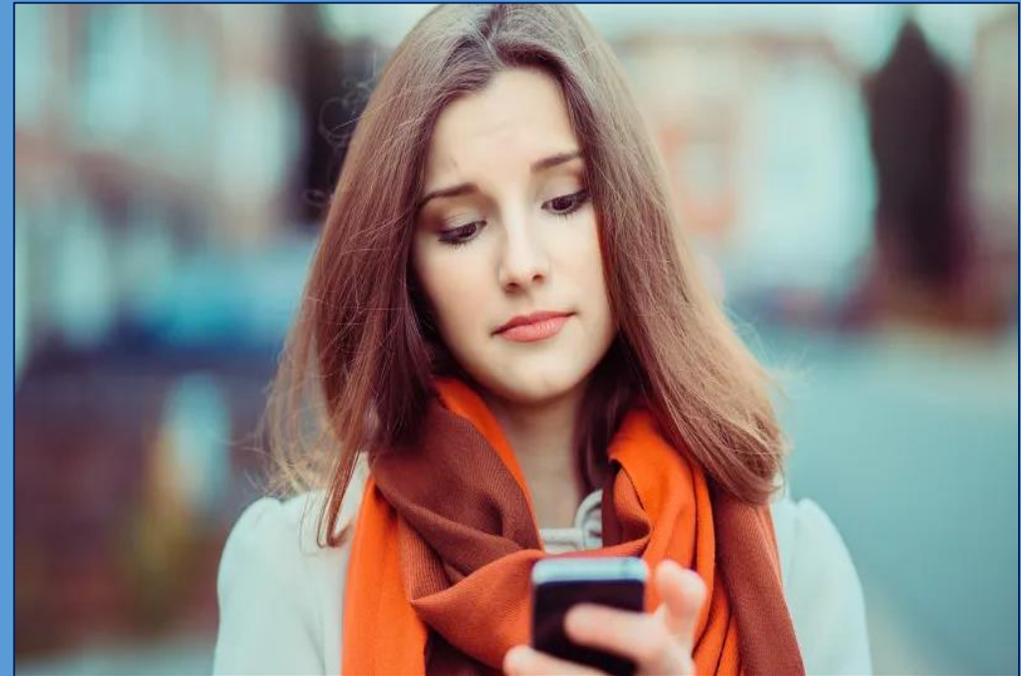
Assessment
Narratives:
How do you define
“RIGOR”?

Common Narratives About Gen Z

Protected and Privileged:
Helicopter/Lawnmower Parents



Tethered:
iGen



How might these narratives affect how we respond to student work? Consider this first sentence from a student essay:

“Most people have believed that relationships, such as friendships and romantic relationships, can be related to particular movies we would watch or from beliefs we have gained while growing up.”

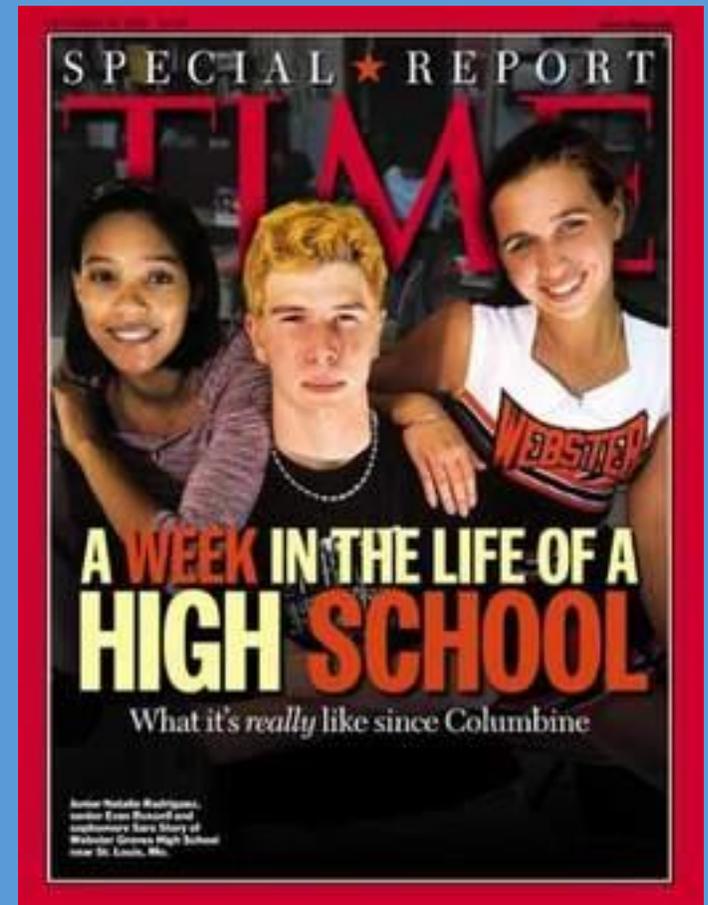
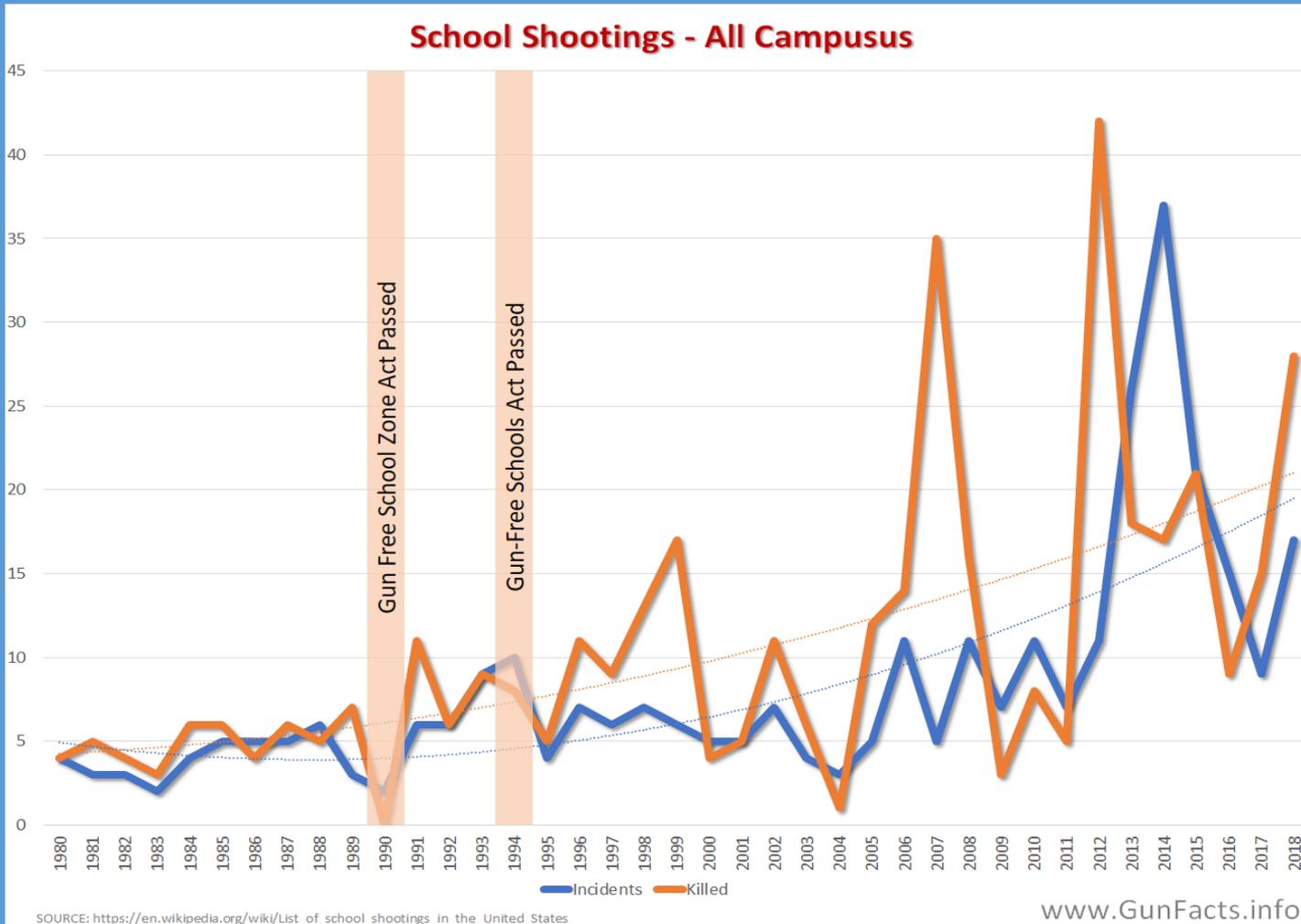
Awkward
Uninteresting
Obvious
Little effort

Perfect is Possible

“In order to get into college, I’ve got to have a 4.6 GPA, 800s on my SATs, captain the soccer team, get elected homecoming queen, and start my own successful non-profit....”



I am unsafe...



More than 4 million children endured lockdowns last school year, a groundbreaking [Washington Post analysis](#) found. The experience left many *traumatized* (Dec. 2018).



What do the Gen Z
narratives have in
common?

Each
undermine
student
resilience.

Toxic impact on students

Data drawn from four large, nationally representative surveys of 11 million Americans since the 1960s; since 2011...

- **Disconnection/
loneliness/
isolation**
- **Adversarial relationships
with TIME**
- **A sense of HELPLESSNESS**
- **Depression and anxiety**

“I find it weird that I hate writing but I love to read... Every time I have an essay assignment for a class, I become very **anxious**. Before I even start writing down my outline, I **stress myself out** over **what will be good enough**. It takes me hours to even write my first sentence... No doubt, I have pressed the backspace button about a million times.”

Meet Natalia



“I try my best in every assignment, but **the outcome never comes out positive**...The bad scores I would get **from my teachers** caused me to **doubt myself, lowered my confidence**, and caused me to **panic** every time I would write an essay.”

How do we craft counter-narratives about Gen Z that foster resilience?

Rigor That Builds Learning Muscles: standards, curricula, and assessments that provide *right amount of adversity* and support student growth.

- **Growth Mindset** *about students* ([Dweck, 2007](#))
- **Warm Demanders** ([Hammond, 2014](#))
- **Empathy and Community:** relationships that create a sense of belonging ([Strayhorn, 2012](#)); classroom collaborations
- **Agency:** pedagogy that *empowers* ([Freire, 1970](#)); inquiry-based curricula; asset-focused assessment
- **Academic Self-Efficacy** ([Bandura, 2008](#))

Student Self-Annotation

Out-of-Class Essay1_ Spring 2017, WRIT 2 [Read-Only] - Microsoft Word

File Home Insert Layout References Mailings Review View

Ruler Gridlines Navigation Pane Show

Zoom 100% Page Width

New Window Arrange All Split

View Side by Side Synchronous Scrolling Reset Window Position Window

Switch Windows Macros

Professor Allen

Academic Writing 2

7 March 2017

You Cannot Believe Everything You See and Hear

Most people have believed that relationships, such as friendships and romantic relationships, can be related to particular movies we would watch or from beliefs we have gained while growing up. We build this fantasy of how life could be with friendships and romantic relationships by witnessing our own family members connections, reading books like *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen, and watching movies such as, *Beauty and the Beast* or *Mamma Mia*. These examples consist of a giving a false reality by giving us hope that it can be easy to gain the "perfect relationship". Yet, in the real world, it is not quite exactly the same thing. I believe that most people have imagined the possibility of a perfect life and were faced with disappointments at some point stepping out into reality. We, all, have imagined what we would want to happen in our life. However, this image is mainly based on our safe bubble that we grew up in. Once we step outside our own environment and experience the world for how it truly is, we gain a new

Comment [1]: HOOK:
Creates a hook that catches the readers attention by making a general relation toward our own personal relationships.

Comment [2]: TONE:
By quoting "perfect relationship", it can create the tone as frustrated.

W P

I did not think that these particular matters would happen until I actually experienced it. We create these false expectations by our inexperience of how the outside world truly is and once seeing the world for how it truly is, we gain a new perspective and lose the old one.

Comment [4]: Uses the word "we" to make the reader feel connected towards the statement.

I want to discuss here certain matters that have made me doubt the idea of friendships being able to last "forever", just as books and movies generally portray. Prior to graduation, people often say to their friends: "Let's always talk, even if we do not see each other everyday" or "Do not worry, we will not drift away!". Most likely, many have heard these sayings from close friends you did not want to lose contact with and strongly believed at the time that it will not happen. In particular, I believed it, because I never wanted to drift away from my close friends. Who would, right? My friends and I have always been together since elementary school.

Comment [5]: Uses similar writing methods by Mary Midgley, using "Trying Out One's New Sword". By using "I want to discuss here certain matters", goes straight to the point which creates a serious tone.

Comment [6]: SIGNPOSTING

Comment [7]: Creates a question towards the

trusted and it's OK. Coming out of my cave I realized the world isn't a safe place, one must be

cautious. Necessarily not everyone is harmful but one can never know. One can't trust a shadow

image of someone. Like my grandma once said *duerme con un ojo abierto*; sleep with one eye

open. Growing up, being innocent gullible me, I began to believe anything people would tell me.

Sometimes I still do. Hoping they'll follow through on what they say. Boy, have a been let down

multiple times. Leaving the cave I realized not everyone is as honest or truthful as my family.

My cave was harmless but it wasn't how the real world worked. Leaving it helped me understand

Comment [4]: Annotation (Spanglish-ism):
Anzaldua usually demonstrates this in her writing and I believed I could implement this as well in to my writing. I wanted to show my culture and what I personally had to go through.

Comment [5]: Annotation (Short Sentences):
Rose uses many short sentences in her writing and I wanted to try to do the same. I wanted to just have a sentences on where I can emphasize something.



Now what do you think about Natalia's capabilities as a writer?



The UNGRADED margin is a low-stakes space that creates resilient thought patterns:

- It's safe to take **risks**.
- The **habit of noticing** and thinking about the authors' style choices becomes more important than the content of any single annotation.
- Students feel they **do not have to be PERFECT**, resulting in **reduced writing anxiety**.

Moreover...

It's good for student learning:

- It slows them down (self-regulation).
- It encourages them to consider their reader (metacognition).
- It encourages them to take responsibility for their writing, instead of passively following directions (agency).
- It helps to make skills salient (transfer).

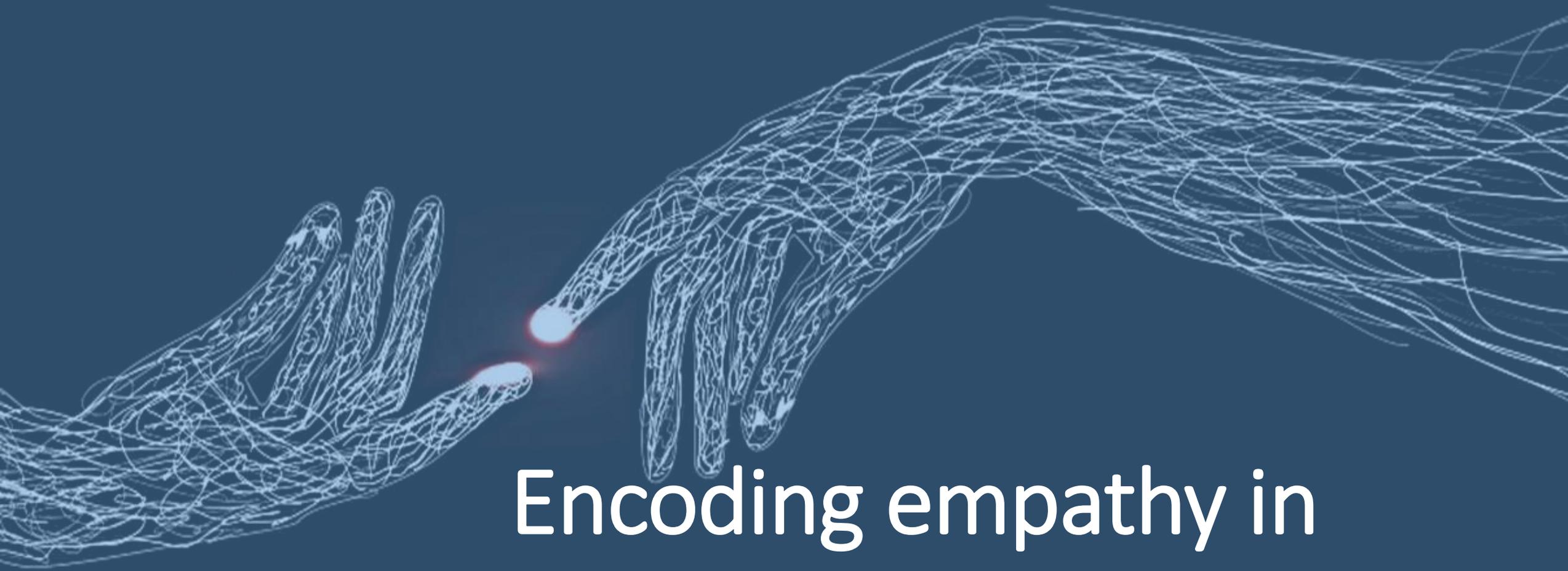


And this, too!

It's good for *teachers*:

Providing a window into the student's process/learning, making visible what was previously invisible...

- Created an opportunity for *dialogue* (as opposed to deficit-judgments).
- Activated instructor *empathy*.



Encoding empathy in
program assessment...



Quantitatively

You can **count the number of annotations** in pre- and post- samples:

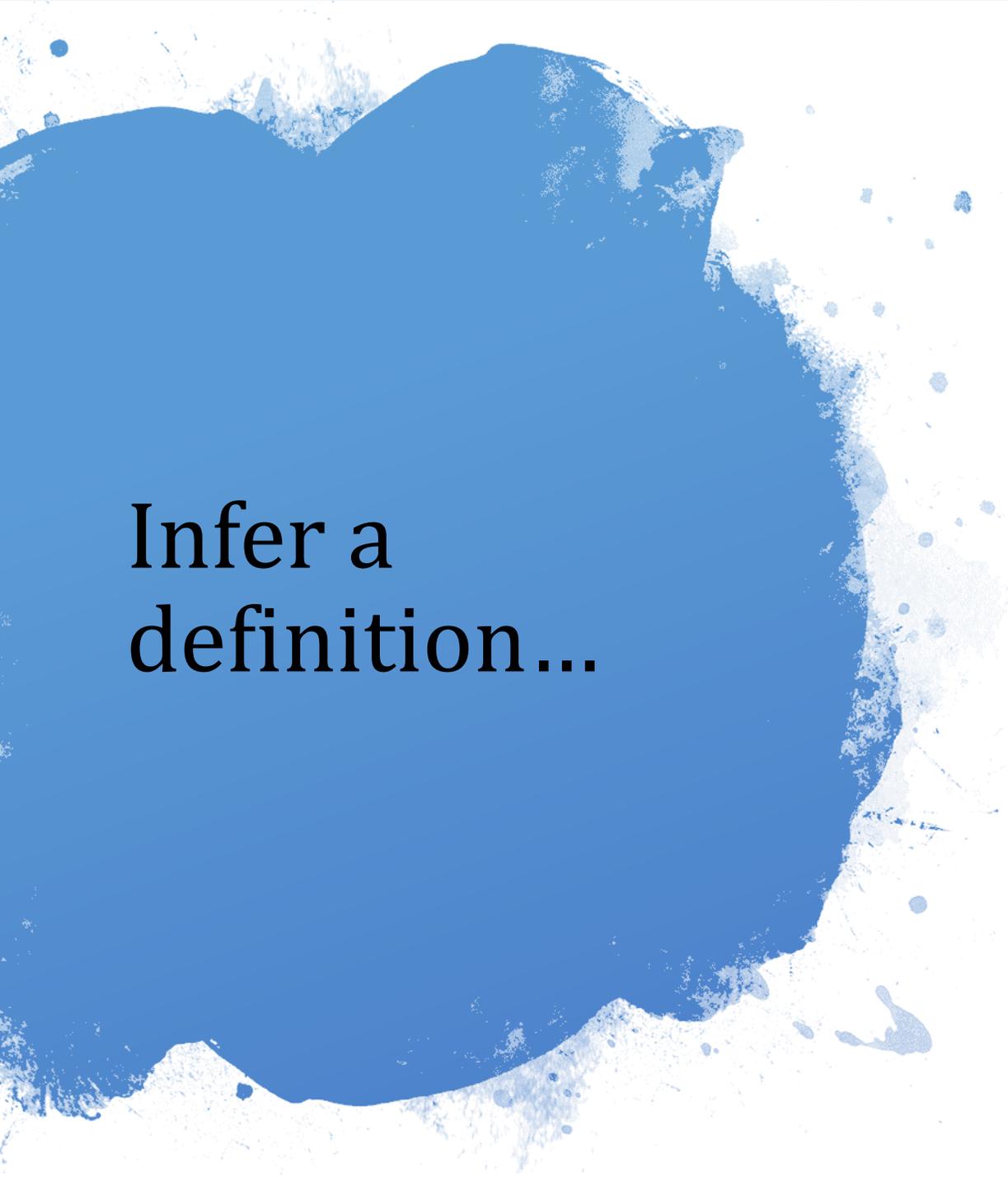
- We noted a **46.67%** **increase** in number of annotations over the year, suggesting **students came to notice more about their writing over time.**

Content Analysis

You can **code the *quality*** of the annotations, marking a “+” if students identified a stylistic strategy AND discussed desired impact on reader, an “N” if they did only one, a “-” if they failed to do either.

Correlate: the most effective writers

...made the most dramatic improvements in their *writing performance AND* also made striking improvements in their *self-annotations*.



Infer a
definition...

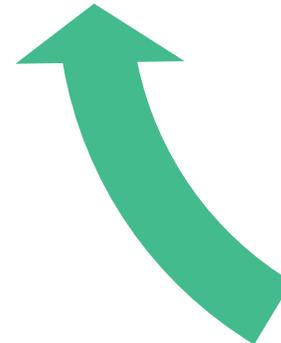
**As students develop
as writers, they also
develop more critical
distance** from their
work and can meta-
cognitively evaluate
written communication
as a **dialogue between
a writer and a reader.**

Correlate: the least effective writers

Failed to acknowledge the effect their rhetorical choices could have on readers.

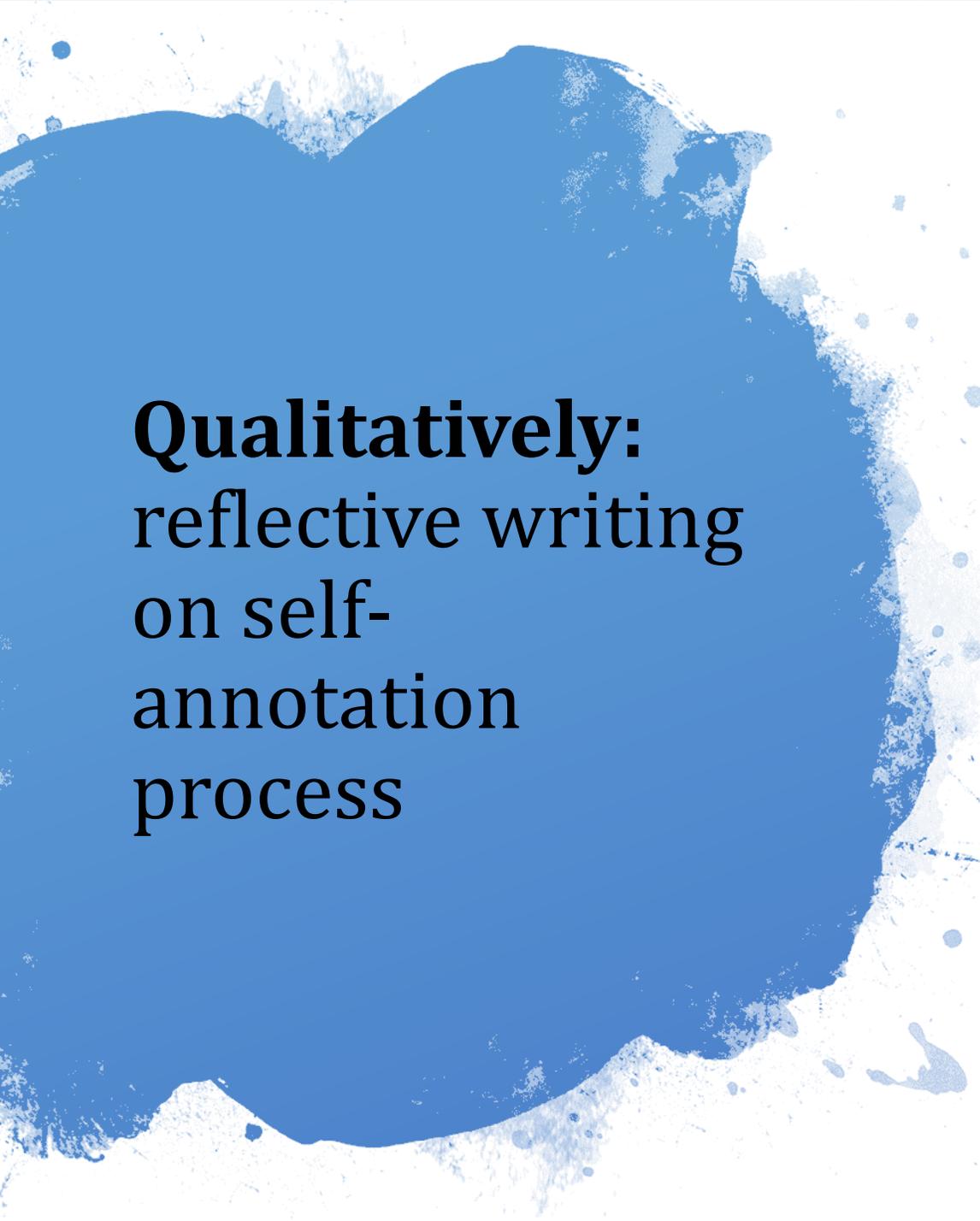
Students who struggled with both writing and self-annotation either:

Merely repeated what was already appeared in the text (e.g., "here I quoted James Baldwin"), or



Infer a practice...

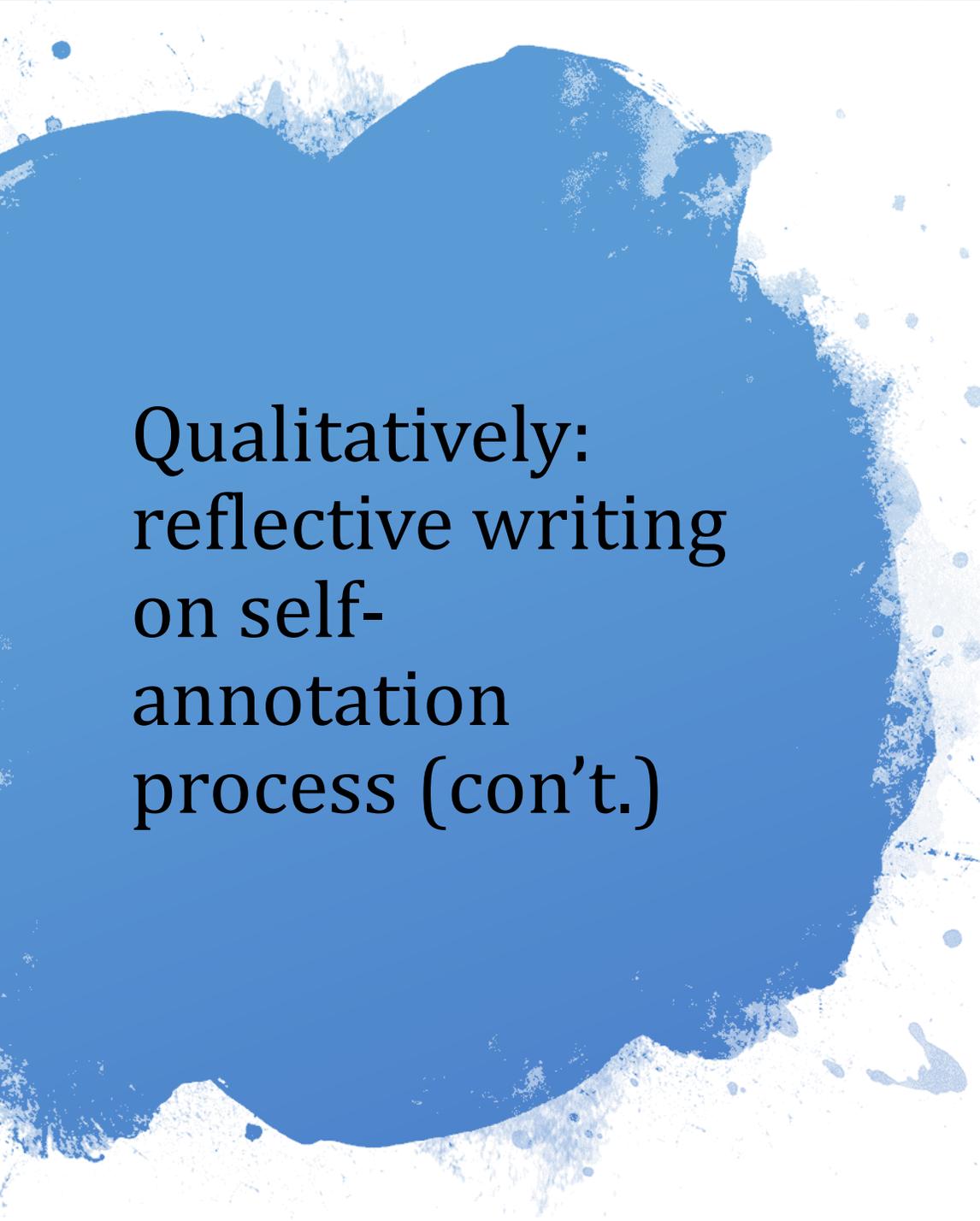
Less-developed writers need support to get **critical distance** and establish a sense of **audience**.



Qualitatively:
reflective writing
on self-
annotation
process

“What I think has helped me the most [to become a better writer] is when we discuss the different writing styles that different writers use. More often than not, I have not heard of some of the different styles, so by **being exposed to them I can use some of those techniques in my own writing.**”

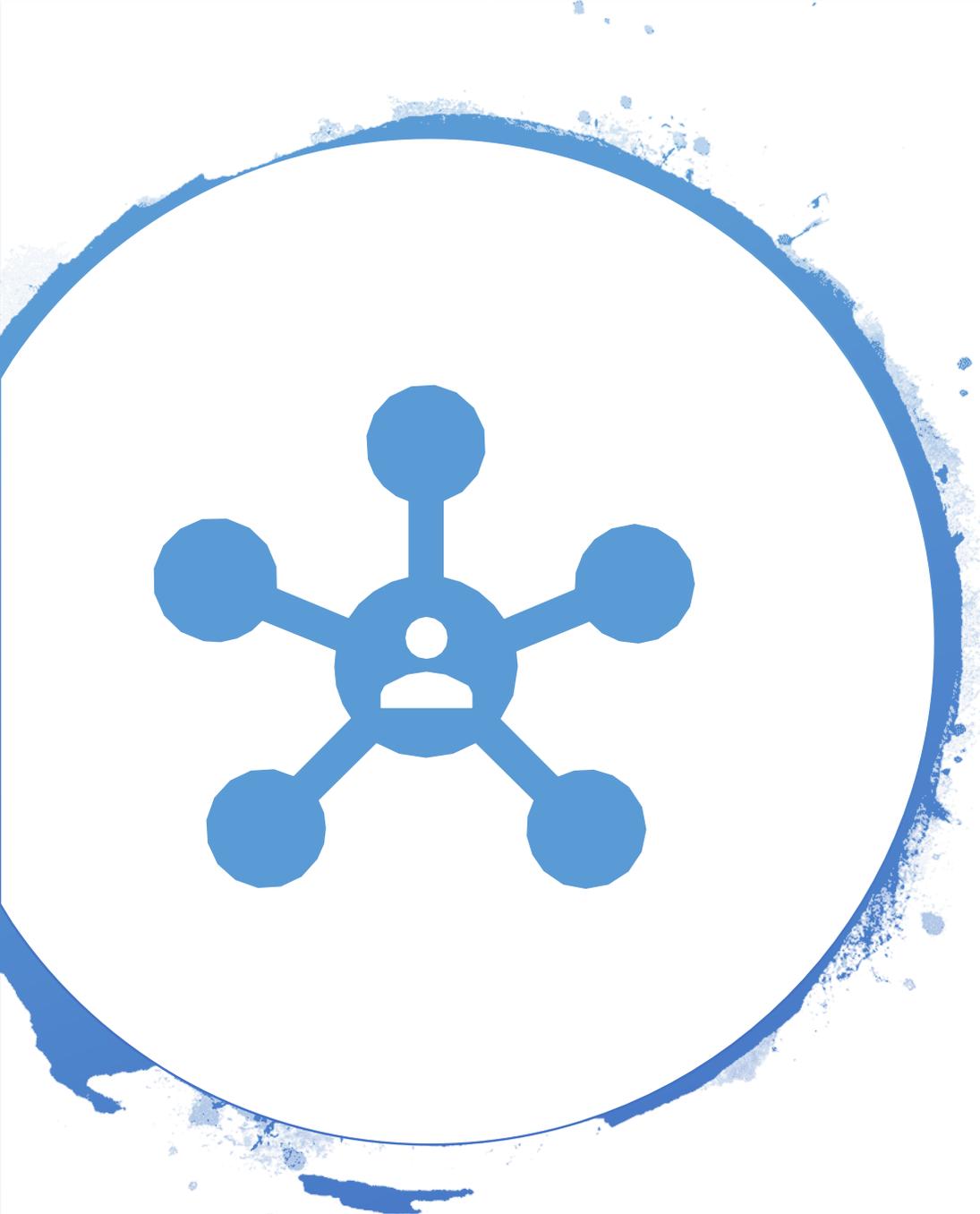
[value of modeling]



Qualitatively:
reflective writing
on self-
annotation
process (con't.)

“I felt that I was discovering another side of myself. I had never thought about ‘what do I write?’” [agency]

“It made me really think about what I was writing and how it would make sense to **the reader**. I could give **the reader** an easier time explaining my essay rather than them having to figure it out.”
[metacognition about audience]



A policy of asking students to self-annotate keeps empathy at the forefront of our assessment practice.

Students who have empathy-based relationships with their ***professors*** are more

- engaged
- motivated
- resilient
- efficacious

Professors who have empathy-based relationships with their ***students*** are more

- engaged
- motivated
- resilient
- efficacious



Questions?