Understanding the Whole Student: CUNY Undergraduates’ Lived Experiences

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Undergraduate Scholarly Habits Ethnography Project

• Where and how are students doing their academic work?

• Why do they choose those places? How do they make them work?

• What tools and technologies do they use or need?
Our Research

2009-2011: photo surveys, mapping diaries, retrospective research process interviews, faculty interviews

2015-2016: mapping diaries, tech-specific interviews, student/faculty questionnaire on hybrid/online courses
What have we learned about

• where students do their academic work,

• the technology they use to do their work, and

• their process for doing research?
AT HOME
ON THE MOVE
Queens

My House

Bus Ride

Approx. 20 mins.

School

Borough of Manhattan Community College

Class 1
9:30 - 10:45

Class 2
3:00 - 4:40

4th Hour

Library

12:00 - 1:45

Lunch

12:45 - 1:00

3:00 - 3:30

Library

Restaurant

Eat 3:00

6:45

Train Ride

Approx. 1 hr.

Friends

Bike

8:00

Bus (Ride)

Train (Ride)
Bus Ride

Reading Highlighting
IN THE LIBRARY
INTENTIONALITY
“When I go home, I get distracted easily. Here, it's very quiet, you know, you can't be loud, you can't talk. So I like being under those rules here. I can concentrate a lot better, and I'm actually doing a lot better now in school than last semester.”
SMARTPHONES
“My smartphone. I am able to access my grades, type up a paper, review a power point, etc. in the palm of my hand.”
“I personally don't use a smartphone or tablet for schoolwork but have been present numerous times while my friends’ work was deleted or would not upload from one of these devices.”
AT THE COMPUTER LAB
“My first year, I didn’t have the Microsoft Word application so I couldn’t type essays. So I would spend HOURS on hours sitting here and trying to focus while people are chewing gum and talking on the phone and arguing and hitting each other. It says it’s a ‘Learning Resource Center’ but in actuality it’s a ‘Hang Out With Your Friends and Look at Your Cousin’s Wedding Pictures Center’ . . . ‘on Facebook.’”
SYSTEMS AND WIFI
“I would make sure that the website being used never has to be ‘under construction’ and I would make sure it is always running as quickly and efficiently as possible.”
“The most frustrating thing is our schools wifi. When in on campus trying to watch our videos it doesn't load properly, it will pause frequently.”
TECHNOLOGY IS CRITICAL
“Enhance everything so that it’s always fast and never crashes”
STUDENT RESEARCH
PROCESS
DEVELOPING A TOPIC
“Once I got the idea of what I wanted to write about, let's see, that was quick.”
Day 1

- Sketch

- Brainstorming

- Relaxation

- Relief

Day 2 - Day 20

- Lazy Period

Day 21

- Day 22

- Day 23 - 28

- Refractive Period

Day 29

- Lack of sleep

Day 30
“No, I waited a little bit, you know. Because I wanted to make sure I had a nice grasp of what we were doing.”
RESEARCH: LIBRARY AND INTERNET
“The next part was trying to navigate the CUNY website which did run me into about two or three hours worth of a headache, followed by another fifteen minutes on Google, where immediately it was the first link.”
“[The librarians have] helped me searching, like, what's the better way to search for a term which is kind of interesting 'cause I didn't think that would really help my research but it does.”
“This sort of forced me to do each little step and report back constantly to the teacher. The orchestratedness of it allowed me to not procrastinate.”
FORMAL AND INFORMAL FEEDBACK
“[In class workshopping] was interesting ‘cause I, like, reading other people’s work, and especially when we’re in the same class, you know? I don’t . . . I mean, we didn’t wanna be too critical and mark up our classmate’s papers . . . And the feedback was good, like, what they thought of it.”
SUPPORT
“I don’t get as much help as I would like . . . So right now I’m writing a research paper and . . . I actually wanted someone to look over it with me, but the library doesn’t do that, the other Writing Center does that and they’re always so full ‘cause there’s not enough tutors.”

“[Writing tutors] explain it more easily than the professors.”
WHAT CAN WE DO?
We – all of us – can

• ask them!

• be flexible wherever possible

• advocate for access and support

• connect and collaborate across campus
Questions?
Thank you!

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