EXPLORING COMPOSITIONAL SPACES AND PRACTICES:

MULTIMODAL REPRESENTATION WITH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES AMONG

PRESERVICE TEACHERS

by

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(Under the Direction of JoBeth Allen)

ABSTRACT

In the three article manuscripts that comprise this dissertation, I analyze data sets that couple

transcribed audio interviews (language-based data) with multimodal artifacts (language + other

semiotic "stuff" within data), focusing primarily on *moving images* as a unique mode of

representation and communication. In my first piece, I foreground Bakhtin's *self-fashioning* and

argue that *socially situated identities* (Gee, 1996, 1999) are, as Parmentier (1994) stated about

institutional norms and identities, "subject to semiotic messing with," particularly involving the

creation of multimodal texts. In my second manuscript, I attempt to analyze the use of *moving

image* as a mode of representation, which I argue is an endeavor to examine multimodal

combinations and how various modes function together to juxtapose and compliment one another

within a text. I position multimodal analysis as a tool with potential to open interpretive

possibilities that emphasize representational affordances (and constraints) beyond linguistic

means. I argue this analytical shift requires attention to methodological detail, referencing Kress

and van Leeuwen's (1996) argument for the need to develop research methodologies with tools

capable of description and critical analysis for visual and other modal combinations of

representation, particularly as new and ever-changing digital technologies continue to make multi-semiotic representations more readily achievable. In my third manuscript, I write for educators interested in envisioning how digital epistemologies and new communicative technologies might function in literacy classrooms. It's written from a personal perspective and points to pedagogical mixing—coupling writing instruction with multimodal pedagogy—and I argue it allows teachers to create opportunities for learners to represent thinking in multiple modes without negating the importance of language. I also describe perceptions of moving image as a mode and digital video as a media, situated contextually in the responses from my undergraduate students in a preservice elementary education classroom.

INDEX WORDS: Multimodality, moving image, preservice teachers, discourse analysis, social semiotics, digital literacy projects, self-authoring, identity

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DEDICATION

For Letty—your offerings continue and are immeasurable

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natural, I believe takes tremendous effort, discipline and balance. I admire her to no end and consider it a wonderful blessing to count her as a friend.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW: COMPLEMENTARITY BETWEEN MULTIMODAL SOCIAL SEMIOTICS AND NEW LITERACY STUDIES

During a one-week technology and literacy camp for youth I recently facilitated, four different persons approached me in private regarding one camper and the behaviors he was exhibiting during camp. One was a parent, and the others I admired for what I knew of their work in education, so each conversation warranted a certain level of attentiveness. They described Freddy (pseudonym) in a range of ways, from "I think he's on the autistic end of the spectrum" to "He might have some anger management issues," comments offered in tandem with descriptions of specific interactions with him.

I had already noticed actions of Freddy that concerned me, one occurring on the playground during break in which he spoke openly in the presence of facilitators about the hatred he felt for another camper who was "showing off all the time." Further, on the second day of camp, he called me "faggot" after I walked around and slapped good morning high fives with a table of campers. He didn't hide it; he just said it out loud. "Faggot." I stopped, all the other campers watching and waiting, and asked Freddy if I could talk with him in private. He was crying softly before we even found an area to talk, and our conversation went something like this:

John: Believe it or not, I was in middle school a long time ago. I don't think you meant to hurt my feelings, and my hope is that you won't say hurtful things like that even in private with your friends. I'm not here to police your language, but when you say it out loud like that, the way I respond to you sends a message to all the other campers about what's appropriate here at camp. And calling someone a faggot isn't appropriate.

Freddy: Okay. (He paced back and forth in the librarian's office and removed several books off the shelves while I was talking, looked at them, then put each one back as he had found them.)

John: Okay, thanks for listening Freddy.

Freddy waited awhile before coming back to the group, which I admired. He seemed to be composing himself, and looking back I imagine my message might have been rather confusing. "I'm not trying to police your language," but in fact I was policing his language. My intention at the time was partially to let him know I envisioned our camp differently from how I imagined his school experiences (and mine) frequently operated. Camp, for me, held less rigid procedural requirements dictating individual behavior, more time to choose how you spent your time and what project you spent your time on, and was entirely void of formal individual testing. However, we did have expectations as facilitators for the ways we wanted campers to treat one another (and us) during camp.

During the week I consciously tried to treat Freddy as I would any other camper, though I anticipated our interactions would likely necessitate a "Freddy and John" type of interaction similar to one previously described. And as we progressed through the camp week, I worried about his lack of enthusiasm for creating "digital stories," the multimedia

artifact that in essence drove our facilitation of the tech camp. I also noticed he spent much of his time watching *Family Guy* or *South Park* clips on the Internet. I nudged him towards our goal of crafting a digital movie, as did the other facilitators, and additionally required him to conference with us daily and attend "mini-lessons" about the digital video software we were using.

It was the last day of working on our projects that an idea emerged for Freddy. It seemed to come like an epiphany because he shared it with great animation and worked through break, vehemently, to complete it. Freddy was paired with another camp leader, who developed a positive rapport with him and encouraged him to pursue his design idea towards its fullest, to give it that "extra Oomph," as the facilitator liked to call it. In turn, Freddy decided to use his own voice to narrate and synchronize a voice-over for his piece, an extra and relatively complex task given his time constraint. Voice-overs are a typical component of digital storytelling, and we modeled them but also made them optional, due primarily to our limited capacity to help campers craft fully realized narratives in their digital stories without the time needed to also teach storyboarding techniques. Still, I viewed this decision on Freddy's part with enthusiasm, and I silently prayed all day that his computer wouldn't crash (several had during the week) and neurotically reminded him, "Save, save, save, Freddy," "After every edit, save Freddy," "Control-S, Freddy."

It wasn't until the end of the last day to work on the projects that I got to see Freddy's piece. It was for me, considering the limited (but sustained) burst of work time, well-crafted, nuanced in remarkably subtle ways, and utterly disconcerting when I imagined him sharing it with an audience full of other campers' family and friends. The

premise was a movie trailer for an upcoming movie entitled "The South Park V.S. Family Guy Movie!!!," to be released in 2020. If it had a theme, it was violence; the movie he described in the trailer is one with "fights, and guns, blood and gore, death, and more guns," a theme appropriated from the very popular culture media he valued and had been watching online. It's a compelling text, and though it's tempting to explain why I view it that way, I hope my manuscripts that follow will speak to the types of analyses possible for a text like Freddy's. Instead, with consent from the author, I offer a link here for readers to view the movie in its entirety, http://freddysvideotext.blogspot.com.

New Literacy Studies

I bring Freddy and his text into this opening chapter because they serve as an example of literacy practices (creating personal multimedia artifacts) sanctioned in this instance in the context of a camp designed specifically to explore the intersections between new literacies and digital technologies. It's not my intention to dichotomize in- and out-of-school literacies, and there is certainly room to argue whether certain aspects of Freddy's work are appropriate in a school context; however, I find it valuable theoretically to view Freddy's literacy practices from a sociocultural and New Literacy perspective (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Gee, 1996) in which all literacies "are bound up with social, institutional and cultural relationships…they are always connected to social identities…always embedded in Discourses" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 8). The local Discourses of our camp environment, for example, likely contrasted Freddy's school culture in some distinct ways, not necessarily locating it on the opposite end of an in- and out-of school continuum but by creating opportunities to engage in literacy practices with digital

technologies less likely to be offered in the high-stakes context of typical public school literacy curricula. In this way, I see the two Discourses, camp and school, as both overlapping and contrasting.

In this case, and from a New Literacy framework, what I find valuable for schools is the potential to incorporate "digital epistemologies" into literacy curricula in ways that acknowledge the changing "status, relations, and distributions of knowledge in a world where 'being digital' is increasingly the norm" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 21). I believe this is, in part, one of the greatest challenges of The New Literacy Studies— making relevant new literacies, found more frequently in out-of-school contexts, for in-school literacy pedagogy. Two obstacles appear quite readily: 1) new literacies incorporate the sociocultural worlds of youth and bring with them popular culture that, as in Freddy's creation of "The South Park V.S. Family Guy Movie!!!," creates a new pedagogical space potentially challenging traditionally held views that associate educational responsibility with specific moral values; and 2) a new focus on digital epistemologies broadens concepts of literacy in ways that bring new challenges to educators less familiar with digital technologies, necessitating in turn a change in the way we prepare new teachers for literacy instruction.

Multimodality

In this sense, Pahl and Roswell's (2006) urge for developing overlaps between New Literacy Studies (NLS), which builds on traditions of ethnography and foregrounds ever-changing social practices, and a multimodal approach to literacy:

What the New Literacy Studies brings to multimodality is that it avoids the essentializing of visual and linguistic forms. It sees them as in-process. Texts are constantly moving and changing . . . We need the multimodal in the New Literacy Studies in order to understand texts as material objects. Multimodality gives an analytic tool to understand artifacts. (p. 8)

Pahl and Rowsell's (2006) proposed merger of New Literacy Studies and a multimodal approach to literacy is a productive notion, and yet at the risk of reducing their quote above, I also think it's somewhat a misnomer to position multimodal approaches simply as analytic endeavors to understand artifacts. The multimodality they wrote about stems from the field of social semiotics (Kress & Hodge, 1998; van Leeuwen, 2005), which addresses in explicit ways the social and ever-changing contextual nature of communication and representation.

What I am most interested in however, and I believe this is their intention, is to garner the momentum of New Literacy Studies and supplement it with a structure that might be applied to classroom pedagogy, as they do in *Travel Notes from the New Literacy Studies: Instances of Practice*. This is an admirable path to follow, and I see my work pursuing this bridge with New Literacy Studies, it's sociocultural emphasis, and the study of multiple modes and medias and ways they functionally work together in various contexts for purposes intentional and otherwise. It's important to note, however, that a multimodal "grammar" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) for schools shouldn't be built with "static" conventions, but will be productive only when also accounting for the social and cultural contexts through which texts are produced and viewed.

Three manuscripts about multimodality and literacy

In each of the upcoming manuscripts, I analyze data sets that couple transcribed audio interviews (language-based data) with multimodal artifacts (language + other semiotic "stuff" within data), focusing primarily, though in different methodological ways, on *moving images* as a unique mode of representation and communication.

Preservice teacher discourses: Authoring selves through multimodal compositions

In my first piece, I foreground Holland and her colleagues (1998) reference to Bakhtin's *self-fashioning* and argue that *socially situated identities* (Gee, 1996, 1999) are, as Parmentier (1994) stated about institutional norms and identities, "subject to semiotic messing with," particularly involving the creation of multimodal texts.

Immediately, two theoretical conundrums arise. First, utilizing the term *identity* implies a "state of being" recognizable by others (for example, college student or elementary school teacher), contrasting the term *subjectivity*, which more often emphasizes less a recognizable state of being but rather a changing subjective stance produced by certain contextual discursive and institutional forces. This is a large part of the debate between social- and self-determinism within social science theories, and it is for this reason that I couple Bakhtin's self-fashioning with Gee's (1996) notion of socially situated identities—not to diminish the subjectivity contingent on dialogic interactions and participation in institutional discourses, but rather to suggest that there is theoretical room for the construction of recognizable identities, which in turn, are subject to semiotic messing with, to improvisation, to self-fashioning.

This leads to a second theoretical dilemma, involving whether or not the notion of "self-fashioning" is individually *agentive*, and if so, what forces come together in certain

circumstances to enable or constrain an agency of this kind? With this in mind, I utilize the terms *stabilize* and *improvise* in my first manuscript, not intentionally to dichotomize the directions persons must move while building identities recognizable to others, but to acknowledge that much of my data reveals, as I argue, acts of self-fashioning less conscious in their performance than the term agency might imply. I instead utilize Gee's (1996, 1999) idea of *Discourse models*, building on previous uses of the phrase cultural models, to highlight the type of identity work that is often performed with less meta-cognitive work aimed at transforming or changing specific ways of being in the world.

This type of meta-transformation is not the primary focus of the work in these manuscripts—though I believe this body of work could lead to that type of critical application—and therefore I emphasize less the possibility for individual agency and more the functionality of multiple modes of representation and communication for various purposes in the context of a university teacher education language arts methods classroom. Inevitably, however, this functionality—the modes, media and tools and how they are used—leads to self-representation and identity work, and in this sense, I hope these manuscripts add to the conversation that discourse analysis can be broadened beyond linguistic approaches.

Multimodal discourse analysis: Design and production using moving image

In my second manuscript, I attempt to analyze the use of *moving image* as a mode of representation, which I argue is in turn an endeavor to look closely at multimodal combinations, at how various modes function together to juxtapose and compliment one another within a single text. In this sense, I position multimodal analysis as a tool with

potential to open interpretive possibilities that emphasize representational affordances (and constraints) beyond purely linguistic means.

At the same time, I argue this analytical shift requires attention to methodological detail, just as linguistic forms of analysis in various fields (Critical Linguistics, Sociolinguistics, Ethnography, etc.) have practiced traditionally to establish legitimate structures of academic validity (though each with its own methodological and interpretive flexibilities). Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) argued, in a similar fashion, for the need to develop research methodologies with tools capable of description and critical analysis for visual and other modal combinations of representation, particularly as new and ever-changing digital technologies continue to make multi-semiotic representations more readily achievable.

Admittedly, there are noteworthy and paradoxical pitfalls associated with this growing analytical endeavor, arising as semiotic analyses often foreground the interplay between modal combinations, an attention to the semiotic functionality—the "grammar" of semiotic resources—in turn creating a potential lack of attention towards the social practices and issues of power playing out through multimodal representations, a critique of semiotic work that has led researchers in the field of education to look for ways to more explicitly combine multimodality with sociocultural approaches (see Pahl & Roswell, 2006).

Bringing moving image into preservice classrooms: Designing and producing digital video projects with future teachers

In my last manuscript, I apply what I hope is a more accessible text written for educators interested in envisioning how digital epistemologies and new communicative

technologies might function in literacy classrooms. It's written from a personal

perspective and points to pedagogical mixing—coupling a particular writing instruction

approach with multimodal instruction—I argue allows teachers to create opportunities for

learners to represent thinking in multiple modes without negating the importance of

language. In this manuscript, I also attempt to unveil many perceptions of moving image

as a mode and digital video as a media, situated contextually in the responses from my

undergraduate students in a preservice elementary education classroom. In focusing on

local perceptions however, it's important to contextualize these views within their

specific sociocultural arenas, and I'd like to end this opening orientation chapter by

attempting to make visible and addressing some of the binaries that arise as I describe

and further envision embedding technologies, including visual and audial modes of

communication, into classroom pedagogy and into opportunities for students to represent

their thinking.

Addressing binaries

Working with new literacies and multimodality—with digital epistemologies and

technologies—despite the best of intentions, often runs a risk of creating binaries

between "new" and "traditional" notions of literacy, between "insider" and "newcomer"

mindsets regarding technology, and between in- and out-of-school literacies. If

unaddressed, these binaries carry potential for a counterproductive reductionism within

the field of literacy education. To elaborate, positioning teachers as "digital newcomers"

and students as "digital insiders" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003) is problematic if it negates

the many teachers whose understanding and familiarity with technology indeed surpass

those of students in many ways, or the many teachers whose willingness simply to

explore ways technology might be embedded in productive pedagogical ways matches the enthusiasm of students to participate in those opportunities.

Furthermore, it's equally counterproductive to position in-school literacies as always static, rigid and related to unpopular policies that define literacy in narrow ways, just as it's undeserved to place all public school institutions as spaces dominated by centripetal forces that push both teachers and students into boxes that are pedagogically, epistemologically and ontologically predetermined and scripted. On the other hand, these are undoubtedly concerns for educators, researchers and policy-makers, and there's much room for critiquing "traditional schooling" (Gee, 2004) and institutional forces that work to culturally decontextualize learning in public school settings. In this sense, these binaries are potentially productive when used not to essentialize two ends of a literacy spectrum, but to promote dialogue about literacy practices in multiple forms and contexts.

It's with these binaries in mind that I'm reminded of several public school teachers with whom I've had the pleasure to work on classroom projects involving digital technologies. These teachers have readily pushed against the centripetal forces they encountered—roadblocks including district-wide bans on Internet email, social networking and multimedia production and dissemination sites—with patience, with dedication to their students, and with a professionalism that embraces a healthy flexibility towards their own ongoing philosophical development regarding teaching and learning. For example, a local high school teacher designed a cultural study project in which she asked students to research, write papers, and additionally represent they're thinking through multimodal products that combined digital video and voice narration.

The experience of facilitating these projects led to conversations that addressed a profound inquiry: What would it look like if these technology tools were utilized by teachers and students in ways that pushed beyond technological novelty and the superficiality often present in multimedia products? What would multimodal research papers look like that no longer necessitate a coupling with traditional essays in order to bring more depth regarding issues of meaning-making: elaboration, clarification, reflection, critical analysis. What changes in pedagogy would need to occur? What issues of technological accessibility would need to be addressed? What professional development for teachers would need to occur? With all these questions and the willingness to explore them, these teachers challenged the aforementioned binary structures that often reduce teaching to an uncomplicated and one-dimensional profession, and these are the teachers who have inspired and pushed my thinking during this dissertation.

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Chapter 2

PRESERVICE TEACHER DISCOURSES: AUTHORING SELVES THROUGH

MULTIMODAL COMPOSITIONS

The space of authoring, of self-fashioning, remains a social and cultural space,

no matter how intimately held it may become. And, it remains, more often than not, a

contested space, a space of struggle. (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998, p. 282)

The origins for this project

Compelled by a growing body of literature that argues for expanding the notion of

literacy in educational theory beyond reading, writing and speaking (Alvermann, 2002;

Gee, 2003; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Knobel & Lankshear,

2007), I designed a multimodal assignment while working with preservice elementary

education majors to engage in what I tentatively called "Digital Literacy Projects"

(DLPs). I asked students to compose "personal narratives" using digital video editing

software (iMovie), a tool affording us multiple modes of communication and

representation—audio, video, still images and text (and/or various combinations of each).

The name *Digital Literacy Project* stuck over the course of five semesters;

however, the ways we designed our DLPs shifted subtly as we investigated a variety of

multimodal genres, from digital storytelling and visual poetry to chronological

photographic essays and more abstract visual responses to music selections. Yet

throughout these shifts, generally speaking, our DLPs consistently took on the format of

short digital movies approximately three to five minutes in length.

Engaging in the creation of DLPs as a class presumed an underlying argument:

literacy is a contested term, particularly in light of the ever-changing digital landscapes in

which we communicate, an era that's been termed "the new communicative order"

(Street, 1998; Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996; Lankshear and Knobel, 1997; Snyder,

2004). Within this new communicative order, modes of communication and

representation traditionally privileged in academia—writing, reading and speaking—are joined by an increasingly multimodal landscape, one that readily incorporates audio, video and still images. As Kress (2003) explained, "The combined effects on writing of the dominance of the mode of image and of the medium of the screen will produce deep changes in the forms and the functions of writing . . . *The world told* is a different world to *the world shown*" (p. 3). In praxis then, creating DLPs together in our preservice course represented a literacy practice that supplemented the print-based academic work students engaged in to represent their thinking and attempted to bridge our own personal experiences with both traditional and multimodal composition *with* our developing ideas about how personal learning and future classroom instruction might be approached.

From August to December 2007, I interviewed 15 DLP authors, all previous elementary education students in my *Language and Literacy* course, about their experiences composing multimodal texts in a university classroom. For this study, I viewed interview transcript data, obtained through audio-recorded conversations with participants, with an analytical lens informed by Gee's (1999) approach to discourse analysis and with a theoretical frame rooted strongly in Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) writings about linguistic communication. More specifically, I used Holland et al's (1998) notion of *improvisation* to argue that authors designed multimodal texts in purposeful, intertextual and dialogic ways. Though primarily a study of preservice teacher discourse, I frequently reference the participants' multimodal Digital Literacy Projects themselves and suggest both a methodological and theoretical complementarity with Kress's (2003) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996, 2001) social semiotic framework for addressing

multimodality. Through this combinatory methodology, I explore various ways preservice teachers authored selves through the design of multimodal texts

1) To reinforce and stabilize *socially situated identities* (Gee, 1996, 1999), particularly those of "undergraduate college student" and "elementary school teacher" within a literacy course in the field of elementary education and

2) To *improvise* (Holland et al, 1998) individually nuanced representations of self, an "authoring of self" that follows Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) dialogic conception of *self-fashioning*.

Utilizing the term *identity* implies a "state of being" recognizable by others (for example, college student or elementary school teacher), contrasting in ways then the term *subjectivity*, which more often emphasizes less a recognizable state of being but rather a changing subjective stance produced by certain contextual discursive and institutional forces. This is a large part of the debate between social- and self-determinism within social science theories, and I choose to couple Bakhtin's self-fashioning with Gee's (1996) notion of socially situated identities—not to diminish the multiple subjectivities contingent on dialogic interactions and participation in institutional discourses, but rather to suggest that there is theoretical room for the construction of multiple (often competing) recognizable identities, which in turn, are subject to semiotic messing with, to improvisation, to self-fashioning. "Being" an elementary school teacher, for example, does not always presuppose that one is no longer "being" a learner, and vice versa.

Improvisation and the authoring of selves

Thus persons and, to a lesser extent, groups are caught in the tensions between past histories that have settled in them and the present discourses and images that

attract them or somehow impinge upon them. In this continuous self-fashioning,

identities are hard-won standpoints that, however dependent upon social support

and however vulnerable to change, make at least a modicum of self-direction

possible. (Holland et al, 1998, p. 4)

The possibility for individual agency has remained a contentious topic highly

disputed between theories of social- and self-determinism. Acknowledging strong

leanings in favor of the former, the potential for individual agentive practices has been

argued by a number of researchers (Holland et al, 1998; Hull & Katz, 2006; Blommaert,

2005; LeCourt, 1998), namely situating agency *within* sociocultural and historically

contingent structurings. Giroux (1996), in theoretical reference to Judith Butler regarding

agency and postmodernism, articulated well the notion of situating the term agency

within and always in relation to broader discursive forces:

Instead of claiming that postmodernism's critique of the essentialist subject denies

a theory of subjectivity, it seems more productive to examine how its claims about

the contingent character of identity, constructed in a multiplicity of social

relations and discourses, redefine the notion of agency. . . . 'the subject is

constituted is not [the same as claiming] that it is determined; on the contrary, the

constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency'" (p. 63).

In other words, an individual's own awareness of the forces acting upon her or his

production as a human subject is the very means by which she or he might in turn

manipulate that production through various acts of agency.

Similarly, LeCourt (1998) wrote of a multifarious human subject capable of

"mobilizing the multiplicity they bring to any cultural production" (p. 285). LeCourt's

concept of subject ideology hinges on diversity and the existence of multiple selves; therefore, the subject's ability to act with agency relies on her/his role as an "active interpreter of ideology, a site of cultural negotiation herself, individuated in her relationship with ideology herself" (p. 285).

Multiplicity itself doesn't guarantee agency, as LeCourt noted, but the theory of individual subjects as multiple and diverse allows critical theorists to consider specific discursive acts as agentive acts. The theoretical framework for notions of agency and identity in this study rests on the acknowledgement that individual acts of *self-authoring* are indeed bound intensely by broad sociocultural and discursive forces, yet are also performed through subtle (though potentially powerful) ways given the available linguistic and semiotic resources available.

I borrow from Holland and her colleagues (1998) this notion of self-authoring, a term grounded in Bakhtin's sociolinguistics, bringing to their conversation Gee's (1996, 1999) distinction between linguistic discourse and Discourses (with "a big D") that include "nonlinguistic" forms of communication and the possible combinations of "*saying-(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing*" (p. 127).

> A socially accepted association among ways of using language, other symbolic
> expressions, and 'artifacts', of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and acting
> that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or
> 'social network', or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful 'role'.
> (Gee, 1996, p. 131)

From a Bakhtinian stance, the potential for self-authoring exists through an incalculable *heteroglossia*—the simultaneous existence of multiple social languages and

sets of values inherent in all communicative spaces. Thus, it's the diversity, and often contentious intensity, of the social world that require persons to orchestrate, through available cultural resources, ever-changing constructions of individual and collective identities. In this sense, I pursue an analytical focus in my data highlighting Holland et al's (1998) *improvisation*, a means through which humans are always in the process of shifting their representations of self towards others in dialogically purposeful ways, contingent on the sociocultural- and historically-constructed contexts of interaction. These improvisations are related to "the processes whereby human collectives and individuals often move themselves—led by hope, desperation, or even playfulness, but certainly by no rational plan—from one set of socially and culturally formed subjectivities to another" (Holland et al, 1998, p. 7).

So even in highly specific contextual spaces, a university classroom for preservice teachers for example, there exists discourses between and among persons who author themselves towards multiple identities, often simultaneously and contradictory, in an ever-changing arrangement of resources that become available from a vast diversity of historical and cultural experiences and discourses, both public and private. For example, take Kelley (pseudonym), a Digital Literacy Project author and participant in this study, who responded during an interview regarding how she decided on her topic:

> I had this great artistic vision but actually I was like, I don't think that I'll be able to pull it off and it's just gonna look, like, me walking around [the city] taking footage of a bunch of puddles and it was going to look really cliché, so I just, I just crossed it off before I got started with it. (Interview, October 19, 2007)

Kelley's fear that she would not "pull off" her "great artistic vision" with her Digital Literacy Project is indicative not necessarily of agentive moves to represent herself in a *new* transformative way; on the contrary, along with her final decision to create a piece teachers might use for a "community helper" unit with kindergarteners, it reasonably points to an authoring of self that worked more to reinforce existing perceptions, through what Holland et al (1998) called the "heuristic development" guiding her peers towards a recognizable, or moreover "normal," orchestration of identity. Indeed, there are social constraints within discourses that make certain identities more or less available (Foucault, 1975; Gee, 1996).

However, though Kelley's statements point to a stabilization of one specific identity, they also exemplify a heightened awareness of audience, namely the cohort of education majors with whom she was expected to share her piece. Gee (1999) wrote that to "pull off" certain identities, you put "language, action, interaction, values, beliefs, symbols, objects, tools, and places together in such a way that others recognize you as a particular type of *who* . . . Whatever you have done must be similar enough to other performances to be recognizable. However, if it is different enough from what has gone before, but still recognizable, it can simultaneously change and transform Discourses" (p. 27). It is in this ability to coordinate available resources within socially situated d/Discourses that the possibility of improvisational self-authoring towards specific identities might occur.

Furthermore, this performance of identity is always in an active state of movement, of *doing* rather than *being*, or in Gee's (1999) words, "*doing being-or-becoming*," (p. 24) and is also always contingent on the recognition by other participants.

In this way, Gee likened his notion of Discourse to a dance, coordinated by authors in complex and often contentious ways or, to invoke a musical metaphor and highlight another frequently used term, "orchestrated" (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland et al, 1998; Kress, 2003; Hull & Katz, 2006) by authors both within and against a set of sociocultural, historical and political constraints.

To further illustrate this sense of audience or what Bakhtin (1986) called "addressivity"—the notion that every individual utterance "is constructed in anticipation of encountering response" (p. 94)—during our Digital Literacy Projects, I share another brief introductory segment of interview transcript from Sidney, an author who, along with another student, chose to create a tribute in response to the Virginia Tech shootings, a tragic event that occurred during that particular semester.

> We were kind of worried that it was almost too serious . . . I think we're both pretty bubbly and just happy and it just kind of surprised us that we both picked an event that was so devastating . . . it was the type of seriousness, it was something devastating and gruesome and we chose to do that . . . We didn't want people to think we had this inner torment going on. (Interview, October 23, 2007).

Like Kelley, Sidney's comments point to a conscious awareness of her audience, an awareness which ultimately created some anxiety about how the DLP would be received and what it might say about the authors themselves (i.e., Do they have some sort of "inner torment going on"?).

Sidney's anxiety about the reception of her DLP by her peers is indicative of a Bakhtinian addressivity, a theoretical notion that shares complementarity with the dynamic and interactive quality of Gee's Discourse and with the notion that performance

of identity is always a practice of *becoming*. Utterances (and the possibilities for individual human expression) are always dialogic, requiring the participation of others, and occur within spaces that for Bakhtin (1981, 1986) contain multiple and contradictory social languages (heteroglossia), and for Gee include also all the other nonlinguistic "stuff" that collide and make up his "Big D" Discourses—*saying(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing* combinations. For both, historical and political contexts determine social positions, but the flexibility, and I argue the fragile possibility for human agency, is located in our *doing*, our *performance*, our *becoming* of those social identities. These are dynamic spaces where struggles for expression, voice and identity spill out into our interactions with the world.

To Bakhtin's sociolinguistic dialogism and Gee's sociocultural d/Discourse, I add, albeit with relative gloss, an additional theoretical focus on semiotic discourse (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), one which foregrounds the multimodality inherent in all human communication. Much akin to the act of orchestration, Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) *design* brings to light authorial choices about the coordinated use of culturally available resources within socially-situated spaces of interaction. Of design, they wrote, "Communicational practice consists in choosing the realisational modes which are apt to the specific purposes, audiences and occasions of text-making" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 30). Both Sidney and Kelley in the previous DLP examples, while constrained by the social and discursive forces of our preservice classroom, designed and produced multimodal texts with some authorial intent in relation to their audience.

Sidney and her coauthor's Digital Literacy Project, in contrast to the topic Kelley decided on, exemplifies a *design* decision relatively less stabilizing however, and indeed

more contradictory regarding the range of textual productions that functioned to "normalize" certain recognizable identities in our preservice course. The anxiety to create something "too serious" is reasonably attributable to a prevailing Discourse in our classroom regarding what undergraduate life should look like—i.e., "having the time of your life" or "Girls just want to have fun" (written descriptions in our DLP film festival program, Spring, 2007)—a Discourse also supported by the predominance of playful, hopeful and light-hearted Digital Literacy Projects (see Appendix A). This noticing led me early on to question how authors assess the potential for "successful" individual expression, particularly when they anticipate expressions to clash in some ways with prevailing Discourses.

Bakhtin (1981) wrote of a dialogic tension between *centripetal* forces (those discursive forces that work to centralize, unify and nucleate a maximum of mutual understanding) and *centrifugal* forces (those that stratify, decentralize and de-unify communication). Centrifugal forces emerge often from what Bakhtin (1981) called our *internally persuasive discourses* and associated utterances that challenge *authoritative discourses*, "When someone else's ideological discourse is internally persuasive for us and acknowledged by us, entirely different possibilities open up. Such discourse is of decisive significance in the evolution of an individual consciousness: consciousness awakens to independent ideological life precisely in a world of alien discourse surrounding it" (p. 345). Sidney and her coauthor's decision to author a "serious" response to a "gruesome" massacre reflects, in various subtle ways, an internally persuasive discourse amidst sociocultural, historical and political forces that constrained their Digital Literacy Project design within a limited range of social performances

recognizable as *doing being-or-becoming* undergraduate students at the end of their college career.

Holland et al (1998) wrote that our "space for authoring" (p. 191) selves is indeed defined by the sociocultural and political forces at play, yet not completely predetermined.

> The possibility of heuristic development does not mean humans can develop whatever subjectivity they wish and to do whatever strikes them at the moment. One's 'history-in-person' is the sediment from past experience upon which one improvises, using the cultural resources available, in response to the subject positions afforded one in the present. The constraints are overpowering, yet not hermetically sealed. Improvisation can become the basis for a reformed subjectivity. (p. 18)

It is through this art of improvisation that Holland and her colleagues (1998) argued individual authorial agency can occur, an improvisation that occurs always within the available space of authoring where multiple *social languages* (Bakhtin, 1981; Gee, 1996) collide in heteroglossia and where identity constructions ceaselessly oscillate between spheres both private and public. I build on Holland et al's (1998) idea of improvisation in this study, suggesting that preservice teachers authored multimodal representations of self in ways that both reinforced existing identities (i.e., undergraduate college student and elementary school teacher) *and* improvised more personally-nuanced individual authorings towards multiple other, often contradictory, identities (i.e., preservice teacher, Christian, secularist, sister, daughter, conservative, liberal, humorist, technologist, etc.).

Methodology

Participant selection

My research focused on preservice teachers willing to discuss their experiences

producing multimodal texts in an undergraduate level course I instructed in the field of

literacy education. To recruit participants, I emailed approximately 100 former

undergraduate students who had previously engaged in the creation of DLPs with me as

their instructor. Seventeen participants agreed, two who no longer worked in the field of

education for various reasons. *Purposeful sampling* (Patton, 2002) provided a suitable

strategy for selecting participants who met a certain criteria (former DLP author presently

in the field of education) and a sample size (15 participants) small enough to study

research questions with considerable qualitative depth. Data were collected primarily

through interviews using multimedia elicitations of participant-produced work as

entryways into open-ended interviews.

Qualitative Interviewing

I utilized in-depth semi-structured interviews as my primary method of data

collection, using an interview guide (Appendix B) with predetermined questions, though

allowing a flexibility within this approach consistent with that of *informal conversational*

interviews. This strategy pursues open-ended discussions that emerge from talking with

participants in particular settings. According to Patton (2002),

> The strength of the informal conversational method resides in the opportunities it
>
> offers for flexibility, spontaneity, and responsiveness to individual differences and
>
> situational changes. Questions can be personalized to deepen communication with

the person being interviewed and to make use of the immediate surroundings and

immediacy of the interview process. (p. 343)

Semi-structured, conversational interviews allowed me to actively engage and follow

relevant topics of discussion as well as unexpected issues that deviated from the

interview and research questions. This flexibility was advantageous for several reasons: it

opened the research to possibilities for new questions, interpretations, and

understandings; it foregrounded the co-construction of knowledge between

researcher/participant during the interview and it highlighted the contextual and social

contingencies of the interview process.

Multimedia elicitation

I also employed *multimedia elicitation* within the interview process, asking each

participant to view and respond to her own Digital Literacy Project. Patton (2002)

described this technique as a category of "creative qualitative modes of inquiry,"

particularly as a "projection technique" (p. 394), one in which participants react to

something other than a question. This proved particularly useful as a technique for this

research. First, it elicited conversations specific to the making and viewing of multimedia

pieces. Second, it offered a "mutual visual context" (Taylor, 2002) that both researcher

and participant could respond to, providing specific points for further clarification.

Discourse Analysis

Informed by Gee's (1999) approach to discourse analysis, I examined linguistic

data through a lens that questioned what and how preservice teachers made relevant (i.e.,

objects, places, values, beliefs) through the design and production of their multimodal

Digital Literacy Projects. I aimed this discourse analysis initially at transcribed interview

conversations specifically regarding the design and production of our Digital Literacy Projects. Though Gee's conception of Discourse included nonlinguistic "stuff," I found it productive to also couple his "tools of inquiry," namely *intertextuality* as it relates to Discourse, with analytic tools that examine the semiotic work being done by specific modes (i.e., still imagery, moving images, sound and text) in our DLPs. Both allowed me to study various ways authors combined linguistic and semiotic resources, consciously and unconsciously, in purposeful and individually authorial ways.

Procedurally, I gathered, transcribed and analyzed interview data in efforts to expound on and theorize how students conceptualized the DLPs in relation to previous experiences in and out of academic contexts, and in turn how they perceived digital compositions working to construct their sense of selves as *undergraduate college students*, *elementary school teachers*, other less prominent identities and/or composites of multiple identities. More specifically, my analysis took root in Gee's (1999) discourse analysis, emphasizing research questions that foreground how individuals and groups build identities (sometimes stabilizing and other times transforming them within contexts of specific Discourses). This polarity, however, between stabilization and transformation, is not as reductive a dichotomy as it may sound. Rather, self-authoring towards specific identities occurs on a complex spectrum, often in highly nuanced ways, and often simultaneously towards multiple identities that collide against one another. Among Gee's discourse analysis tools (which he also called "thinking devices"), *intertextuality*, and a companion term Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) called *provenance*, provided specific analytical lenses through which I examined collections of *data* (see Appendix C—verbal

transcription material from interview data, written descriptions of Digital Literacy Projects, and the semiotic components in the multimodal DLP texts themselves).

Gee's (1999) discourse analysis also allowed for an initial inductive coding that paired common linguistic themes within interview transcript data (and DLP descriptions written by preservice teachers during the making of their multimodal texts). More specifically, I point to linguistic representations within the data that offer insight into the individually authorial *work* being done both discursively and semiotically by preservice teachers in ways both stabilizing for and improvising upon various identities within the social context of our literacy education classroom.

Digital Literacy Projects

To further describe our Digital Literacy Projects, I offer Hull and Nelson's (2005) description of *digital stories*:

> [They are] brief movies distinctive in featuring the digital voice of the author who narrates a personally composed story and an assemblage of visual artifacts. . . . they are multimodal and digital, and thereby allow individuals those compositional means and rights that used to be associated just with the world of mass media. . . . they typically privilege a personal voice and allow participants to draw on pop culture and local knowledge. (p. 231)

Further, multimodal compositional processes can function, as LeCourt (1998) wrote of different writing technologies, "to denaturalize the forms and genres that seem so normal within an academic context" (p. 283). Using this thinking, I assigned Digital Literacy Projects in an effort to expand and challenge longstanding academic norms for communication, namely those that value the academic essay as the premiere genre to

represent thinking. Our DLP topics (see Appendix A), in conjunction with our explorations of various format and genre possibilities, ranged significantly in terms of subject matter, overlapping broad categorizations such as representations of student/college life, representations of teacher/future teacher and representations of self towards personal identities besides student and teacher.

[*Pseudonyms are used throughout data for all participant names and places.]

Stabilizing social identities of college student through Digital Literacy Projects

U.H.: University of Harrisburg

> *Who Let the Hawks Out observes the atmosphere, environment, and residents of Harrisburg, home of the Harrisburg Hawks, and shows how the two simple words that express the sentiments of the entire Hawk Nation are evident in all that you encounter on any given day through art, photography, fashion, and structures on campus and downtown Harrisburg. Those two words…GO HAWKS!* (DLP "Film festival" program description, Spring, 2006)

Consider this segment of transcript data involving a Digital Literacy Project author named Leslie who created a piece entitled "U.H." to highlight what she believed are "the great things" about her university, a piece she stated "encompassed everything I love about this university."

John: If you were to try to sort of summarize what your message or your story is in this piece, how would you do that?

Leslie: I would say it's, you know, I guess it's about going to college and stuff and things that are important but it's not one thing about a place that makes it special, it's a

combination of many different elements, whether that is education or friends or family or places, there's a lot of things that make one thing special to a person.

John: Do you think that message that you were trying to send was received or interpreted by other people in the cohort?

Leslie: I think so, probably because they were in it and they got to share things that they love cause I didn't prompt them at all to say what they said. To see, you know, that a lot of them maybe thought football, but also said the McCall Education Building cause I would cut and paste what they said and break it up cause I just let them talk as much as they wanted to. They could see that a lot of people had the same feelings that they did, and to be able to tape what one person said and they might say McCall or the school of education or football and another person said the same thing it kind of shows across the board that everybody feels the same way.

I discovered, with excitement, that Leslie herself had produced a sort of mini-qualitative study with her piece, interviewing all the members within her cohort regarding "what they loved most" about the university and about being a student, then creating a representation of her findings through a Digital Literacy Project that blended her personal experiences with patterns she noticed in interview comments from peers. I focused initially on her phrase, "everybody feels the same way," namely because it presents a relatively hyperbolic and centripetal conception of what university life as an education major in our cohort looked like.

Applying Gee's (1999) discourse analysis, I took similar chunks of language (words and phrases) and asked what assumptions were being made about student life, and in turn what "stuff" was excluded from this conception of *being* an undergraduate.

Leslie's statement, "It's a combination of many different elements, whether that is *education* or *friends* or *family* or *places*, there's a lot of things that make one thing special to a person" (italics added), contains general and nominally abstract terms that, though she considers them "different elements," are referenced in highly specific ideological ways through her Digital Literacy Project. Mentioning football repeatedly, for example, works to provide an ideological reference point, an intertextuality working on multiple levels to connect Leslie with a more localized social importance of the activity within her cohort, along with a broader solidarity celebrating a sense of belonging with the university and furthermore the national phenomenon of football fandom common at large state-run universities. These different elements belong to a similar discourse describing what university undergraduate student life looks like, and Leslie's process of associating herself in specific ways with education (and the university institution as a whole), with places (the college of education) and with activities (football) is purposeful, each of these for her possessing relevant, meaningful and significant commonality among the cohort.

This assertion is reinforced by a descriptive absence of experiences differing in appearance (i.e., higher education as culturally, monetarily or academically challenging for students), and in turn, by an exclusion of "non-traditional" student activities (i.e., returning to school for degrees at various stages in life or working in a myriad of employment capacities to pay for school). It's no accident that Leslie didn't focus on other sports, riding horses or gymnastics for example, as they lacked the threads within the classroom to weave as strong a centripetal tone of solidarity in her piece. The absence of these specific components, coupled by making explicitly relevant other more centering activities (i.e., football), function to reproduce the Discourse for a particular type of

university student by reinforcing what is easily recognizable among "college students" as culturally valuable. In this sense, Leslie was aligning her "internally persuasive discourse" with already existing authoritative forces defining culturally central ideological values.

To elaborate on how the presence of certain intertextual elements (and the absence of others) work to centripetally center an authoring of self towards a particular identity of college student, I turn to Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) term *provenance*, a term sharing with intertextuality the practice of recontextualizing materials and the inevitable referencing of other Discourses:

> A sign that signifies through provenance evokes a complete discourse, but without making that discourse explicit, so that, subjectively, only a vague and confused complex of ideas and values is communicated. Nevertheless, these ideas and values are usually important to the 'place' which has created the provenance sign, and they are associated with strong feelings. As a result the vagueness is not usually consciously realized. Communication by means of provenance is usually unsystematic and *ad hoc*, an invention of the moment (p. 73).

To illustrate, consider again a segment from Leslie's transcript data.

John: In terms of the song that you used, did you know that you wanted to use it?

Leslie: I did, the Joe Maloy song, *Every Hawk has Its Day*, encompasses the great part of Harrisburg. It's a song that I think anybody who goes to Harrisburg University or went to Harrisburg could listen to without getting chill bumps, so I couldn't think of a better song. I thought about using a different song, one of his songs and I kind of immediately thought of Joe Maloy because he writes so many songs that pertain to Harrisburg and he

has such a love for Harrisburg and I thought, well, he loves Harrisburg so much, I mean, why do I, why do you love U.H.? I have to put him in there because he's just like Mr. Harrisburg Man altogether. I went to one of his concerts one time and watching him talk about loving Harrisburg and it was the biggest concert he had ever done. It was in the Harrisburg Center, I mean he got so emotional talking about the place and then he performed that song last and I mean, you couldn't, you almost cried, it was so awesome to see him do that so there's not a better song that I could have chosen.

John: I think it was very fitting, too. You said something that's really interesting to me. What he produces, like his music and the way, what he talks about and what he chooses to say, kind of represents his interests and what he finds important, and you even called him, you know, Mr. Harrisburg Man. Do you think that what you produced in this text, um, influenced how people see you as a person?

Leslie: The girls in the cluster, I mean of course immediately when they saw they were like Leslie had to do this one because I adore Harrisburg and I'm kind of crazy about it, but I think they saw, they got to see parts of things that I love, of course everybody loves football, but they'd have to see places on campus that they might not have realized or you know, friends that I have that they don't know, but they might have met, but I think they got to see different parts of why I love U.H. not just the football and the Blue and Grey {newspaper}, you know, it was all these things combined into one, but I think it was very, I think they had a good impression of who I was before they saw this, but they saw that this fit me really well.

John: So maybe it reinforced what they already knew?

Leslie: What they already knew, definitely. They know I'm kind of crazy about [Harrisburg]. I actually showed it to my parents for the first time a couple weekends ago and my dad just laughed he was like, "Oh my gosh, this is so you. I totally expected all that." But, you know, I think all of it combined with the music, and a lot of my friends that they know or girls from the cluster that they know, they got to see everything that I love combined into one, so it was a good opportunity, I guess it's gonna be nice for me to look back and for them to look back and for me to show my kids maybe one day, "This is why I love Harrisburg and hopefully you'll have that experience one day too."

Given the strong tone of solidarity within her piece, it's reasonable to assume that Leslie's production was designed dialogically in concert with the centripetal values and beliefs of the cohort as a group, or what Leslie believed to be the cultural norms that worked to define *being* a particular type of college student (a "normal" undergraduate) within the context of our classroom. In this sense, Leslie's Digital Literacy Project works to stabilize the identity of a university student, one situated within a particular Discourse. First, using Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) provenance as an analytic tool, Leslie referenced a particular historical event in the past (the concert) in which a notable person ("Mr. U.H. Man") performed a specific activity (talked and sang a song about "loving Harrisburg"), resulting in an emotional response ("you almost cried"). For Leslie, this experience contributed to her "history-in-person" (Holland et al, 1998), in turn functioning also for Leslie to appropriate this sense of emotionality in her own Digital Literacy Project by choosing a song "that I think anybody who goes to Harrisburg University or went to Harrisburg could listen to without getting chill bumps." The

provenance of the Mr. U.H. Man's song is one of pride for the institution and a strong, even emotional, sense of solidarity among those who attend. In this sense, Leslie intentionally, though implicitly, authored herself through recontextualizing and appropriating another text into her Digital Literacy Project.

Not only did Leslie author herself as student through intertextuality by referencing the past, she made relevant this identity by "building connections" (Gee, 1999) to future interactions with Discourses outside the current situation ("to show my kids maybe one day, 'This is why I love Harrisburg and hopefully you'll have that experience one day, too'"). Leslie's authoring of self then reinforces an identity that simultaneously coincides with future notions of self (i.e., as parent, as mother, as active alumni for the institution). In addition, Leslie's DLP design served to solidify her sense of self (in relation to others) in the present moment of its production both inside and outside of our classroom. "The girls in the cluster, I mean of course immediately when they saw {it} they were like Leslie had to do this one . . . I think they had a good impression of who I was before they saw this, but they saw that this fit me really well." Through Gee's conception of Discourse—*saying(writing)-doing-being-valuing-believing*—Leslie's ability to produce a DLP that "fit" her is attributable to a successful coordination of elements, an orchestration of available cultural resources recognizable within and across multiple Discourses.

Passion!

> *Through photos, words, and music, Passion! explores the products of good*
>
> *teachers and the many reasons why we teach. This i-movie was inspired by the*

poem "Passion!" by Karen Morrow Durica, which we feel sums up why we teach.

(Film festival program description, Spring, 2007)

Similar to the ways Leslie stabilized a particular identity of college student in her DLP text, this next segment of data highlights various ways another author, Stacey, designed and produced a Digital Literacy Project entitled *Passion!* with a group of authors that reinforced a particular identity of *elementary school teacher*. I draw from Gee's (1999) discourse analysis another analytic "thinking device," that of *Discourse models*, which involve "(usually unconscious) assumptions about models of simplified worlds . . . emblematic visions of idealized, 'normal,' 'typical' reality" (p. 78), and argue that Stacey authored herself through her DLP, thoughtfully and intentionally, towards a preexisting and centripetal construction of *elementary school teacher*.

Gee built the term Discourse models on the theoretical foundation of *cultural models*, a term not surprisingly used by others who have studied teacher identities, notably Britzman (1991) who argued that

> Cultural myths offer a set of ideal images, definitions, and justifications that are taken up as measure for thought, affect, and practice. These images instantiate the characteristic of modern myth: value-laden, it is masked by a naturalized appearance that seems complete and speaks for itself. A myth makes particular discursive practices that positions situations as given without quality of contingency; its form asserts a stable meaning despite unstable contexts by offering reasons in the guise of motives. (p. 6)

Alsup's (2006) work, research that also focused on teacher identity, stemmed from a deep concern regarding a specific cultural model, one that positions educators as "heroes,"

often following a "calling" to teach, despite an overwhelming irony that teachers are rarely rewarded with equivocal social status. I compare this positioning of teachers to what Gee (1996) called a *master myth*, one

> often associated with certain characteristic metaphors, or turns of phrase and thought, in which the group or society encapsulates its favored wisdom. At the same time, these myths hide from us other ways of thinking, even ways that actually co-exist in the society with the master myths. They come to seem inevitable, natural, normal, practical, common sense (p. 86).

Alsup (2006) identified three kinds of tension in her narrative analysis work: "'student' versus 'teacher' selves as preservice teachers moved from the role of university student to that of high school teacher, personal beliefs versus professional expectations, and university ideologies or educational methods versus the practical ones experienced in secondary field placements" (p. 55). Alsup incorporated the use of visual metaphors with preservice secondary teachers as a means to access "thoughts and feelings that other genres did not" (p. 10), a pedagogical effort to foster what she believed an important integration between development of personal and professional identities and one that shares with semiotic approaches a theoretical framework that foregrounds the relevance of communication through multiple modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress, 2003). The creation of Digital Literacy Projects represents a similar pedagogical attention to possibilities for epistemologically different authorial affordances of communicational modes other than the historically held prevalence of writing in academia.

Stacey's DLP, however, and her interview transcript point more towards the adoption of a culturally scripted role than to an authoring of self-individuality. She indicated that their purpose from the onset was to create a product to "show potential employers, like, this is what we did with our students," something they could "actually use in the future, something we could show to people." About their movie, Stacey said, "I mean, we all clearly love the kids." Much like Leslie then, Stacey represented herself for multiple Discourses, (re)authoring an identity of teacher *in concert* with Discourses that overlapped—the then-present context of our preservice classroom and the then-future context involving "potential employers."

A certain message about teaching, one in which shows the participants "clearly love the kids" is central to their project, and they reinforce this teacher identity throughout the piece with direct reference to a poem entitled "Passion," by Karen Morrow Durica. The poem tells a story of a teacher who "has fire in her eyes" and gives an ending call for teachers to "love what it is you teach." The depiction is one of a teacher as a figure with undying passion, where loving what you teach can transcend other struggles educators face. Furthermore, they chose to include the poem in two specific ways: as a voice narration (recited by elementary school children) occurring simultaneously with digital still images, and as a textual component visually breaking the entire video into short segments of the poem itself.

Intertextuality plays out on multiple levels to reinforce a stable conception of teacher. First, "doubling" the poem's message through two modes (visual and aural) references two ways of knowing—the world *told* and the world *seen* (Kress, 2003)—and reinforces the notion that multiple voices are saying the same thing. Not only did the

group "re-accentuate" Karen Morris Durica's poem (and in turn her authorial "voice"), they projected this vision of teachers onto the literal voices of children within their DLP. In a Bakhtinian sense, it's not surprising that their DLP was "multi-voiced" and dialogic. Bakhtin wrote, "In all areas of life and ideological activity, our speech is filled to overflowing with other people's words" (p. 337). Stacey and her co-authors align themselves well with an authoritative discourse for teachers, and commenting on what she thought her piece showed others about herself, Stacey said, "The whole thing is just passion for teaching, I think it just struck me. I mean, at this point we're all just really passionate about being the best teacher we can. And I think this poem just encapsulated that whole idea about teaching."

In addition to the above example of intertextuality, another education course (in which the entire cohort participated) used the poem, generating in turn an immediate familiarity—a shared knowledge—among the students in our course regarding its message. *Being* a "good" teacher (more so than *being* good in other professions), presupposed particular social practices, namely *being* "passionate." This passion is at the same time noticeable and unnoticeable; it is energetic and patient, but it is also *knowing* culturally what teachers say and when they say it (Gee, 1996). This layer of intertextuality heightened the intimacy between already overlapping Discourses (student and teacher) and their epistemological and ontological ways of being.

Interestingly, though she was excited to show the piece to the cohort, Stacey thought their movie was "not one of the most exciting pieces. I mean, I felt really excited until I watched everybody's else's and I realized everyone's was really good and a lot of them were really emotional and ours wasn't, so I don't know." The struggle for voice

then, and in turn the struggle for identity, is always contingent, and furthermore incomplete, on the interactive negotiation between people in specific social contexts (Bakhtin, 1981; Britzman, 1991; Hull and Katz, 2006). Comparing Stacey's again to Leslie's DLP, the amount of emotional content was held as a highly important element regarding the uptake of DLPs by the audience. This knowledge is developed from our historical experiences as a consumer of this media (video) and, as Stacey indicated, from the production and localized consumption of the DLPs together. In our context, to resonate powerfully with your audience meant also including a certain intensity of emotion within your multimodal text, at least when using digital video as a primary tool for combining different modes of representation.

Improvising social identities through Digital Literacy Projects

The previous two Digital Literacy Project examples exemplified an authoring of selves that reinforced certain specific perceptions of identity within a university teacher course, namely the roles of "undergraduate college student" and "future elementary teacher." These self-authorings utilized certain sociocultural discourses and practices, analyzed through a Bakhtinian lens and with Gee's (1999) specific "inquiry tool" of intertextuality, to *stabilize* specific representations of self in our classroom. Though the previous two DLP texts, from a Bakhtinian perspective, undoubtedly possessed complex "multi-voiced" utterances orchestrated in purposeful ways, I argue in regards to identity building that they both lean heavily towards more "monologic" interactions between individual internally persuasive discourses and the authoritative discourses at play in our preservice classroom.

In other words, these particular "authoring of selves" aligned with what the authors perceived to be well-recognized versions of undergraduate student and future elementary teacher *doings*, the practices and discourses that are in turn recognizable as components of certain college student and elementary teacher identities (Gee, 1999). In their design, they deviate little from these roles, whether unconsciously aligning with preexisting cultural/Discourse models (Britzman, 1991; Gee, 1996, 1999; Alsup, 2006) about student and teacher identities, or consciously and actively reinforcing Discourses the authors found valuable and productive to establish these social positions (and likely a mixture of both).

I argue, in contrast, that this next example showcases a strikingly different use of available cultural resources within the Discourses and practices of our university classroom, seen comparably through this DLPs intertextuality—references to other "texts" outside the classroom, and therefore the inevitable reference to other utterances, other voices and identities, and other discourses. This next DLP example shows evidence of a playfulness with the available cultural materials, a degree of risk-taking, and a willingness to composite multiple (and contradictory) identities into a singular utterance, all of which I argue open spaces for a resourceful, improvisational and ideologically complex authoring of self.

E! True Hollywood Story: You Snooze, You Lose

I offer first a description of this Digital Literacy Project created by a preservice student in our classroom named Amy. Most striking in its design, contrasting the previous two examples, is its use of humor, a focus that included relatively esoteric comedic content intended for the appreciation by the two moviemakers themselves, as

well as a complex layering of multiple humorous elements (some juxtaposing iconic images and politically sensitive social issues within an overall tone of parody). Arguably, Amy's approach to our Digital Literacy Project involved appropriating and combining "social languages" from a variety of mainstream media sources, a "hybridization" leaving considerable room for a wide range of interpretive responses regarding the authors' intentions, and in this way differing from the "monologic" authoring performed with the previous pieces. Bakhtin (1981) characterized hybridization as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses" (p. 358), and through Amy's DLP there is evidence of a unique, individualized juxtaposition of elements.

Amy's DLP premise started with an Oprah Winfrey-like spoof and developed into a parody about the practice of alarm clock snoozing, a "highly addictive" problem of "epidemic" proportions facing our global society. As she continued to develop her idea, she soon dropped out of a collaborative group to fully pursue the project's design on her own. She expressed she didn't want to impose her ideas on others, and though we didn't talk specifically about this decision during the interview, she alluded to the potential for a different creative experience by working alone, one allowing her to pursue a more singular comedic vision in her design. In addition, she had the technological help of her brother, also an undergraduate at the university, whom she leaned on for software assistance outside of class, and whom she "bonded with" during the making of the piece. This "outside" relationship and collaboration becomes especially relevant as it adds an additional layer of complexity to the design and production of the text. Not only is the content for Amy's piece immediately more open to a variety of interpretive response, it is

authored by an "insider"/"outsider" team, at once heightening the potential for "multi-voiced" combinations and a self-authoring "replete with contradictions" by its simultaneous attention towards multiple audiences, or likewise, an attention to a singular audience perceived differently through insider/outsider statuses.

Again, Gee's (1999) approach to discourse analysis brought a certain complementarity to Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) notion of the *always* dialogic and appropriated utterance, and it allowed me to apply the same inquiry tool (intertextuality) when comparing and analyzing different Digital Literacy Projects and the linguistic discourses within my interview data. Intertextuality (in its linguistic and nonlinguistic forms) has an intimate connection with the art of improvisation. Amy's movie, for example, blended a wide range of media genres together—primetime news reporting, reality TV, straight documentary, realistic and absurd parody—to create a "multi-voiced" mini-mockumentary reminiscent in ways to satirical Saturday Night Live skits. The design and production of the piece was, using Amy's words, "highly scripted" and intentional, involving decisions about musical score selections and the use of dramatic effects (i.e., desaturating digital film into black and white segments to juxtapose ones in color). Again, it's noteworthy to attend to the "outside" collaboration Amy enlisted, one bringing a new set of technology skills to her multimodal production that contrasted the general level of familiarity with this new composing software in our classroom. This is no small contribution, particularly as it brings to light a specific set of skills, a "literacy" so to speak, that arguably afforded these authors greater openings in which to "play," a Vygotskian concept Holland et al (1998) borrowed to underscore their notion of improvisation.

Holland et al (1998), considering the development of identity, highlighted "the dense interconnections between the intimate and public venues of social practice" (p. 270). In addition, they referenced Vygotsky in two important ways. First, they argued that the "space for authoring" (the social context in which authors orchestrate or "improvise" available cultural elements for their dialogic utterances) is connected to Vygotsky's zone of proximal development:

> The "voices" that make up a space of authoring are to an 'author' as Vygotsky's instructing adults are to the neophyte: they do not so much compel rote action as extend, through their support, the competencies, the 'answerability,' of persons to operate in such a diverse yet powerful social universe. The histories that give shape to spaces of authoring, besides being both personal and public, are thus also compulsory and liberatory, in degrees that vary greatly. (p. 272)

In this way, they defined identity as a spectral movement between the private and the public spheres, in which personal authorship, always dialogic and attending to others, can be performed through "play" (the second important reference to Vygotsky's work), or the art of *improvisation*, "created on the margins of regulated space and time" (p. 272) and through which Holland and her colleagues situated their definition for human agency.

Amy's particular use of *intertextuality*, how she shifted between authored-selves in a highly "multi-voiced" text, and how she saw herself and her text in relation specifically to the others in the cohort (the situated "responsivity" of her text) all set it apart from the previous two examples. For example, I asked Amy about the song selections they chose and if they had made those decisions to reinforce certain messages. She laughed and recalled the moment she decided to sync Bob Dylan's "Everybody Must

Get Stoned" with footage of an interviewee saying, "I just have to hit it," drawing deliberately on a clichéd drug reference. Responding to whether she thought her audiences picked up on her intended comedic nuances during the single showing of the film, she again laughed and told a story of her parents' neighbor expressing uncertainty about how to interpret the piece: "My dad took the video to our next door neighbor and said, 'I think you really need to watch this.' And he, our next door neighbor was like, 'Are you serious?' I mean, cause it was just very realistic I guess." Her neighbor's interpretive ambiguity, in some ways, pays homage to a successful orchestration of elements within the movie and its ability to leave under question the intentions behind the deliberate appropriations of other mainstream media sources. In this way, Amy and her brother draw on various modal "affordances" within a culturally common multimodal discourse (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001), primarily referencing mainstream television media.

This improvisation utilizes the various material and cultural resources at hand and is consistent with both Gee's (1996, 1999) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) notion of discourses involving multiple, often nonlinguistic, modes of expression. To highlight the multimodal work being done within this Digital Literacy Project, and ultimately to bridge it with Bakhtin's sociolinguistics and Gee's Discourse, I depart briefly from a linguistic focus into a multimodal discourse analysis (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001) and draw attention to elements of design that provide evidence for internally persuasive discourses that functioned in ways different from the previous examples, ways that challenged centripetal forces of an authoritarian discourse.

For example, when asked what she gained from creating black and white segments in her piece, Amy answered, "Kind of the feeling of realistic dream. If that makes sense. Something very serious that happened, and I guess that's why I was thinking black and white, and it's so dramatic I feel like sometimes it's so much more dramatic than color and a little more depressing. So I think that's why I chose to do it, to set the mood." This answer aligns with what Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) refer to as part of a general (though contextually contingent) "grammar of visual design." For example, saturation affects an image's "modality," or its perceived "realness," and the participant's articulation for choosing to desaturated footage fits Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) description of saturation as an element of visual design grammar:

> Its key affordance lies in its ability to express emotive 'temperatures', kinds of affect. It is a scale that runs from maximum intensity of feeling to maximally subdued, maximally toned-down, indeed neutralized feeling. In context this allows many different more precise and strongly value-laden meanings. High saturation may be positive, exuberant, adventurous, but also vulgar or garish. Low saturation may be subtle and tender, but also cold and repressed, or brooding and moody. (p. 233)

Amy's "play" is performed through her DLP text, a singular representational utterance, orchestrated by combining various modes used to both reinforce specific intended meanings within perceived Discourses and to improvise how those modes might be pushed and manipulated to juxtapose meanings. The improvisation, specifically, increased the risk of presenting obscure and challenging ideas and values, and worked to express an internally persuasive discourse that embraced a multiplicity of voices, of

social identities. It challenged an authoritative discourse defining preexisting singular and highly recognizable social positions within our preservice course.

The multimodal nature of the piece afforded a visually- and audially-driven intertextuality within her piece, but also created a certain *risk* for self-authoring within the specific social space of our teacher ed classroom. When I asked Amy what she thought the project said to other people about who she was as a person, she responded generally that "humor" and "creativity" were what came to mind; in other words, she believed her piece reinforced the ways her cohort peers had already come to see her "personality." At the same time however, while Amy expressed a strong sense of pride in her final project, she also recalled an intense feeling of anxiety when showing the piece for the first time. "I felt kind of bad because it was taking a very serious issue and making light of it. I mean, addictions in general. I felt a little bad about that, but I think we went totally so much with humor that I don't think anyone took offense to it really."

When pressed to elaborate on why she felt "bad," she explained, "Well, because you always hear about, you know, cocaine addicts and crack addicts, and I've had friends who have gone through rehab and everything. It's a very serious issue, and you know, we had some images in there of some guys shooting up heroin on the street and we're treating snoozing as a serious addiction that causes family break-ups and dropping out of school and it's not." Amy also juxtaposed "the addiction of snoozing" voice-over narrative with iconic images of malnourished third-world children. Her anxiety is no surprise, though it speaks to her awareness of the multiple voices she blended together in her design.

In this sense, it was an awareness of tension, of the juxtaposition between iconic images and the hope for "using humor strong enough that it didn't offend people" that she legitimated her satire with a personal justification of appropriateness. We might look to current comparisons regarding this genre in which politically sensitive topics are recontextualized in "spaces of authoring" that elevate the use of humor to legitimate a sense of ironic parody, often with issues taboo in certain social contexts. In this way, Amy's DLP can be seen as much an improvised authoring of self shifting her from a position superficially inhabiting a student with a "really funny personality," a "cut-up" within the cohort, to that of an author possessing abilities to weld sophisticated and multi-dimensional comedic texts that challenged the superficiality of her position. Her parody on addiction is in fact a parody on the discourses of mainstream media, and her skillful representation with a collection of media strategies used frequently to guide viewers created a powerful satirical message about the very making of media itself, regardless of how consciously Amy intended that "critical media" message to be.

Yet it's in this resourceful accessing of other medias, other social languages, that Amy's piece becomes a representation filled with the "echoes of others" and replete with contradictions between multiple voices of self—simultaneously building on the fun-loving, witty personality and yet inevitably brushing up against other voices and identities, including those of a serious college student, an intimately connected family member, a future elementary school teacher with sophisticated technology prowess, and an author balancing "creative expression" with an awareness and sensitivity to multiple audiences. Bakhtin's addressivity makes complicated the production of text for more than one audience simultaneously; yet, as Britzman (1991) wrote, it is through the utterances

of internally persuasive discourse that a person "pulls away from the norms and admits a variety of contradictory social discourses," and internally persuasive discourse "is opened during times of spontaneity, improvisation, interpretive risks, crises and when one reflects upon taken-for-granted ways of knowing" (p. 21).

Concluding thoughts

In many ways it is a dangerous representation of data to interpretively create dichotomizing categories of "stabilizing" and "improvising" performances of identity with these Digital Literacy Project examples and the authors' interview responses. For example, though I argue that Amy's piece presents a text in which her internally persuasive discourse is expressed through acts of improvisation with the design and production of her DLP (one which challenged discursive and authoritative norms), she also reinforced her own pre-existing "personality," described as witty and humorous, through the use of parody in her piece. Likewise, though the first two DLP examples offer evidence of self-authorings that functioned primarily to reinforce specific culturally scripted identities of student and teacher, both also demonstrated an awareness of future audiences outside our classroom, *building connections* (Gee, 1999) to future Discourses by acknowledging for example the transition from the role of preservice student to that of practicing teacher, or the from the role of college student to that of supporting alumni. Indeed there are complexities that become reduced in any analysis, much like the inevitable incompleteness of any communicative event (Bakhtin, 1981; Kress, 2003), regardless of an author's skillful orchestration of linguistic or semiotic materiality. Our utterances, our voices and our construction of identity are always dialogic and contingent on the interaction and interpretation of others within specific social settings.

However, Gee (1996) wrote that it is "by stressing the inevitable multiplicity and indeterminacy of interpretation that the rest of us can resist domination" (p. 102) and the constraints of authoritative discourses that through cultural models work to define certain identities and marginalize others. In her work, Alsup (2006) suggested that preservice teachers must "negotiate conflicting subject positions and ideologies while creating a professional self" (p. 6) to counter what Britzman (1999) considered the "myth of normalcy" positioning teachers into limited ways of being. To highlight this potential for negotiation, I draw from the data once more and employ another of Gee's "thinking devices," the concept of *Conversations*. When we communicate, we reference others' language and Discourse in specific ways, but we also often allude to themes or debates that are familiar within our society on a broader level. Gee wrote (1999),

> I refer to all the talk and writing that has gone on in a specific social group or in society at large around a major theme, debate, or motif as a 'Conversation' with a capital 'C,' using the term metaphorically, of course. Most of us today are aware of the societal Conversations going on around us about things like abortion, creationism, global warming, terrorism, and so on and so forth through many other issues. To know about these Conversations is to know about the various sides one can take in debates about these issues and what sorts of people are usually on each side. (p. 22)

Regarding a Digital Literacy Project co-authored by four students (Tammy, Casey, Katie and Lisa) chronicling their upbringing, their friendship and their desire to be teachers, the issue of religion surfaced as the group negotiated which song to use for the piece. In my interview with Tammy she explained,

>There's this song that comes up later and it's a little bit based on Christianity and
>stuff and Lisa didn't really want that in there. Not that she's against Christianity,
>but it's just not one of her strong points so we had a little mishap over the song we
>were going to choose…I think Casey had recommended it, and Casey's really
>strong in her faith. And Katie and I really liked it, and you know Lisa will speak
>up for herself, she's not scared to, so she was like, I don't really want it to be all
>about that, you know. She saw it if that was the music playing in the background
>for all of it that would set the tone, which you know is true, so we had chosen a
>different song instead of that one. (Interview, October 3, 2007)

Lisa, presented with a situation in which she would be associated with the creation of a text that alluded to a Conversation about religion in a way that made her uncomfortable demanded that she respond, either passively by allowing the song without resistance or actively, as she seemed to do, by expressing the dissonance between the song and her sense of self. "If we are alive," Holland et al (1998) wrote of Bakhtin's writing, "then we are engaged in answering what's directed at us. We are always engaged in the activity of making sense of what is happening as one who will respond. We are always authoring the meaning of action" (p. 279).

Discourse, with its many components and social practices (combining for example within this study intertextuality and provenance, Discourse models and Conversations) has a reciprocal relationship with self-authoring and in turn with the construction of various identities. Considering academic discourses in university settings often work to normalize certain forms of ideology (LeCourt, 1998), Digital Literacy Projects, like other multimodal communication practices, offer a compositional space

"for juxtaposing, recentering and recontextualizing" (Hull & Katz, 2006, p. 42) multiple modes—written texts, images, music and video footage—and allow authors the possibility to "investigate how the possibility of seemingly intractable institutional norms and the identities they produce are in fact fragile, and subject to semiotic messing with" (Parmentier, 1994). If we bring this focus into educational settings then, as we examine ways preservice teachers construct various identities and composites of multiple identities, to conjure the writing of Britzman (1991) again, "we can find cultures of silence and voice and discourses that are authoritative and internally persuasive. And if we look even more closely, we can uncover how personal social practices legitimate and contest both forms of discourse as they shape theories about what it means to become a teacher" (p. 27). It is in these spaces that we, as teacher educators, might foster possibilities for self-authorings that deviate from culturally scripted norms regarding identity formation.

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Chapter 3

MULTIMODAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: DESIGN AND PRODUCTION USING

MOVING IMAGE AMONG PRESERVICE TEACHERS

Bishop, J. To be submitted to Contemporary Issues in Technology and Teacher

Education.

You can be in a community, you can be with lots of people, you can be surrounded by many different people, but you might feel alone in that surrounding, even though … you do have a big place with a whole bunch of connections.

  —Alyssa, preservice teacher, 2006

I walk a lonely road

The only one that I have ever known

Don't know where it goes

But it's home to me and I walk alone

  —Green Day, "Boulevard of Broken Dreams," 2004

Sojourner (n): a temporary resident

  —http://www.dictionary.com

* The videotext referenced in this manuscript is located online:

http://sojournervideo.blogspot.com/

   Alyssa (pseudonym), a preservice elementary education major in her final year of study at a large southern university, coauthored a compelling short digital video along with three of her cohort peers using a single digital video camera as their "recording technology" and iMovie as their "synthesizing technology," (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), both tools that allow (and limit) authors regarding specific design and production choices. Alyssa and her coauthors designed their movie, entitled "Sojourner," to show

viewers how "loneliness" is a human experience that "all of us have felt," a message foregrounded in their video through specific modal combinations (i.e., written text + music + moving image), each mode working in conjunction with others to reinforce certain *experiential meaning potential* for their audience, "the idea that material signifiers have meaning potential that derives from what it is we *do* when we articulate them, and from our ability to extend our practical experience metaphorically and turn action into knowledge" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 22). The material signifiers constitute the *media* (both the tools and the materials used) through which *modes* are realized. Modes, emphasizing "what it is we *do* with material signifiers," are the semiotic resources that "allow for the simultaneous realization of discourses and types of (inter)action" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 21). Alyssa and her coauthors then, authoring a short digital video, orchestrated multiple modes of representation into a multimodal ensemble, a singular utterance articulated through the medium of digital video. The multimodality in their piece—the combination of multiple representational modes—brings an epistemological complexity that impacts both their intended expression and their audience's interpretive responses. Consider, for example, the contrasting "epistemological commitments" (Kress, 2003) written language and image require of readers: written alphabetic text orders communicative utterances through a logic of linearity, an inevitable temporality, while image, on the other hand, represents information simultaneously, bound not by a sequential ordering of time.

What I hope to achieve in this article is threefold. First, I expound on theories of multimodality, and in turn social semiotics, and establish their relevance for research in the social sciences, particularly for work within the field of education. Secondly, I build

on ways of utilizing multimodal data analysis to address interplays between mode and media, specifically focusing on *moving image* as an increasingly significant mode of representation and digital video as its corresponding media for dissemination. Lastly, I couple this emphasis on semiotic analysis with interview transcript data and situate my interpretive work within a specific sociocultural context, preservice teacher discourses, attempting to account for relationships between the *materiality* (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996) of multimodal artifacts (all the "stuff" used to create digital films) and the *social practices* and representations of self that are enabled or constrained by their use in classroom environments.

Multimodality

Numerous theoretical accounts of discourse have argued for a multimodal or multi-semiotic framework (Gee, 1996; Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001; Fairclough, Graham, Lemke and Wodak, 2004) emphasizing both linguistic and nonlinguistic elements that function during human social interactions. *Multimodality* itself has become a term that signifies an approach to literacy studies and, as this article emphasizes, for analyzing semiotic data, arguably emerging with Kress and van Leeuwen's (1990/1996) "grammar of visual design," theoretical work that complements social semiotic theory (Kress and Hodge, 1988; van Leeuwen, 2005). Social semiotics builds on Halliday's notion of "semiotic resources," a phrase emphasizing the social practices and uses of sign systems, critiquing then Saussure's semiology for its impression of "signs" as static and predetermined with meaning. Of multimodality, Iedema (2003), a researcher working with film texts, stated that its relevance to meaning making has been linked to changes in our "semiotic landscape," particularly an increase in multi-semiotic representation via

digital communications and an associated increase in the blurring of cultural and social boundaries of globalization.

Kress (2003) argued that using modes of communication other than written and spoken language require different "epistemological commitments," each mode requiring specific ways of constructing knowledge. For example, the organizing logic in the mode of alphabetic writing typically *describes* the world; it tells, names, orders, and sequences temporally all events and knowledge. Image, on the other hand, *shows* the world; it depicts spatial relations within an image simultaneously rather than sequencing the information in any particular linear order. These epistemological differences, and the possibility for diverse combinatory variations, account for a powerful meaning-making potential in multimodality. In other words, not only can multimodal texts afford new ways to make meaning, it can afford different types of meaning.

For Hull and James (2007), this potential lies in one's ability to represent oneself, "to depict one's own social reality in relation to another's, and to do so using the most current and potent mediational means. At this moment that powerful means is multimodal and multimedia" (p. 26). In light of new technologies continuing to make different modal combinations and variances available for representation and communication, Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) proposed, arguably originating a burgeoning new theoretical and analytical approach to discourse and literacy ("multimodality"), to develop research methodologies with tools capable of description and critical analysis.

Writing about multimodal texts generally, Hull and Nelson (2005) stated, "Multimodal communication is powerful to the extent that the constituent modes are integrated in such a way that they each do what they do well and that these strengths are

positioned so as to complement one another" (p. 247). This acknowledgement that multimodality, the epistemological combination of *telling* and *showing*, doesn't automatically equate to powerful expression is a noteworthy one, and further legitimates the need to establish methodological and analytical means to address multimodal components in research data. For example, what methodological means might be used to analyze how a particular mode is foregrounded above others (i.e., audio over image) in a multimodal piece? Furthermore, how might researchers work to analyze and describe how separate modes work together to complement one another for a particular authorial message or intent? These questions are particularly important for multimodal analysis, and are arguably given more significant urgency within the field of literacy education considering the rapid availability for the digital design, production and dissemination of multiple communicative modes online. What follows is a particular look at how *moving image*, as it's own unique mode, can be analyzed in a way that addresses these questions regarding the use of multiple modes for representation.

Moving image—The kineikonic mode

Arguing that moving image can be viewed, in a gestalt sense, as its own particular mode of representation, Burn and Parker (2003, 2003b) developed the term *kineikonic* to refer to the "integrative, combinatorial assemblage of modes" (2003, p. 59) within moving image. The kineikonic (from the Greek words for *move* and *image*), they wrote,

> Refers to how all the elements of the moving image are assembled, but includes
> the particular conventions afforded by the practices of filming and editing; this
> uses a range of semiotic resources to make the moving image, integrating them

into the spatiotemporal flow by (re)designing and producing them within the spatial frame and the temporal sequence of the film (Burn & Parker, 2003, p. 59).

The notion of a kineikonic mode is significant for researchers attempting to describe and analyze moving image for various methodological and theoretical purposes as it seeks to account for the complexity of multimodal ensembles and more specifically as it distinguishes the kineikonic from previous film theory principles, namely Christian Metz's (1974) separation between *cinematic* and *filmic* elements of filmmaking. Metz concentrated on the "cinematic" in his textual analyses of film, properties that relate directly to the craft of filming and editing, such as camera angles, shot distances and scene sequencing (as opposed to the additive "filmic" components, such as musical scores to enhance emotional inflections). The kineikonic, in contrast, builds on multimodal theories of communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001) that highlight the *integration* of multiple semiotic resources, both cinematic and filmic.

The conception of the kineikonic mode, Burn and Parker (2003) argued, allows for an analysis of moving image a single frame at a time, a methodological affordance that allows researchers, paradoxically, to explore how different modes "complement, reiterate, anticipate and contradict each other" (p. 63), in turn addressing the shifting epistemological salience (and the combinatory complexity) of various semiotic work occurring in texts that include moving image. For example, working with 10- and 11-year-old children and their teacher in a primary school in England, Burn and Parker (2003) adopt the four components of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) "strata for semiotic production"—*discourse*, *design*, *production* and *distribution*—and identify some of the principles in which moving image combines other communicative modes

through spatiotemporal design, the integration of spatial frames with temporal sequencing.

A multimodal social semiotic approach to analyzing moving image

Social semiotic analysis enables us to question ways films present social reality and provides a means to talk back, rather than be overwhelmed by what is, ultimately, a very sophisticated and powerful medium. (Iedema, 2001, p. 187)

I utilize Burn and Parker's conception of the kineikonic mode, along with van Leeuwen's (1985, 1999, 2005) emphasis on *rhythm* to analyze Alyssa and her coauthors' digital film "Sojourner," particularly with regards to components in Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) strata of authorial representation (i.e., their *design* in the mode of moving image and their *production* using the tools of digital video camera and digital video editing software). This initially positions my analysis towards the authors, their representational intentions, and the affordances of the mode and media they use to design and produce their text. However, I supplement my semiotic functional analysis with Alyssa's transcribed interview data (to further expound on authorial intention), but also reference the semiotic analysis of others working with television and film (Iedema, 2001, 2003; Chouliaraki, 2004) to address the dialogic and social interactivity among authors, text, and viewers. From a social semiotic standpoint, this is referred to as the *orientational* functionality of the text (Kress and Hodge, 1988; van Leeuwen, 2005)—the capacity to enable (or restrict) certain social relations. For this study specifically, I focus on the kineikonic aspects of the students' digital video project "Sojourner" in relation to the some of the discourses operating within their university preservice education classroom.

Alyssa's "Sojourner": A case study of moving image

I chose, as a case study, a digital video entitled "Sojourner" created by a group of four preservice teachers, a methodological choice allowing me to pursue in greater depth a functional semiotic analysis of the modal work occurring within a digital video. I build on the multimodal analytic work others have done with moving images (Burn & Parker, 2003, 2003b; Iedema, 2001, 2003; van Leeuwen, 1985, 1996), and specifically how authors utilize various modal affordances in specific representational ways. In turn, I situate this analysis within a context of preservice teacher education, specifically a language arts methods course, and the discourses that operate to make available and constrain certain ways of being. Looking at moving image then is valuable in its capacity to afford a range of representational means, and in turn opportunities for epistemological and ontological diversity.

The questions I ask initially involve the affordances the mode of moving image and the media of digital video play in practices of representation situated in the social space of a university preservice education classroom. I pay closer attention to specific semiotic elements, namely those that help construct the kineikonic mode (i.e., using the camera as a tool to vary *shot distance* in intentional ways or combining multimodal *assemblages* through the "mixing" tool of digital video editing software), an emphasis that admittedly and purposefully privileges a "systemic-functional" view of semiotics, an approach Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) proposed following the work of Michael Halliday. Inevitably, as Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) wrote,

> Sign-makers…are guided by *interest*, by that complex condensation of cultural and social histories and of awareness of present contingencies. 'Mature' sign-

makers produce signs out of that interest, always in transformations of existing

semiotic materials, therefore always in some way newly made, and always as

motivated conjunctions of meaning and form. (p. 12)

In this sense, I hope to contribute, as Kress and van Leeuwen do with visual images, to

the broadening of "discourse analysis" by attending specifically to moving image as an

increasingly relevant mode of representation in the field of education. Through a detailed

look at Alyssa and her coauthors' film "Sojourner," I attempt to illuminate ways they

utilized moving image to communicate an intended message, and how the mode and

media afforded them specific opportunities to make central that message with their

audience.

Methodologically, I offer visual and written descriptions for segments of their

video, in turn adding another layer of representational abstraction from their original

work. The inevitable partiality to analyze, describe and theorize moving image is an

important acknowledgement for this work; however, the following analytic representation

is meant to highlight patterns salient in the authors' film, not to fully re-present the piece

for readers. I start with a table (Figure 1) consisting of six screen-captures from their

movie, each representing an important, salient moment in their piece.

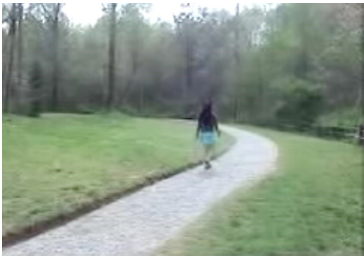| Image 1	Image 2	Image 3

Title clip opening the movie.	Opening scene in which the four authors/actors are sitting together, a point from which they walk out of the frame individually, one at a time, in different directions.	A screen-capture showing an example of a redundant close-up shot of someone's feet shown walking.
Image 4 	**Image 5** 	**Image 6**
A screen capture showing a redundant shot depicting one of the authors walking alone through a "long" camera shot.	A screen capture showing a redundant shot depicting one of the authors alone, though they are near to other "actors," or other people in the film.	Final scene in which the authors/actors return from different directions to the original point of departure, creating a circular ending, without any noticeable interaction among them.

Figure 1: Salient moments

Textual components

Beginning with the first image in Figure 1, the title clip, viewers see a shot of written text, displaying the word "sojourner" as the opening visual for the piece. "Sojourner," from *sojourn*, meaning "a temporary stay" in its noun form (in verb form "to stay temporarily") is also the title of their film and suggests of a state of transience, though arguably not without an obscurity regarding its potential to initially orient the viewer. Its informational "load" (Kress, 2003) as a mode depends on viewers' knowledge

of the word. The use of text here, in the classic theory of interplay between images and texts, as Barthes (1978) argued, provides an "anchorage" in which the text functions as a "relay" to predispose viewers towards a particular meaning associated with the moving images to come, much in the same way a feature film title might orient audiences towards meaning making in the film itself. However, visual modes, from a multimodal and social semiotic approach (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, 2001; Kress and Hodge, 1988), do not rely on written text to provide meaning as Barthes argued. They function in epistemologically different, and therefore significant, ways; alphabetic text *tells* about the world and images *show* the world. Interestingly, other than the title "Sojourner," Alyssa mentioned that they purposefully left the piece completely devoid of dialogue or text because they wanted "other people to come to the message on their own … which could allow people to interpret it a different way."

This epistemological difference is profound, and from it emerges diverse and contentious theoretical viewpoints for those studying visual texts. Machin and Jaworski (2006) for example, rejected Barthes' theory that imagery is always anchored by language, as well as Kress and van Leeuwen's theory that visual communication possesses a "grammar" to be "read." Instead, they distinguished between images, which form "simple" sign systems, and language, which forms "complex" sign systems, ultimately arguing that images are closer to the phenomenal world and in turn closer to the "real world" of our experiences. This is theoretically problematic, particularly in light of technologies that increase the potential to manipulate and construct various realities through imagery. However, it raises an important epistemological conversation, notably

for education, one that elevates the significance of questions relating to how various types of knowledge construction are privileged in particular learning environments.

Indexing place

The second image in Figure 1, a screen-capture from "Sojourner," shows all four authors together in one location, a culturally iconic setting at the university they attend. The archway in Image 2, under which the authors/actors are sitting, carries with it a shared cultural knowledge; it is a social tradition for newly graduated students to walk under the arch to symbolically punctuate their academic achievement. This particular locality is also considered the main entrance to the university, connecting the school with an active downtown business district and its restaurants, coffee shops and bars. In this sense, the opening setting in "Sojourner" is a familiar bridge between the academic and social lives of the undergraduate students in the course, the primary audience for the film.

The decision to include this location is, like the written text for their title, an intentional design choice, one that utilizes a shared cultural knowledge among their audience of peers. In this sense, the filmmakers generated an unspoken solidarity with their viewers, locating themselves initially in a place familiar to their audience, a design practice that Hull and James (2007) argued works to establish an indexical relationship between place and identity, in this case the identity of undergraduate students.

Drawing further on the indexical property of place, the setting that opens "Sojourner" arguably initiates a tone of hope symbolized through the archway's rite of passage, a tradition marking the accomplishment of graduation and the commencement of a new phase in lives of students. Yet, it is also here that the authors depart, both figuratively and literally, from this "place" of hope. First, each author, performing a role

for the camera (a representation of themselves), stands and exits in various directions.

Second, and to highlight another modally important design choice, the soundtrack begins,

Green Day's song "Boulevard of Broken Dreams." The music, like the location in which

the authors begin their film, carries a significant cultural "load" with it, indexing popular

youth culture and functioning to reinforce a sense of solidarity between Alyssa, her

coauthors and their audience of peers by reflecting a recognizable "taste," a statement of

value associated with the particular social identity of student they perform in their piece.

The mode of music

While linked with cultural significance, it's the song's emotion inflection, its

lyrical contribution to the film's theme, and its capacity to provide a "guide rhythm" (van

Leeuwen, 2005)—an affordance allowing the authors to coordinate camera movements

and editing points in synchronization to the music—that I underscore in upcoming

segments. For example, as the opening scene ends and the actors depart in different

directions, viewers hear these lyrics: "I walk a lonely road, the only one that I have ever

known. Don't know where it goes, but it's home to me and I walk alone." Immediately

then, in the duration of only the first two shots, viewers experience a multimodal

complexity through the combination of textual representation ("sojourner") in the mode

of written language, visual representation (the four actors leaving the scene) in the mode

of moving image, and audial representation (Green Day's song) in the mode of music, all

working in relation to one another, both juxtaposing and complementing each other's

contribution towards the intended message of the authors, described by Alyssa during an

audio-recorded interview this way: "You can be in a community, you can be with lots of

people, you can be surrounded by many different people, but you might feel alone in that

surrounding, even though that, you know, you do have a big place with a whole bunch of connections."

Alyssa shared a personal situation underlying the movie—she had moved into a sorority house hoping to fight a growing sense of loneliness, but ultimately felt unconnected there. She experienced a deep sense of loneliness, something she said "all of us have felt [at some point]." Her statement that loneliness is something "all of us have felt" brings with it a sense of *universality*, a belief that feeling alone is part of the human condition. There are various ways semiotic resources in their film reinforce this universal sense of loneliness. First, and moving now to the third image in Figure 1, viewers see a close-up shot of feet, belonging presumably to one of the authors/actors, but visually representing an anonymous view of "walking alone," an action portrayed through the movement afforded by the mode of moving image and one that reinforces and is reinforced by the song lyrics, "I walk alone. I walk alone." This shot is repetitive through out the film (see Figure 2), and amplifies the universality of walking alone by depersonalizing the action, showing only the feet, keeping vague and therefore less important the individual engaged in the action.
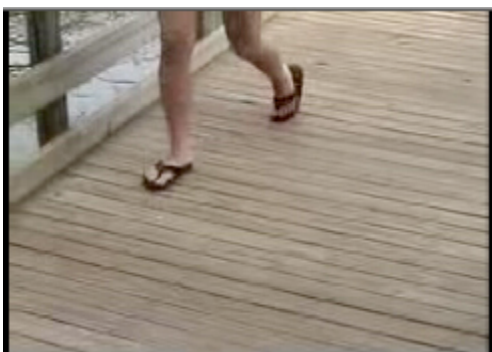
Image 1	Image 2

Shot length: ~4 seconds	Shot length: ~7 seconds
Song lyrics playing during shot: "I walk this empty street"	Song lyrics playing during shot: "I'm walking down the line that divides me somewhere in my mind."
Image 3	**Image 4**
Shot length: ~5 seconds	Shot length: ~5 seconds
Song lyrics playing during shot: "My shadow's the only one that walks beside me, my shallow heart's the only thing that's beating."	No song lyrics at time of shot.

Figure 2: Close-up shots

The video camera as a semiotic resource

The video camera itself is an important mechanism, or tool, allowing the authors specific design and production affordances related to the kineikonic mode. Just as the four images in Figure 2 depict close-up shots of human feet to create generic and "universal" movement, the authors also use the camera to capture "long" shots (see Image 4 of Figure 1) to depict actors walking alone in unidentifiable locations. These long shots, like the close-up feet shots, are repetitive throughout the piece (see Figure 3),

again heightening the message of loneliness as a universal human experience, something "we all go through."

Though this single semiotic element may seem, as Iedema (2001) wrote of film analysis, like a "micro-aspect," the benefit of this focus "can contribute to how we understand the unfolding of a narrative" with a film text. "Redundancy (how patterns amplify one another through likeness)," as an interpretive principle, Iedema continued, "enables us to make inferences about specific camera and editing choices" (p. 201). Using the camera as a tool to create close-ups and long shots speaks to the *design* choices Alyssa and her coauthors made in order to "realize" a particular discourse, a "socially constructed knowledge" about being a student.

Discourses, however, are never fixed in time or space, and often multiple discourses are operating simultaneously, aligning themselves together or clashing in subtle and nuanced ways. Burn and Parker (2003b) remarked that the young filmmakers in their research created a skateboarding documentary

> speaking directly to skateboarders, or to 'youth' generally, and the discourse which this orientation invokes informs the content of the film, the music, and the close attention to particular skateboarding moves or tricks. However, a second discourse is operating which links the filmmakers to the audience of their teachers or examiners, a discourse that is driven by the need to show, through practical production, an understanding of the genre and its conventions, with the ultimate aim of gaining accreditation towards a public examination. (p. 14)

Alyssa and her coauthors, likewise, designed and produced their short digital video for similar discourses, their immediate peers in preservice education program and for me as

their instructor, a significant participant in the evaluation of their work. In this sense, though I offer an analysis that privileges the functionality of representation (how modes and media are used to construct a particular message), it's possible to in turn focus an analysis on the *orientational* functionality of moving image, or how modal ensembles are used to legitimate, improvise upon, or resist positions of identity within discourses.

Likewise, Hull and Nelson (2005) analyzed a digital story created by a young participant in an after-school program (DUSTY—Digital Underground Storytelling for Youth) to, as they titled their article, "locate the semiotic power of multimodality." They selected a digital story created by a participant named Randy entitled Life-N-Ryme, one they emphasized as possessing frequently noted "emotional and intellectual impact" (p. 234) on viewers. This common remark, the recognition by viewers as a powerful expressive digital story, created the impetus for their study—to analyze the modal components and how they functioned together to create this perceived representational power. As an analytic strategy, they used Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001) theory of orchestration as a guiding principal, but like Burn and Parker (2003), they adopted a "momentary conjunction of image-spoken language as the basic unit of analysis" (p. 235). This, again like Burn and Parker, allowed them to break the piece up into a detailed look at how modal components complemented and contradicted one another in multimodal ensembles, a study allowing them to link issues of identity with what they considered agentive design choices for how modes can be combined to create diverse representations of self.
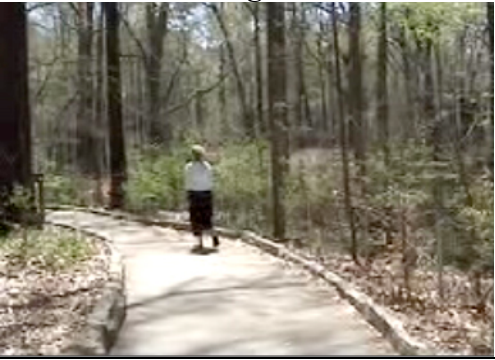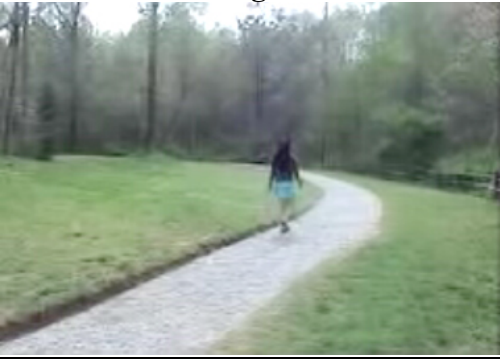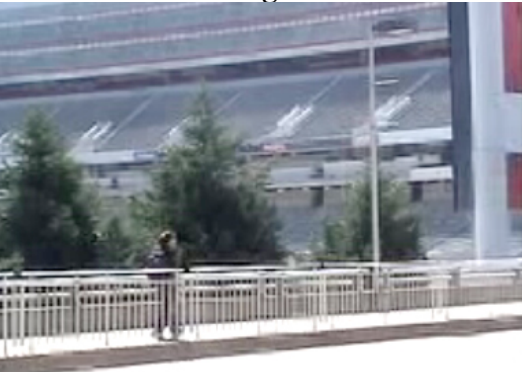
Image 1	Image 2
Shot length: ~7 seconds	Shot length: ~11 seconds
Song lyrics: "Check my vital signs to know I'm still alive and I walk alone"	Song lyrics: "My shadow's the only one that walks beside me, my shallow heart's the only thing that's beating"

Image 3	Image 4
Shot length: ~8 seconds	Shot length: ~8 seconds
Song lyrics: "I walk alone, My shadow's the only one that walks beside me"	Song lyrics: "Read between the lines, what's fucked up and everything's alright"

Figure 3: Long shots

Considering again the "micro-aspect" of long camera shots, I borrow from

Chouliaraki's (2002) interpretive semiotic analysis of different video footage from

television news coverage of September 11, 2001, "Long shots universalize. They abstract

from indexical, context-specific meaning and foreground the iconic. This image works generically, though obviously there are particularizing elements" (p. 161). What Chouliaraki noted about the affordance of long shots is applicable to Alyssa and her coauthors' movie; it generalizes the space and the actors and in turn universalizes the theme of loneliness. Drawing from Bakhtin's notion of "anatopism," Chouliaraki (2002) noted that long shots have the capacity

> To establish equivalence among disparate locales, thus producing a new configuration of possible connections among them…the spectator engages with this space as a potential sufferer herself. Anatopism, then, introduces into this "sublimated" representation of distant suffering a new dimension of proximity, 'proximity as vulnerability.' (p. 162)

Looking back to the beginning of their piece then, located in a culturally symbolic space, one of optimism, viewers see a juxtaposition between loneliness and the solidarity that this human experience is a shared one, a transient "sojourner" in our lives. This juxtaposition operates through what Chouliaraki referred to as a "tableau vivant," a distancing visual re-presentation of an action, and in Alyssa and her coauthors' piece, this representation is of loneliness and solidarity, one which

> Lends itself to aesthetic appreciation…by establishing a relationship of contemplation to it. The feeling potential of this contemplative proximity is displaced neither onto a benefactor nor onto a persecutor. It stays with us as an experience of aesthetic indulgence. This is what Boltanski discusses as the sublimation effect of distant suffering, an effect which constitutes aesthetic pleasure in a double moment. (p. 161)

Aesthetic indulgence in light of others' suffering is indeed problematic, particularly for critical theory as it distances the creator and the audience from the responsibility of responding to social injustices. Yet, it is this very "insertion in distant space-times, and the social relationships these space-times evoke, that certain moral horizons and orientations to the "Other" become possible, acceptable and legitimate" (Chouliaraki, 2002, p. 163). In other words, the capacity for authors to construct relationships between texts and viewers is particularly applicable for education, indeed for critical media theory, notably with its implications for the ways viewers in turn might acknowledge, accept and/or resist those constructions in their reading of moving images. Television media coverage of events, for example, are designed, produced, and disseminated in ways that recontextualize content towards specific ideological stances.

Moving image as a mode occurs, as Bakhtin (1981, 1986) wrote of speech communication, in "heteroglossic" spaces where multiple "social languages," and in turn multiple "truths" collide and exist simultaneously. For Chouliaraki (2002), "The invitation to contemplate the spectacle is, then, not only an aestheticizing move that divorces the spectacle from history and politics. It is, perhaps, a potentially rehistoricizing and repoliticizing move that offers the spectator a distance and a temporality of reflection" (p. 165). I agree with Chouliaraki, though she seemed to hedge the "potential" for rehistoricizing through moving image, *perhaps* because her video data was situated somewhat towards one end on a politically explicit continuum regarding the use of video in news media, a context oriented more towards mass audiences and typically involving political *Conversations* (Gee, 1999) about highly emotional and politically charged news events. Comparing her work with the video in this article is

valuable for several reasons, however, not the least of which brings a broad sociocultural theoretical perspective to filmmaking and the digital video. It is how the text is used, dialogically between authors and viewers, and what it is able to *do* in social interactions that is important.

Initiating rhythm

Multimodal theory (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2001) positions the author in a place of agentive decision-making regarding the design and production of texts, referring to an agency that is at once contingent on social, cultural, historical and economic forces at work, but one that also affords authorial choices for how and for what purpose multimodal texts are created and with what semiotic resources. Thinking again about the connection Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) made between materiality (the *how* and *what* of a text) and the *interests* (in turn, the ideological stances) of the author, I draw again from our example video in Figures 1-3 to note a simultaneous attention to time and rhythm. Noting the duration of the shots, for example, we see a relatively consistent length, one that also marks shot transitions that coincide with the beat of the musical score, what van Leeuwen (1985) called an overall "initiating rhythm" for their movie, an element he argued to be a dominant organizing feature of film. It is no coincidence that a majority of their shots are cut in time with full lyrical stanzas and synchronized in time with the beat, tempo and measure of the song, mirroring in this sense the visual content with the "movement" of the audio soundtrack.

This initiating rhythm is achieved during the orchestration of different modes in the piece, in this case using the synthesizing editing tool of iMovie to synchronize multiple semiotic components into an integrated whole. Considering the broader

multimodal distinction between design and production (and their frequent overlap), Burn and Parker (2003b) differentiated between "pre-planned" sequences and "improvised" sequences, the former occurring during both filming and editing, while the latter is bound to only to editing. Thinking about time and rhythm, both Image 3 and Image 4 in Figure 1 offer screen captures in which the authors slow down time, compressing it in ways that alter the meaning making potential for viewers. The affordance is there to accentuate the importance of these moments relative to the "normal" pace at which other shots travel temporally.

This works in direct conjunction with the initiating rhythm established, its mood and emotional tonality, and as Chouliaraki explained, has the potential to rehistoricize events to represent time, space, and in turn reality, in particular ways. Van Leeuwen (2005), in theorizing the importance of rhythm in semiotic work that involves compositions in time, mirroring the importance of the principle of layout in compositions of space, highlighted the relationship between social and semiotic time, "with semiotic time symbolizing, enacting and celebrating (or critiquing and subverting) social time" (p. 196). Here, Alyssa and her coauthors heighten a potential to dramatize the action of walking alone, slowing the time surrounding the act, coupling it with the cultural significance of their song choice and the music's rhythmic contributions, and combining these with the affordances of the visual tools—short or long shots to reinforce a universality of "walking alone," a generic this-might-be-any-college-student depiction— all in the orchestration of what Burn and Parker (2003, 2003b) termed the *kineikonic* mode of moving image.

Concluding thoughts

Ultimately for this study, and for literacy education, what makes working with multiple modes of representation methodologically appealing is the possibility for establishing methods of analysis from a lens that moves beyond purely linguistic conceptions of discourse and discourse analysis. Multimodality, as an analytical approach, foregrounds various representational affordances (and constraints) for both mode and media during the design, production and dissemination of texts. This has valuable implications for literacy education, shifting and diversifying epistemological, pedagogical and ontological practices; in other words, an increase in representational means affords opportunities to construct knowledge in new and meaningful ways, and in turn to participate and interact with the world differently, moving from a notion of discourse centered on language to one that's multimodal.

Take, for example, Alyssa and her coauthors' semiotic work, their synthesizing of modes, to produce a video that offered viewers the opportunity to make meaning visually, audibly and through written text. Imagine, likewise, the implications these semiotic affordances have for communications across geographical distances, a fourth grade pen pal cultural exchange between a rural southern town in the United States and an urban environment in Japan for example, and the potential for opening up diverse ways of sharing information and in turn constructing knowledge together.

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Chapter 4

BRINGING MOVING IMAGE INTO PRESERVICE CLASSROOMS:

DESIGNING AND PRODUCING DIGITAL VIDEO PROJECTS WITH FUTURE

TEACHERS

I remember I said this out loud in class and everybody laughed at me but I really didn't intend it to be funny. But I said that I felt this sense of power when I walked around downtown with the video camera … it kind of made me feel like a different sort of person carrying a video camera because it's not something that I do. And it made me feel very removed from the situation. It kind of gave me an excuse to go to places where I don't usually go to and see things that I don't normally notice.

—Kana, preservice teacher education student, 2006

Over the course of the past three years, I've had the opportunity to work with preservice teachers at the elementary level in the field of literacy education. As with any teaching endeavor, this proved both rewarding and challenging in a multitude of ways. One of the highlights, and the impetus for this article, emerged through an exploration together with digital video as a tool for representation and communication. We called these explorations "Digital Literacy Projects" (DLPs), a somewhat arbitrary name at its conception, but one that stuck throughout the life of the project, nearly six semesters.

To define a DLP is a slippery task, as the products themselves ranged from *digital stories* and *visual poetry* to a wider, more amorphous collection of texts that included music videos, photo slideshow tributes to family and friends, and satirical parodies, among others. However, following Hull and Nelson's (2005) description of digital stories, I consistently encouraged designs aimed towards brief movies "multimodal and digital," ones that "typically privilege personal voice and allow participants to draw on pop culture and local knowledge" (p. 231). For me, the DLPs presented a pedagogical opportunity to put to work in my preservice classroom my leanings toward

multimodality, multiliteracies, and New Literacy Study theories of literacy (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Unsworth, 2001; Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Pahl & Rowsell, 2005; Jewitt & Kress, 2003). DLPs allowed me to explore with my students how compositional processes and representational decision-making might vary with new resources. In our case, the tools we used consisted primarily of digital video (DV) cameras and DV computer editing software, both allowing us to work in the *mode* of moving image to produce digital movies in a variety of formats.

Let me confess that I felt relatively confident using these tools prior to the assignment, an advantageous but unnecessary precursor to using digital video with preservice teachers. I had dabbled in amateur digital filmmaking, mostly collaborations with friends, frequently creating short experimental films and uploading them to online video sharing sites. In this sense, I built on previous experiences to help facilitate the Digital Literacy Projects. I imagined myself with an "insider" *mindset* towards technology use, and I championed digital video for what I believed to be its relatively gentle learning curve, its increasing relevance in our society's digitalized communications, and for its capacity to foster self-expression in diverse ways within educational settings.

This representational diversity within the *mode* of moving image arises from its capacity to combine multiple other modes (speech, written text, music, images, and moving images) into *multimodal ensembles*, a possibility I valued for its potential, as Hull and Nelson (2005) stated, "not just a new way to make meaning, but a different kind of meaning" (p. 225). To briefly illustrate, the mode of written language (generally speaking) requires readers to follow the logic of *temporality*, or the sequential ordering of

information—words follow words to make sentences and so on. The logic of image, on the other hand, resides in *spatiality*, a simultaneous presentation of information. These "epistemological commitments," as Kress (2003) termed them, require different ways of constructing knowledge in the classroom.

For this article, I draw on audio-recorded interviews with former students, some now teaching in their own elementary classrooms, to look at ways they articulated their experiences with digital video in our preservice course. I am particularly interested in the insights they bring regarding connections between their multimodal video production experiences and how they envision (or don't envision) this type of technology translating into their own elementary classroom teaching practices. Our recorded conversations together suggested a range and complexity regarding perspectives about technology use in literacy education. These perspectives, I attempt to illustrate, were formed in part by an intricate meshing of 1) personal histories with various forms of mode and media, 2) our teacher education classroom experiences designing and producing in the mode of moving image and 3) the discourses about teaching that position certain identity constructions regarding technology as more or less valuable. It's my hope to first share these student insights (and subsequent questions that arose for my interpretive work), then offer suggestions for how we might gain as teacher educators by including multimodal composition opportunities in ways that help move beyond preservice classrooms to inform the pedagogical designs for literacy in our schools.

Does the mode of moving image allow for a more *real* media?

To expound on some of the thinking preservice teachers shared with me during interviews, let me begin by offering a few brief interview transcript segments

highlighting salient themes that, for these future elementary educators, described digital

video as a media they believed to possess certain unique characteristics as a

communication tool.

And … action!

Predominantly, they expressed statements regarding digital video as a medium

that presents the world in a way "more real" or "closer to reality" than other medias. For

example, consider the following comment from Katie (pseudonym):

> *It's almost like real life*. It's almost being able to go on a time machine, back to
>
> that point … I can always look at this and it'll be almost like it's happening again.
>
> It's a little different I guess than photography … where you can look at the
>
> picture, but here I can look at the picture, I can see their faces, I can see their
>
> facial expressions and movement and hear their voice…*It's like real life.*

Responding to ensuing questions about what seems to make video seem "like real life,"

one participant commented on the ability of video to capture "the action. It's almost, kind

of like you're there. You're seeing it, rather than seeing a picture of it." This attention to

"action" and its role in how video is connected with reality was likewise common

throughout the transcript data, and several participants focused on "motion" or

"movement" and its ability to facilitate a viewing experience linked to "the actual time"

and space being represented.

These author comments about the "realness," and subsequently about the element

of motion (action), raise important questions about how and why we "read" different

forms of media in different ways. On one hand, researchers have argued that images

(including those that make up video) form simple sign systems, in contrast to the

complexity of language, and "are closer to the phenomenal world and closer therefore to the real world of our experiences" (Machin & Jaworski, 2006, p. 345). On the other hand, and as I argue in this article, the *modality*, or "truth value" of any semiotic representation, in this case through the multimodal ensembles within moving image, are always orchestrated and constructed in various ways that in turn alter their representations of reality and in turn the viewers "reading" of those multimodal texts.

The juxtaposition between different notions for how motion affects the reality of a text is an example of how one mode might function towards a particular depiction of the world, in this case a more real world. How, then, do other modes impact viewers' sense of "reality," and in turn, how might authors of multimodal texts capitalize on each mode's potential for depicting the world in various ways? From a multimodal approach to literacy instruction, and considering the increasing opportunities to produce digital and modally varied texts, this is indicative of the pressing need to wrestle with our "readings" of texts, working to analyze and deconstruct how different modes and media offer authors and viewers distinct functionalities in regards to the meaning-making of those texts.

You can just hear his voice

Beyond movement (or action), participants also commented about other qualities of moving image and digital video when talking about the "realness" of video. For example, in a short digital video designed to pay tribute to the families and victims of the Virginia Tech shootings, a group of authors decided to begin their piece with a single audio clip and a blank black screen, absent of any additional visual component. Melissa, a coauthor for the video, stated (italics added),

I can't remember where we found the sound clip, but *it was so real, and just genuine* and I mean the guy, *you can hear just his, his voice was just like in shock.* You can tell he has no idea what to think and its almost emotion, it's just like, "Okay, here's what just happened," and he doesn't really know what to think. *And that was just raw and I felt like it was just like real* and I really felt like that's how it needed to start off because this was something that was real.

When I asked if she thought they could have achieved this same effect—qualities "real" and "raw" for their audience—through writing, she responded,

The way he pauses and especially the part when he, I think he talked about, "Is shock an emotion?" The way he says that I don't think I could have gotten that into text. I don't think it would have gotten across to anybody else if I had written it. *I think you had to hear it and hear the way he was saying it. That was really important.* And we didn't want anything else on the screen at that time because it's such a serious talk that, one, I didn't want anything to take away from it, and if there was something going on the screen, like if we had put more newspaper clippings, then it would have been very distracting.

Here it's the audio component—the *mode* of speech in the *media* of digital video—that gets *foregrounded* as the most apt and salient way to reflect a "raw" and "real" tone they hoped to express in the opening of their piece.

Candid camera

So far we've looked at motion and sound (speech)—two distinctive components in the mode of moving image—as resources actively contributing to ways video was perceived by these preservice teachers as more or less "real" (and in the example of the

audio also as powerfully emotive) representations of life. In this sense, the mode of moving image as a form of communication, or rather its capacity to be orchestrated with various modal combinations, leads to a modally diverse epistemological complexity, one that requires a concomitant, pedagogically complex approach to thinking about text.

To complicate this modal complexity, I offer a response from Samantha, a DLP coauthor who made a short digital video designed to tell a "universal" story about the life of college students. Samantha explained that an immediate design dilemma her group encountered involved the difficulty of capturing "candid" moments, which she stated are "better" because "they really tell the story." Candid moments are more difficult, she said,

> and require someone else to take that picture, because if you staged the picture and they knew you were taking it, it wouldn't show it. But it's the someone-looking-in-on-the-kitchen as we we're, as someone's sitting on the counter, the kitchen counter, that's the picture you have in your mind but there's no one to take that picture.

For Samantha, "posed" moments, by contrast, are contrived, less natural, less a representation of "normal" life, and therefore less powerful or moving as a text. While Katie and Melissa's statements highlighted the components of motion and sound (speech) within the mode of moving image, here we see an attention to a particular way in which a single mode (still image) can be recorded and editorially selected for inclusion in an overall multimodal ensemble to make, subjectively, a digital video production "really tell the story." In this sense, Samantha's comments suggest an awareness for a camera's capacity to maximize certain representational affordances for the modes of still and

moving image; in this case, capturing candid moments reinforced a visual discourse she believed at the time to be a closer depiction to real life.

Candid versus posed moments, generally speaking, index certain visual genres, the former arguably accessing the privileged role documentary films have played historically in the construction of "real-life" depictions on screen. The genre of documentary film has traditionally avoided what Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) called a "form of direct address," in which subjects make visual eye contact with the camera, an "image act" that historically runs counter to the type of visual representations ethnographic studies have valued as "objective" forms of knowledge.

Inevitably, the *Discourses* and *cultural models* (Gee, 1996) within which we have learned, often unconsciously, to interact socially determine certain "ways of being" in the world, playing important roles in how we "know," for instance, the degrees of truthfulness in various media, and as is evident in the comments of Katie, Melissa and Samantha, how we "read" texts with moving image and how we "know" good ways to design and produce them. The practices of consumption and production inform one another and are interwoven into sociocultural constructions of knowledge regarding the possibilities for representation and communication, and in turn for spaces of self-understanding and agency.

So what's to gain? The *affordances* of moving image

The segments of interview transcript above suggest somewhat juxtaposing perceptions among my preservice students about how modes and media function in our cultural lives. Katie and Melissa, for example, remarked on the "realness" of video, possessing for both the ability to transport viewers to an "actual time" through movement

and sound. Samantha's description, on the other hand, implied a much more malleable representation of reality through moving image and video; she contrasted, for example, the *modality* (or "truth-value") between candid and posed images within her video. I believe there is theoretical room at both ends of this spectrum, stemming from our own local knowledge and personal histories using moving image and associated video media, as well as from broader cultural stability and functionality, the "epistemological commitments" each require from its authors and viewers.

The multimodality of moving image

Burn and Parker's (2003, 2003b) work with digital video and youth provides a valuable reference point from which to compare my Digital Literacy Project video work with preservice teachers. Working with third graders, they blended speech, music and animation within a single video production. To highlight this "integrative, combinatorial assemblage of modes" (p. 59), the developed the term *kineikonic* (from the Greek words move and image) to refer to moving image as it own unique mode, possessing specific affordances for communication. The kineikonic mode, they wrote,

> Refers to how all the elements of the moving image are assembled, but includes the particular conventions afforded by the practices of filming and editing; this uses a range of semiotic resources to make the moving image, integrating them into the spatiotemporal flow by (re)designing and producing them within the spatial frame and the temporal sequence of the film" (p. 59).

In other words, while alphabetic writing orders knowledge construction temporally, and still image requires an epistemological commitment of spatiality, moving image as a

mode combines both the logics of writing and image into one mode, a spatiotemporal mode that has its own affordances and limitations for communication and representation.

An awareness of a mode's compositional characteristics, Burn and Parker (2003, 2003b) argued, informs the purposeful production of texts, and in turn it's potential for communicating, persuading, entertaining, or to vie for attention among the "burgeoning information revolution associated with digital technologies" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003, p. 109). In relation to the representational choices authors make during multimodal composing, I make comparisons between the pedagogical processes Burn and Parker (2003, 2003b) shared in their work and the video work we engaged in during our Digital Literacy Projects in an undergraduate course focusing on elementary level language arts methods.

Specifically, I focus on the intersections between *design* and *production*, the work done while conceiving of ideas and determining the most apt semiotic resources through which to express those ideas to others. For example, for Burn and Parker, they explicitly taught "the convention of the close-up, with its selective indications of salient detail and its implications of social proximity" as well as foregrounding the importance of writing in the storyboarding process as "a way of notating the dialogue and voice-over" (p. 60). Generally, Burn and Parker looked at ways young authors used modes to "*complement*, *reiterate*, *anticipate* and *contradict* each other" (p. 63), arguing that the mixing of resources in the kineikonic mode, a process previously only accessible to filmmakers in specialized settings, is now available for youth, teachers, and communities.

Pedagogy of Digital Literacy Project

Like Burn and Parker, I learned early while facilitating these DLPs there were specific conventions I needed to explicitly address with my students related to "visual grammar" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), other modal considerations, and the overall process of assembling multiple modes within moving image productions. For example, I hadn't thought initially to explore candid versus posed images, or degrees of color saturation, and how they might impact meaning making for authors and viewers. Nor had I anticipated the competing attention for scaffolding a broad range of technical proficiency (and familiarity) with the tools I was asking my students to use. To add one more layer of complication to our DLPs, these new nonlinguistic conventions vied for time that could have been used to reinforce language instruction practices during the short duration of a single semester together. How, for example, could I avoid short-changing the focus on writing instruction with my preservice students, whose pedagogical development in this area was intimately tied to specific curriculum-driven learning objectives of schools within which I was responsible for preparing them to teach? Was I preparing them for classrooms as they were, or for classroom learning as I hoped it could be?

These questions were indeed daunting, and no doubt continue to challenge my teaching practices, but I soon found that my curriculum—a language arts emphasis on craft (Fletcher & Portalupi, 1998, 2001), the integral connections between reading and writing (Ray, 2001), and the "writing teachers write" mantra I adopted from The National Writing Project—all provided a pedagogical foundation fertile for incorporating a multimodal approach to literacy. I need to also add that we had access to a fully equipped

computer lab, along with digital video camera equipment available for check out from our college of education instructional technology department, a convenience of great significance allowing me to design the Digital Literacy Project with access to technological resources.

Still, not every student needed a computer station and a camera; in fact, I quickly learned that group collaboration on projects helped to spread out the various levels of competency with the tools. I provided a list of ways students might problem-solve and troubleshoot technological issues together, creating more classroom time for me to conference with individuals and groups on the craft of multimodal composition. I learned from Fletcher and Portalupi, Ray and others in the business of classroom writing instruction that "reading like a writer" can lead to powerful ways of composing, that celebrating language choices and other craft techniques—playfulness with time, flashbacks, building character, etc.—all translated directly into multimodal forms of composition. And in this sense, after sharing a few examples (from Apple's Educational uses of iMovie website and The Center for Digital Storytelling website, among others), I turned them loose, so to speak, by sharing a description of the assignment from our syllabus (albeit one that changed from semester to semester) and by providing a rough timeline to help guide their progress of designing, gathering materials, and producing their digital film. An early description for the DLP from fall, 2006 read:

> The goal of this project is to introduce you to an available technology applicable to literacy, and to challenge you to think about literacy beyond reading and writing. Working individually or in groups of no more than four, you will concentrate on some aspect of literacy and present your findings to the class by

creating an iMovie. This project is wide open; the topic should be selected based on your interests and needs as writers and teachers. You may want to create a piece that is informational and directed at some specific aspect of literacy, or you may choose to create a movie that is more metaphorical, artistic or self-expressive of issues or events of important in your personal life.

Pedagogically speaking, including this multimodal video project into my curriculum over the course of several years allowed the tremendous benefit of refining what I might teach students (and what they might teach me), visual conventions and the use of voice-narrations to enhance intended messages for example. With permission from authors, I built a collection of examples to share with students, videos for us to "read like writers," to celebrate and trouble together. The overwhelming intensity of deciding what and how I should teach conventions of multimodality faded into the background as we explored together what became a generative, rather than daunting, set of resources.

Design and production

The sharing of video media in different formats ranges dramatically in terms of viewing experiences. Imagine, for example, watching a YouTube video on a computer versus watching a feature film on the "big screen" in a traditional cinema theatre. I focus this next section on the *design* and *production* of our video pieces—short digital films created by preservice education majors—particularly on the affordances the mode of moving image has for communication and representation. I begin by first sharing a short segment of interview transcript data during which a digital video author described an event that took place at night after a recent (and rare) southern snowstorm, an event she thought "lent itself to being videoed."

The hill thing, which was actually at night, and so you couldn't see their faces …

but you could hear their screams, I guess sound is a big part, I mean you could

hear their screams and see this thing going down this hill and thinking, God this is

so dumb. But it brought me back, watching it, and I was like, "Oh yeah, I

remember standing there." … I could pinpoint who it was by their scream, and

just the motion of like, you look at how fast they really were going and sometimes

there was conversation between me and my roommate who was standing right

next to me … you can hear our conversation, you hear our thoughts.

This excerpt exhibits awareness for how the camera allowed them to capture certain

features of the mode of moving image that other modes and associated recording tools

couldn't have allowed, motion and sound notably. Add this awareness to a practiced

familiarity with the affordances synthesizing technologies (i.e., Apple's iMovie or

Microsoft's Movie Maker) allow authors—the ability to mix recorded footage in different

ways, to blend the footage with additional semiotic resources (such as an overlaying

musical soundtrack), and/or to manipulate variables within a single mode to dramatically

or subtly alter rhetorical purposes for the overall multimodal ensemble.

For example, when I asked Megan, a student who created a satirical piece about

"the addiction of snoozing," what she thought she gained from desaturating from color

into black and white a segment of digital footage in which "an intervention" occurs, she

answered this way (italics added):

Kind of the feeling of realistic dream, if that makes sense. Something very serious

that happened, and I guess that's why I was thinking black and white, and *it's so*

dramatic I feel like sometimes it's so much more dramatic than color and a little more depressing. So I think that's why I chose to do it, *to set the mood*.

Like awareness for what might "lend itself to being videoed," this comment is indicative of conscious attempt to articulate why a particular design choice was made and how the author intended it to work. These statements, these types of conversations between students and teachers, underlie a fundamental goal for multimodal approaches—to begin to develop a "meta-language" with which to speak about communicative modes, linguistic and nonlinguistic, and ways they work differently for different purposes in different social settings, what Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) referred to as part of a general (though contextually contingent) "grammar of visual design."

Likewise, in what Unsworth (2001) called a "multiliteracies" approach, the focus "is on developing children's knowledge about language and image (meta-semiotic understanding) at the same time as they are learning verbal and visual language and learning through verbal and visual language" (p. 183). Though it may seem a paradoxical endeavor to develop a linguistic means with which to *describe* visual and other nonlinguistic modes, this "critical analysis" of nonlinguistic texts and how they are both created and viewed is nothing new, particularly for film theory, or other visual, three-dimensional, performance or musical field of study. This type of multimodality is, however, often marginalized in our school literacy curricula and educational policy-making.

Multimedia is a noun, multimediating a verb

Considering the mode of moving image and its capacity to combine various modes in diverse ways, we were presented with possibilities for *new* ways of knowing, of

learning, of teaching, and likewise, of interacting with the world. Given the article's opening quote, in which Kana described the project giving her "an excuse to go to places where I don't usually go to and see things that I don't normally notice," I placed considerable stock in the notion of "writing teachers write," the mantra that in order to be informed (and effective) teachers of literacy, we must engage in the literacy practices we hope to provide and push our students to participate in. Coupled with the profound changes in digital communication technologies and the increase in opportunities for self-representation through various modal assemblages, multimodality has important implications for the types of literacies and pedagogical methods we choose to help prepare learners for participation in digital, and multimodal, and increasingly globalized communication practices.

Lankshear and Knobel (2003), underscoring the impact of new digital technologies on contemporary communicative practices, referred to performance artists Michael and Ludmila Doneman's term "multimediating," a word "emphasizing cultural production over cultural consumption … In matters of definition, why spend so much time on *multimedia* as a noun when we could be looking at *multimediating* as a verb?" (p. 34). In somewhat a sharp critique on traditional schooling, Lankshear and Knobel (2003) suggested that "schools and classrooms are among the last places one would expect to find 'new literacies," literacy that emphasizes the dialogic and ideological development of communicative practices, notably those relating to the burgeoning digital world through which we interact. With this theoretical underpinning in mind, I turn now to the reflective insights my former students provided about how their opportunities to "multimediate" in an undergraduate preservice course translated into school classrooms.

Translating preservice experiences with digital video into classroom pedagogy

I ended my interview conversations with Katie, Melissa, Samantha and other former students with questions typically aimed at how they thought the DLP experiences impacted, if at all, their thinking about classroom teaching. I realized, after thematically sorting their responses, just how much stock I had placed in the "writing teachers write" philosophy and in my reframing of it, a phrase a bit more awkward—"multimodal literacy teachers *do* multimodality." We must, as the mantra goes, experience the sense of joy and pain, struggle and triumph, clarity and confusion, and so forth. And generally speaking, our *doing* of multimodality together indeed spanned a wide range of emotional, psychological, and physical classroom experiences.

It wasn't uncommon, for example, to pass around tissue during our final "film festival" sharings, touched by emotionally charged pieces, or to double-over with laughter at the humorous content of others. There were tears, likewise, at the frustration when technology failed, as was the case with a student at the loss of an unsaved project during our final week of production one semester. There were students who experienced "the flow," as a young woman named Megan described it, loosing track of time while using iMovie, engrossed in the process of synthesizing the components of their videos. "It's addictive," Megan said about her process of combining different modal components together, "I wanted it to be just right." And, to contrast, there were students who needed considerable scaffolding and collaboration, considering themselves, as a student named Casey described, "not technologically savvy *at all.*"

Through this range however, my former students, overwhelmingly, expressed positive attitudes towards their experiences designing and producing digital videos in our

classroom. Sarah, an interviewee reflecting on why it was such a positive experience for her, remarked, "We've never got to do this type of project before." Others said it was "a special project," "fun to do," with a product at the end "we can look back on twenty years from now." As I thought about their comments, I noted the sense of novelty, the newness of a project like this in an academic setting, and in turn began to think about how these students envisioned similar types of multimodal practices functioning in their school classrooms. How did these preservice teachers, some now practicing, imagine using the mode of moving image and the associated tools to design and produce multimedia products for classroom learning?

The newness of technology

Two salient and overlapping strands emerged from the data regarding classroom applications, the first involving ways these former preservice students described how young students interact with technology, and the second involving notions of *new* teacher identity. The two patterns and their relationship with one another provided contrasting views about technology use in classrooms and proved insightful when directed towards my own pedagogical practices and perhaps further towards broader institutional values and expectations regarding technology and classroom learning.

Consider this interview excerpt, a response from Alyssa, at the time a student teacher in a fifth grade classroom, about whether she thought about doing this type of project with her students.

> Definitely, I know they'd love it because, well, the last tech lesson I did was with digital cameras and they made a PowerPoint out of pictures they took … I put them in groups and they took pictures just doing whatever, doing silly stuff,

running around playing, and they put it into a PPT slideshow as a grammar review

and each slide they had to include a certain type of verb, a proper noun, and they

loved it. They usually do the folders, where they fill in the blanks and stuff, but I

was like we're going to do this instead and they were obsessed with it. They did

the best job. I think they'd love it.

This is an interesting segment for me. In one sense, the combination of integrating text

and image is indeed a multimodal approach to literacy, each mode potentially reinforcing

the other. On the other hand, it positions the technology against the ideas of using

"folders, where they fill in the blanks and stuff," a positioning that mirrored comments

my preservice students made contrasting the common practice of written reflections with

the novelty of creating a "fun" digital video. When asked why she thought her young

students "love it," she stated, "Kids love watching TV. They're so obsessed with seeing

themselves. They're fascinated." Here, multimodality seems linked more to issues of

motivation tied with popular cultural practices, a valid but notably different pedagogical

aim with teaching goals that address ways modes might "*complement*, *reiterate*,

anticipate and *contradict* each other" (p. 63), as Burn and Parker (2003) stated of the

multimodality within the kineikonic mode.

Likewise, conjuring up our "writing teachers write" mantra, Michelle, also an

upper elementary student teacher at the time, commented this way about classroom

applications of video,

I think as valuable as it is to me it's probably just as valuable to them … I think

technology is really important … And I think there's just such value in video, I

think so many times we think that TV is so bad for kids, but there's a lot of

educational value in something like this, where there's that visual, so many kids today are, go home watch TV and play video games, and this is a kind of way to focus that kind of mindset into an educational way so that they're getting the experience that they get on an everyday basis but in an educational way instead of just reading out of the book which most kids don't do on an everyday basis in a lot of places. And I think it's fun. I think it's fun to say I learned something from a computer video.

Again, there is complexity in this type of response. Expressing the connection between a literacy practice that she valued and one that her students might value is a useful construct to consider with any approach to literacy instruction. On the other hand, there is again a sense of placing "traditional" literacy practices, "reading books" for example, up against the "fun" of computers; this discourse has potential to dangerously dichotomize technology as inherently progressive, further positioning "old" literacies as less "fun." Furthermore, when I asked Michelle if there were specific things she thought both she and her students would value together using video in a learning setting, she responded that it's simply "more fun, a better product, more enjoyable. People like watching videos."

Yet, within this segment of Michelle's interview, she also implicitly suggested the pedagogical value in connecting literacy practices students engage in outside of school settings with those in her own classroom, a model Hull and Schultz (2002) advocated in their book *Bridging Home and School Literacy Practices*. Indeed, the dangers of sanctioning only a narrow variety of literacy practices in school include the potential to further marginalize certain types of students as "illiterate," a labeling that frequently

works to position children into categorical types of learners. In this sense, I find optimism in Michelle's suggestion, that video "is a kind of way to focus that kind of mindset into an educational way so that they're getting the experience that they get on an everyday basis but in an educational way."

There were other valuable ways of incorporating technology in the classroom my interviewees shared with me as well, including the practice of teachers and student teachers "introducing themselves" to students and to families through videos, creating "emotional wrap-ups" after big events, and the following idea I'll share through an excerpt from Alyssa, a student teacher working in the primary grades.

> Classes are doing these to-be-continued class books and they're videotaping the pages and kids are recording their voices and I was like that is so awesome …So I was like maybe we do something like that, I can pull them out of centers and have the kids read their favorite pages from their overcoat books {books they created in response to Joseph Sedak's Caldecott picture book *Joseph's Little Overcoat*}.

These examples of technology use in the classroom, and the resources teachers utilized (the mode of moving image notably), indeed made use of the modal affordances of various tools and media in purposeful ways. And while I value these practices, I also noted little mention in my conversations with my former students that linked our DLP experiences to specific classroom applications that moved beyond the "newness" of video technology in educational settings towards explicit pedagogical designs to explore how different modes, media and associated technological resources vary in their functionality as literacy tools.

Related, many of my interviewees were finishing their final student fieldwork and in the process of looking for teaching positions, a circumstance that required them to consider how they might best present themselves in applications and interviews with school districts. As a result, a common theme in our conversations involved how technology skills increased their marketability as new educators. In this regard, my former students recognized the prevailing educational discourses that valued teacher computer skills, but shared comments that emphasized not specific pedagogical principles related to multimodality and new technologies, but more often indicated the marketability of tech related skills. Andrea, who had created a particularly sophisticated Digital Literacy Project, exchanged this dialogue with me about technology issues:

> *Andrea*: I've always had a knack for it. It fascinates me. I took on more classes during this program. I took four out of five for the IT certification. The other people in the cohort they were like Andrea is the go to person.
>
> *John*: What do you think happened differently for you that gave you that thirst for technology?
>
> *Andrea*: Probably to stand out. We're pretty competitive. I just wanted to have something by myself. Before I had technology I didn't really think I stood out at all. I was determined to find something.

Marketing herself as a teacher with technology skills was an attentive and astute alignment towards what she believed to be a valued commodity in teachers, one sought out by schools. As Lankshear and Knobel (2003) wrote,

> In a climate of shortage, schools value almost any computer skills in teachers. In practice, this means that low-level operational or technical skills and knowledge

predominate. Not surprisingly, teachers look for ways to fit new technologies into classroom 'business as usual'. Since educational ends are directed by curriculum, and technologies are "mere" tools, the task of integrating new technologies into learning is often realized by adapting them to familiar routines. One corollary of this is that making learners "technologically literate" is largely reduced to teaching them how to "drive the new technologies. (p. 31)

In this sense, questions loom about what kinds of technology skills are being valued in education systems, and more importantly how those skills are translated into valued pedagogical designs, ones that function in ways to prepare students for participation in diverse, digital, and increasingly multimodal interactions.

So what's next then?

Melissa's earlier description of different *mindsets* among children when they are in- and out-of-school contexts was an insightful one, and in turn, speaks to a broader discussion happening theoretically about the intersections between technology and literacy education. It is a beneficial though flawed construct to position youth as "insiders" and adult educators as "newcomers" in reference to a new mindset that embodies digital technologies and literacy practices as inseparable and profoundly different from ways we have communicated in the past. There are enticing arguments though, for example, that relate the intensity and sheer volume of information produced online is creating "an attention economy," in which authors are no longer attempting simply to communicate ideas, but rather to attract, to market, and to "gain attention" of audiences in an increasingly fragmented and niche market economy (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003). This has implications for how we might prepare our students for

citizenship in both local and global communities, particularly in light of the ever-changing shifts digitization has on our use of multimedia. For schools, in turn, there are important steps we need to make for how we teach students to become critical consumers of that media and for how we provide opportunities to use multimodal resources to design and produce digital media in relation to others.

These opportunities for young authors, as Kress (2003) noted, "foregrounds the agency of sign-makers," the possibility to choose resources that best fit the message intended to be "told." For preservice education then, and for our Digital Literacy Projects, it might not be enough to live by the mantra "multimodal literacy teachers *do* multimodality," as immensely valuable as it is; rather, we need to build in pedagogical constructs in our preservice classrooms that take advantage of the intersections between "traditional" forms of literacy instruction which focus on reading, writing and speaking and multimodal and New Literacy Study theories, which emphasize multiple forms of communication from multiple social contexts, including those valued outside typical school settings.

An example of this is shared by Stein (2008), who highlighted the need for teachers "to extend their subject knowledge in relation to multimodality and multimodal texts, and their pedagogical knowledge in terms of how to use multimodality to improve students' learning. An important starting point is to include visual communication as an essential component of any teacher-education curriculum" (p. 895). Stein continued to offer a concrete example of how multimodal assessment might look, introducing the term "transmodality," a category that allows teacher educators to combine a more holistic look at text production in conjunction with explicitly defined assessment criteria, a practice he

argued "allows for a more concentrated focus on human agency in designing" (p. 893).

Applied to our DLPs then, as Stein urged, I envision ways for us not only to broaden our sense of "text" production towards a more diverse and multimodal range of communicative resources, but to also establish criteria for assessing our learning together, guidelines that will likely parallel our philosophy for effective writing instruction practices. What I learned in the process of these conversations with former students about their DLP experiences is the importance of bringing those very types of conversations into my preservice classrooms, of talking about our processes and texts together. It is then, returning to Kana's opening quote for the article about using video, that I too might *go places I don't usually go and see things I don't normally notice* with my students.

Addressing binaries

Working with new literacies and multimodality—with digital epistemologies and technologies—despite the best of intentions, often runs a risk of creating binaries between "new" and "traditional" notions of literacy, between "insider" and "newcomer" mindsets regarding technology, and between in- and out-of-school literacies. If unaddressed, these binaries carry potential for a counterproductive reductionism within the field of literacy education. To elaborate, positioning teachers as "digital newcomers" and students as "insiders" (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003) is problematic if it negates the many teachers whose understanding and familiarity with technology indeed surpass those of students in many ways, or the many teachers whose willingness simply to explore ways technology might be embedded in productive pedagogical ways matches the enthusiasm of students to participate in those opportunities.

Furthermore, it's equally counterproductive to position in-school literacies as always static, rigid and related to unpopular policies that define literacy in narrow ways, just as it's undeserved to place all public school institutions as spaces dominated by centripetal forces that push both teachers and students into boxes that are pedagogically, epistemologically and ontologically predetermined and scripted. On the other hand, these are undoubtedly valid concerns for educators, researchers and policy-makers, and there's much room for critiquing "traditional schooling" (Gee, 2004) and institutional forces that work to culturally decontextualize learning in public school settings. In this sense, these binaries are potentially productive when used not to essentialize two ends of a literacy spectrum, but to promote dialogue about literacy practices in multiple forms and contexts.

It's with these binaries in mind that I'm reminded of several public school teachers with whom I've had the pleasure to work on classroom projects involving digital technologies. These teachers have readily pushed against the centripetal forces they encountered with patience, with dedication to their students, and with a professionalism that embraces a healthy flexibility towards their own ongoing philosophical development regarding teaching and learning. In all these ways, they consistently contradict the use of binary structures to reduce teaching to an uncomplicated and one-dimensional profession, and these are the teachers who have continued to inspire and push my thinking.

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Chapter 5

CONCLUSION: UNIVERSITIES + PUBLIC SCHOOLS + LOCAL

COMMUNITIES = PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE FUTURE

In 2002-03, I taught sixth grade middle school language arts. It was, as I remember it, an ideal teaching position. I had an enthusiastic and supportive mentor providing encouragement and critical feedback, challenging me to think beyond my pedagogical boundaries, nurturing me when I wore thin. It was also during that school year that my sixth graders and I built a website, http://johnny.myweb.uga.edu/mrbishop, to display our writing with families and friends outside our classroom. We made business cards proclaiming to be published authors, and handed them out by the stacks inviting others to visit our site. We boasted jokingly and shamelessly marketed our site to anyone who'd listen. We were, the majority of us, quite proud of it, as rudimentary as it was.

We designed the site at the time specifically to display our writing, and in turn to write for an "authentic" audience beyond our classroom. I wasn't aware of blogs or wikis or other online platforms that would allow for online feedback, so our site was relatively static, the maintenance of which fell on my shoulders while the content relied on the willingness of students to share their work online. Their response, generally speaking, was enthusiastic, and it was an enormous motivating factor for our writing. It helped

generate a momentum for us as a learning community, and I remember putting countless hours into the site, a task typically spilling over into the weekends.

As I look back, I realize the site functioned in interesting ways in my classroom and in the development of my early pedagogical philosophies. First, providing a platform for disseminating student work outside of classroom walls bolstered our motivation to create writing we cared about sharing with the world. I think, in retrospect, this was one if not the primary reason for creating the website. I can remember vividly students coming in the room to tell me about someone they knew who had visited the site. They demanded a second printing of business cards and had ideas for how the new ones should look [see http://johnny.myweb.uga.edu/mrbishop/action/ (third picture down)]. I want to be careful about overly romanticizing our website project, but these moments inspired me, and it's my hope to revisit them as I'm doing now, and to recreate them in different, more pedagogically sound ways in the future.

Our website was also a way for *me* to show off what I believed to be vibrantly youthful expressiveness from students who, quite frankly, were generally more familiar with adults telling them they were "behind" as learners. The website allowed me to brag on them in my own way, and I sent the URL to friends and family, colleagues and faculty, many of whom provided an interesting mix of responses ranging from praise to suggestions for handling misspelling to words of caution about the appropriateness of violence in student-generated content. In this way, it was a hotbed for dialogue—for my students and me, my mentor and me, colleagues and me; it fueled my teaching that year.

A third function, and perhaps the very seedling for this dissertation, emerged as many of my students exhibited eagerness not only to author the writing content that went

up on the site, but to participate in authoring the *design* of the site—what it looked like, what it should have on it, what it shouldn't have on it. Displaying student writing, our feature content, was in ways sharing its importance with the very display of that content—the visual interface viewers would see as they arrive at our site. The medium, as McLuhan (1964) infamously stated, was as much the message as the content.

We began taking pictures of ourselves to *show* readers who we were. Those pictures, as classes viewed and compared each other's compositions, became somewhat of an ever-changing this-is-who-we-are profile for viewers. This led to class image designs more metaphorical in the ways they showed classroom "personalities," coupling their learning of metaphor in writing, and their learning of metaphor in their own lives. For example, ponder this image of a student playing trombone and how it might speak to the "personality" of a group of students in a single class http://johnny.myweb.uga.edu/mrbishop/new_classphotos/class_photos2.html (third picture down). How do vibrant primary colors worn by students for a group photo function in how viewers might "read" what a class is like (second to last image)?

In this way, the website, though I didn't know it at the time, became my first foray into "visual grammar" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), and together my students and I wrestled with what these images on our website might say to our intended viewers and how they might work with or compete against *foregrounding* our own writing content, the very reason we created the site in the first place. In turn, I wrestled with whether I was doing enough to foster their language skills, code-switching skills needed to succeed in the economic environment beyond school (Delpit, 1995). Looking back however, I believe the literacies involved in our website design possessed a rich mixture for both

linguistic and nonlinguistic elements—language-based, visual and multimodal communication skills. Skills that in turn translated into ways we thought about representing ourselves to others.

Influential partnerships

It would be remiss to write about an early website exploration in a school context without also talking about other experiences, places and persons who influenced my thinking about ways multimodality and literacy instruction can be explicitly combined in valuable ways with youth in various contexts. Rather than dichotomizing in- and out-of-school literacies as more or less important for school curricula, it's my hope to capitalize on both environments and suggest ways both settings can inform and enrich one another. It is also my hope that the manuscripts within this dissertation speak to the fundamental notion that literacy is inevitably a complex, multi-semiotic and multimodal practice, contingent on sociocultural forces, both local and global, at play in any contextual setting, "academic" or otherwise.

Though I'm continuously inspired by countless interactions with individuals, local groups and communities and broader organizations, I have a short list of experiences particularly noteworthy in my journey exploring the intersections between technology and literacy. The following three examples are indicative of work I admire and also find intriguing and productive to think about. I'll provide the current websites for interested readers and keep the descriptions to a minimal, focusing instead on my personal interactions with these projects.

D.U.S.T.Y.—Digital Underground Storytelling for You(th)

DUSTY's website (http://oaklanddusty.org/) currently has the R&B star John Legend performing on its homepage, highlighting his visit to the multimedia afterschool program for youth in Oakland. The willingness of celebrities (they've had R&B star Alicia Keys visit as well) is indicative less of high-powered fundraising status (the center operates primarily on grant monies) and is more demonstrative of the value (and hope) placed in programs like D.U.S.T.Y. that partner socially active community members and universities with youth living in impoverished and under-privileged areas. I borrow from the website to provide a brief description of the center,

> DUSTY students work on computers to create their own Digital Stories, as well as to generate rap and hip hop "beats and rhymes." Throughout the creative process, students learn to master programs such as Adobe Photoshop, Adobe Premiere, iMovie, and Fruity Loops with the help of skilled instructors. At the end of each semester, the students' creative masterpieces, including digital stories, raps, beats, and performances are showcased in some sort of final event at The Parkway Theatre, The Metro, and other local venues.
>
> [DUSTY] is part of the West Oakland Center for Digital and Multimedia Literacy. The Center combines Internet access and multimedia activities with literacy instruction for West Oakland residents of all ages. It is a joint project developed by the Prescott-Joseph Center for Community Enhancement and the Graduate School of Education at the University of California, Berkeley.
>
> I visited during July 2007 during a period in which D.U.S.T.Y didn't have an

official program running, though I saw young people moving throughout the center. The

benefit of this timing proved to be a wonderfully detailed tour of the facilities and a lengthy conversation with the director, Michelangelo James, about issues of collaboration with the university, sustainable funding, legalities and logistics regarding student participation. What became apparent to me I had already anticipated—D.U.S.T.Y. is a program striving to offer youth opportunities to tell stories about their lives; to explore and develop skills with modes, media and tools that youth value as expressive forms of communication; and to play a role that simultaneously celebrates young people and their literacies and counters the intense economic and political deficiencies facing their community. I am thankful to Glynda Hull and Michelangelo James for their time, their generosity and for their encouragement to continue pursuing different ways these types of programs might sustain themselves.

826 National

During two conferences held in New York City, I had the opportunity to visit *826 Brooklyn*, a chapter of the *826 National* afterschool program started by Dave Eggers "to assist students ages six to eighteen with their writing skills, and to help teachers get their classes excited about writing. Our work is based on the understanding that great leaps in learning can happen with one-on-one attention, and that strong writing skills are fundamental to future success" (http://www.826national.org/about/).

What is immediately striking about *826 Brooklyn*, as with the other chapters, is its effort to "lure" students into the space, captivating young people with storefront facades such as Brooklyn's Superhero Supply Store or 826 Valencia's Pirate Supply Store. These facades are intentional and underlie a fundamental philosophy that foregrounds the *space* created for learning. Designing a compelling, exciting learning environment welcomes

and encourages young people (all people) into that space. I spent much of my time during both visits appreciating the aesthetic design and layout (and pondering how it came to be). Like D.U.S.T.Y., the 826 programs serve poor and working class communities and strive to provide a supplemental learning environment that celebrates youth, youth literacies, youth identities, and foster skills applicable to school success and beyond.

To contrast D.U.S.T.Y., which from my understanding utilized Berkeley's teacher education program for the majority of its volunteer help, *826 Brooklyn* boasted a remarkably active volunteer community (over 800 listed). I'm fascinated and intrigued with this momentum and what it means for the program's sustainability. I suspect, though cautiously, that there are many factors involved, notably a celebrity involvement in fundraising, along with Brooklyn's population of community members willing to devote time during their day to volunteer and tutor students. Also noteworthy, perhaps, seems to be a unique demographic of freelance writers in the Brooklyn area (equally compelled as the youth to be in this "writerly" space among others who seek to identify themselves as writers). And like my time at D.U.S.T.Y., I am equally grateful to the staff and tutors at *826 Brooklyn* for their generosity and the time they gave to talk with me and friends about their program, its logistics and the plans they have for future work. They are a warm and enthusiastic group.

Red Clay Writing Project's Youth Camp for Technology and Literacy

Lastly, and coming full circle with the dissertation, I've had the opportunity to pursue my interest in intersections between technology and literacy within our local chapter of The National Writing Project (NWP), Red Clay Writing Project (RCWP), notably putting into practice in a camp environment for youth some of the "digital

literacies" I've explored in other contexts. June 2008 marked our first official year for Red Clay's Technology and Literacy Camp for Youth (http://campredclay.wetpaint.com), a one-week afternoon camp in which we created "Digital Literacy Projects" (DLPs) much in the way I described their production in the dissertation manuscripts.

Perhaps more like D.U.S.T.Y. than 826, RCWP's tech camp inherently embedded a teacher "professional development" component into its design, offering opportunities for teachers to facilitate multimodal learning in an out-of-school context. Playing on the mantra that to be more effective teachers of literacy, we must be willing to engage in a variety of literacy practices ourselves, we expanded our concept of literacy at Camp Red Clay to include the creation, consumption and sharing of digital compositions, created with Microsoft's Movie Maker and Adobe's Photo Story 3. The youth camp, in this sense, provided a fertile ground for three teachers, myself included, to practice pedagogies that embed technology in literacy instruction, and vice versa, through the production and sharing of multimodal texts. A camp structure proved an inviting pedagogical space for several reasons. First, a summer camp has much potential for flexibility concerning curriculum, a pedagogical space that opened doors for us as teachers and for our campers to take risks, to experiment, to play with our design and production processes. In addition, the composing and sharing of digital compositions explored ways to incorporate various modes of expression and communication (visual, audial, textual, gestural, and combinations of each) into personal texts.

In turn, these multimodal compositions required us as facilitators to work through a myriad of logistical challenges involving computer hardware and software, Internet safety and responsibility, ongoing accessibility beyond the camp, and ways to address the

spectrum of technological knowledge students brought to camp. Overall, this space proved to be it's own "small learning community" (Fecho, 2003), often reversing traditional roles of students and teachers. From my own personal experience facilitating middle grade students with the creation of their digital literacy projects during the camp, I was reminded on several occasions, despite my tendency towards controlling the pace and activities, that students are willing to explore and are knowledgeable far beyond my own understanding about a range of various technological skills and literacy practices. Before the week was up, their willingness to offer assistance positioned them as facilitators with expertise about how multimodal compositions might be used for self-expression and communication. Noticeably, this learning environment felt unique, and I continue to ponder ways this pedagogy might be fostered in classrooms.

Partnerships for the future

Each of these examples, both in- and out-of-school contexts for youth to work with technology and literacy, possess what I consider valuable partnerships between some mix of local communities, schools, and universities. As we continue as educators to traverse changing digital landscapes and the multitude of literacy practices they compel us towards, I see exciting opportunities to follow in the footsteps of innovative programs like D.U.S.T.Y. and 826 National, along with organizations like National Writing Project and the work it fosters with teachers to expand notions of literacy at local chapter levels.

As I enter a junior faculty position in a curriculum and instruction department within a college of education in Mississippi, my hope is to create a valuable space for youth to explore digital representations of identity in an environment that celebrates young people as culturally rich individuals. Perhaps that space will become an *826*

Mississippi or a technology and literacy camp grown out of the local writing project chapter. I envision rich potential for collaboration in this space, potential for new and practicing teachers to explore how technology might be embedded within literacy instruction, potential for youth to engage in expressing themselves in culturally and technologically relevant ways, and potential for creating a space where a local university and local public school system might develop a "hotbed for dialogue."

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