

“THERE’S ALWAYS ROOM TO LEARN”: UNDERSTANDING ADOLESCENTS’
IDENTITIES AND LITERACIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS
AND SOCIAL MEDIA

by

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(Under the Direction of Donna E. Alvermann)

ABSTRACT

This qualitative research study took a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) to examine adolescents’ multimodal literate identities through social media, and teachers’ perceptions of students’ social media use, to better understand how literacy and identity may intersect (or not) within the English language arts (ELA) classroom. There were 22 students who participated in one survey and three focus group interviews (with seven to eight students per group); five ELA teachers were individually interviewed. Key findings from this study suggest that social media use creates opportunities for high school students to form their own digital, multimodal literate identities, such as through social media; however, students do not perceive the ELA classroom and curricula as a context responsive to these uses and identities. The discussion addresses implications for both teachers and researchers as they navigate the intersections between adolescents’ multimodal literate identities through social media and the ELA classroom.

INDEX WORDS: literacy, identity, adolescents, social media, multimodality, English language arts

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DEDICATION

To my students—both past and present. You all inspire me every day to be a better teacher, researcher, and person. The future is bright.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Ms. Beach, you know, it’s just the thing to do. I can Instagram my portfolio to get feedback, but Twitter is where I just let myself go.”

As I began asking more of my high school students at Ocean High School (pseudonym) how they were using social media in their out-of-school lives, I noticed that many used a variety of platforms for different reasons, as highlighted by the quote above. Yet, what I found even more interesting than their ability to address different audiences across these platforms was that these students seemed to form separate identities through these spaces despite not identifying as “digital natives”—a term often used in teachers’ professional development to label our 21st century learners.

Of course, as teachers and students continue to navigate a “post-truth” (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/post-truth>) era, I personally have seen the need to examine how we look at reading and writing today. This need is what motivates my work within the pages of this dissertation—work that takes a look into what our kids are doing and why, and how we are preparing ourselves as educators to create opportunities to help our students exceed on state mandates and more importantly within the world around them.

Statement of Problem

The dichotomy between home and school literacy practices is very present in today’s classrooms full of state standardized testing mandates and cannot be ignored

(Dowdall, 2006). In addition, the *language* used to describe literacy today, such as in teachers' professional development, is problematic because (a) students do not identify with terms used to label them or their literacy practices, such as digital native, and (b) teachers and researchers are not always in agreement with one definition of terms that are used, such as digital literacy.

Furthermore, in a recent executive summary from their research study with students at middle, high, and college levels, the Stanford History Education Group (2016) reported that “our ‘digital natives’ may be able to flit between Facebook and Twitter while simultaneously uploading a selfie to Instagram and texting a friend. But when it comes to evaluating information that flows through social media channels, they are easily duped” (p. 4). And not to be left off the list is that in many schools today, digital learning spaces available through technology are often seen as a distraction (Watolla & Shah, 2015).

Yet, despite classrooms that are not always willing or able to include reading and writing practices in digital spaces, our students continue to read and write in ways that extend beyond the classroom walls, such as through social media. And the Pew Research Center's (2016) survey suggests that adolescents are not alone—62% of adults get their news from social media with 18% doing so often. For these reasons, literacy researchers and teachers need to understand more clearly how and why today's students are choosing digital spaces, such as through social media, to create and share their identities with people all over the world.

Background and Rationale

Within the past ten years, social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, have become an extremely popular way for people to communicate and share information, stories, memories, and moments. For example, just six years after its inception in 2004, Facebook became one of the biggest websites in the world with over 400 million people visiting it each month (Carlson, 2010); it now has an estimated two billion users (Fiegerman, 2017). Its mission is “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (Facebook, 2017). Twitter, founded in 2006 (Carlson, 2011), reports an estimated 313 million monthly active users with a mission “to give everyone the power to create and share ideas and information instantly, without barriers” (Twitter, 2017). Instagram (2017), “the home for visual storytelling,” has an estimated 600 million users; it was founded in 2010 (Roberts, 2014). Snapchat (2017) believes its platform “empower[s] people to express themselves, live in the moment, learn about the world, and have fun together.” Created in 2011, the platform has an estimated 158 million users with 2.8 million snaps created a day (Carson, 2017). And, not surprisingly, my high school students filter into the growing numbers above as they engage in and with a variety of social media daily. Yet, the question remains: as teachers, what do these soaring participation numbers mean for the English language arts classroom?

The National Council of Teacher’s of English (NCTE [2013]) remind teachers “literacy has always been a collection of communicative practices shared among members of particular groups. As society and technology change, so does literacy.” In fact, its position statement on the definition of “21st Century Literacies” states:

Active, successful participants in this 21st century global society must be able to develop proficiency and fluency with the tools of technology; build intentional cross-cultural connections and relationships with others so to pose and solve problems collaboratively and strengthen independent thought; design and share information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes; manage, analyze, and synthesize multiple streams of simultaneous information; create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts; attend to the ethical responsibilities required by these complex environments.

Therefore, as a current high school English language arts (ELA) teacher and literacy researcher, these participation numbers matter to me and have helped me develop my own stance on what literacy means today. While state standards define my students' literacy skills, I have found that there is much more to what they can *do* than simply bubbling a's, b's, c's, or d's or writing five paragraph essays. Nonetheless, though my graduate coursework taught me more about the possibilities of literacy, the weight of expectations from the state's Department of Education on my shoulders reminded me that my students would still be assessed in a print-centric format—a format that did not include the ways in which my students were reading and writing within social media.

Still I challenged myself to develop ways in which I could continue to help my students become and identify as critical thinkers, readers, and writers in the world around them—be it face-to-face or in digital spaces, such as social media. This challenge meant that I had to be willing to learn from my students as I brought in opportunities to negotiate the rich intersections of learning that I overheard them talking about in the mornings as they hung out in my room. Ultimately, our learning space became one that

we created together through multimodal uses of language that still practiced the skills required by our standards—multimodal uses of language that can work within Georgia’s Standards of Excellence (GSE [2015]) “9-12 English Language Arts Overview” that states, “students will graduate with the fully developed ability to communicate in multiple modes of discourse . . .” as well as “skillfully employ rhetoric and figurative language . . .” in ways that students “recognize nuances of meaning imparted by mode of presentation, whether it is live drama, spoken word, digital media, film, dance, or fine art.”

Whether for self-expression or self-promotion (van Dijck, 2013), my students use social media in a plethora of ways to highlight *that* moment or piece of information they want to get across to a certain audience. In fact, “users have various socio-discursive needs—expressive, communicative, or promotional—reflecting the need for different personas and necessitating different addresses” (van Dijck, 2013, p. 211). Thus, my students’ social media interactions utilize the same literacy skills we address in ELA class, but students also actively shape their multimodal literate identities through those digital spaces, too.

Yet, when considering teachers’ perceptions of digital literacy practices, there is a lot of confusion about what counts as literacy where digital spaces and practices are concerned (Beach, 2016). And it is important to remember that most social media, as the platform examples described above suggest, were not purposefully created with the classroom in mind even if their mission statements connate words like author’s purpose, narrative writing, or reading informational texts. This confusion is particularly important to unpack because there *is* significant research done on digital literacy practices;

however, schools are still negotiating, and not necessarily considering, the use of these digital literacy practices, specifically regarding social media usage (Alvermann & Wilson, 2007; Beach, 2015). In other words, while researchers are looking at digital literacy practices, information concerning social media, from my personal experiences, is often left out of professional development with teachers.

Vasudevan (2010) said, “too often, the digital proclivities of youth are framed in the media and curricula through lenses of fear (e.g., cyberbullying), protectionism (e.g., Internet predators), frivolity (e.g., social networking), or appropriation (e.g., uncritically assigning rap lyrics as a medium of math problem solving)” (p. 44). These lenses of fear are why, perhaps, many schools do not give serious attention to students’ informal learning spaces due to the learning space (Merchant, 2010). Yet, the questions, of “‘where,’ ‘how,’ and ‘whom’ remain important factors” (Vasudevan, 2010, p. 45), online or offline, and literacy researchers need to consider these questions when they are investigating youth’s social media use.

For this reason, when I think about adolescents’ motivation with literacy practices, I realize that my students are not always motivated for in-school, print-centric practices, but instead become engaged multimodal literacy “doers” in the digital realm outside of school. Vasudevan (2011) said:

Literacy pedagogy does not begin and end with the English Language Arts classroom. Nor are the implications of multimodality limited to literacy pedagogy. By attending to the ways in which youth compose meaning across modes, we can enact pedagogies that are multimodally responsive, digitally intuitive, and culturally relevant to their multimodal selves. (p. 97)

Thus, educators might consider how they can encourage digital, multimodal literacy practices within their classrooms to create relevant learning opportunities for today's multimodal youth.

However, even with the increasing number of adolescents using their available resources, such as social media, to engage in multimodal digital literacy practices that inform their identities within the English language arts classroom, the reality is that in many classrooms, the modes and semiotic resources available to learners still center on print-only forms of communication (Alvermann, 2008). In fact, while many scholars have discussed the need for a “third space” in which educators work between both students' home lives and school lives (Alvermann, 2011; Alvermann & Eakle, 2007; Boche & Henning, 2015; Dowdall, 2006; Dredger, Woods, Beach, Sagstetter, 2010; Moje et al., 2004; Moore, Alvermann, & Hinchman, 2007; Vasudevan, 2010; Vasudevan, DeJaynes, & Schmier, 2010), researchers cannot ignore the fact that the dichotomy between home and school is still present in many classrooms full of state standardized testing mandates.

With this point in mind, Ranker (2015) notes a deeper understanding of the concept of *affordances*, which can help teachers better understand, plan, and use multiple forms of media within the classroom. I see this point relating to adolescents' literate identities due to the rhetorical decisions of students to make a conscious choice to consume, (re)produce, and disseminate information in very specific ways. Especially with the recent events (e.g. the presidential election, the confederate flag, and immigration) that are currently shaping our country's history, adolescents in the United States are not merely taking a passive role regarding the important, and much-needed,

discussions that are occurring, thanks to the affordances of multimodal composing on-the-go within a participatory culture that is especially prevalent within social media.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of adolescents' literacy practices within digital spaces, such as social media, that influence their literate identities. The more we understand how students view themselves and their digital literacy practices (Sandlos, 2009, p. 69), the more we can help make connections to their school-related literacy practices by strengthening professional development for teachers in order to validate students' rich, digital, multimodal literate identities. When students' multimodal, digitally literate identities are examined with teachers *and* students (and not just one or the other), then we can work to create a more engaged and meaningful pedagogy for the ELA classroom.

Research Questions

The following questions guided my research when working with adolescents to better understand their social media:

1. In what ways, if at all, does social media use create opportunities for high school students to form their own digital, multimodal literate identities?
2. In what ways do high school students perceive the English language arts classroom and curricula as a context responsive to these uses and identities?

In order to examine these questions, I took a grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2014) to conduct focus group interviews with a general population of 22 students, including males and females, in a public, city-district high school in a southern, metropolitan area

and analyze their digital literacy practices through social media. This approach helped me to better understand how students created and viewed their multimodal literate identities within digital spaces and the connections of those identities to their school-related literacy practices. Furthermore, I conducted interviews with five English language arts teachers from the same high school in order to analyze how teachers might perceive students' digitally literate identities and practices. The intersections of data from students and teachers were analyzed through the sociocultural tradition, which allowed me to consider students' literacy practices as *social*.

Definition of Terms

Since our students are members of various networks, both in and out-of-school, it is important to consider how their identities are shaped by their digital, multimodal literacy practices. Literacy cannot be viewed in isolation; literacy must be viewed through the lens of society, culture, and values (Gee, 2012). With this point in mind, it is important to consider how adolescents interact in the digital sphere by consuming, (re)producing, and disseminating media, including popular culture, which all informs their multimodal literate identities within the ELA classroom. Here, I define some key terms to clarify how I view digital literacy practices, social media, multimodality, and literate identities. In addition, I have included two labels that are often used in discussions about the aforementioned terms.

Digital Literacy Practices

I pull from Lankshear and Knobel's (2008) definition of *digital literacy practices*: "a shorthand for the myriad social practices and conceptions of engaging in meaning making mediated by texts that are produced, received, distributed, exchanged,

etc., via digital codification” (p. 5). In addition, Lankshear and Knobel (2008) believe that digital literacy practices should be considered in a variety of contexts, which is something they believe is often missing in New Literacy Studies research (Buck, 2012, p. 10). In fact, the variety of contexts in which literacy practices include the use of digital tools and spaces “can be seen as being ‘new’ in a significant sense [and] will reflect the extent to which these literacy practices involve different kinds of values, emphases, priorities, perspectives, orientations and sensibilities” (Knobel & Lankshear, 2007, p. 9). For these reasons, I focus on digital literacy practices within “larger systems of literate activity and larger literacy ecologies” (Buck, 2012, p. 10), which can be thought of as connected digital literacy spaces, such as social media.

Social Media

The definition of *social media* according to the *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* states: “forms of electronic communication (as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos).” Social media is often associated with social media networks though one can differentiate the two and say that social media is created through social media networks.

The Young Adult Library Services Association (2011) expands this definition for schools and libraries as it states social media “refer[s] to a variety of web-based tools used to connect, collaborate, and create web content and experiences. Websites that allow visitors to send email, post comments, build web content or take part in live audio or video chats are all considered to be social media sites.” With this expansion in mind, I

believe social media to include the networks adolescents use to create digital, multimodal literate identities, which includes digital media.

Digital Media

In this discussion, *digital media* are defined as various texts that are consumed and produced in digital spaces. Currently, educators are seeing an “historical moment when technology aids the production” of multimodal media within the digital sphere (Jewitt, 2011, p. 3-4). For this reason, digital media are often multimodal.

Multimodality

The term *multimodality* can most simply be broken down into the concept of multiple modes of communication. Here, a mode is “broadly understood to be the effect of the work of culture in shaping material into resources for representation” (Jewitt & Kress, 2008, p. 1). Thus, multiple modalities include, but extend beyond communication that is print-centric, such as “the role of image, gesture, gaze, and posture, and the use of space in representation and communication” (Jewitt, 2011, p. 1).

With this definition in mind, multimodality has a direct tie into traditional semiotic resources, such as speech and writing (Kress, 2003, p. 1), because it provides one with varied ways of communication that one can choose within a specific moment. Furthermore, NCTE (2005) supports this definition in its “Position Statement on Multimodal Literacies,” showing teachers how they might consider multimodal literacies and develop them within their teaching practices that already include a focus on semiotic resources.

However, this definition also carries with it the realization that “modes rarely, if ever, occur alone” (Jewitt & Kress, 2008, p. 2), as well as the “need to look beyond

language to explore a wide range of modes and communicational contexts” (Jewitt, 2011, p. 2). In other words, multimodality allows one to carefully consider the choices one makes to communicate and how one uses available resources to communicate information and shape meaning. Ultimately, these choices help individuals create and shape literate identities.

Literate Identities

The term *literate identities* stems from Gee’s (2012) idea of socially-situated identities and the multiple modes one uses to communicate identities. In addition, because literate identities are socially-shaped, they are not fixed, but instead viewed as a process of becoming.

Our students are members of various digital networks, both in and out-of-school. With this point in mind, the American Library Association’s Digital Literacy Taskforce (2011) notes a digitally literate person:

Possesses the variety of skills—technical and cognitive—required to find, understand, evaluate, create, and communicate digital information in a wide variety of formats; is able to use diverse technologies appropriately and effectively to retrieve information, interpret results, and judge the quality of that information; understands the relationship between technology, life-long learning, personal privacy, and stewardship of information; use these skills and the appropriate technology to communicate and collaborate with peers, colleagues, family, and on occasion, the general public; and uses these skills to actively participate in civic society and contribute to a vibrant, informed, and engaged community.

For this reason, it is important to consider how students' identities are shaped by their digital, multimodal literacy practices within social media through the actions listed above.

Millennial

Developed by researchers Neil Howe and William Strauss, this is a label that is given to the generation of people born between the years 1982 to 2004 (Bump, 2014; Horovitz, 2012).

Digital Native

A controversial label coined by Marc Prensky (2001) in which he suggests that all students are “native speakers” of the digital language through the digital spaces in which they are members. This label is used in contrast to his notion of a “digital immigrant,” which refers to people who have later adopted aspects of technology. However, there are educators and researchers who note that the digital native label limits and ignores the complexities involved with digital literacy practices (Helsper & Enyon, 2010).

Nonetheless, this term continues to be one that is used often within teachers' professional development to label adolescents from my experiences.

Theoretical Framework

For this study, a sociocultural tradition is used as a guiding framework. Perry (2012) writes: “Because of the differences among the various theories united under the sociocultural umbrella, it is more appropriate to speak of sociocultural perspectives as a collection of related theories that include significant emphases on the social and cultural contexts in which literacy is practiced” (p. 51). For this study, I focused on the area of *literacy as a social practice*, which was originally identified by Street (1984) and led the

way for what is called New Literacy Studies (NLS). However, in order to understand this notion, I first trace some of the key contributions that helped paved the way for it.

Early Works on Examining Literacy from a Sociocultural Lens

Scribner and Cole's (1981) seminal work *The Psychology of Literacy* focused on their work with the Vai people of Liberia. Their research questioned the assumption that literacy automatically helped with psychological/cognitive development. Instead, they found what really mattered were the ways in which people created their own literacy. In other words, they remind teachers and researchers that literacy is not just about reading and writing, but *how* it is applied within specific purposes and contexts. In addition, these practices are "socially developed and patterned ways of using technology and knowledge to accomplish tasks" (Scribner & Cole, 1981, p. 236), further suggesting that literacy practices and meaning making/learning comes in a variety of social ways.

One of the people influenced by Scribner and Cole's (1981) early work was Brian Street. As previously noted, in his early work *Literacy in Theory and Practice*, Street (1984) identified literacy as a social practice, which is how I situate my study within the sociocultural tradition. Street (1995) further supports this lens as he notes, "the transfer of literacy from a dominant group to those who previously had little experience of reading and writing, involves more than simply passing on of some technical surface skills" (p. 15). If we think about his view here in terms of today's classroom, the dominant group, then, traditionally, would be the teacher and the group with little literacy experience would be students. However, when considering the sociocultural tradition here, according to Street (1995), our focus on literacy practices should study the relationships between language, literacy, and society (p. 8). This broad sociocultural approach helps teachers

and researchers see beyond the institutions of schooling as the only form of learning in order to recognize that “for most of history and in great sections of contemporary society, literacy practices remain embedded in other social institutions” (Street, 1995, p. 107).

For example, Heath’s (1983) *Ways with Words* considers the use of language between home and school in two very different communities. In the end, she found that teachers “learned to believe that their students could learn, and that they could learn from their students” (p. 314). Thus, language use and learning were structured by and interdependent on the places of language, communities, and family structures; in other words, she found “culture as [a] learned behavior and on language habits as part of that shared learning” (Heath, 1983, p. 11). Her work, then, shows the intersections that Street (1984) discusses when he considers the social complexities of literacy learning, including the ways in which “teachers, practitioners, teacher educators, and programme planners can theorize their practice in the contexts of the specific cultural differences, localities and politics they are faced with” (1995, p. 136). And these ways of considering literacy learning is where NLS enters the discussion.

The New Literacy Studies

To best understand how the New Literacy Studies (NLS) works, I first considered Gee’s (1989, 2012) use of “big ‘D’ Discourses.” Here, Gee (2012) takes into consideration how “ways of behaving, interacting, valuing, thinking, believing, speaking, and often reading and writing” are accepted as particular identities by particular social groups (p. 3). One cannot examine language without considering Discourses and the impact they have on one’s choice of mode and meaning.

When considering how Discourses play an instrumental part in understanding the contexts surrounding multimodal literacy practices, the NLS, which sees literacy as a “social and cultural achievement” (Gee, 2009, p. 2), is a crucial lens to examine and help educators and researchers better understand how and why multimodality is used by different groups of people. In addition, Discourses help both teachers and students engage with and recognize a “sort of *who* [is] doing a distinctive sort of *what*” (Gee, 2012, p. 152) as well as discuss *why* as these Discourses “change in reaction to other Discourses” (Gee, 2012, p. 155). For this reason, it is necessary for teachers *and* students to navigate the various Discourses surrounding literate identities within the classroom and within digital spaces.

Through this lens, educators and researchers better understand how “texts shape practice and are themselves in turn shaped by practice” (Street, Pahl, & Roswell, 2011, p. 200). Therefore, the intersection of NLS and multimodality can help one view digital multimodal literacy practices in social media networks as “achievements” based on the validation of adolescents’ multimodal compositions and their literate identities (Alvermann, 2011; Jewitt, 2011; Kajder, 2010; Street, Pahl, & Roswell, 2011; Vasudevan, DeJaynes, & Schmier, 2010).

However, it is important to note the distinction between NLS and the New Literacies Studies, as well as New Media Literacy Studies (NMLS). As Gee (2009) states, “The NLS was about studying literacy in a new way. ‘The New Literacies Studies’ is about studying new types of literacy beyond print literacy, especially ‘digital literacies’ and literacy practices embedded in popular culture” (p. 9). Furthermore, NMLS moves beyond simply looking at marketing companies and their influence on consumers, but

instead seeing how consumers “can now produce their own media and compete with professionals and corporations. Thus, the NMLS stresses the ways in which digital tools and media built from them are transforming society and, in particular, popular culture” (Gee, 2009, p. 11-12). These distinctions, though slight, are very important because they provide a richer lens through which to view students’ literacy work within digital spaces.

In fact, NLS, New Literacies Studies, and NMLS all help educators and researchers better understand the social, historical, institutional, and cultural contexts that influence how one is deemed a socially-situated, literate individual through the language one uses, such as through social media. After all, Gee (2009) states, “People don’t just read and write in general, they read and write specific sorts of ‘texts’ in specific ways and these ways are determined by the values and practices of different social and cultural groups” (p. 4). Supporting this notion, Mills (2016) writes, “the distinguishing feature of a socio-cultural literacy approach is the emphasis on describing and validating the varieties of literacy practices that are shared within and between communities, including communities of practice in schools and other institutions” (loc. 1162). For this reason, when it comes to texts and learning, Moje and Luke (2009) remind us, “Learning, from a social and cultural perspective, involves people in participation, interaction, relationships, and contexts, all of which have implications for how people make sense of themselves and others, identify, and are identified” (p. 416).

Sociocultural Tradition and Identity

Considering Moje and Luke’s (2009) key point above, the sociocultural tradition is linked to identity work because “Discourses are instantiations of identity” (Mills, 2016, loc. 740). In fact, when we view Discourses as “identity kits” (Gee, 1989, p. 7), we begin

to understand how youth use them to “identity members of a socially meaningful group” (Mills, 2016, loc. 740). And today, these instantiations of identity include processes of becoming readers and writers in many ways through the digital realm. Lewis and del Valle (2008) note that the “new” direction of identity and adolescent literacy work suggest “youth do more than perform their identities; they are discursively engaged in a process that brings identity into being. This process is intertextual, relying on story lines that intermingle, overlap, and sometimes conflict, gesturing toward a ‘third wave’ of identity-related sociocultural research on literacy” (p. 316). Thus, we have entered a new time in which

. . . technologies and their texts are endlessly superseded by new affordances of communication media, literacy practices encompass an ever-broadening range of textual features and structures, and possible formats and sites of digital display, and these concerns extend to anyone who claims to be a teacher or researcher of language and literacies. (Mills, 2016, loc. 772)

Here, conversations of participatory culture (Jenkins, 2006), local and global networked flows of identity (Brandt & Clinton, 2002), and sociocultural approaches to language, literacy, and technologies (Gee, 2009) all form a new paradigm that encourage researchers and educators to consider new spaces of learning, which I believe should include social media.

Another key point to keep in mind when considering how literacy is a social practice is brought to our attention by Moje and Luke (2009): “few literacy studies have acknowledged the range of perspectives on and views for conceptualizing identity, even when they have taken the idea that identity and literacy are socially constructed as a

given” (p. 416). In fact, when viewing identity as a social construct, they note that a social view of identity can mean multiple things to different people, such as through group memberships, identity construction in all social situations, dependent on others’ recognition, or identity that is enacted or performed in different settings (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 417-418). And though each view on identity can be different, “each acknowledges identity as something fluid and dynamic that is produced, generated, developed, or narrated over time” (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 418). However, when considering their metaphors of literacy, *identity as narrative* and *identity as position* can both be used to think about students’ digital multimodal literate identities.

The thought behind identity as narrative is simple: identities are shown in and through language. In fact, this metaphor offers “the possibility of documenting how people recognize others or respond to the recognitions of others via the telling of their stories” (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 429). Here, one cannot deny the fact that stories are important when we think about learning how we can best help the students in our classrooms.

Next, the thought behind identity as position builds off Althusser’s (1970) notion of “interpellation.” This term essentially means “hails,” and Althusser (1970) used it to note that ideology interpellates individuals as subjects (p. 97). In other words, “the subject exists only as he or she is recognized in a specific way that has a social structure as its referent. The subject is thus preceded by social forces, or ‘always-already interpellated’” (Lee, n.d.). However, the identity as position metaphor extends beyond basic interpellation to “specify *how* positions get taken up and resisted and how those interpellations translate into identities over time” (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 430). In fact, an

identity as position mindset brings together all of the views on identity, as well as accounts for the doing of identity (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 431). This point lends itself well to study how adolescents can be positioned regarding literacy within different spaces, such as the classroom or digital realms out-of-class.

Ultimately, reading and writing within digital spaces, such as social media, results in a specific kind of text created in a specific kind of way. And Mills (2016) reminds us that “the socio-cultural perspective of literacy practices is equally relevant to online or virtual communities of practices that are characterised by meetings and departures in a virtual game or chat room, or who subscribes to online communities on the basis of interest, friendship, culture, belief or ideology” (loc. 820). Thus, in order for teachers to validate their students’ literate identities within social media networks, they must not wait on the collective powers around them to decide what their students are doing is important. Students have voices that provide the “what” of literate identities, whereas students’ positions show how those literate identities are built. Teachers *know* their students and must act to create an awareness and validation of their students’ multimodal literate identities in which they are engaged in or out of the classroom.

Organization of Study

This study is organized into five chapters. This first chapter (Introduction) provided the problem, overall rationale and background information, purpose, and theoretical framework for this study. Chapter Two includes a review of the relevant literature devoted to literacy that highlights sections focused on the following three areas: multimodality and literacy pedagogies in the digital sphere; adolescents’ interactions in the digital sphere by consuming, re(producing), and disseminating media, including

popular culture; and identity constructions. Next, Chapter Three discusses the research design and methods that were used for this study. Chapter Four then follows with the qualitative findings from the study tied to the research questions. In conclusion, Chapter Five discusses and interprets the findings while providing implications for teachers and researchers.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

Literacy practices, or reading and writing, are not restricted to just pencil and paper in my high school English language arts (ELA) classroom. Instead, I strive to think beyond the tradition of paper and pencil to encourage, engage, and challenge the diverse students within my classroom in a variety of ways when we read and write to support how NCTE (2005, 2013), ALA (2011), and YALSA (2011) suggest ELA teachers should consider reading and writing in today's 21st century.

Current literature regarding adolescents' literacy practices discusses the need for expanding our definitions of what "counts" as reading and writing. With this point in mind, I used Maxwell's (2006) approach to review relevant literature to build my conceptual framework that helps me "explicitly stat[e] the points that are being made and the links between them" (p. 31).

My review of literature starts by examining current research in the field to support the need for a study that considers adolescents' literacy practices in digital spaces, such as social media, that influence their literate identities. In reviewing the literature, the following areas emerged:

- Multimodality and literacy pedagogies
- Adolescents' interactions in the digital sphere by consuming, (re)producing, and disseminating media, including popular culture
- Identity constructions

While there are many findings that establish the importance of understanding adolescent literacy practices, including social media, the literature further supports the need for a study that pulls from both students' *and* teachers' understandings on the aforementioned literacy practices to positively affect the ELA classroom.

Multimodality and Literacy Pedagogies

As teacher's help validate all of the rich ways students are active readers and writers in their everyday lives and how they identify as readers and writers, they begin to see that new definitions of literacy skirt past traditional, paper and pencil only forms of learning. In fact, Mills (2016) states, "Broadening conventional understandings of literacy beyond written word does not create ambiguity. Rather, it resists a narrow literacy curriculum that excludes everyday literacy practices that are augmented and modified by multiple modes in digital formats" (loc. 878). Yet, literacy pedagogy "has been a carefully restricted project—restricted to formalized, monolingual, monocultural, and rule-governed forms of language" (New London Group, 1996, p. 61). Nonetheless, today's students are engaged with many forms of digital, multimodal literacy practices in their out-of-school literacy spaces, such as through their Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, or other social media platforms.

Here, it is important to note that digital, multimodal literacy practices are not "new," but instead they are a "commentary on new ways of making meaning and marking a historical turning point" that supports the notion that "there is no monomodal culture" (Jewitt, 2011, p. 4). Furthermore, "reducing the English curriculum to a narrow repertoire of conventional genres and writing skills ignores the reality of literacy practices in society today by excluding new forms of digital texts" (Mills, 2016, loc.

889). Thus, digital, multimodal literacy practices help connect traditional and nontraditional forms of meaning making that extend beyond the classroom.

While some might note that the digital sphere has created “new” forms of literacy (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003), the following sections serve as an opportunity to focus on digital, multimodal literacy practices that always have been socially situated and present, but today may look differently than how they looked years ago. In other words, people have used language all along for a variety of reasons, in multimodal ways, including advancement in society, religious practice and following, knowledge, and self-fulfillment and exploration to name a few. Therefore, in a sense, their motivations are similar to adolescents’ digital, multimodal uses, too, despite the differences in generation.

Adolescents strive to find their place in society while also negotiating learning spaces between home and school, which often includes the use of social media.

To support the idea of validating youth literacy practices and show how educators might validate adolescents’ literate identities through multimodal literacy practices, Vasudevan, DeJaynes, and Schmier (2010) discussed how multimodal pedagogies were “informed by understandings of adolescents’ emerging literacies” (p. 9). In their multiple case study, the authors showed how students used multimodal literacy practices, such as blogging, YouTube, podcasts, popular culture, and social media, in order to better know each other and their teacher. In fact, they note, “interacting with students through social media has been one of the key factors in knowing them more deeply and also building trusting relationships” (p. 13). Ultimately, these authors feel their work proves “the challenge to educators [is] to be pedagogically nimble in order to most effectively support the literacy learning of adolescents” (p. 6) while suggesting that “creating

classrooms of and for multimodal play” (p. 8) can be helpful when considering how we might reimagine traditional learning spaces that could include adolescents’ social media use.

In addition, Hull and Katz’s (2006) comparative case study examined how “digital storytelling and the social context for learning provided through a community technology center” (p. 44). Their work helps educators and researchers better understand how multimodal composing (a) positions learners to communicate “pivotal moments in their lives and to assume agentive stances toward present identities, circumstances, and futures” and (b) “blurs the lines traditionally drawn between adult and adolescent development” pushing back on the age-divided sections of literacy learning that typically occur in schools (p. 44). For this reason, this study provides support that multimodality and literacy pedagogies can potentially provide more learning opportunities to a diverse range of learners today.

However, not all classrooms encourage a multimodal approach to literacy learning. For example, Brass’ (2008) case study of Horatio found that he was “competent and engaged with numerous literacies out- side of school; however, he was not nearly as successful with school-based measures of literacy achievement” (p. 464). Here, Brass (2008) discussed how learning opportunities were afforded to Horatio through his multimodal hybrid text—a video—titled “What It Takes to Be #1” once “he could draw freely upon his textual life at home to complete a school-sanctioned textual practice” (p. 471). Ultimately, Brass’s (2008) study offers empirical support that if teachers bring in students’ “local knowledge,” such as through digital video composing, then they may encourage and facilitate more engagement and academic achievement.

Furthermore, Khoo and Churchill's (2013) research focused on case studies of children in primary schools in which they found these children to develop five skills through their digital literacy practices, including multi-mode (using different modes to form information); contextual link (creating links with different elements to form information); affordances of mode (using affordances of modes to form information); navigation (moving around a screen to form information); and digital functionality (assimilating digital functions to form information [p. 253]). Yet, their results showed that these skills were not extended into the students' classroom learning, which supports the mono-modal culture of most classrooms. Even though their study focused on children in primary school, it is nonetheless still important to consider because it validates the fact that youth are engaged in digital, multimodal learning spaces that are not often validated within the traditional space of learning—the classroom.

Adolescents' Interactions in the Digital Sphere

Alvermann and Eakle (2007) reminded readers that there were non-linguistic resources available to students “to ‘do’ (accommodate), ‘re-do’ (reproduce), and ‘undo’ (resist and/or disrupt) institutionalized notions” (p. 2). Their reminder suggested that students' digital, multimodal literacy practices were purposeful, and those choices greatly affected how students viewed themselves and others as literate individuals. The following sections highlight some of the literature that supports this idea by focusing on consuming, re(producing), and disseminating media, as well as how popular culture can inform students' literate identities within the English language arts classroom.

Consuming Media

Consuming media is the way in which students read a variety of texts that may come in a variety of multimodal forms, such as print, video, audio, or gesture. According to the Georgia Department of Education's (2012) brochure on Common Core State Standards, a major focus of reading now includes text complexity and rigor. With this point in mind, Boche and Henning's (2015) article outlined the ways in which multimodality as a scaffold is used to "help both teachers and students realize there is more than one way to access challenging material or complex ideas" (p. 580).

To illustrate multimodality as a scaffold, Henning's (2015) classroom incorporated film, optical illusions, nonfiction broadcasts, and a variety of other multimodal resources to help students see that meaning can be created in a plethora of modes (p. 588). During this time, Henning reported an increase in her students' desire to engage with complex texts more easily and eagerly, as well as giving them a "richer entry point into discussion and synthesis" (p. 588). Thus, her students' confidence and comprehension skills grew through consuming multimodal media and allowed them to become savvy in navigating complex, and often mediated, messages as well as finding connections to their out-of-school literate selves as shown through their research process on their chosen topics for the school's "Population Conference."

While Boche and Henning's (2015) examples showed how multimodal consumption helped give students a platform from which to engage and build literacy skills as productive members of the classroom environment, they really only glossed over the idea of digital, multimodal media being layered with particular social views. However, Alvermann and Wilson (2007) noted,

A multimodal approach supports teaching adolescents that all texts, including their textbooks, routinely promote or silence particular views. This, in turn, suggests the importance of teaching youth to think more critically about what they read, write, view, or hear than is possible within a transmission model of teaching, with its emphasis on skill and drill, teacher-centered instruction, and passive learning. (p. 20)

In this statement, Alvermann and Wilson (2007) suggested that adolescents need to be aware of the socially-situated ways media are represented, which helps students take an active approach to consuming media in the classroom and beyond, such as within social media.

Again, consuming digital, multimodal media is a way to give students confidence in their literacy skills within the classroom and a way to give students' voice a powerful platform to produce, such as to engage with current events within social media. Once students gain the necessary skills to engage and even challenge digital, multimodal texts, they often move to producing their own digital, multimodal media. After all, "multimodality is central to the communicative practices of youth" (Vasudevan, 2015, p. 4).

(Re)producing Media

After considering how important consuming multimodal texts are, I now examine how multimodality is key to youth's language use in the digital sphere. In fact, Alvermann (2008) supported this point by noting, "texts in cyberspace are well suited for editing and remaking [repurposing]" (p. 10). For this reason, it is important to consider how adolescents' are producing digital, multimodal media, or in some cases reproducing

media, which means that they are taking a message/meaning and creating a new one from the original example.

In regards to (re)producing media, or repurposing, “modes are constantly transformed by their users in response to the communicative needs of communities, institutions, and societies” (Jewitt, 2008, p. 247). Specifically, many of these transformations occur today thanks to the mobile culture that adolescents are a part of outside-of-school (Leander & Vasudevan, 2011, p. 129).

For example, Leander and Frank’s study (as cited in Leander and Vasudevan, 2011) illustrated how an exchange of a series of images and print exchanges in an instant message session essentially repurposed images and words as a form of identity production (p. 131). They found that 29 of the 53 messages were either images or image/verbal hybrids. The adolescents discussed here were repurposing the images and pairing them with mostly affective textual responses (e.g. awwwwww) in order to communicate specific, repurposed meanings. Thus, developing a “multimodal grammar” (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009) may be helpful in deconstructing adolescents’ repurposed messages that help create deliberate identifications with certain groups or affinities with others.

And Peppler and Kafai’s (2007) findings discuss moving beyond passive consumption and participation to creation (p. 4). Their ethnographic observations come from a Computer Clubhouse in South Central Los Angeles that worked with high poverty, minority, urban youth from 8-18 years of age with a computer program they developed called Scratch (p. 9). Scratch allows users to have “a familiar building block command structure that enables designers to create or incorporate existing images and

sound files into their videogames, interactive art, and video productions — allowing for easy media mixing” (p. 5).

Ultimately, their study showed that there are many benefits of informal literacy learning spaces, such as uninterrupted time for youth to explore their interests and opportunities for teachers to help youth verbally articulate what they were consuming visually (p. 15). In addition, it reminds researchers and educators that there is more to consuming media and what one can do *with* it, which ties into what Alvermann and Eakle (2007) suggest noted previously. In fact, Peppler and Kafai (2007) feel that creative production

pushes youth to question their current observations and understandings, make explicit their assumptions about new media, and discover the conventions of writing the language of new media by learning the visual, semiotic, aural, and technological literacies necessary to inscribe one’s self into the larger participatory culture. (p. 5)

Here, we see that (re)purposing through informal learning spaces is one way that a wide range of diverse, and often labeled “at-risk” youth, are able to engage with learning opportunities that complement our expanding notion of what it means to be a literacy teacher in today’s digital, multimodal world.

Finally, with the increase in multimodal composing, one must remember that (re)producing media is more than just a technical skill (Sheppard, 2009) and is separate from dissemination. In fact, one must remember “the importance of continual reevaluation of how multimodal components are shaped and integrated into a text’s larger rhetorical objectives” (Sheppard, 2009, p. 124). This reminder is especially important

when one begins to look at how (re)purposed media are disseminated to a diverse audience through social media.

Disseminating Media

Adolescents are “tirelessly editing and remixing [repurposing] multimodal content they find online to share with others, using new tools to show and tell, and rewriting their social identities in an effort to become who they say they are” (Alvermann, 2008, p. 10). For this reason, affordances and spaces are integral parts in understanding how and why adolescents are reaching their audience (Jewitt, 2008; Lender & Vasudevan, 2011).

Jewitt (2008) mentioned that the “affordance of a mode is material, physical, and environmental” (p. 247). An affordance then can help an author transcend certain barriers that would otherwise hold one back from reaching an intended audience (Seargent & Tagg, 2014, p. 11). For example, Takahashi’s (2014) ethnographic study on Japanese youth’s relationships with everyday multimodal texts through social media pointed to the “constant connectivity” as the phenomenon that motivated these adolescents to navigate between different forms of communication to reach audience members through multiple forms of social media and multimodal messages. The youth in this study made very conscious decisions about how and where they used language through multimodal forms of communication, as well as decide how they would present themselves by using their real identities or who they would like to be.

In addition, Lee’s (2007) study considers the affordances of text-making practices and linguistic resources available within instant messaging (IM) (p. 224). She found that “text-making practices in IM are shaped by the perceived affordances of resources, that is, people’s perceptions of the possibilities and constraints offered by the sources (e.g.,

languages and writing systems) available to them” (p. 246). In other words, Lee’s (2007) work ties back to the importance of recognizing and understanding how and why affordances play a role in adolescents’ digital, multimodal production and how they choose to share that work with others.

Furthermore, a sense of “public-ness” (Kajder, 2010, p. 81) was a motivating factor for adolescents to be sure they are using the right mode for the specific message they are trying to get across. With the emergence of followers on popular social media sites, such as Twitter or Instagram, it is no wonder then that disseminating digital, multimodal media has become an important part of today’s culture (Takahashi, 2014). In addition, the use of popular culture to reach audience members and further develop adolescents’ literate identities is also included in this discussion.

Popular Culture

Alvermann (2012) mentioned that adolescents’ desire and ease of working with and disseminating digital, multimodal media was all the more reason for teachers to consider the use of popular culture texts within the classroom. In fact, she stated: “the politics of identity construction are alive and well. That they often come alive through films, music, rap lyrics, and so on is yet another reason that popular culture has a place in curricula” (p. 8).

To support Alvermann’s (2012) belief, Moje and colleagues (2004) emphasized the potential of using popular culture and multimodality within the English language arts classroom in their study. Moje et al. (2004) found that the majority of youth they observed were consistently engaged with popular culture texts. In fact, these youth were so engaged that they “mediated their choices of popular cultural texts with their family,

community, and peer funds of knowledge and Discourse” (Moje et al., 2004, p. 60).

These adolescents engaged with a variety of texts with multiple modes, such as music, print magazines, news media, television, and movies; thus, despite being bilingual (which can be perceived by some in the ELA classroom as a deficit according to my own experiences with teachers), these students’ responses and mediated choices suggest that popular culture could be used to create powerful connections to adolescents’ lives by ultimately helping them become powerful readers/writers across various social contexts (Moje et al., 2004, p. 60-64). This finding is especially important when considering how adolescents are engaged and mediating popular culture texts through social media.

In addition, by focusing on analyzing genres of popular culture and creating arguments, Williams (2014) found, through student interviews and textual analysis, that through the simultaneous use of print and multimodal popular culture texts, students seemed to provide in-depth reflection and revision that teachers seek when teaching writing (p. 119). By paying attention to the genres that students are engaged with outside of the classroom, teachers can create connections to the classroom for students to use their knowledge of popular culture genres as a compositional resource (Williams, 2014, p. 119). Though Williams’ (2014) study is pulled from a college writing course, the implications still trickle over to adolescents’ literacy practices within the ELA classroom, too. Furthermore, this study provides educators with a way to see how one might be able to engage and challenge students as they view themselves as reader and writers within the classroom and beyond.

Ultimately, media bombard adolescents every day in easily accessible digital, multimodal texts (Alvermann, 2012) that they are consuming, (re)producing, and

disseminating. For this reason, it is no surprise that popular culture texts can be quite influential within the ELA classroom. After all, “adolescents’ multispatial and multimodal literacies involve meaning-full [sic] engagement with artifacts that reflect the multiple communities and contexts to which they are connected” (Vasudevan, 2011, p. 99). Thus, adolescents’ literate identities are constructed through multiple face-to-face and digital communities, such as social media.

Identity Constructions

The New London Group (1996) stated: “just as there are multiple layers to everyone’s identity, there are multiple discourses of identity and multiple discourses of recognition to be negotiated” (p. 71). With this point in mind, it is essential to consider how these multiple discourses tie into adolescents’ literate identities within the English language arts classroom especially because students are navigating many mediated intersections—both in and out of the classroom.

To begin, Alvermann et al. (2012) found within their five multiple case studies that “maintaining multiple sites for multiple identities was a pattern in three of the five case studies” (p. 184). Merchant’s (2010) study also noted that adolescents are in a process of “making and remaking identities, taking complex decisions on how and what to present to their friends and the wider community” (p. 52). Here, adolescents’ multimodal identity constructions were dependent on a variety of factors that influenced how they wanted to be “read” across various community sites.

In addition, Bartlett’s (2007) ethnographic study working with Brazilian youth examined what it means to “do literacy,” or the “active and improvised identity work on two levels: the interpersonal (seeming) and the intrapersonal (feeling), in which one

works to convince others and oneself that one is the ‘kind of person’ who knows how to read and write” (p. 55). Students used a variety of multimodal texts to “challenge socially prescribed, positional aspects of identities and to ‘do’ literacy” which gave them power within social contexts (p. 64).

Furthermore, the assumptions of “doing literacy” for power were apparent in Lewis and Fabos’ (2005) study with seven adolescents who all used the affordances of instant messaging to improvise and redesign their language uses and social worlds in order to sustain and satisfy exchanges and “generate more interesting and flowing conversations with their peers” (p. 482-483). They noted “our identities shape and are shaped by what counts as knowledge, who gets to make it, who receives it, and so forth” (p. 474). In addition, Guzzetti’s (2006) study is another example of “doing literacy.” In this study, two adolescent girls’ used interactive cybersites, which “allowed them to develop their technoliteracies, to enact various identities, to position themselves as learners and teachers, to affirm their identities through others’ feedback, and to reflect on their performance of identity” (Guzzetti, 2006, p. 162).

Moje’s (2000) examination of “gangsta” adolescents’ graffiti writing found that their multimodal constructions were “a way of conveying, constructing, and maintaining identity, thought, and power” (p. 651) that is not typically valued within school communities. Yet another study, by Dowdall (2006), supports the idea that adolescents’ identities are negotiated based on the relationship to the audience. For example, Clare, was writing to in order to create an academic persona (Dowdall, 2006, p. 161). Thus, the reasons youth consume, (re)produce, and disseminate multimodal media are often focused on how they are received by their intended audience, which typically means

deciding who and what gets validated in schools. After all, Vasudevan's (2007) search for "Angels," reminds educators that "teachers should know each student as more than a 'nonreader,' 'low literate,' or 'a troublemaker'—and instead as artists, poets, and designers [through their multimodal work]" (p. 255).

Taking these studies into consideration, one can see that adolescents' digital, multimodal literacy practices inform their literate identities both in and out of the ELA classroom. In fact, Vasudevan's (2014) study about youth involved in a Theater Initiative found that when teachers connected to their students' personal stories, they were reinforcing "the ethos of membership and belonging in the way they legitimized the youth's lived experiences as core texts and source material out of which the Theatre Initiative scripts were forged" (p. 60-1). Thus, when teachers negotiate spaces of belonging through and within social situations, students are able to identify as powerful literacy warriors ready to take on anything that is thrown their way in the English language arts classroom.

As Kress (2003) said, "work always changes those who do the work, and it changes that which is worked on" (p. 39). One might find multimodality and identity working together in this way through social media. After all, identity is "not a stable, pre-determined property of an individual, but rather a set of resources which people draw upon in presenting and expressing themselves via interaction with others" (Sergeant & Tagg, 2014, p. 5). In other words, our identity changes with each mode we use to communicate to others based on how they perceive us, as well as how we perceive our 'selves' through the various social media uses that we employ.

More Thoughts for the ELA Classroom

Through the above examples in the relevant research literature, multimodality within digital literacy practices is viewed as a way for adolescents to not only express themselves by building their identity/ies and negotiating tensions between their learning spaces, but also to consume, produce, and disseminate media in smart ways that garner the attention—and respect—of others (Alvermann, 2001; Alvermann, 2008; Alvermann, 2011; Ito et al., 2010; Kajder, 2010). However, much of this would not be possible without the technological advancements that have been made and the seemingly infinite, participatory connections adolescents now can make within their social media uses.

Alvermann (2008) stated: “adolescent literacy is linked to social practices that involve reading and writing as well as other modes of communication (e.g., still and moving images, sound, embodied performances) in which young people engage” (p. 8). Yet, classroom spaces and digital spaces are often not valued equally in today’s educational landscape. When and if our students do not see how their rich multimodal practices can connect into their literate classroom identities, too, then they do not have a chance to make powerful connections to help them be successful in school settings.

When further considering this point in regards to the ELA classroom, the following quote by the New London Group (1996) comes to mind: “Literacy educators and students must see themselves as active participants in social change, as learners and students who can be active designers—makers—of social futures” (p. 64). However, as many of the studies above allude to, educators are only able to embody this mindset once they realize that multimodal texts are not a threat to traditional means of schooling, but instead are ways to make different kinds of meaning. And this is a mindset that needs to

occur *now* because students are already active makers of social futures as they “confidently and somewhat effortlessly manipulate multiple forms of texts” (Alvermann & Eakle, 2007, p. 4). Therefore, I feel there are two areas that educators can focus upon to help create this transition in the ELA classroom: multimodal forms of reading and writing and multimodal assessment of multimodality.

Multimodal Reading and Writing

As noted above, Kajder (2010) showed how a spin on a traditional ELA assignment, the book report, created more reader engagement and confidence with students’ skills and their literate identities. I think this work also pulls in the importance of helping adolescents navigate texts in which messages are being “conveyed (or silenced), by what means, and for what purposes” (Alvermann & Wilson, 2007, p. 18). In other words, these authors show how teachers can be encouraging critical consumption and production of multimodal texts within the ELA classroom.

Furthermore, Baepler and Reynolds’ (2014) studies support the idea of engaging students across modalities through digital video assignments. Specifically, they found that students were more engaged with their invention and revision, more confident in navigating from print to visual communicative modes, more confident with technology, and more reflective through video feedback. Thus, their findings suggest that ELA teachers can use multimodal digital (re)producing to help students become more active, confident participants within the classroom. Yet, while multimodal reading and writing are important components of developing adolescents’ literate identities within the ELA classroom, some teachers may be worried about how to assess multimodal content.

Multimodal Assessment

Many forms of multimodal assessment occur in the form of digital portfolios (Baepler & Reynolds, 2014; Gallagher, 2014) or rubrics (Burnett, Frazee, Hanggi, & Madden, 2014). In addition, through interdisciplinary, project-based, multimodal (IPM) activities, Hill (2014) found this environment “enhanced student knowledge while fostering motivation and creativity by allowed students to experience curricular content in multiple modalities” (p. 458). Furthermore, Lemke et al. (2015) support the use of multiple activities and practices on “*multiple time scales*” to better understand learning in informal settings, which could include the digital sphere.

Yet, these are just suggestions for how educators can begin to think about assessing multimodality. Beach (2015) recommends that in order to best assess multimodal digital productions, one should “focus on students’ ability to determine the extent to which their use of design features serves to achieve positive rhetorical uptake for their intended audiences.” This focus would allow ELA educators to know more about their students, how their students perceive their own literacy skills and goals, and as a common ground to have conversations about uses of multimodality.

However, I also specifically would add to this discussion the need for students to understand the Discourses (Gee, 2012) at work and how they are socially positioned in delivering their work. In addition, Charlton (2014) reminds us that while today’s digital multimodal texts may be new to many teachers, they should still be open to experiment with feedback and assessment that best works for their classrooms and is not “too contained” (p. 32). Thus, assessment of multimodality needs to be open to evolve to the needs of the learners within the ELA classroom. For example, educators should consider

how assessing multimodal texts *with* multimodality could affect their work with their students and the overall goals surrounding students' work.

Final Thoughts

If attention is spent on *how* students respond when their personal literacy practices are valued in-school, and the potentially corresponding positive consequences within the ELA classroom noted above in the research literature, then we can see an opportunity to explore how a third space is possible and present at all times (Alvermann & Wilson, 2007, p. 23). Students are already navigating these mediated intersections, and we need to focus on their fluid movement between school literacy practices as well as on and offline literate identities. In addition,

NLS [New Literacy Studies] has demonstrated a shift from traditional authority to an epistemology of shared knowledge and expertise. In online social sites, institutional authorities, such as parents and teachers, do not establish writing standards and protocols, nor are they positioned as instructional experts. Rather, norms and criteria for participation are located in peer—and interest—based communities.” (Mills, 2016, loc. 1083)

Thus, it is time for our efforts to encourage multimodal literacy practices as a “field of application” with the development of theories to support those applications (Jewitt, 2011, p. 2).

As Freire (1970) suggested: “knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). With this note in mind, teachers *can* become makers of social futures (New London Group, 1996) *with* their

students by incorporating opportunities that embrace multimodal literacy practices so that students can embody all of their literate selves in ways that extend beyond the ELA classroom walls.

Of course, new challenges are presented for educators with this opportunity. In fact, Vasudevan (2015) said: “our pedagogical challenge has become effectively striking a balance between preparing for spontaneous multimodal play and allowing that play to move us in unexpected directions, in the activities that unfold, conversations that emerge, and the texts that are produced” (p. 10). The research studies and conceptual pieces noted above have supported the notion that while Discourses have a direct impact on students’ language identities, when students are given the opportunity to become experts in the room through multimodal literacy practices, the potential outcome for student achievement and ownership of learning can be quite positive in ways that extend beyond the classroom walls. Thus, when students see how their rich, digital, multimodal practices can connect into their literate classroom identities, then they can create their own powerful connections to help them be successful in school settings.

Summary

In this chapter, I examined the relevant literature in which I found three key areas to support the need for my study: multimodality and literacy pedagogies; adolescents’ interactions in the digital sphere by consuming, re(producing), and disseminating media, including popular culture; and identity constructions. In the following chapter, I discuss the methodology that was used for my study, focusing specifically on the description of my research site, participants, and methods of data collection and analysis used to design and conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Charmaz (2014) stated, “Grounded theory serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them” (p. 17). As previously noted, in my interpretive study, I took a grounded theory analytical approach to conduct focus group interviews with a general population of 22 students, including males and females, in a public, city-district high school in a southern, metropolitan area in order to analyze their digital literacy practices through social media. This approach allowed me to better understand how adolescents create and view their multimodal literate identities within digital spaces and the connections of those identities to their school-related literacy practices. Furthermore, I conducted interviews with five English language arts (ELA) teachers from the same high school in order to analyze how teachers might perceive students’ digitally literate identities and practices. Combining both students’ *and* teachers’ perspectives allowed me to consider the possibilities of informing ELA curricula development to include ways in which ELA teachers might validate students’ rich, digital, multimodal literate identities in and out of the classroom.

This chapter includes my rationale for design, my subjectivity and researcher’s statements, site and participant selections, and data sources and collection. In addition, I have included data management and analytical procedures, as well as notes about credibility and ethics of the study. As previously noted, the following research questions were explored through this study:

1. In what ways, if at all, does social media use create opportunities for high school students to form their own digital, multimodal literate identities?
2. In what ways do high school students perceive the English language arts classroom and curricula as a context responsive to these uses and identities?

Rationale for Design

Glense (2011) states: “With the research goal of interpreting the social world from the perspectives of those who are actors in that social world, it follows that the research methods include interacting with people in their social contexts and talking with them about their perceptions” (p. 8). For this reason, the research design used for this study took a focus group approach (Roulston, 2014) with students, as well as individual interviews with teachers, to better understand their perceptions about multimodal literate identities within social media and how those identities—and subsequent digital literacy practices—may or may not be valued within the ELA classroom.

When viewed as a dialogic interaction, focus groups present “opportunities for dialogue, consciousness raising, and deliberate discussion of topics brought forth by both participants and researchers” (Roulston, 2014, p. 38). And, because my theoretical framework includes viewing literacy and identity from a sociocultural lens, creating an environment that allowed students to unpack their own literacy practices and identities based on the sociocultural contexts in which they were engaged was especially important. These discussions helped me uncover new data, such as students’ school assignments and social media interactions. Additionally, the student focus groups and individual teacher interviews all included intensive interviewing practices, which involve focusing “on

research participants' statements about their experiences, how they portray this experience, and what it means to them, as they indicate during the interview" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 58). Thus, focus group interviews and individual interviews were useful when paired with a sociocultural framework because they allowed me a flexibility to examine varying perspectives to better understand literacy as a social practice.

Research Process

The overall research process consisted of the following:

1. Gaining IRB approval from the university to begin the study.
2. Securing approval from the school to begin research [Appendix A].
3. Gathering student participants [Appendices B and C].
4. Gathering teacher participants [Appendix D].
5. Securing approval from the student participants and their parents/guardians to begin research [Appendix E].
6. Securing approval from the teacher participants to begin research [Appendix F].
7. Collecting and analyzing data in order to present findings [Appendix G].

Subjectivity Statement

Roulston (2014) defines subjectivity as "a researcher's personal assumptions and presuppositions" (p. 58). This area is one that I find to be important when considering anything related to New Literacy Studies (NLS), New Literacies Studies, and New Media Literacy Studies (NMLS) because I acknowledge that not all educators would universally agree with my outlook on literacy practices within today's ELA classroom. For example, students' social media practices, from my experiences as an ELA teacher, are typically

only viewed from a negative standpoint in literacy-related professional development sessions. Yet, because I have found success with creating those connections between my classroom and students' out-of-school literacy practices, I continue to want students to realize they are already readers and writers before they even walk into my classroom.

While I choose to bring an interest of digital literacy practices, such as those through social media, into the ELA classroom, I believe it is important for me to mention how I personally view the use of social media with students. Even though I am active on several social media platforms, I do not follow students. My belief is that teachers should not always be online nor should they be "friends" with students online, and I value the separation between my work and home spaces. Nonetheless, I do feel that I have a responsibility to model for students how one develops a positive digital footprint.

Taking this point into consideration, my Twitter and Instagram accounts are open, which means they are visible to the general public, and several students do find and follow me. However, I have found that students are respectful of how I engage within those digital spaces. For example, some will tag me to a tweet with an article tied to something we discussed that day in class or with a picture taken from a school event. Others will re-post information I have shared whether it is tied to education, sports, or a popular quote, for example. And yes, some students do choose to contact me on Twitter versus email with a question about class. I, too, have used Twitter to share general class information knowing that some students would see and pass it along to other students; I realize that they will see a tweet faster than they will check their school email. Again from my experiences, students have been respectful with how they interact with me within those spaces all the while knowing that I am not always online for work.

Yet, I acknowledge that not all educators have open social media accounts or even use social media at all. Furthermore, some have accounts setup solely for their work content. In addition, it is important for me to remember that students have different affordances to technologies that allow them access to social media. Also, some students may not care for teachers to bridge in digital literacy practices within the ELA classroom, and teachers may not care to engage students in those spaces either for a variety of reasons. Therefore, an awareness of these limitations is needed.

Role of Researcher

I embodied many roles during this study, as I had the unique position of being a teacher *and* researcher throughout it. However, especially for this reason, the importance of being reflexive throughout this process was extremely important, as others have noted (Charmaz, 2014; Glesne, 2011; Roulston, 2014; Creswell, 2007). Nonetheless, as an observer-participant, I share below how these two roles came together because of my relationships with the participants.

In the observer role, I observed and documented conversations that occurred in the focus groups and interviews. During the conversations, participants were comfortable with me because they knew me in my role as their former ELA teacher and current colleague in the school. Then, as conversations continued, I became a participant when both students and teachers would ask me questions, too. Nevertheless, I focused my attention on bringing myself back into the observer role, where I was able to examine the groups' interactions and perceptions on the topics being discussed.

Ultimately, my positioning within this study is as a white, middle-class, and female teacher. I am also defined as a “Millennial” (Bump, 2014), which comes into play when I interpreted the data, especially with the teacher participants.

Research Site Selection

Ocean High School (OHS) is a public, city-district high school located in a southeastern, metropolitan area, which is where I currently teach English language arts. Usually, when people think of OHS, they think of a “private” public school, and one that has a very affluent population because it is so competitive and successful in the academics, athletics, and arts within the state and nationally as well. While OHS has students who pay tuition to attend there based on its success, it is not a charter school, and a large portion of the population at OHS falls on the lower end of the socioeconomic status. In fact, as a city-district school, meaning that it is independent of the county it falls in, OHS actually might be a Title I school; after all, the lower grade schools within the city are all Title I schools, and these schools feed directly into the high school. These students do not disappear; they walk the hallways of OHS.

With this point in mind, there are students at OHS who live in homes that have dirt floors in parts of the house. There are students whose home—a trailer—has been chopped in half by a tree after a bad storm, and the family continues to live there with the bedroom door shut to close the house back up. There are students who work full-time to help support their families by paying rent/mortgages and by putting food on the table. In other words, OHS’s success leads to assumptions of affluence, but the student population includes students from all socioeconomic levels.

In regards to racial demographics, OHS has a little bit of everything. There is a small Asian and Indian population that has recently moved in district. There is an “old-school” African American population whose families have lived in the district their entire lives; there is also an “old-school” white population whose families have also lived in the district their entire lives. These “old-school” families have been a part of what OHS has become over the years and still buy into the small town mentality of everyone knows everything about anyone connected to the school. In addition, many Hispanic students move to live with their aunts and uncles because their cousins have received a high school diploma from OHS, and their families want them to graduate, too.

In some ways, OHS might be seen as a “last chance school.” This label has developed from its reputation of being the last and only opportunity for students to graduate from high school or a place for them to go after they leave the local alternative school. For this reason, there are many students who filter in from all over to work towards receiving a high school diploma at OHS.

It is important to note that OHS has a very proud student population—one that puts in grueling hours of dedicated work towards succeeding in academics, athletics, or the arts. Students work hard to find the success that follows them with the help of a dedicated faculty and a community that supports it in every way possible. Students will tell you that they feel everyone around them wants them to be successful—no matter who they are, where they are from, or how they identify. Halls are lined with championship trophies and awards that the students have earned to show this dedication.

Interview Site Selection

The student interviews took place face-to-face at OHS and through Google Hangout depending on the availability of the groups and the ability to fit our meetings more easily into the students' busy schedules. Glesne (2011) notes several issues with conducting "backyard research," however, I am choosing OHS for a very specific reason: "to improve the schooling experiences for students" (Glesne, 2011, p. 43). Therefore, my positioning within this community as an established and current teacher researcher, who has worked on multiple leadership teams concerning technology and pedagogy, provided me the opportunity to research here and offer suggestions on how professional development might be improved, especially since I am often tasked with the job of conducting professional development with teachers at OHS and within the system. This job is one that I have had the opportunity to take part in due to Central Office members and OHS administration acknowledging my personal interest, sound pedagogy, and knowledge with including technology effectively into literacy instruction.

The teacher interviews took place face-to-face or through Google Hangout depending on the individual teachers' schedules. Markham (2005) notes that due to the "distance-collapsing capacity of the Internet," the researcher can now "include people previously unavailable for study" (p. 801). With this point in mind, Google Hangout provided me with an opportunity to work with students and teachers at a time (and place) that worked best for them if talking face-to-face was not an option.

Participant Selection

While the number of participants needed is often questioned when one uses grounded theory, Charmaz (2014) reminds readers that it is problematic to assume there is a concrete number and that researchers would all agree on that said number:

When novices ask how many interviews they need, their question likely rests on three presuppositions. First the question presupposes that the number of interviews answers a researcher's concern about performance, whether this concern is about meeting barely adequate, credible, or exemplary standards. Second, the question presupposes that experts can specify a concrete number of interviews. Third, it presupposes that they would agree on the same concrete number. All three presuppositions are problematic. (p. 105)

Here, it is important to remember that the research purpose and emergent data often guide what the researcher needs to analyze to consider "how many" (Charmaz, 2014, p. 106). In addition, Charmaz (2014) alludes to the fact that one might choose to add more participants if only interview data is being used; one must not assume that interviews are the only form of data that can emerge (p. 107). However, my study includes several pieces of data, which are discussed later in this chapter.

Taking these points into consideration, in this qualitative study, I conducted focus group interviews with a general population of 22 students, including males and females, who attend a public, city-district high school in a southern, metropolitan area. Roulston (2014) suggests that a successful focus group typically is around 8-12 participants; however, I used seven students total in two groups and eight students total in one group to ensure that all voices would be heard during our meetings. Student participants were

invited through an inquiry letter home (shown in Appendices B and C) to their parents/guardians, and the first 21 students who responded were accepted. Because two students' emails were received at the same time, and both students were adamant about being a part of the research, 22 total students were kept, which resulted in one focus group including eight students as noted previously. These participants were all former students from my 10th grade World Literature and Composition class. Below is a brief account of who these students are in their own words, which I felt was important viewed through a sociocultural perspective in which their identities are brought into being through the descriptions (Lewis & del Valle, 2008). Full descriptions of these participants are shown in Appendix H. These descriptions are divided by students' focus groups, which were selected based on the common time that students were able to meet.

The first focus group included seven students: G-Cur, Kenneth Caleb, Froggystyle, Hunter, Tom Tom☺, Nancy, and CG2. G-Cur, a 17 years old, white female, is "very busy, athletic, determined, prideful, confident, focused, and different." She is a good student in ELA class, but does not like reading or writing essays; she feels that her ELA class is boring. Kenneth Caleb, a 17 years old, African American male, is "an enjoyer of life." He is not motivated in ELA class because he does not get to read things he enjoys or is interested in reading. Froggystyle, a 17 years old, African American male, is "very fun and selfless to others." He is a great writer in ELA class, but does not enjoy reading so much; in fact, ELA class has been one of his most difficult classes. Hunter, a 17 years old, white/African American male, is "funny, kind of shy, and hardworking." He is pretty good at analysis and decent at conventions and mechanics; he enjoys ELA class a lot. Tom Tom☺, a 17 years old, Indian male, is "a hard worker who can still have fun."

He does not excel in ELA, but he still does somewhat well in it; in fact, although he understands the importance of ELA, he is not a huge fan of it because it is not something he really enjoys. Nancy, a 17 years old, white female, is “leadership oriented, technologically savvy, passionate, and focused.” She is motivated and passionate about ELA class because she loves it; it is her favorite subject. And CG2, a 17 years old, Hispanic female, is “generally a happy person who is athletic and sympathetic.” ELA class is definitely one of her strong suits, and it is typically one of her highest grades; she enjoys it and finds it pretty interesting.

The second focus group included seven students as well: Lily Smith, Cristobal Arroyo, Kiminem, Ling Ling, No Preference☺, MARCIE, and Valentina. Lily Smith, a 17 years old, Asian/white female, is “helpful, kind, athletic, religious, and loving.” She is an obedient student in ELA class with a solid understand of language arts; she loves looking at something and knowing she can always improve (especially writing). Cristobal Arroyo, a 16 years old, Hispanic male, is “hardworking and persevering.” He knows that if he does not work hard in ELA class and do his work, he will fail; ELA class is his weakest class. Kiminem, a 16 years old, white/Korean male, is “funny, creative, and nice.” He is a bad student and really bad at reading and writing in ELA class; he just does not like it. Ling Ling, a 16 years old, Asian female, is “a lazy perfectionist with a sense of humor as dark as [her] soul.” She actively participates in ELA class, but she is not good at it—instead only good at guessing; she thinks it is interesting how ELA class can overlap with other subjects. No Preference☺, a 16 years old, Asian female, is “a perfectionist and likes to spend time with close friends.” She typically does well in ELA class though it is not her favorite because writing is not her strength though she knows it

will help her in the future. MARCIE, a 16 years old, white female, is “dependable, organized, trustworthy, and friendly.” She is a strong writer and avid reader when interested in the book in ELA class, but terrible with reading comprehension questions; thus, as long as the novels are interesting and there is not a lot of poetry involved, she typically enjoys class. And Valentina, a 17 years old, white female, is “hard working, driven, kind, social, and determined.” She is a good reader and progressing writer; she likes being able to learn more about different writing styles and time periods.

The third focus group included eight students: Hotline, fresh 2, JJ, Buttercup Goldfilter, Momma Long Leg, C.A.T., Mrs. Situation, and Briar. Hotline, a 17 years old, white female, is “nice, funny, responsible, and caring.” She is pretty good at ELA and likes it, but thinks it is boring sometimes. fresh 2, a 17 years old, white female, is “responsible, athletic, caring, and focused.” She is very dedicated to her ELA grade and interested in being challenged—after all, ELA class is challenging but rewarding. JJ, a 16 years old, Black/African American male, is “very outgoing.” He is easy going in ELA class and feels that he can be very descriptive and wordy in writing. Buttercup Goldfilter, a 16 years old, African American female, is “loving, caring, loyal, and mature.” She thinks she is an “okay” student in ELA when she actually focuses and takes her time which results in better outcomes (grades); however, ELA is not her favorite subject because she does not think she is that great of an essay writer, which usually makes her not like class so much. Momma Long Leg, a 16 years old, white female, is “tall and funny.” She is not very strong in ELA class because she can never focus; she just does not like it. C.A.T., a 16 years old, Black male, is “athletic, social, and goofy.” He is involved in ELA class, but only sometimes when he finds it entertaining and fun. Mrs.

Situation, a 16 years old, mixed female, is “loud, outgoing (social butterfly type), caring, and passionate.” She is engaged and eager to learn in ELA, but she does not always enjoy it. And Briar, a 16 years old, white female, is “nice, fun, and energetic.” She is engaged and creative in ELA class and considers it a class where she can think about things differently.

ELA teachers were also participants in this study because if I wanted to better understand how students were using social media to inform their multimodal literate identities, then I needed to talk with teachers who worked with students in a literacy setting to see if and how the curricula was conducive for students’ multimodal literate identities. The five teachers who participated in this study were the first five teachers who responded to an email invitation to participate in this study (shown in Appendix D). The email was sent to all ELA teachers who are in my department. Below is a brief account of these teachers describing the students with whom they work. Full descriptions of these participants are shown in Appendix I.

Goody D, who has taught ELA for 24 years, works with “students who are currently taking 9th grade Lit and Comp on either the College Prep (CP) or Honors track.” She teaches “a variety of students from mixed cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds.” Meredith, who has taught ELA for 3 years, works with “Resource (small group) 9th grade College Prep (CP), Resource (small group) 11th grade CP, and CP 11th grade.” Her “resource students are mostly kids that have high anxiety and/or focusing issues in a larger group setting. They are doing the same daily tasks as regular CP students, taking the same tests and Milestone as all other CP students.” RealT, who has taught ELA for 28 years, works with “12th grade students in Advanced Placement English

Literature.” His students “tend to be among the best, brightest, and most intellectually curious members of the senior class.” Sally McDonald, which has taught ELA for 17 years, works with “all students—from the students who struggle and are considered ‘at risk’ because of previous failing scores on standardized tests, to students who are in the top 10% of their class.” And Reba, who has taught ELA for 11 years, works with “students who are currently taking 9th grade Lit and Comp on either the College Prep (CP) or Honors track.” He teaches “a variety of students from diverse cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds.” All teachers have a piece of technology for each of their students in the classroom, such as Chromebooks or iPads.

The student participants came from a general demographic consisting of different races and socioeconomic statuses to name a few variations, other than gender, in order to gain a better idea of how and why a variety of students are using social media as literacy practices and as a possible way of constructing identity. The sample selection criteria for this study were as follows: (1) general population, (2) male and female (as identified by the student), (3) high school student, (4) uses social media regularly. Again, Appendix H describes the students’ basic demographic information collected from the initial survey (shown in Appendix J).

The teacher participants also came from a general demographic and are colleagues that I know who teach the 22 students. The sample selection criteria were as follows: (1) general population, (2) male and female (as identified by the teacher), (3) high school English language arts teacher. Appendix I describes the teachers’ basic classroom information, including students and resources available to them, in their own words.

Data Sources and Collection

Charmaz (2014) stated: “Because the interviewer seeks to understand the research participant’s language, meanings, actions, emotions and body language, intensive interviewing is a useful method for interpretive inquiry” (p. 58). In addition, Charmaz (2014) called for the use of “intensive interviewing” to help keep the topic focused while “providing the interactive space and time to enable the research participant’s views and insights to emerge” (p. 85). This approach provides the opportunity to have “more analytic control over [my] data collection and emerging theoretical ideas” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 85). Data was collected over five phases all of which are outlined below.

Phase I: Student Survey

In order to garner an understanding of how adolescents are using social media to create their digital, multimodal literate identities, Phase I consisted of a survey (shown in Appendix J) that was given to students to ask them basic demographic information and to list the types of social media they engage in regularly. These “elicit responses” offered “thoughts, feelings, and concerns of thinking, acting subject[s]” to give me “ideas about what structures and cultural values influence” the students (Charmaz, 2014, p. 47). In addition, these responses gave me an opportunity to create a rich description, in their own words, for each participant’s identity, including their pseudonyms, as well as their social media use in order to introduce the discussion topics and “stimulate thinking prior to the focus group” (Roulston, 2014, p. 42), as noted in Appendix H.

Phase II: Teacher Interviews

Teachers were interviewed in Phase II to better understand how each teacher understands social media and considers digital literacy practices within the ELA

classroom. Appendix J reports the interview guide used for this phase. During the interviews, I sought to generate data concerning the teacher's "reasoning practices and justifications [that] are made explicit in the ongoing dialogue" (Roulston, 2014, p. 28) focused on their perceptions of students' social media use and if their ELA classrooms were welcoming to those uses. These responses helped guide my questions for my second round of focus group interviews with students.

Phases III-V: Student Focus Group Interviews

In Phase III, focus group interviews were conducted with the student participants based on the aforementioned research questions that elicits data concerning the *process* of creating an identity through social media (Roulston, 2014, p. 79). Appendix J includes all of the focus group questions for interviews one, two, and three. Again, focus groups were created by the common times the students were available. Phase IV included the second round of focus group interviews, guided by the results from the teacher interviews and data collected from the previous student-focused phases as well. Then, Phase V concluded the focus group interviews with questions guided by social media use in the English language arts classroom.

Transcriptions from the audio recorded student focus groups and teacher interviews, field notes, follow-up questions/answers with participants, in addition to the original interview guides, any lesson plans/ideas that the teachers choose to share, and any artifacts of students' social media usage that they choose to share during the interview sessions were collected as well (Glesne, 2011, p. 47-8). Furthermore, GroupMe, a popular app used to communicate within a group, was set-up by students to

decide the next meeting or share recent social media interactions. These chats were also collected as part of my data.

In addition, it was important to consider any analytic ideas that come up during the discussions or from the subsequent GroupMe chats created by students, as Charmaz (2014, p. 111) suggests. Thus, personal memos were extremely important to use since they helped provide more depth to my analysis, and they aided in the generation of grounded theory (Roulston, 2014, p. 155). With this point in mind, my personal memos served as an “interactive space and place for exploration and discovery” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 170) in which I could begin to consider emergent categories leading to my theories.

Ultimately, “the stated goal of grounded theory strategies is to focus data collection to construct theory” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 87). With this goal in mind, my conceptual development and theory construction was imperative as I moved into the data analysis phase of my research. Again, Appendix G outlines the types of data collected and the research questions supported by that data.

Data Management

Paulus, Lester, and Dempster (2014) note that technology has changed the way we organize and write about our data (p. 165). For this study, I used ATLAS.ti, a computer-assisted, qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), to help keep all of my work within one space as I began to organize and analyze my data. This tool was especially important since I used a variety of data forms, including text, audio, and image. In addition, copies of all documents were stored in a Dropbox folder for back-up purposes.

As mentioned previously, I used all pseudonyms to protect the identity of my participants as I worked on my analysis, and the participants created these names. In regards to data security, I kept my laptop and cell phone password protected so that no one could access the files or programs in which I was using. In addition, numbers versus names were used to save audio files to ensure teacher participant anonymity as an extra precaution. The pseudonyms teachers created were used for their names within those files as well. All audio files were deleted from my computer, including ATLAS.ti, once I reviewed them with the transcriptions.

In addition, when students shared specific social media profiles or other digital, social interactions with me, I “purposefully obscure[d] data” (boyd, 2015, p. 10). In other words, to ensure that I deleted all identifying information and provided participant anonymity, profile names were removed, photos altered to remove major identifying information, such as faces, and quotes altered from profiles and posts unless students shared a public tweet or a public tweet from a public figure/account. These actions ensured that to the best of my ability data could not be traced back to the individual from where it originated.

Data Analysis

Grounded theory analysis helped me “define what constitutes the data and to make implicit views, actions, and processes more visible” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 113). For this reason, as previously stated, it was important to collect data early to “begin to separate, sort, and synthesize” it (Charmaz, 2014, p. 4) by establishing codes. Then, these codes helped me to begin to analyze for conceptual categories relating to literacy practices and identity creation (Glesne, 2011, p. 21) throughout each of the data

collection phases. Next, I linked those conceptual categories, after each phase, into five essential categories, developed through my analytic memos, that helped lead me to my emerging theory about how we could understand the process of adolescents' identity creation through social media to help shape meaningful literacy practices. Because each phase had its own codes and categories, I was able to build questions that were created from my analysis across all phases. This process of theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014, p. 200) allowed me to gather data to refine my categories and better understand the relationships between them.

The “interactive space” in which I consistently engaged with my data (Charmaz, 2014, p. 115) helped to “shift, change, or transform” my relationship with it (Charmaz, 2014, p. 116) through a constant comparative method of analysis (Charmaz, 2014, p. 132) to help generate my potential theory. Furthermore, “‘interpretive theorizing’ moves beyond individual situations and immediate interactions to include collectivities and institutions” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 233). In other words, grounded theory is a social action that works in connection to particular people, places, and times (Charmaz, 2014, p. 234), which is another reason a sociocultural lens was used for the analysis of this study.

Because the five phases discussed above provided a large amount of data from the 22 student participants, I picked three students to highlight in my analytical work—Hunter, MARCIE, and Mrs. Situation—in order to provide a clear focus during my analysis. It is important to note that these students were not the only ones analyzed, but instead provided overall viewpoints from their focus group. In fact, Chapter Four shares tables that bring in data from all students used to support the three students' specific examples. In other words, each of these students came from a separate focus group and

other members would consider them a “leader” within that group. Here, a “leader” would be defined as a student who synthesized all comments made by the group, made connections between other students’ comments, and thus, generated further discussion among the other group members.

In addition, I found that these students’ names came up in many of my personal memos as students to follow-up with regarding their overall commentary; these students also engaged with me outside of the focus group meetings. Through these personal memos, the three student leaders identified rich complexities surrounding the groups’ digital identities, their digital actions, and their understandings of the label “digital native.” Furthermore, Charmaz (2014) reminds readers that grounded theorists typically include less description than other qualitative approaches and instead “often fragment actions, events, and participants’ stories in service of our developing analyses” (p. 171). Again, the decision to highlight three students did not exclude other data; instead it provided me with specific examples to share throughout my analysis that voiced the overall groups’ comments.

The following steps, then, were used to construct theory from the data through analysis after each phase, and these steps are modeled after Charmaz’s (2014) work:

1. Collect data and write personal memos.
2. Create initial and focused codes, as well as conceptual and essential categories.
3. Create analytic memos to build potential theory through the analytic insights.

Again, these steps were conducted after each data collection phase to help lead me to my theory. Finally, after Phase V, data saturation was found as each phase’s conceptual categories were narrowed down to overall essential categories that would be the

foundation for which my analytic memos developed in order to form insights for my emerging theory. Because the research questions were addressed throughout the research phases (shown in Appendix G), the five essential categories that developed all connected back to the questions that guided this research. Thus, the process noted above helped me see new possibilities, establish connections, and ask questions (Charmaz, 2014, p. 224) concerning adolescents' social media use and their digital, multimodal literate identities.

Credibility and Ethics of Study

To improve the credibility of my work, I immediately transcribed all interviews and reviewed them several times with the transcriptions as recommended by others (Roulston, 2014; Paulus, Lester, & Dempster, 2014). I compared the transcriptions with the audio three times, and I corrected any errors that were present. In addition, participants were consulted before my final comparison to ensure that my interpretations aligned with what they felt was accurate as well based on our conversations.

In addition, there are issues of public versus private spaces within social media that can be viewed with an ethical lens. For example, even though participants' information was visibly public to everyone through their social media profiles, anywhere around the world, boyd (2015) acknowledged that she could not violate what teenagers heard with regards to "creepy strangers" online by her solely lurking (watching online without actually directly participating with subjects) in the digital sphere (p. 5). Acknowledging this same concern and care, I included in my parental permission and student assent letter that student participants could potentially share their social media uses with me.

Also, since I collaborated with my former students and current colleagues as participants within this study, it was important for me to be reflexive about what I brought to my research site as a teacher researcher (Charmaz, 2014). For this reason, I made it explicitly clear that it was not a mark against the student participants if they choose at any time to not participate within my study. And I let the students know that their English language arts teachers would not know who the students were other than the fact that they teach them, in one of their classes, which provided students comfort.

Finally, as noted above, I purposefully obscured data if students provided specific references to their social media profiles. Yet, even the process of editing these media is something that Markham (2005) reminds us is an ethical, conscious choice researchers make. When researchers obscure data, they are choosing how they are representing another's work; researchers have more freedom to construct and represent data. In other words, there are more ways to represent participants through digital media based on the numerous ways participants are engaging within the digital. Thus, I had to be careful that I did not unintentionally misrepresent my participants' digital media through obscuring, and I checked with them to ensure my edits were representative of what they shared with me.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss my choices for methodology. I outlined the rationale for design, subjectivity and researcher's statements, site and participant selections, and data sources and collection. In addition, I included data management and analytical procedures, as well as notes about credibility and ethics of the study. The next chapter explores my overall findings.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

As noted in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of adolescents' literacy practices within digital spaces, such as social media, that influence their literate identities. Through these understandings, then, English language arts (ELA) teachers' might strengthen curriculum and instruction in order to validate students' rich, digital, multimodal literate identities in and out of the classroom.

This study included data from 22 students, such as what they shared in a survey and three focus group meetings, as well as five teachers and what they shared during individual interviews. Three students are highlighted that include each group's overall commentary to provide a specific focus for analysis, which is supported by Charmaz (2014) noting that qualitative grounded theory often "fragments" these descriptions in order to develop analyses (p. 171). The following chapter is organized by the overall context pulled from the student survey responses that helped inform my research questions for this study:

1. In what ways, if at all, does social media use create opportunities for high school students to form their own digital, multimodal literate identities?
2. In what ways do high school students perceive the English language arts classroom and curricula as a context responsive to these uses and identities?

Then, I report on the other findings from the data collection phases mentioned in Appendix G. Again, findings were established after careful reviewing of the interview transcript, building codes from the data, and developing categories for each phase. Each phase shares the subsequent analytical steps that were taken including creating initial codes, focused codes, conceptual categories, and essential categories, respectively, and creating analytic memos to discern insights to build potential theory. Finally, the theory is noted that was developed from the overall data analysis.

Phase I: Overall Context from Student Surveys

Phase I allowed me to gain valuable information about how the students considered themselves as readers and writers in the ELA classroom and what social media platforms they engaged with the most. Students were asked questions based on how they identified with gender and race, how they identified as an ELA student, what their digital activities included while at both school and home, and what they wish their ELA teacher knew about them and how they use social media (see Appendix J for a full list of questions used). As noted in Chapter Three, the participant descriptions (see Appendix H for detailed descriptions) were created using their own words; the main points below stem from these detailed descriptions. This step allowed me to understand how these young people were identifying as readers and writers with their own language, which is important when working within a sociocultural tradition to value how their Discourses and subsequent identities use language differently (Gee, 2012, p. 170).

Out of the 22 participants, 14 students identified as “good” in ELA class, whereas six students identified as “not good” students. From their responses, good versus bad typically meant their ability to write and answer reading comprehension questions. Two

students also noted that they were “not good” because they were not very motivated in ELA class. Furthermore, nine students identified as not liking ELA class, whereas eight students said they did like it. Five reported that they were only motivated, or liked, ELA class because they could see beyond the immediate future, however, the class was definitely not their favorite.

The 22 participants used a variety of social media platforms; however, the top three choices included Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat, all of which had very specific and different purposes dependent on the audience(s). Some of these purposes included letting people know what was on their mind, in that moment, through video, image, or text; keeping up with events happening around the world; being creative; finding relevant information to do something, such as baking or working on a car; or staying in touch with others to name just a few.

Yet, in the ELA classroom, students reported digital literacy practices were confined to six overall purposes: reading class articles, writing essays to submit online, using Google Classroom for information, creating PowerPoints, reviewing online (through Kahoot or Quizlet), and researching online. In my personal memo regarding this initial survey, I noted, “What a discrepancy between social media used personally and complete LACK of use in ELA!”

This discrepancy also supports Perry’s (2012) notion about the importance of examining literacy in the social and cultural contexts in which it is practiced—or in this case, where it is *not* practiced. And it was important to consider these differences because none of the social media platforms that students used personally were referenced in their school-related digital literacy practices. In fact, digital literacy practices in school were

limited to assignment-driven assessments, or student-to-teacher audience only. Table 1 highlights the initial codes that were constructed and the subsequent categories that began to form after analyzing the data from this phase.

Table 1

Phase I initial thoughts from the researcher

Initial Code	Focused Code	Conceptual Category	Example
ELAi (ELA identity)	Self-established identity in ELA class through reading and writing	Connection (to teacher) Connection (to future) Personal	All students report a self-established identity in ELA
SMi (Social Media identity)	Self-established identity on social media through profile and interactions	Personal Connection (to audience)	All students report a self-established identity through social media
ActS (Active on Social Media)	Actively participating on social media	Location (home vs. school) Personal	All students participate in social media actively; depends on platform
NActS (Not Active on Social Media)	Not-actively participating on social media	Location (home vs. school) Personal	All students' responses showed discrepancies between home (active) vs. school (not active).
CP (Classroom Purpose)	Digital literacy practices in ELA class	Personal Varies on platform Writing	All students reported DLP in ELA. Appears more task-oriented

Table 1 continued

SP (Social Media Purpose)	Digital literacy practices on social media	Personal Varies on Platform	All students reported DLP in social media; appears more personal in choice, purpose, and audience
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Now that I have reported the findings from Phase I, the following sections share the other four phases of data collection that took place within this study, highlighting the emerging data from the ELA teacher interviews and the focus group meetings with students after developing codes and categories.

Phase II: Teachers' Perceptions

Teacher interview responses (shown in Appendix I) helped develop the participant descriptions in their own words presented in Chapter Three, which is again an important component of conducting research through a sociocultural lens so that I can value their language uses (Gee, 2012, p. 170). The interview questions (detailed fully in Appendix J) focused on questions concerning the teachers' classrooms and access to technology, their use of technology to complement ELA state standards, how and why they did or did not use social media in the classroom, how they perceived their students used social media, and how teachers might help each other to consider the use of digital literacy practices within the ELA classroom.

Of all five ELA teachers interviewed, I found that they shared some similarities with the students in how they engaged with social media. For example, the teachers also used social media to stay in touch with others, or maintain relationships. Yet, only one teacher, Meredith—who identified as a Millennial—identified broad and varying uses of

social media that had specific purposes for using specific types of social media, just as the students did. In fact, she noted her use

depends on the outlet. Facebook is mostly what I use to connect with people I don't see regularly; I put albums of pictures on there and 'check-in' to different places when I travel. It's like a broader overview of my life. Instagram is where I put up pictures of daily occurrences; though I don't post daily, it's more 'real time' than Facebook. Twitter (my personal one) is basically just random thoughts that I have or things that are happening around me.

Meredith's response reminded me of Street's (1984) thoughts on the complexity of literacy learning especially in terms of teachers theorizing their practice(s). She positions herself apart from the students, and this position is what appeared to drive her pedagogy; yet, she reported similar personal uses to students suggesting she recognized how the various platforms worked in ways that provided her a different purpose and identity within those spaces.

The only other similarity the teachers' responses reflected in terms of what the students' survey results showed included the three most popular social media platforms used by students: Twitter, Instagram, and Snapchat. However, the differences were apparent in the teachers' perceptions of the students' social media uses and how those uses might be useful within the ELA classroom.

In order to better understand some of these differences, I pulled data from specific teacher interview questions because of the connections found within my personal memos that tied back to the students' survey results regarding how social media use is/is not used within the ELA classroom to help students form digital, multimodal literate identities. To

begin, all teachers believed that their students were digital natives, and teachers defined this term as someone who has grown up with technology. This definition did not include the ways in which students were reading and writing within digital spaces.

When asked to describe the students in their ELA classroom, all teachers noted the ELA ability level by the classes they taught (e.g. Advanced Placement, Honors, or College Prep). For example, RealT said, “[his students] tend to be among the best, brightest, and most intellectually curious members of the senior class.” Teachers’ responses to my question made me wonder if students’ ELA abilities influence a teacher’s choice for including social media. While the immediate answer from teachers’ responses would suggest no, teachers consistently noted students’ ability levels tied to state standards throughout our discussion together.

As teachers described the technology available to them within their ELA classroom, all teachers reported their rooms included devices for every student, whether it was a Chromebook or an iPad. Teachers also commented on the shared resources of the building including a Mac computer lab and a PC computer lab. For example, Goody D stated, “[technology available to her classroom] includes a Chromebook for each student, Mac and PC labs, projector, Internet, Smart Board, 60-inch television, websites, student email, and students’ personal smart devices.” Out of all five teachers, this teacher was the only one to mention sources of technology brought in by students from out-of-school (e.g. “personal smart devices”), which supports the fact that there is a divide between home and school learning spaces and the resources deemed valuable to help with that learning—learning that stems from state ELA standards.

In regards to the ELA standards, however, teachers' discussion on how they used technology to complement standards did not really discuss standards other than using technology to produce and distribute writing, which is a section of the writing domain noted in the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE). Instead, technology mostly was used to inform students of upcoming assignments, to give students access to class materials, and to offer students a way to review for assessments. For example, Goody D said,

All daily assignments are posted on my website for student review and make up. I often incorporate my projector, Macbook, and the Internet with reading/writing/speaking & listening instruction. Students, probably two to three times weekly email/share assignments and writings with me to be graded and given feedback. Often, weekly, students engage in a group activity that is presented to the class including visual aids and incorporating at least one aspect of technology. Use of Internet sites such as Quizlet, Kahoot, and my website as study aids and supplements.

All five teachers' responses, such as Goody D's above, viewed technology use as a tool-only instead of as way to improve students' reading and writing practices. Ultimately, their responses aligned with how students' self-reported their own ELA digital literacy practices—as a tool-only often viewed as an aid with disseminating class information and reviewing for assessments.

Here, it is important to note why the teachers did not choose to bring in digital literacy practices into their ELA classrooms. Every single teacher noted the state standards, the state standardized tests, and OHS's focus on preparing students for those

tests through regular benchmark exams. Even for Meredith, digital literacy practices, such as those she self-described using on social media, were too risky in an ELA curriculum geared towards preparing students for mandated tests. Again, teachers' responses suggested that they viewed digital literacy practices as tools only versus actual literacy practices.

In fact, teachers were split in their decision to include social media in their ELA classroom: three teachers reported they did not use social media and two reported that they did use social media. Yet, Twitter was the only social media platform the teachers used with students, though no ELA state standards were noted with the ways in which teachers used this tool. In fact, even when discussing Twitter, the teachers reported very different experiences with the tool. For example, RealT noted, "Yes, Twitter is one of the ways in which I communicate information to my students." However, Reba said, "No. I tried using Twitter in the past, but someone copied my profile and started spamming a number of my students." These varying responses support teachers' concerns with using technology, such as social media, within the ELA classroom. Again, the data suggests that for these teachers, social media (e.g. Twitter) was only used to communicate information, such as class due dates and schedule changes. And all teachers reported a reluctance to use social media even including those teachers who said they used it to communicate with their students.

Perhaps the aforementioned focus of social media as a communicative space is why all of these teachers' perceived students used social media for 24/7 communication. Expanding on this point, Sally McDonald said, "I think they use it to remain in contact with friends 24/7, but I think they also use it to gain approval from others." This

perception was interesting to note because students did not report so much on the approval of others, but instead the interaction with intended audience(s) for a specific purpose. Thus, teachers' responses did not consider the nuances in students' uses of social media in ways that the students described. Furthermore, when teachers' were asked about students' understanding of their audience(s) through social media posts, three teachers reported that their students did not consider their audience, whereas only one teacher felt that students did, while one felt it depended on the student. For example, RealT mentioned, "The most savvy students are aware of their audience, but there are some students who have little to no audience awareness." Once again, the data shows how teachers consistently referred back to students' ability to navigate, read, and produce texts. This point is important because all students reported having a very keen audience awareness, which varied depending on the social media platform.

A lack of understanding, then, would suggest why teachers were once again split on their decision to include students' out-of-school literacy practices to the ELA classroom as three teachers reported they did not include and two teachers reported they did. Reba stated, "I can't say that there has been much of a connection, other than students being glad to use study aids like Quizlet or Kahoot on their phones. I would suppose that many like it for the same reason that I like being able to pay my bills on the phone. It streamlines my need to do a variety of things at one time." Here, once again, the data shows that tools-only, such as those used to inform or review for assessments, were the ways in which teachers' tried to connect to students' out-of-school digital literacy practices.

Not surprisingly, then, only one teacher reported that “sometimes” students’ digital literacy practices were discussed inside the ELA classroom. In fact, RealT said,

I don't know that we have explicit conversations about their use of technology in their lives, but we are always assigning things that require them to understand and use it. The only thing I've ever had to explicitly walk through is when my tenth graders had to use iMovie for a project and some of them had never used that before.

While Meredith responded, “To be honest, this [digital literacy practices such those within social media] would be a rare discussion point . . . It usually takes place as a reaction to something.” Taking these responses into consideration, the data made it clear that if digital literacy practices are not discussed, then one might assume that social media would not be brought into the ELA classroom.

In addition, discussions about social media were seen from a deficit perspective or only needed in order to help students be safe. For example, when asked about where students should learn about or discuss social media, Sally McDonald said, “Honestly? At home. However, I realize that many of my students do not get that kind of instruction [because they do not come from good homes], and I do think the schools can do their part to help students learn about safe social media practices.” And Goody D acknowledged teachers’ inadequacy with talking about social media when asked where students should learn: “At home and at school. Although, some teachers are not equipped with the character nor experience to ‘properly’ discuss social media with teenagers.” Here, it is important to note that none of the teachers’ responses included connections to the ways in

which youth are reading and writing; thus, social media was not viewed as a way to engage with ELA state standards.

This last point is perhaps one of the most thought-provoking ones considering all teachers reported that social media and technology would have an important role in students' futures educationally and professionally. Yet just as all teachers in this study noted social media as an omnipresent factor in students' lives, ironically, all noted that the only social media spaces that had potential to bridge connections to the ELA curriculum included Twitter and blogs. Reba honestly voiced a concern for his lack of understanding of social media as what hindered him from trying to include home and school spaces of learning through social media:

I don't know. I don't understand Snapchat. I am a novice at Twitter. I feel like I need my own understanding of these spaces and how they can be effective to people like me to improve before I am able to accurately assess how they might be better used for the betterment of my students, because right now I feel almost scared of them, and I feel wary about my own lack of knowledge. It is that which hinders my stepping deeper into this territory [bridging social media to the ELA classroom].

Thus, a lack of knowledge on how to use social media to complement ELA standards pervaded many of the teachers' hesitancy to consider the possibilities of using it within the classroom.

In addition, teachers were not sure how to best help other teachers engage with technology, such as social media, within the ELA classroom. In fact, RealT stated, "This [using social media] is tricky in today's high-stakes test, standards-based world of

education.” Reba, however, said, “If someone has a digital or multimodal practice that works, I think teachers would benefit from hearing about how to apply those techniques to their own classes . . . but I think it might be hard when preparing for high-stakes tests.” And Meredith alluded to helping teachers step outside of their comfort zones and the importance of professional development:

Helping people understand that social media isn't necessarily an ‘evil’ thing, which is what some in the older generations believe, I think. If we [younger teachers] were able to teach them and explain social media and it's various uses, because there are so many different uses, they may be more open to considering them as actual learning platforms. I think once they understand social media, then they can understand how students are creating those identities . . . Also, better professional development. Enough said. We all know how that goes.

Meredith’s response brought back the point mentioned earlier about some Millennials perhaps being more comfortable with digital literacy practices within social media. In addition, the data suggests the following:

- Teachers find it hard to use social media (or technology) due to standards-focused curricula and high-stakes testing.
- More opportunities are needed to share what works and what does not work among teachers when considering digital literacy practices tied to a standards-driven ELA classroom.
- Professional development matters and should include opportunities to learn from all teachers no matter if they are a novice or veteran in the field.

With these points in mind, it is no surprise that all teachers reported a need to focus on ELA state standards if digital literacy practices, such as those incorporated within social media, are to be used in the ELA classroom.

Interestingly enough, all teachers reported the same ELA standards when asked how they might tie social media to the classroom: rhetoric and writing (GSE's writing and language standards) and communication (GSE's speaking and listening standards). No teachers reported any reading standards within their discussion. While all teachers noted a needed balance when including technology within the ELA classroom, discussions once again centered on how to use a tool (e.g. social media) within the classroom and not *how* reading and writing might look differently within those digital spaces and *why*. For example, RealT noted, "Social media are useful resources for disseminating information, but I don't think I would ever have a lesson on 'How to Set-Up Your Social Media Account.'" And Sally McDonald reported, "I think sometimes the course content is lost—and certain skills (like the ability to write a well-reasoned paper, for example) are compromised . . . for the sake of doing 'shiny, pretty' activities with technology." In addition, the data suggested that teachers did not perceive or consider the multimodal interactions that might occur within digital spaces—multimodal interactions that were important and purposeful to the students in their classrooms.

Again, these findings were pulled after reviewing field notes and personal memos that were written after each individual interview. The data mentioned here were provided to help show how I continued to develop my categories through this phase, which later informed my analytic memos. Table 2 outlines my initial thoughts from interviewing the teachers in Phase II.

Table 2

Phase II initial thoughts from the researcher

Initial Code	Focused Code	Conceptual Category	Example
ELAiT (ELA teachers' perceptions of student identity)	Defining students and their abilities based on course taught	Connection (to teacher) Personal	"The most savvy students are aware of their audience, but there are some students who have little to no audience awareness."
ActST (Teachers' perceptions on students' activity on social media)	Defining how students use social media	Location (home vs. school) Personal	"I think they use it to remain in contact with friends 24/7, but I think they also use it to gain approval from others."
PD (Teacher's professional development)	Focus of teacher professional development opportunities with technology	Tool-only Teacher concern Standards-based Personal	"If someone has a digital or multimodal practice that works, I would think that other teachers would benefit from hearing about how to apply those techniques to their own classes."

Table 2 continued

CP (Classroom Purpose)	Digital literacy practices in ELA class	Writing	“Often, weekly students engage in a group activity that is presented to the class including visual aids and incorporating at least one aspect of technology. Use of internet sites such as Quizlet, Kahoot, and my website as study aids and supplements.”
		Tool-only	
		Varies on Platform	
		*Note: Only category with common language between student and teacher on defining digital literacy practices in ELA.	
SP (Social Media Purpose)	Digital literacy practices on social media	Connections (to audience)	“Academically, technology allows so many resources to be available in the blink of an eye. So, there are many opportunities to increase the depth of learning in a shorter period of time.”
		Personal	
		Varies on Platform	
		*Note: Simplified distinction when compared to the students’ responses	

Here, I found that the “social and cultural achievements” (Gee, 2009, p. 2) were limited to assessment, study resources, and simplified uses of social media to name a few. Thus, the findings in Table 2 suggest only one Discourse mattered in the big scheme of the ELA classroom—the academic Discourse so that students would be prepared for their state-mandated tests.

Phase III: Students' Perceptions on Overall Social Media Use

The purpose of Phase III was to pull from students' survey responses and consider their overall social media use to better understand how they may be forming their own digital, multimodal literate identities and if the ELA curricula was responsive to them. Focus group questions (detailed fully in Appendix J) for this phase centered around how they viewed literacy practices in home and school spaces, how teachers might help them develop literacy skills if they understood students' social media uses, how they created their social media profiles, how they perceived the uses of their top social media sites, and how they defined a digital native. In addition, students were asked about their recent social media interactions. Again, it was important for me to consider how students were considering their social media interactions within their own language to better understand their everyday Discourses (Gee, 2012, p. 154).

The analytic process outlined previously was followed to help ensure a constant comparative analysis between each phase. Table 3 highlights the initial thoughts from Phase III to show the development of codes and categories here.

Table 3

Phase III initial thoughts from the researcher

Initial Code	Focused Code	Conceptual Category	Example
DN (Digital Native)	Activities that suggest students are digital natives	Personal	Kiminem,
		Writing	MARCIE,
		Tool-only	Hotline, fresh 2, JJ, Momma Long Leg *Briar (depends on platform)

Table 3 continued

NdN (Not Digital Native)	Comments that suggest students do not view themselves as digital native based on ability	Personal Tool-only	G-Cur, Lily Smith, Kenneth Caleb, Cristobal Arroyo, Ling Ling, No Preference☺ , Froggystyle, Hunter, Tom Tom☺, Valentina, CG2, Buttercup Goldfilter, Nancy, C.A.T., Mrs. Situation
HelpELA (Help with ELA)	Receiving a benefit for ELA class from using social media	Writing Connection (to teachers) Tool-only	All students reported social media can help with ELA
CP (Classroom Purpose)	Digital literacy practices in ELA class	Writing Tool-only Varies on Platform	All students reported examples of DLP in ELA
SP (Social Media Purpose)	Digital literacy practices on social media	Connections (to audience) Personal Varies on Platform	All students reported DLP on social media, such as Figure 1

Findings for this phase focused on identifying with the digital native label, helpful social media interactions for ELA, and how students construct social media identities.

Discrepancies with Digital Natives

One of the most notable findings included a major contrast between the teachers identifying all students as digital natives. Yet, out of the 22 students, 15 stated that they did not identify as a digital native. Only six strongly identified as a digital native and one student felt that it depended on the social media platform on whether or not that identity would work for her. The notion that even though students were engaged on social media did not mean they were digital natives permeated throughout many of their responses.

For example, Mrs. Situation shared,

Well, a digital native is someone who is born with social media and uses it a lot, so I kinda was born with it, and I use it a LOT, but no, I'm not one because digital natives are really smart!"

Researcher: You are very smart.

Mrs. Situation: No, they're extra. Like, hella smart. I'm smart, but not that smart.

In addition, overall Hunter's group felt the same, as he shared,

I don't think I am one [a digital native]. I think a digital native is someone that from a young age, well, all of their communication is digital. Of course we still use face-to-face, but all of us are not digital natives. Just because we are familiar with the concept of writing someone a letter or writing thank you notes, and now people just send thank you texts or thank you calls, so I think it's really about people who are familiar with digital communication, and I'm not always that.

Yet, MARCIE and her group felt being a digital native was about the personalities and skills being developed as she shared,

I think a digital native can be synonymous with a Millennial because I think that it is someone who grew up with technology their whole lives and developed their personalities in social media and digital skills of reading and writing. So yeah, I would consider myself a digital native.

Whether the students identified as a digital native or not, these examples support the fact that teachers' perceptions of students' identities did not align with the majority of students, and these students created literate identities from what they identified as an intellectual ability or skill tied to the ELA classroom. In addition, these examples show how in the ELA classroom, the identity is typically "fixed," which contradicts the notion that identity is "fluid and dynamic" as discussed in Chapter One (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 418). In other words, the "interpellations" (Althusser, 1970) of literate identities in the classroom are teacher-directed instead of student-created unlike students' identities within their social media.

Helpful Social Media Interactions for ELA

Another key finding during Phase III included students sharing how social media interactions could possibly help with the learning going on within the ELA classroom. Hunter reported that he sees reminders on Twitter and remembers he has to do turn something in the next day, which was reported by his group as well. MARCIE and her group noted that teachers' posts could be entertaining and help make connections to what they have discussed in ELA. Yet, Mrs. Situation and her group had a different perspective. She pointedly stated, "Honestly, I don't even go look at any teacher's stuff [on social media], unless if it's like you [the researcher] because I really know you [from face-to-face interactions through teaching/coaching], so I want to learn from you." Thus,

Mrs. Situation's group noted the value of personal, face-to-face relationships with their teachers as being the key to looking at online resources.

In addition, each group felt that social media interactions could only amplify their interactions with their teachers in face-to-face settings; social media provided a way for teachers to see what was important to their students (including activities, family, and culture)—but only if the teachers wanted to make those connections for themselves.

Also, despite what teachers perceived might be concerns for them interacting with students online, students all strongly agreed that they could clearly and easily negotiate the fine line between a teacher's personal social media interactions and how they would react to their teacher in the classroom. In fact, Hunter said,

Each student is really an individual, and they might need a different type of attention than another student. I think looking into their social media can help the teacher know okay the student needs this and this other student needs this as opposed to teaching everyone with the same style at the same time.

With this comment in mind, all groups noted the importance of individually recognizing students to strengthen relationships—relationships that correlated directly into increased interest and confidence in ELA. This point lends itself to Mills' (2016) notion of how “communities of practices” (loc. 820) are built within digital spaces to build relationships and why sociocultural perspectives cannot be limited to face-to-face interactions.

Constructing Social Media Identities

Of course during this phase, all students continued to note examples of their social media identities that transferred into who they identified as in the ELA classroom, too.

For example, a tweet (Figure 1) could showcase a sense of humor shown across in and out-of-school spaces.

Figure 1. Example of student identity



Figure 1. Hunter shares a tweet with the group that he thinks highlights his sense of humor that he shares both in and out-of-the-classroom. He used Photoshop to mirror two images of himself—the left image is him candidly throwing up his hands to represent the “past,” carefree attitude he had concerning an assignment, and the right image is him glaring at his past self for doing the assignment when he had the opportunity to do so.

However, MARCIE and her group did not feel that they put any thought into creating their social media identity though they mentioned it was created purposefully to help others find them:

Well, my usernames are always just my name. There were no thoughts involved in that whatsoever. My profile information always usually has my high school because I think that helps people identify especially since my stuff is locked if they want to make sure I'm the right person. Just having a little bit of extra information helps them make sure they know it's me.

Furthermore, Mrs. Situation and her group discussed the need to show what they valued and care for within their profile, stating multiple examples of tragic events that informed how they identified and how they shared that identity. For example, Mrs. Situation shared

that in order to support her friend during a family death and show she was a part of that grieving community, she added specific information to her profiles. She stated,

I just put my school and graduation, so people know it's the real me. And I put [hashtag for the death of friend's brother]. It's for my friend's situation; her brother that passed away . . . just so she knows I always support her and what her family goes through no matter what. We are really close, and she stayed with me when her brother first died, so it's sort of a way to always remember him, too.

Here, individual personality and purpose(s) were identified through the discussions as ways for students to build an identity on social media. Thus, the text—Mrs. Situation's profile—was created in a specific kind of way using specific language to create a certain type of “recognition” for others. In fact, this example shows what Moje and Luke (2009) describe as identity as narrative, and how students, like Mrs. Situation, are sharing their stories through social media.

Phase IV: Students' Perceptions on Teachers

The purpose of Phase IV was to pull from the teacher's interview responses and build questions to ask during the student focus group meetings about what they thought regarding their teacher's perceptions on their use of social media. Questions for this phase (outlined in Appendix J) focused on how students' perceived their teachers' responses about student social media use, how students viewed safety concerns on social media, how students considered what they posted, how social media might impact students' futures, and how teachers might learn from their students to help them become better readers and writers. Again, students were asked about their recent social media interactions to continue to weave the sociocultural tradition throughout while considering

identity as narrative and positional (Moje & Luke, 2009). The initial thoughts from this phase are noted in Table 4.

Table 4

Phase IV initial thoughts from the researcher

Initial Code	Focused Code	Conceptual Category	Example
CP (Classroom Purpose)	Digital literacy practices in ELA class	Writing	Survey results reiterated again from all students.
		Tool-only	
		Varies on Platform	
		Standards-based	
SP (Social Media Purpose)	Digital literacy practices on social media	Connection (to audience)	All students reported examples of DLP on social media, such as Figure 2
		Personal	
		Varies on Platform	
		Standards-based	
TM (Teacher Modeled)	Needing teachers to model effective and responsible social media uses	Connection (future)	All students reported that teachers should model social media use.
		Varies on Platform	
		Location (home vs. school)	
		Personal	
F (Students' Futures)	How social media would impact students' futures	Teacher Concern	
		Connection (to future)	
		Connection (to teacher)	
		Personal	All students reported social media would be a part of the/their future.

Table 4 continued

SD (Student Directed)	Digital literacy practices in ELA class	Connection (to teachers)	MARCIE, Hunter, Mrs. Situation, Ling
	Digital literacy practices on social media	Varies on Platform	Ling, Tom Tom ☺, CG2, C.A.T.,
	Student as expert	Location (home vs. school)	Kenneth Caleb, Kiminem,
		Personal	Buttercup Goldfilter, Momma Long
		Teacher Concern	Leg, fresh 2

Overall, the key findings from this phase included the need for teachers to model responsible social media use (personally and professionally), where social media should be discussed/taught, and how ELA standards can be met through social media.

Modeling Responsible Social Media Use

As previously noted, students felt that their teacher's social media interactions could help them in the ELA classroom. However, after hearing that their teachers did not think they should engage with them on social media, all students reported that they felt their teachers should have personal and professional social media profiles, which would help them be more comfortable with interacting with them online.

In fact, the consensus was that teachers should be modeling how to effectively and responsibly use social media for their students because they believed that their futures would only continue to include more social interactions in these spaces. For example, Hunter shared the overall sentiments of his group as he said,

For a lot of kids who don't have stable parental role models, teachers are the next best thing. If teachers can set an example on keeping personal life and business in

two hemispheres, I think it can show students a thing or two about stability and organization [in the real world beyond school].

Though this point appears to be similar to teachers' responses in Phase II that social media should only be modeled or discussed because some students do not receive that information at home, again, all groups noted that teachers should be modeling effective social media use that extended beyond issues of safety for all students. This example reminded me that identity (and the corresponding literacy practices) are socially constructed in new ways and spaces of learning (Jenkins, 2006; Brandt & Clinton, 2002; Gee, 2009), and teachers did not seem to realize their students wished they would help them within those spaces.

Yet, it is important to note that students were not naïve to what they considered age/interest-driven reasons for teachers not using social media with them—they believed teachers just were not that interested in social media. For example, MARCIE noted,

They [teachers] should set examples for the other generations like us. They should model to show what being responsible should look like. However, I think they are not interested in social media like teenagers, so they just don't feel they need to keep up with it or use it with us.

Mrs. Situation also reported, "When it comes to social media, sometimes students know more than teachers, so maybe they just shut down like we do in ELA sometimes." Here, students suggested that teachers could learn from them, which was a similar joke across the groups as students voiced that their teachers were the "experts" and they were "just students."

This thought resonated with me throughout several of my memos in which I kept coming back to this one-way perceived notion of learning in the ELA classroom. I noted in Chapter One that Moje and Luke (2009) suggest, “learning, from a social and cultural perspective, involves people in participation, interaction, relationships, and contexts, all of which have implications for how people make sense of themselves and others, identify, and are identified” (p. 416). A certain type of reciprocity, then, is suggested when considering a sociocultural lens on learning. And students seemed to crave those opportunities to not just share social media with their students, but to also learn from their teachers as well.

Ultimately, all students felt they could learn something from their teacher’s social media use, and whether personally or professionally active within those spaces, students believed they could respect the fine line of their teachers’ lives in and out-of-the-classroom.

Where Social Media Should be Taught

The debate of where students should learn about social media was clearly seen in students’ varied responses and tied back to previous points about audience awareness of posts. For example, Mrs. Situation’s example (Figure 2) shows that by viewing a popular music group’s post, she could see how quickly information could spread online and thought about that whenever she posted something.

Figure 2. Example of students' audience awareness



Figure 2. When asked about where social media should be taught, Mrs. Situation shared the following tweet from a popular music group to illustrate how quickly something could be spread online to reach a lot of people. She tied this back to knowing who her audience is, and sometimes lessons are learned the hard way when young people are not taught how their digital interactions can be damaging especially when considering one's future.

Her group agreed with the immediacy and implications of posting online. Mrs. Situation stated,

I don't really follow that group [Pentatonix], but I connected to that tweet through the mannequin challenge and that's how I found it. So yeah, I'm always aware of the audience that will see what I post because I know people look at my account every day and what I put on social media really shows others who I am.

In addition, MARCIE and her group noted, "I don't think anyone sat me down and told me how to use social media. You just do it and you figure it out." However, the idea of the "future" resonated with her group as she also said, "Maybe teachers should be helping us know how to use social media more like professionals . . . then again, maybe

we need to be teaching teachers about social media!” Furthermore, Hunter summed up his group’s thoughts by stating,

This one [idea of where to teach social media] definitely varies. There are some people that have a clear handle on how to approach social media, and so teachers don't worry about them. However, there's still a large amount of people who block teachers, and even their own parents, because they enjoy the freedom to post obscene/insulting things without punishment even though they should know that those posts could be damaging down the road.

Once again, students were very attune to their futures and how social media could connect to their future selves.

Thus, just like the teachers, students were split on where one should learn about social media; however, they all clearly felt that there was a need to know how to engage within those spaces responsibility before it caused damage to one’s future reputation or opportunities.

ELA Standards and Social Media

As noted above in the survey results data breakdown, students identified classroom, digital literacy practices to include the six overall purposes: reading class articles, writing essays to submit online, using Google Classroom for information, creating PowerPoints, reviewing online (through Kahoot or Quizlet), and researching online. However, these purposes only loosely include connections to the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) on which they are assessed.

For example, each group mentioned a time in which they reviewed for a test using Quizlet—an online, flashcard study tool—to study general vocabulary focused on Latin

roots. Again, they noted that this was a way digital literacy practices were used within the ELA classroom. True, the review activity ties into the Georgia Department of Education's (2015) GSE's language domain: "ELAGSE9-10L4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grades 9–10 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies," and "ELAGSE9-10L5: Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings." However, when this activity is viewed through the lenses of multimodality (NCTE, 2005) and 21st century literacies (NCTE, 2013), there is a big discrepancy in viewing the activity as a literacy practice versus a "cool review tool." In other words, this example did not bring in the "intertextuality of communicative events" (NCTE, 2005) to help students better understand the words nor did it encourage an opportunity to "create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts" (NCTE, 2013) in order to help students understand words across different contexts.

Again, during Phase IV, students reiterated the key purposes noted above with how they understood digital literacy practices within the ELA classroom. These purposes also aligned with the results in Phase II (teacher interviews) that discussed tool-based uses of technology in the ELA classroom while not considering the actual literacy practices that could take place within digital spaces.

Phase V: Students' Perceptions on the ELA Classroom

The final phase focused on working with students, but was re-focused to pull in all of the previous phases and what students (and teachers) had shared up to this point based on the codes, categories, and analytic memos that were developed after each phase. During this final phase, questions (shown in detail in Appendix J) focused on how

students understood their multimodal literate identities, how their social media practices informed those identities, how ELA might connect to their social media practices, how students might use social media for positive change, and what they wished their teachers knew about them as a reader and writer both in and outside of the ELA classroom. And, once again, students were asked about their recent social media interactions to consider how they were working across language, society, and culture (Street, 1995, p.8).

The last round of focus group interviews focused on two key findings: (a) the need to see beyond immediate, close relationships, and (b) perhaps, through humor, students and teachers build relationships, or shared experiences, that help to build a common language through which they can discuss social media and literate identities within the ELA classroom. Table 5 includes the initial thoughts from Phase V.

Table 5

Phase V initial thoughts from the researcher

Initial Code	Focused Code	Conceptual Category	Example
CP (Classroom Purpose)	Digital literacy practices in ELA class	Writing	All students reported examples of DLP in ELA.
		Tool-only	
		Varies on Platform	
		Standards-based	
SP (Social Media Purpose)	Digital literacy practices on social media	Connection (to audience)	All students reported examples of DLP on social media.
		Personal	
		Varies on Platform	
		Standards-based	

Table 5 continued

CSoc (Change on Social Media)	Need to create change or bring awareness through social media	Connection (to audience)	All students reported examples of change that can be created by social media, such as Figure 3 and Sandy Hook PSA.
		Connection (to future)	
		Personal	
		Varies on Platform	
CELA (Change in ELA)	Using ELA skills to help create change or bring awareness	Connection (to teacher)	All students reported that ELA skills help with skills necessary to communicate and persuade for change, such as Appendix K and Sandy Hook PSA.
		Connection (to future)	
		Connection (to audience)	
		Standards-based	
HELA (Humor in ELA)	Using humor to create connections to ELA	Connection (to teacher)	All students shared examples of humor connection social media to ELA, such as Figures 4 and 5.
		Connection (to audience)	
		Standards-based	
HSoc (Humor in Social Media)	Using humor to create connections beyond ELA	Connection (to audience)	All students shared examples of humor used to create connections beyond ELA.
		Connection (to teacher)	
		Varies on Platform	
		Personal	

Creating Change through Social Media and ELA

One of the key points students kept reiterating was that they use various social media platforms for specific purposes; these purposes cater to their diverse audiences within the specific platform. While earlier it was noted that teachers reported students were only concerned with the amount of likes they received and being likable among those they engaged with on social media versus understanding the depth of their audience, students reported a slightly different response—one that focused on seeing social media as a way to engage with tough topics that affected them personally and others around the world as well. Thus, social media was a tool for disseminating multimodal content that could connect to a large audience. Nonetheless, because the transaction of literacy practices is more than just skills (Street, 1995, p. 15), students' discussion alluded to the idea that the texts they create shape their literacy practices, which in turn shapes them and how they identify and how others identify them, too.

For example, Mrs. Situation and her group focused on what they called hashtag (#) awareness. She said, "Basically it's like what I post tied to my friend's brother's death. It's a form of remembrance and respect that our [OHS] community understands." Students in her group brought up the example of #neVerforgeT. They knew I had used this hashtag within my own social media use to honor those lives lost on April 16, 2017 at Virginia Tech. Here, they used my own example to provide another example of hashtag awareness and essentially define it as a way in which one identifies with an event to show support and raise awareness. Another example from a global perspective that was shared included MARCIE's group focusing on issues such as childhood cancer (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Example of students' awareness for social change



Figure 3. MARCIE's group highlighted several issues that they brought awareness to on their social media platforms, including childhood cancer. In this example, Megara, from the popular Disney movie *Hercules*, was used as a character. Students felt their awareness received attention based on where they posted the information, how they posted it, and how many people engaged (or liked) their post.

Yet another example from Hunter's group included a post about good sportsmanship involving the Nebraska football team playing a man down to honor the life of their late punter. Students responded that sportsmanship went beyond sports and just came down to showing respect to other people. Hunter replied, "The world could use a little bit more of that," as his group considered the events that occurred in the U.S. with the recent presidential election.

Surprisingly, all three groups mentioned the recent Sandy Hook public service announcement (found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Er_HugcPmJ8) that they kept seeing posted everywhere on social media. All expressed shock at how the video

turned out and how sad it made them. Mrs. Situation voiced her group's thoughts by reflecting,

I think social media is a good way for people to see what's going on around us because sometimes we just get so busy with day to day life that we forget about others out there and what has happened to them. It [social media] helps us come back to reality that there is more than just HS. I think it helps people come together; it can bring communities together. It [the Sandy Hook PSA] just makes you sit back and think 'whoa, that could've been me.'

Furthermore, the groups discussed the need for context to be able to read into pieces such as the PSA—a skill they connected to the ELA classroom. For example, MARCIE and her group noted, "There were clues all along, just like in every story . . . we need to be aware of context to better understand what others are going through and to create real change."

While these examples all show how students understood how their interactions on social media could create change and possibly tie into the ELA classroom, Hunter's group brought up an interesting point—the notion that social media creates an opportunity for you to help persuade others to create change. For example, he stated, "It [social media] fosters critical thinking that allows you to not only participate in discussions about what's happening, but also to take charge of your own attempts to persuade people to help you create change." The skills listed—reading, writing, and thinking (to listen/speak)—all tie into various state standards for the ELA classroom and focus on the skills students and teachers felt adolescents would need to know for the future. And, these skills all consider the intricate connections between language, literacy,

and society that Street (1995) notes are imperative when viewing literacy from a sociocultural perspective.

Building Bridges

The final key point in Phase V builds from the common thread students noted throughout the interviews about building relationships, and how humor might do that, or help create shared experiences, between students and teachers. Then, perhaps those relationships are what provide the foundation for both teachers and students to build a common language for which they can discuss social media and literate identities within the ELA classroom. Whether for motivation (Figure 4) or grammatical reminders (Figure 5), students shared a variety of examples that showed how engaging with others, including teachers, on social media helped them make connections to their ELA class.

Figure 4. Example of student motivation



Figure 4. Several students noted a tweet I shared from the Virginia Tech Men's Basketball Coach. MARCIE and her group found this tweet hilarious but found the seriousness in what they thought it meant as it served to motivate them for a decision they had to make with their ELA class and an upcoming research essay.

Figure 5. Example of a popular grammar tweet

HIS NOTE: "Commas are important.
Wanna know why? To them it's 'you're
pretty stupid' but to me, it's 'you're
pretty, stupid'".
11/29/16, 9:28 AM

Figure 5. Another example of a tweet that tied social media and ELA class together through humor. Students referenced several tweets similar to the example shown here to highlight mistakes or show stylistic choices authors could make in their writing.

However, had it not been through those social engagements, students were not sure they would have picked up on the ELA content (or cared to do so).

For example, all students noted the importance of diverse voices and experiences to help them understand the world around them, again, supporting the relationships Street (1995) noted were important when considering sociocultural approaches to literacy—relationships that students were engaging with daily on social media but not within the ELA classroom. Some of these experiences were shared humorously as shown above, but then they worked down to issues of education, politics, and basic human rights. To support this point, MARCIE shared the following after a more light-hearted banter among her group about the U.S. presidential election:

I've always had the mentality that if I had to think if it [posting on social media or speaking up in-class] would be worth it or not. Like during the presidential debates, there were times I wanted to respond and ask people what they were doing?! [by posting ignorant comments on social media that continued into comments in ELA class] Then I realized I'm not going to sacrifice myself and what I believe in, which is basic human rights for EVERYONE, over a Twitter

fight or class conversation. Because I know I'm right. And I'll just let you look stupid on social media and in class. It's just not worth it to me. Because anyone who matters is going to look at that too and think what the heck?

Following this point, MARCIE shared to the group her recent rhetorical review (shown in Appendix K) that she said was inspired by our discussions. Thus, MARCIE and her peers used humor to build rapport before they were comfortable sharing personal beliefs on controversial topics that found their way from social media into the ELA classroom.

In addition, Mrs. Situation's and Hunter's groups both commented on the fact that they now noticed a lot more on social media and how it connects to the ELA classroom after the focus group discussions. However, they felt these bridges were made because they were not being graded on their responses, they felt comfortable in talking with me, and the discussions were fun. For example, Mrs. Situation and her group compared the writing process in ELA class to how they posted on social media. She noted,

Writing IS sort of like how we post pictures. OMG! Coach, it takes us an hour to post one picture. We have to figure out the best angle, filter, caption . . . it's slick like us getting feedback on our essays. We modify our posts to bring attention to them . . . I'm definitely more aware of what I do now because I think about why I do it. Just like I have to think about why I'm changing a word in an essay.

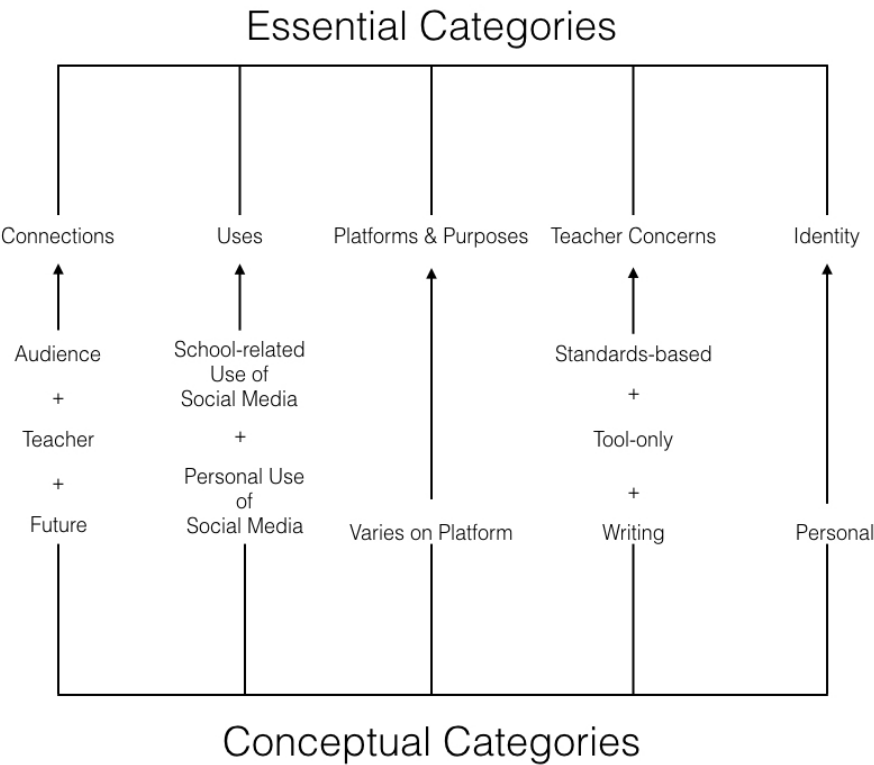
Thus, the data from teachers and students showed that though the language is different surrounding adolescents' literate identities and literacy practices in regards to social media and English language arts, there *are* bridges between the two.

Developing Theory

At this point in the overall data analysis, saturation was found as categories from each of the five phases were narrowed into the following essential categories after reviewing relationships between the conceptual categories and the analytic memos that continued to develop. Table 6 shares these overall essential categories including connections, locations, platforms and purposes, teacher concerns, and identity.

Table 6

Researcher’s breakdown of essential categories from overall conceptual categories development



Once the essential categories were established, I revisited the analytic memos to again question the categories and see what they showed both implicitly and explicitly to

help build my theory. Analytic memos allowed me to explore my ideas concerning my categories that helped lead to the discovery of theory, as Charmaz (2014) notes is an imperative part of the grounded theory process (p. 181). In addition, it is important to note that these definitions were constructed while considering the relationships between language, literacy, and society (Street, 1995) to stay connected to the sociocultural tradition and value my participants' voices and experiences.

Connections were defined as ways students used social media to connect to teachers, peers, or others in their local and extended communities/networks. Gee's (2012) notion of Discourses as ways of accepting identities within groups comes into play because these relationships were built upon the students' multimodal literate identities. In addition, connections were time-based as they provided ways for students to think about the skills they were using in terms of their futures (e.g. jobs). Connections relate to the other essential categories because they are dependent on location, are developed by platforms and the purposes for which students used those platforms, and inform students' identities within their social media uses. However, connections were seen as problematic when compared to teacher's perceptions on adolescents' social media use and the opportunity to engage with students within those potential learning and communicative spaces.

Uses were simply defined as differences in social media use for personal use or school-related practices. Here, uses connect to the other essential categories as students reported that their connections (to their audience, to their teachers, and to skills they believed they would need in their futures) were limited. In addition, the ways in which they defined social media use, including their platforms and purposes, were dramatically

different as well. For this reason, students' identities were markedly different between home and school learning spaces—in fact, school spaces were typically associated with a deficit identity regarding literacy skills. In other words, students' primary Discourses (Gee, 2012, p. 154) were ignored while the secondary Discourse, or academic Discourse, was the only one understood to be valuable. Teacher concerns with social media defined how and when social media was used within the ELA classroom.

Platforms and purposes were defined as the specific ways in which students were using digital literacy practices that tied to a specific ELA skill. The ways in which students discussed platforms and purposes supported that they made different connections to people through them as well as the ways in which they viewed literacy skills that would be needed in the future. Again, teacher concerns limited the types and ways in which students were able to use various social media platforms within the ELA classroom. These limitations further supported the differences in how platforms were used depending on location and the ways in which students identified through those uses. In other words, students' choice of platforms for specific communicative purposes shows how they were navigating Discourses (Gee, 2012) in very specific ways while considering how language is influenced by society (Street, 1995). In addition, the choices students made here support higher order thinking skills through the lens of studying literacy in a new way (New Literacy Studies [NLS]), studying literacy beyond text-only practices (New Literacies Studies), and studying how students are changing society by producing new media (New Media Literacy Studies [NMLS]).

Teacher concerns were defined as a wariness to use social media in the ELA classroom due to the focus on standards-based instruction or an uncertainty on how to use

social media (a “tool”) in the classroom. These concerns limited students’ connections, how they were able to use social media, where they were able to use it, and the ways students identified through it outside of the classroom. In many ways, teacher concerns alone dictated when and if social media was used in the ELA classroom. These concerns often limit the variety of Discourses (Gee, 2012) students are using in their every day lives. Furthermore, these concerns often limited social media to a tool, or skill, when literacy practices are much more than passing on a skill when viewed through a sociocultural lens (Street, 1995).

Finally, identity was defined as the way in which students viewed their literate identities in and out of the ELA classroom. Students built diverse, multimodal literate identities through social media; however, their in-school identities included a focus only on literacy ability, which typically was negative when focusing on the ELA classroom. Yet, Moje and Luke (2009) remind us that when viewing identity through a sociocultural lens, identity can mean multiple things to different people. Their point suggests that students’ multimodal literate identities are not valued because the dominant group (teachers, schools, departments of education) is only concerned with the identity performed in school. Interestingly enough, though, as noted above, teacher concerns seemed to act as a catalyst for the ways in which students viewed their literate identities within the ELA classroom versus the students self-identifying. Nonetheless, students’ out-of-school identities were built around connections and the ways in which they forged those connections through various social media platforms and the reasons for which they engaged within those spaces.

As I continued to link, sort, and conduct theoretical sampling between my data and the essential categories within my analytic memos, I began to note several analytic insights developing that provided the foundation for my theory, or new understanding. Charmaz (2014) notes, “knowledge and theories are situated and located in particular positions, perspectives, and experiences” (p. 231). Thus, I considered how those three areas were reflected within my definitions noted above. Ultimately, the positions, perspectives, and experiences that were shared in the data from the students and teachers directly shaped how my theory was emerging by considering the intricate connections between both students’ and teachers’ perceptions on social media and the English language arts classroom. The building blocks of my theory—or analytic insights—found within this study are as follows:

- There is a disconnect between the uses of digital literacy practices, which leads to students having very separate literate identities within different learning spaces.
- Teachers are not sure how social media could benefit students when used in the ELA classroom, which results in concerns with its use.
- Students’ digital, multimodal literacy practices within social media, such as through remix, are not just random; everything is purposeful including the platform students choose to use.
- Popular culture is often represented only in personal uses of digital literacy practices; however, these representations students engage with and remix shape their multimodal identities within social media.

- Social media provides a chance to forge connections with others (teacher to student, or student to student, or student to others), which can benefit in-class relationships and content skills.

These insights stemmed from the analysis of data, including student survey responses, individual ELA teacher interviews, and three focus group interviews with students and the subsequent categories that were developed from the data through analytic memos. In addition, the insights were developed after considering the relationships between the essential categories—connections, locations, platforms and purposes, teacher concerns, and identity.

Ultimately, analyzing these relationships was essential not only in developing these insights, but also to better understand the ways in which students built their digital, multimodal literate identities and how the English language arts classroom could or could not be a place for those identities to flourish. Thus, my research questions were supported by each of these statements and led me to the following understanding or theory:

The ELA classroom is about building a learning space that affords opportunities for students to learn beyond the classroom walls by valuing a variety of ways in which students use digital literacy practices, such as social media. These unique uses help students make connections to others, invite mediated, remixed texts, such as popular culture, into the classroom, and consider the platforms and purposes students choose to engage with to connect to the world around them. ELA teachers also must be willing to be comfortable being a learner within their classroom as they consider the ways in which students' social media use could further develop literacy skills needed on state-mandated tests. However, if one of the key components noted above is removed from the ELA

classroom, then the intersection of adolescents' social media use and the ELA classroom will not be viewed as collaborative, fluid learning spaces in which adolescents' multimodal literate identities are valued.

Summary

In this chapter, I have shown how my findings helped me construct the overall essential categories and analytic insights that led to the aforementioned theory, which is further discussed in Chapter Five. In Chapter Five, I will note the theory's potential implications for the English language arts classroom and future research.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE AND RESEARCH

Only those who will risk going too far can possibly find out how far one can go.
—T.S. Eliot (1931)

Eliot's (1931) quote has always inspired me to think about the possibilities that lie before us despite challenges that might come our way. For example, what if one envisioned an English language arts (ELA) classroom in the following way? Imagine a learning space where teachers and students' work together in order to create reciprocity. This reciprocity is not only between teachers and students, but created by a shared understanding that texts, such as those created through social media, have an influence on literacy practices, which in turn have an influence on students' multimodal literate identities. In this learning space, students consider how all members—even those outside of class—participate and interact in order to build relationships across varying contexts (Moje & Luke, 2009, p. 416). A learning space that helps students understand that literacy is more than just a set of skills (Street, 1995, p. 15).

This ELA classroom dissolves the gap between different uses of literacy practices, such as personal use of social media or school-related use, because all uses and learning spaces are equally valued as students navigate the Discourses (Gee, 2012) and their unique languages. This space allows teachers to learn from students, too, regarding social media and digital literacy practices; however, teachers and students acknowledge they do not have to be “connected and online” all day and night. It is a space that values students' social media interactions and understands that they are purposeful. It is a space that also

acknowledges popular culture can be just as valuable as canonical literature. And, in this ELA classroom, social media creates opportunities to further develop students' multimodal literate identities by connecting to the ELA content and skills aligned to state standards.

It is a learning space where both students and teachers work together to consider the theory of establishing adolescents' multimodal literate identities in social media and sustaining relationships to those literate identities and practices within the English language arts classroom to create a more meaningful pedagogy conducive to adolescent literacy learning. Imagine.

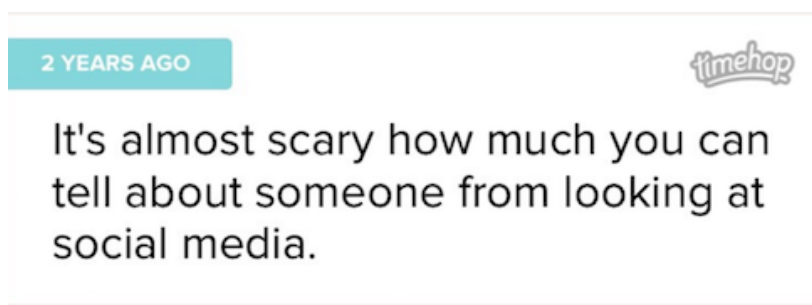
Taking this ELA classroom into consideration, the purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of adolescents' literacy practices within digital spaces, such as social media, that influence their multimodal literate identities. With this understanding, teachers might consider new ways to validate students' rich, digital, multimodal literate identities to create a more meaningful and engaging English language arts (ELA) pedagogy.

My research questions helped guide my data collection and analysis in ways that led to my theory development tied to how we understand adolescents' literacy practices and what we might consider a learning space. In fact, the results from this study are pushing my thinking on my own classroom and what it means to teach ELA to today's connected student. For this reason, the teachers involved in this study are just like me: trying to find ways for students to meet and exceed standards while also trying to find ways to forge connections with students so that they believe us when we say ELA class matters more than inside the halls of OHS. And, of course, I continue to be amazed by the

students involved in this study with all that they do both in and out-of-school to make themselves better and the world around them better, too.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part offers implications for ELA teachers tied to the five insights that developed in order to build my theory, and the second part focuses on future research dedicated to this timely and much-needed discussion.

Implications for Practice



The above timehop reminder, shared by MARCIE, was posted two years ago when she would have been 14 years old. In fact, I smile when I see this reminder because MARCIE and her peers have been questioning what social media and identity mean to them long before this dissertation even began. Her example—one that resonated resoundingly across all of the focus groups in our last meetings—really brought my work full circle as students reflected on their social media uses, identities, and their work in ELA. In fact, I would argue that though “traditionally, literacy is treated as a mental phenomenon” (Gee, 2012, p. 26), the students’ reflections—and the teachers’ perceptions on students’ social media use—support Gee’s (2012) notion that literacy is social because “in our daily lives, the beliefs we have and the claims we make have effects on other people” (p. 19). Thus, teachers’ beliefs on students’ social media use and students’

awareness of those beliefs help shape literacy practices and identities within the ELA classroom.

As noted in Chapter Four, my data analysis led me to develop five analytic insights and an emerging theory that ELA teachers might take into consideration when examining adolescents' digital, multimodal literate identities through spaces such as social media. The analytic insights that developed my theory are as follows:

- There is a disconnect between the uses of digital literacy practices, which leads to students having very separate literate identities within different learning spaces.
- Teachers are not sure how social media could benefit students when used in the ELA classroom, which results in concerns with its use.
- Students' digital, multimodal literacy practices within social media, such as through remix, are not just random; everything is purposeful including the platform students choose to use.
- Popular culture is often represented only in personal uses of digital literacy practices; however, these representations students engage with and remix shape their multimodal identities within social media.
- Social media provides a chance to forge connections with others (teacher to student, or student to student, or student to others), which can benefit in-class relationships and content skills.

The insights discussed here directly informed my research questions, and they suggest that social media does, in fact, create opportunities for high school students to form their own digital, multimodal literate identities. However, high school students do not perceive

the ELA classroom and curricula as a context responsive to their social media uses and identities. Thus, establishing adolescents' multimodal literate identities in social media and sustaining relationships to those literate identities and practices within the ELA classroom is needed to create a more meaningful pedagogy conducive to adolescent literacy learning.

Disconnects in Literacy Practices and Identities

The results of this study reminded me of one key point: students are reading and writing a lot both in and out-of-class. However, students and teachers often do not consider the ways students do so out-of-class as academic or valuable. These considerations directly influence students' literate identities and are especially important when we view them through a sociocultural lens that focuses on the importance of identity as narrative and as position (Moje & Luke, 2009). In fact, when literacy practices are valued differently between in and out-of-school learning spaces, students form different identities based on what they believe they can and cannot do, depending on the learning space.

I see this point relating to adolescents' literate identities due to the rhetorical decisions of students to make a conscious choice to consume, (re)produce, and disseminate information in very specific ways depending on the platform of choice. These conscious choices show an understanding of critically reading to compose (and often revise) that extends beyond simply liking or retweeting content that is not relevant.

And, students' profiles support the idea that social media allows them to create their own digital, multimodal literate identities. From profile pictures and usernames to location and hashtag activism, students created an identity in those spaces that did not

necessarily directly transfer into their ELA classes unless the teacher made an effort to engage with them through social media. Yet, the teachers' responses suggest that there was not an effort made to engage with students through social other than to share class information. The data supported this contradiction as students identified, clearly, differences in how social media was used personally versus in the ELA class.

In fact, while all students in this study reported they were active social media users, further discrepancies were noted concerning their engagement in ELA and whether or not they were “good or bad” in ELA. These perceptions can be problematic and suggest that some students enter the ELA classroom with a deficit identity before even engaging with the content and skills. This deficit identity supports Gee's (2012) on primary and secondary Discourses suggesting teachers are ignoring the many Discourses and language uses students are bringing with them into the classroom based on their literacy experiences. Teachers, then, need to consider how valuing students' digital, multimodal literate identities might create learning opportunities for individual students within their classrooms. However, as one might expect, teachers have a lot of concern when it comes to using social media in the classroom.

Teachers' Uncertainty with Social Media

In an attempt to counter the information overload that has proliferated digital spaces and classrooms, boyd (2017) questions if media literacy has backfired as students run to the Internet for quick-and-easy information that is often argued to be “fake” depending on the source of dissemination. She states, “Addressing so-called fake news . . . is going to require a cultural change about how we make sense of information, whom we trust, and how we understand our own role in grappling with information.” With this

point in mind, the challenge of teaching reading and writing in a post-truth era is a tough one that directly ties into teachers' uncertainty with how to include social media in the ELA classroom to benefit curriculum and instruction.

As the data from this study suggests, ELA curricula and instructional practices focused on incorporating informational sources through Internet research-based writing assignments. Yet, Watolla and Shah (2015) note, "since knowledge is available to many on the Internet, modern teaching and learning settings need to be redesigned." This point may seem like common sense, especially considering that the Pew Research Center (2015) reported 92% of teens went online daily. Yet, the teachers and students in this study did not report any changes in teaching and learning settings, curricular design, or instructional practices within the ELA classroom due to the influence of social media.

In addition, when conversations do not occur surrounding adolescents' digital literacy practices, then one might wonder how social media might ever find its place in the ELA curriculum. Here, I am reminded of Boling's (2008) study working with pre-service teachers to better understand how technology can be used to enhance literacy learning. She found "views of technology and literacy education frequently countered my own views. I saw technology as being an integral part of K-12 literacy learning, while many of my students [pre-service teachers] thought of technology as simply being used for "add-on" activities that are implemented only after children have already mastered foundational literacy skills" (p. 83). And while my study worked with in-service teachers almost 10 years later, I found the same limitations on how digital literacy practices and technology integration are viewed within the ELA classroom. Ultimately, conversations cannot occur when teachers lack the confidence, knowledge, or skills necessary to engage

with social media in ways that their students are engaging through reading and writing. After all, “more powerful than a room full of gadgets is a teacher who has a deep understanding of what the new forms of reading and writing entail” (Kist, 2013).

For this reason, educators might request and advocate for their professional learning to include conversations on how one might use social media within the ELA classroom to complement reading and writing instruction. After all, Wozney, Venkatesh, and Abrami’s (2006) study found that teachers’ confidence and overall attitudes toward technology played a big role in if they used technology in the classroom to help students learn. Their findings suggest “professional development must attend to the enhancement of teachers’ expectations of success. Teachers need to believe that they can successfully implement the innovation within their own context; if not, they may neither take the initial risk nor continue to persevere in implementing it” (p. 195). And this idea of “risk” is what often develops when educators consider social media within the classroom as a space for learning. And, as Meredith reminded me, professional development needs to include all voices to show a range of pedagogical strategies employed by both novices and veterans alike.

Furthermore, Siegel (2012) cautiously notes the possibilities that can occur when “assessment—mostly in the form of standardized testing—has been a technique for imposing a single standard of language, literacy, and modes or sign making, and in this way has contributed to the production of inequalities that are the legacy of schooling in the U.S.” (p. 675). Perhaps the dichotomy is not between home and school learning, but instead learning and assessment on state-mandated tests *and* within the real world. With this point in mind, educators, like myself, really have to think about *why* they would

bring in social media to the ELA classroom to complement the state standards. And, these thoughts can lead to teachers working with other colleagues—near or afar—to build learning networks of their own.

In fact, ELA teachers might begin to develop their own professional learning network (PLN) through a social media platform, such as Twitter. After all, Mills (2016) notes: “Social media plays a vital role in sustaining peer culture, gradually replacing the role of played by physical meeting sites, such as malls, homes, or the street. In formal settings, the most powerful examples of digital literacy programs were based on the learner—rather than teacher-interests” (loc. 1016). ELA teachers might also aim to incorporate one digital, multimodal literacy practice they have learned about through their professional development (in-school or through their own PLN) and prepare to share that with others in the building. Essentially, then, they are creating a culture of sharing what works—and what does not work—in order to benefit their students’ literacy learning and eliminate some concerns of using social media through their experiences.

Nothing is Random

Falter and Beach (2017) highlight several digital, multimodal, social ways in which students could engage with Shakespeare. The tools these authors share offer students’ choice in deciding how they convey the analysis of the text at hand; yet, they remind readers that the focus is not on the tool, but instead how the tool might complement what the task is asking students to do (or show they have learned). Their examples, then, show that student choice in platform is an important way in which adolescents are engaging in the digital sphere.

In fact, students in my study noted frequently that their digital, multimodal literacy practices within social media, such as through remix, were purposeful and dependent on the platform they used. Their choices supported Gee's (2012) belief that "words are consequential. They matter. Words and the world are married" (p. 25). However, this point contradicts the teachers' perceptions on youth practices in digital spaces reported here.

The reason this contradiction should be furthered explored by teachers is that student's conscious choices for including types of media and how they disseminate that media are purposeful and can be examined for style, tone, purpose, to name a few, just as canonical texts are done in the classroom, too. And despite the fact that the Georgia Department of Education (2015) only acknowledges a glossary of terms pulled from the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE) Language Standards focused on "grammar," the fine print notes: "Teachers are free to provide students with whatever tools and knowledge their professional judgment and experience identify as most helpful for meeting the goals set out in the Standards." This point is where I believe instructional practices and curriculum development should consider literacy practices developed through social media. After all, students' "'dance' with words, deeds, values, feelings, other people, objects, tools, technologies, places and times" (Gee, 2012, p. 152) through social media supports the same skills students need to meet and exceed state ELA standards. If students can recognize the "dances," then they are engaging with a variety of Discourses; however, the differences in Discourses come down to one key component: what is valued as a "text" based on location (home versus school).

Popular Culture Matters

Parry (2014) reminds readers that children find motivation, or enthusiasm, with their own lived experiences and culture when they are shared within the classroom because they are not excluded from the learning process occurring within the room. And the results from this study also support this notion, too, especially concerning the use of popular culture—or lack thereof—within the ELA classroom.

This study found that while students were consuming, (re)producing, and disseminating popular culture frequently, again, these forms of reading and writing were not valued as equal to traditional forms of print-based texts. In fact, though not one teacher mentioned incorporating popular culture in their ELA class, students shared specific references to popular culture (e.g. Figures 2 and 3) and discussed how they frequently engaged with popular culture.

As Moje and Luke (2009) remind readers:

. . . literacy-and-identity studies provide ample evidence for the need to include multiple text types and media in our literacy curricula, as texts and new media tools provide multiple opportunities in a classroom to engage generalized others, interpellate readers into particular kinds of relationships and positions . . . or narrate oneself into the world. (p. 433)

With this point in mind, teachers might consider how including more examples of popular culture in the ELA classroom might seek to include more student voices in the learning process. Beach and Dredger (2017) support this idea by writing about the power of incorporating memes in the classroom so that they can be rhetorically analyzed, which can tie into reading literary, reading informational, speaking and listening, writing, and

language ELA standards. And it is important to note that this suggestion does not mean that teachers have to be an “expert” in popular culture. They can invite students to bring in their own texts that they are reading/writing in digital spaces out-of-class. This opportunity would show students that all texts have value, and again invite more voices into the classroom that might help students find ways to connect to the curriculum in order to succeed on state-mandated tests.

Social Media Matters

As noted in Chapter Two, the New London Group (1996) stated, “Literacy educators and students must see themselves as active participants in social change, as learners and students who can be active designers—makers—of social futures” (p. 64). And through the findings of this study, teachers might be able to consider how they—along with their students—might become “makers of social futures.”

As the findings reported, digital, multimodal, literate identities are perhaps more pervasive within today’s culture in ways we would not expect them to be, such as through “borderland Discourses” (Gee, 2012, p. 185), that bring together diverse communities for a variety of reasons. For example, the student focus groups discussed ways in which they connected to teachers, other students or OHS community members, and others around the world through their social media interactions. Specifically, all student groups referenced the Sandy Hook public service announcement as a way to create change regarding a hotly debated, political topic among our country’s leaders right now.

In addition, teachers might consider how they can further examine the digital, multimodal identities that result from grief after a tragic loss within the school community to create a culturally sensitive pedagogy during these tough times. The

responses from students in this study suggest that identities influence relationships and communities of literate individuals (at school and beyond), as well as suggest a need for critically examining what *need* students have for multimodal identity constructions within these tragic situations. Ultimately, these identity constructions and relationships can benefit in-class relationships and ELA content skills.

In addition, a social media class or unit might be worth introducing into schools' curricula. Spector (2015) states,

Perhaps the most important things a Social Media class would do is be relevant—it would not only teach students a variety of skills to benefit them in life and career, but it would capture their attention and engage them because it would be rooted in platforms that already do that.

As students reminded me, “There are some teachers that teach; they know how to teach; others teach, but they don’t know *how*, Coach. There’s a big difference.” As educators, we need to be willing to expand our notion of what counts as literacy and pedagogy to meet the unique needs of our students—and this expansion is for all educators whether they are a Millennial or not. Social media matters, and we need to be open to the possibilities of its use within our classrooms and while helping students navigate the nuances it creates in today’s reading and writing practices.

Implications for Future Research

This study suggests that adolescents’ digital, multimodal identities deserve more than they typically receive credit for within ELA classrooms. In other words, their digital literacy practices involve more than just “cool” technology or 24/7 communications, as teachers’ perceived within this study. In fact, I believe they offer sophisticated ways in

which students negotiate relationships between language, literacy, and society (Street, 1995), which ties directly into my theory of viewing the intersections of adolescents' social media use and the ELA classroom as collaborative, fluid learning spaces in order to continue to establish and develop multimodal literate identities so that educators better understand the ways in which adolescents' engage in social media dependent on the context and platform to sustain relationships.

With this point in mind, the purpose of my study was not to examine only one social media platform. However, I believe the evidence presented within it, especially concerning how students shared specific purposes within specific platforms, has direct implications about how each individual social media platform influences and complements the standards-based ELA curriculum. In other words, the differences between social media platforms could be examined to better understand the changing demands of reading and writing through those platforms.

While there were not any ethical issues with my research study, I do think this study pushes the ethical line of using social media within schools. In other words, there are educators, as shown by this study, and parents who think social media should only be used for personal reasons—if at all—and that it does not have an educational place in schools. In addition, this study might encourage ethical questions concerning (a) how teachers separate from students between personal and professional spaces and (b) how teachers' relationships on social media are viewed when using social media as an educational tool in order to engage students with the ELA curriculum. Thus, this study attempts to further the discourse in the area of social media within schools and its use with teachers and students. These discussions can support the need to include more

awareness of how ubiquitous social media is becoming as it shapes our students' multimodal, literate identities.

In addition, Markham (2013) points out that inquiry today "is not only about simplifying and narrowing, but generating layers upon layers of information units that influence our interpretations" (p. 74). Generating layers of interpretation is especially done easily and quickly in the digital sphere when one considers how some of these outcomes seem new, such as through remixing; however, "elements are being combined [that] are borrowed from other sources" (Markham, 2013, p. 75). This point is needed when we begin to consider how the digital sphere can be what Arora (2012) calls a "cyber-playground" for researchers in which we take a lot from the physical world that we can "learn, adopt, and transfer" into the online sphere (p. 612). Thus, we must continue to analyze how we conduct qualitative research within digital spaces and how we manage data that is always "on," such as data through social media.

Of course, I would be remiss if I did not consider how research might continue to influence ELA teachers' professional development, as alluded to in the section on "Implications for Teachers." While this study did not include questions focused on teachers' experiences with professional development, the data suggests that teachers want and need help with ways to include digital literacy practices, such as those used on social media, into their curricula and instructional practices in ways that connect with students and help students meet and exceed state standards. As the educators in this study can attest, incorporating digital literacy practices, such as those found on social media, is not always easy. Even the students represented in this study who enter their ELA classrooms expect pieces of literature and writing to be limited to the pages of a book. Tensions also

rise with state testing mandates that limit students to choices on a scantron. And having teachers open to the new possibilities of learning is one of the key components outlined above that helps build currency in the ELA classroom with students.

For these reasons, as we continue to investigate the influences social media has on the literacy classroom, we can help educators find ways to make literacy relevant and meaningful. Considering social media use and adolescents' multimodal literate identities does not mean that teachers forget traditions of the ELA classroom, but instead it means really thinking about how they can help shape the next generation of thinkers, readers, and writers. Thus, as a field, we might consider the following in our work together:

- The ways in which teachers receive professional development (e.g. sitting down face-to-face or engaging through social media).
- The ways in which effective techniques for digital, multimodal literacy practices are shared and how/if they are implemented.
- The ways in which teachers receive continued support for incorporating digital, multimodal literacy practices within their classrooms to build teacher confidence and knowledge.
- The ways in which teachers and students can build rapport and reciprocity to create professional development that is not “scheduled” to encourage student learning.
- The ways in which students might lead teachers' professional development to share their digital multimodal literacy practices to inspire a pedagogical shift to occur within the ELA classroom.

It is important to note that this last consideration really drives home what this study has encouraged me to continue to explore: the intersections that occur when students' multimodal, digitally literate identities are examined with teachers *and* students (and not just one or the other). Just as students learn from teachers, teachers also can continue to learn from their students. In fact, "Millennials are on track to be the most educated generation in history" (Kent, 2015). Furthermore, 73% of American adults consider themselves lifelong learners (Horrigan, 2016). Thus, one can only imagine what the new generations will know and can share with teachers, too, as technologies and literacies continue to evolve. These intersections, I believe, hold the key to forging powerful connections for our students between what they do across all of their learning spaces. After all, whether etched in ink forever on a page or time-stamped in the digital sphere through multimodal ways, we all have our ways in which we share our stories, knowledge, values, and beliefs every day. Literacy is a social practice (Street, 1984; Gee, 2012), and it helps us understand multimodal literate identities as narrative (or through language) and positional (or how we "do" literacy in different spaces [Moje & Luke, 2009]).

Recently, my students reminded me, "there's always room to learn." Those possible learning spaces, like the classroom imagined at the start of the chapter, are the pages our students are reading and writing every day. And these spaces and pages will continue to evolve in ways that neither students nor teachers can imagine. Yet, perhaps this reflection is the exciting part of where I think this study leaves us—considering the opportunity for students *and* teachers to work together to create powerful learning spaces that include all the stories around us—including the stories from our students. Their

stories matter, and their stories provide the narrative for a past, present, and future sense of self that deserve to be recognized and examined in order to positively affect the English language arts classroom.

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Appendix A

School Authorization to Conduct Research

Date:

June 6, 2016

Dear Institutional Review Board:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that I give Crystal Beach permission to conduct the research titled Literacy and Identity: Understanding Adolescents' Social Media and Remixing Possibilities for Teachers' Professional Development at Ocean High School. We have agreed to the following study procedures: student and teacher recruitment via email; students' survey; student and teacher focus group interviews (as needed).

This also serves as assurance that this school complies with requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment (PPRA) (see back for specific requirements) and will ensure that these requirements are followed in the conduct of this research.

Sincerely,

[XXX]

- Curriculum and Instruction Administrator

The right of a parent of a student to inspect, upon the request of the parent, a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed by a school to a student. Any applicable procedures for granting a request by a parent for reasonable access to such survey within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.

- Arrangements to protect student privacy that are provided by the agency in the event of the administration or distribution of a survey to a student containing one or more of the following items (including the right of a parent of a student to inspect, upon the request of the parent, any survey containing one or more of such items): Political affiliations or beliefs of the student or the student's parent. Mental or psychological problems of the student or the student's family. Sex behavior or attitudes. Illegal, anti-social, self-incriminating, or demeaning behavior. Critical appraisals of other individuals with whom respondents have close family relationships. Legally recognized privileged or analogous relationships, such as those of lawyers, physicians, and ministers. Religious practices, affiliations, or beliefs of the student or the student's parent. Income (other than that required by law to determine eligibility for participation in a program or for receiving financial assistance under such program).
- The right of a parent of a student to inspect, upon the request of the parent, any instructional material used as part of the educational curriculum for the student. Any applicable procedures for granting a request by a parent for reasonable access to instructional material received.
- The administration of physical examinations or screenings that the school or agency may administer to a student.
- The collection, disclosure, or use of personal information collected from students for the purpose of marketing or for selling that information (or otherwise providing that information to others for that purpose), including arrangements to protect student privacy that are provided by the agency in the event of such collection, disclosure, or use.
- The right of a parent of a student to inspect, upon the request of the parent, any instrument used in the collection of personal information before the instrument is administered or distributed to a student. Any applicable procedures for granting a request by a parent for reasonable access to such instrument within a reasonable period of time after the request is received.

Appendix B

Recruitment/Advertisement for Parents

Dear Potential Parent of Student Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Donna Alvermann in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at The University of Georgia. I am inviting your child to participate in a research study entitled “Literacy and Identity: Understanding Adolescents’ Social Media and Remixing Possibilities for Teachers’ Professional Development.” The purpose of this study is to better understand how high school students use social media to create multimodal literate identities that may or may not be validated within the English language arts classroom. Your child is eligible to participate in this study if he/she is a high school student who uses social media regularly.

Your child’s participation will involve one survey on your child’s social media uses and four focus group interviews with other students. These interviews should only take about one to one and half hours each and will be conducted either face-to-face or through Google Hangout depending on the scheduling needs of the members of the focus group.

The findings from this project may provide information on how professional development can better support teachers as they consider their students’ multimodal, digitally literate identities and practices within the English language arts classroom. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you would like to allow your child to participate in this study, or if you have any questions, please call me at (404) 710-1767 or send an email to cbeach17@uga.edu. Thank you for your consideration!

If you are not interested in allowing your child to participate in this study, please simply email me back and let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Crystal L. Beach

Appendix C

Recruitment/Advertisement for Students

Dear Potential Student Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Donna Alvermann in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at The University of Georgia. I would like to invite you to participate in a research study entitled “Literacy and Identity: Understanding Adolescents’ Social Media and Remixing Possibilities for Teachers’ Professional Development.” The purpose of this study is to better understand how high school students use social media to create multimodal literate identities that may or may not be validated within the English language arts classroom. You are eligible to be in this study if you are a high school student who uses social media regularly.

Your participation will involve one survey on your social media uses and four focus group interviews with other students. These interviews should only take about one to one and half hours each and will be conducted either face-to-face or through Google Hangout depending on the scheduling needs of the members of the focus group.

The findings from this project may provide information on how professional development can better support teachers as they consider their students’ multimodal, digitally literate identities and practices within the English language arts classroom. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you would like to participate in this study, or if you have any questions, please send an email to cbeach17@uga.edu. Thank you for your consideration!

If you are not interested in participating in this study, please simply email me back and let me know.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Crystal L. Beach

Appendix D

Recruitment/Advertisement for Teachers

Dear Potential Teacher Participant:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Donna Alvermann in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled “Literacy and Identity: Understanding Adolescents’ Social Media and Remixing Possibilities for Teachers’ Professional Development.” The purpose of this study is to better understand how high school students use social media to create multimodal literate identities that may or may not be validated within the English language arts classroom. You are eligible to be in this study because you are a high school English language arts teacher.

Your participation will involve one interview and will only take about one hour. The findings from this project may provide information on how professional development can better support teachers as they consider their students’ multimodal, digitally literate identities and practices within the English language arts classroom. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you would like to participate in this study, or if you have any questions before you decide to participate, please call me at (404) 710-1767 or send an email to cbeach17@uga.edu.

If you are not interested in participating in this study, please simply email me back and let me know.

Thank you for your consideration! I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Crystal L. Beach

Appendix E

Parental Permission and Student Assent Form

Dear _____ and _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Donna Alvermann in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at The University of Georgia. I would like to invite you/your child to participate in a research study entitled “Literacy and Identity: Understanding Adolescents’ Social Media and Remixing Possibilities for Teachers’ Professional Development.” The purpose of this study is to better understand how high school students use social media to create multimodal literate identities that may or may not be validated within their English language arts classroom.

You/your child’s participation will involve one survey on your/your child’s social media uses and four focus group interviews with other students. These interviews should only take about one to one and half hours each and will be audio recorded. Interviews will take place face-to-face or via Google Hangout.

You/your child’s involvement in the study is voluntary, and you/your child may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are/your child is otherwise entitled. You/your child’s grade or class standing will not be affected by your/your child’s decision to participate or not. If you/your child decides to withdraw, or if you decide to withdraw your child from the study, the information collected up to the point of withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information that can be identified as yours/your child’s.

For the purposes of this study, I will be using pseudonyms for all of my transcription information, including interviewees’ names and names of schools. While I will emphasize to all participants that comments made during the focus group session should be kept confidential, it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future. In addition, the survey involves the transmission of data over the Internet. Every reasonable effort has been taken to ensure the effective use of available technology; however, confidentiality during online communication cannot be guaranteed.

In addition, all audio files, transcriptions, field notes, personal memos, artifacts of social media use, or follow-up questions will be saved without any traceable identifiers as well. The audio files will be deleted as soon as my analysis is complete. Identifiable information will not be shared outside the research team unless otherwise required by law.

The results of the research study may be published, but your/your child's name or any identifying information will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only.

The findings from this project may provide information on how professional development can better support teachers as they consider their students' multimodal, digitally literate identities and practices within the English language arts classroom. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (404) 710-1767 or send an email to cbeach17@uga.edu. Questions or concerns regarding your/your child's rights as a research participant in this study should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

To allow your child to voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you and your child must sign on the lines below. Your signatures below indicate that you and your child have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Please sign both copies, keep one, and return one to the researcher. Thank you for your consideration! Again, please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Crystal L. Beach

Name of Student Participant

Signature

Date

Name of Parent/Guardian

Signature

Date

Name of Researcher

Signature

Date

Appendix F

Teacher Consent Letter

Dear _____:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Donna Alvermann in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at The University of Georgia. I invite you to participate in a research study entitled “Literacy and Identity: Understanding Adolescents’ Social Media and Remixing Possibilities for Teachers’ Professional Development.” The purpose of this study is to better understand how high school students use social media to create multimodal literate identities that may or may not be validated within the English language arts classroom.

Your participation will involve one individual interview and will only take about one hour. Your involvement in the study is voluntary, and you may choose not to participate or to stop at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to withdraw from the study, the information the information collected up to the point of withdrawal will be kept as part of the study and may continue to be analyzed, unless you make a written request to remove, return, or destroy the information.

For the purposes of this study, I will be using pseudonyms for all of my transcription information, including interviewees’ names and names of schools, as well as deleting the audio files as soon as my analysis is complete. In addition, all audio files, transcriptions, field notes, personal memos, lesson plans you choose to share, or follow-up questions will be saved without any traceable identifiers as well.

The results of the research study may be published, but your name or any identifying information will not be used. In fact, the published results will be presented in summary form only.

The findings from this project may provide information on how professional development can better support teachers as they consider their students’ multimodal, digitally literate identities and practices within the English language arts classroom. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

If you have any questions about this research project, please feel free to call me at (404) 710-1767 or send an email to cbeach17@uga.edu. Questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant in this study should be directed to The Chairperson, University of Georgia Institutional Review Board; telephone (706) 542-3199; email address irb@uga.edu.

To voluntarily agree to take part in this study, you must sign on the line below. Your signature below indicates that you have read or had read to you this entire consent form, and have had all of your questions answered.

Please sign both copies, keep one and return one to the researcher. Thank you for your consideration! Again, please keep this letter for your records.

Sincerely,

Crystal L. Beach

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Signature	Date
_____	_____	_____
Name of Researcher	Signature	Date

Appendix G

Data Sources, Collection Methods, and Research Question Addressed

Guiding Research Questions 1. In what ways, if at all, does social media use create opportunities for high school students to form their own digital, multimodal literate identities? 2. In what ways do high school students perceive the English language arts classroom and curricula as a context responsive to these uses and identities?				
	Data Source	Collection Methods	Specific Artifacts	Research Question Addressed
Phase I: Overall Context from Student Surveys	Getting to Know You Survey (Note: Survey allowed me to narrow in on 22 participants divided into 3 total student focus groups w/ 7-8 students per group.)	1 per student (22 total)	- demographic information - social media uses	RQ1 RQ2
Phase II: Teachers' Perceptions	Interview (perceptions on social media use in the ELA classroom)	5 teachers; one session each	- field notes - interview transcripts - personal memos - GSE - lesson ideas	RQ1

Phase III: Students' Perceptions on Social Media	Focus group interview #1 (social media use)	7-8 students; one session per 3 groups of students	- field notes - interview transcript - personal memos - some artifacts of social media use	RQ1 RQ2
Phase IV: Students' Perceptions on Teachers	Focus group interview #2 (teachers' perceptions)	7-8 students; one session per 3 groups of students	- field notes - interview transcript - personal memos - some artifacts of social media use	RQ1 RQ2
Phase V: Students' Perceptions on the ELA Classroom	Focus group interview #3 (ELA classroom)	7-8 students; one session per 3 groups of students	- field notes - interview transcript - personal memos - some artifacts of social media use	RQ1 RQ2
<i>Note.</i> Data analysis took place after each phase to study emerging data using the outline Charmaz (2014) provides (p. 169).				

Appendix H

Student Demographic Information in Their Own Words

Name	Description
1. G-Cur	A 17 years old, white female who is “very busy, athletic, determined, prideful, confident, focused, and different.” She is a good student in ELA class, but doesn’t like reading or writing essays; she feels that her ELA class is boring. In her ELA class, she checks her grades, types essays, and submits them electronically. She wishes her ELA teacher knew that she wants to get better at writing, but she doesn’t know how. Regarding social media, G-Cur said, “I snapchat around 15 people daily to keep our streak up; on instagram: I maybe go on it 2 or 3 times a day; on twitter: I maybe go on it 3 or 4 times a day; and on facebook: I go on it every other day maybe.” From her profile and posts on social media, people would know a good bit about her.
2. Lily Smith	A 17 years old, Asian/white female who is “helpful, kind, athletic, religious, and loving.” She is an obedient student in ELA class with a solid understand of language arts; she loves looking at something and knowing she can always improve (especially writing). In her ELA class, she uses Google Classroom and researches online. She wishes her ELA teacher knew how much she appreciates her. Regarding social media, Lily Smith said, “I use Twitter, Instagram, and

	snapchat. I use them to keep up with my friends, and express my life and update them. I also use it for myself. It boosts my confidence.” From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she is religious, loves her friends and would do anything for them, and loves soccer.
3. Kenneth Caleb	A 17 years old, African American male who is “an enjoyer of life.” He is not motivated in ELA class because he doesn’t get to read things he enjoys or is interested in reading. In his ELA class, he reads poems and stories electronically. He wishes his ELA teacher knew how much he loves to read. Regarding social media, Kenneth Caleb said, “I use Snapchat, Twitter, and Instagram. I use them to keep in touch and for a few laughs.” From his profile and posts on social media, people would know he is random and enjoys life.
4. Cristobal Arroyo	A 16 years old, Hispanic male who is “hardworking and persevering.” He knows that if he doesn’t work hard in ELA class and do his work, he will fail; ELA class is his least strongest class. In his ELA class, he uses Google Classroom. He wishes his ELA teacher knew that he likes to work hard. Regarding social media, Cristobal Arroyo said, “I use Twitter to follow comedy and friends, snapchat to communicate with friends and see what's going on in that moment.” From his profile and posts on social media, people would know he’s just an “average guy,” and he likes to “roast” others but not to hurt them only in fun.

5. Kiminem	A 16 years old, white/Korean male who is “funny, creative, and nice.” He is a bad student and really bad at reading and writing in ELA class; he just doesn’t like it. In his ELA class, he does not use any technology. He wishes his ELA teacher knew that he takes just about any challenge given to him. Regarding social media, Kiminem said, “I’m on twitter for a couple hours a day, and I use snapchat all day.” From his profile and posts on social media, people would know he is funny and relatable.
6. Ling Ling	A 16 years old, Asian female who is “a lazy perfectionist with a sense of humor as dark as [her] soul.” She actively participates in ELA class, but she is not good at it—instead only good at guessing; she thinks it’s interesting how ELA class can overlap with other subjects. In ELA class, she can’t think of any time she uses technology. She wishes her ELA teacher knew about “her love of consuming cats (jk).” Regarding social media, Ling Ling said, “I use Snapchat: talk to my friends and send them pictures of my double chin; Instagram: post pictures of things I do; and Twitter: retweet relatable tweets.” From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she’s sarcastic and laid back.
7. No Preference 😊	A 16 years old, Asian female who is “a perfectionist and likes to spend time with close friends.” She typically does well in ELA class though it’s not her favorite because writing is not her strength though she knows it will help her in the future. In ELA class, she uses the

	Internet to read current event articles, occasionally watch videos, and for assignment purposes (such as TurnItIn and Google Classroom. She wishes her ELA teacher knew that she “used to LOVE reading and did it a lot (ask anyone at the elementary/academy),” but now rarely reads anything outside of required schoolbooks. Also, that she’s a hard worker regardless of whether or not she likes the subject. Regarding social media, No Preference☺ said, “I use Instagram- Very Frequently (it's my favorite!); Twitter- I go on to read other people's tweets and to be updated on current events but I rarely post. Snapchat- I use this very often. Gotta keep up the streaks [insert happy emoji] Facebook- I use this mainly for my church communication since this is what they all use. I don't normally post much, just read other's statuses or watch videos.” From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she loves to travel, go to church, and that her friends and family are important to her.
8. MARCIE	A 16 years old, white female who is “dependable, organized, trustworthy, and friendly.” She is a strong writer and avid reader when interested in the book in ELA class, but terrible with reading comprehension questions; thus, as long as the novels are interesting and there isn’t a lot of poetry involved, she typically enjoys class. In ELA class, she views digital book summaries/advertisements, constructs various video projects, produces group writings through Google Docs, and creates plenty of PowerPoint presentations. She

	wishes her ELA teacher knew that she's "not as verbal/outgoing as you think; don't call on [her] unless [she] raise[s] [her] hand." Regarding social media, MARCIE said, "I use Snapchat: I probably send hundreds of snapchats per day, but there's not a specific purpose behind any of them. I just really like the silly filters and playing with the colored texts and stickers. Facebook: This is used simply for my family and their old people friends to keep up with what's going on in my life. Twitter: I scroll through it all the time, but I don't post much. VSCO: I don't use this all the time, but when I do it's for pictures that I love but weren't quite good enough to deserve a spot on my Instagram feed. Instagram: I LOVE pictures. I use this app the most often to keep up with what my friends are doing and post pictures of myself and my friends that I really like." From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she's happy.
9. Froggystyle	A 17 years old, African American male who is "very fun and selfless to others." He is a great writer in ELA class, but doesn't enjoy reading so much; in fact, ELA class has been one of his most difficult classes. In ELA class, he uses Wordpress and Microsoft Word. He wishes his ELA teacher knew that he hates to read. Regarding social media, Froggystyle uses Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram. From his profile and posts on social media, people would know he's a good person.
10. Hunter	A 17 years old, white/African American male who is "funny, kind of

	shy, and hardworking.” He is pretty good at analysis and decent at conventions and mechanics; he enjoys ELA class a lot. In ELA class, he uses Google Docs for a variety of assignments. He wishes his ELA teacher knew that he hates timed essays. Regarding social media, he said, “I use Twitter—every dang day. I peruse Insta.” From his profile and posts on social media, people would know he’s funny and ridiculous.
11. Tom Tom ☺	A 17 years old, Indian male who is “a hard worker who can still have fun.” He does not excel in ELA, but he still does somewhat well in it; in fact, although he understands the importance of ELA, he is not a huge fan of it because it’s not something he really enjoys. In ELA class, he looks at political cartoons online in order to analyze them; he also analyzes college essays and used SparkNotes to help understand difficult readings. He wishes his ELA teacher knew “that sometimes I know the answer to a question he asks, but I do not have enough confidence to answer it aloud.” Regarding social media, Tom Tom☺ said, “For the most part, I just use twitter. It started out as a tool for basketball, but now, I use it to communicate with my friends, read about college admissions, and keep up with the news.” From his profile and posts on social media, people would think he might not be outgoing, but that’s not true.
12. Hotline	A 17 years old, white female who is “nice, funny, responsible, and caring.” She is pretty good at ELA and likes it but thinks it’s boring

	sometimes. In ELA class, she writes online. She doesn't wish her teacher knew anything about her. Regarding social media, Hotline said, "I use twitter: keep up to date with people; instagram: see what people look like; snap chat: to talk to people." From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she's "adventurous, artsy, friendly, and boyfriend."
13. Nancy	A 17 years old, white female who is "leadership oriented, technologically savvy, passionate, and focused." She is motivated and passionate about ELA class because she loves it; it's her favorite subject. In ELA class, she reviews articles, writes essays, and reviews quizlets online. She wishes her ELA teacher knew that she is "very passionate about reading plays and wishes [they] were able to read more plays/scripts." Regarding social media, Nancy said, "I use Twitter: funny comments about my life, sports updates, humor and news blurbs; Instagram: cool pictures, my favorite pictures that I have on my phone go on here, longer captions with feelings; Facebook: to keep my family updated on my activities; and VSCO: view and post cool pictures." From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she's goofy but intellectual.
14. Valentina	A 17 years old, white female who is "hard working, driven, kind, social, and determined." She is a good reader and progressing writer; she likes being able to learn more about different writing styles and time periods. In ELA class, she does not use any technology. She

	wishes her ELA teacher knew “I am trying to evolve my writing to find my own voice and style. I like to challenge myself.” Regarding social media, Valentina said, “I use Twitter: to see what's happening in that moment; Instagram: so see what other people are doing or what they did on a trip; and Snapchat: to stay in touch with my friends and also see what's happening in that moment.” From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she’s “a sweet girl who cares about her friends with a diverse life and loves what she does.”
15. fresh 2	A 17 years old, white female who is “responsible, athletic, caring, and focused.” She is very dedicated to her ELA grade and interested in being challenged—after all, ELA class is challenging but rewarding. In her ELA class, she writes essays and enjoys quizlet live online. She does not wish her ELA teacher knew anything about her. Regarding social media, fresh 2 said, “I use snapchat: for daily communication with my friends, also to keep streaks, and show my friends what I'm doing; twitter: to explain how I feel and to see what other people are up to; instagram: to post a picture I really like so everyone can see it; and vsco: to post artsy pictures.” From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she’s busy, social, and happy.
16. CG2	A 17 years old, Hispanic female who is “generally a happy person who is athletic and sympathetic.” ELA class is definitely one of her strong suits, and it’s typically one of her highest grades; she enjoys it and finds it pretty interesting. In ELA class, she uses Google

	Classroom, Docs, and Slides; she also uses quizlet and kahoot to study. She wishes her ELA teacher knew that she really does enjoy ELA even though most of her peers hate it. Regarding social media, CG2 said, “I use twitter, instagram and snapchat: I usually use them to see what my friends are doing, keep up with standings (related to college sports), and post some of my thoughts and or accomplishments. Snapchat, however I use as means for communication along side text and imessage.” From her profile and posts on social media, people would know her physical characteristics and what she likes to do.
17. JJ	A 16 years old, Black/African American male who is “very outgoing.” He is easy going in ELA class and feels that he can be very descriptive and wordy in writing. In ELA class, he uses Google Docs and Google Classroom. He wishes his ELA teacher knew that he doesn’t really like to read aloud. Regarding social media, JJ said, “I use Twitter and its an app where people post what's going on right now or how you feel. Snapchat is like texting but by sending pictures of what you're doing and instagram is like Twitter but you use pictures instead of just typing how you feel and vsco i think of that being a artsy or creative app to let you express yourself and just be you with pictures and poems.” From his profile and posts on social media, people would know he can be very funny or very serious.
18. Buttercup	A 16 years old, African American female who is “loving, caring,

Goldfilter	loyal, and mature.” She thinks she is an “okay” student in ELA when she actually focuses and takes her time which results in better outcomes (grades); however, ELA is not her favorite subject because she doesn’t think she’s that great of an essay writer, which usually makes her not like class so much. In ELA class, she does projects online but no activities. She wishes her ELA teacher knew “I would like class better if we read stuff that was relevant and in modern language that students could understand.” Regarding social media, Buttercup Goldfilter said, “I use Twitter: I use this the most. I'm usually just looking if I'm bored and may tweet from time to time. Instagram: don't use it as much; but same as twitter (posts every now and then). facebook: cooking videos☺ and other posts.” From her profile and posts on social media, she’s not really sure what people would know because it’s always changing.
19. Momma Long Leg	A 16 years old, white female who is “tall and funny.” She is not very strong in ELA class because she can never focus; she just doesn’t like it. In ELA class, she researches articles online. She wishes her ELA teacher knew that she hates reading. Regarding social media, Momma Long Leg said, “I use Snapchat- communicate with friends by sending pictures of what I'm doing, Twitter- let people know what is on my mind or show funny videos, and Instagram- post pictures of what I am doing that day or night.” From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she’s funny.

20. C.A.T.	A 16 years old, Black male who is “athletic, social, and goofy.” He is involved in ELA class, but only sometimes when he finds it entertaining and fun. In ELA class, he reads books online and creates powerpoints. He wishes his teacher knew that it’s one of his favorite classes. Regarding social media, C.A.T. said, “I use Twitter, Instagram, and snapchat.” From his profile and posts on social media, people would know he’s active, funny, and inspirational.
21. Mrs. Situation	A 16 years old, mixed female who is “loud, outgoing (social butterfly type), caring, and passionate.” She is engaged and eager to learn in ELA, but she doesn’t always enjoy it. In ELA class, she uses Kahoot and Quizlet live. She wishes her ELA teacher knew that she has a passion for writing. Regarding social media, Mrs. Situation said, “I use Instagram- posting pictures of me and my friends and family, snapchat- to send pictures of what I'm doing, to have conversations, to watch what others other doing, Twitter- to tweet what's going on in my life or to see what's going on in others lives and to see what's trending and going on in the world.” From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she’s “extra.”
22. Briar	A 16 years old, white female who is “nice, fun, and energetic.” She is engaged and creative in ELA class and considers it a class where she can think about things differently. In ELA class, she writes papers online. She doesn’t wish her ELA teacher knew anything about her. Regarding social media, Briar said, “I use Snapchat and Instagram.”

	From her profile and posts on social media, people would know she's always playing volleyball or with her friends.
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Appendix I

Teacher's Classroom Information in their Own Words

Goody D	Goody D who has taught ELA for 24 years, works with “students who are currently taking 9th grade Lit and Comp on either the College Prep (CP) or Honors track.” She teaches “a variety of students from mixed cultural, religious, and economic backgrounds.” The technology available for her to use includes a Chromebook for each student, Mac and PC labs, projector, Internet, Smart Board, 60-inch television, websites, student email, and students’ personal smart devices. Regarding how these tools are used within her classroom to meet Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), Goody D stated, “All daily assignments are posted on my website for student review and make up. I often incorporate my projector, Macbook, and the Internet with reading/writing/speaking & listening instruction. Students 2-3 times weekly email and share assignments and writings with me to be graded and given feedback. Often, weekly students engage in a group activity that is presented to the class including visual aids and incorporating at least one aspect of technology. Use of internet sites such as Quizlet, Kahoot, and my website as study aids and supplements.”
Meredith	Meredith, who has taught ELA for 3 years, works with “Resource

	(small group) 9th grade College Prep (CP), Resource (small group) 11th grade CP, CP 11th grade.” Her “resource students are mostly kids that have high anxiety and/or focusing issues in a larger group setting. They are doing the same daily tasks as regular CP students, taking the same tests and Milestone as all other CP students.” The technology available for her to use includes a technology cart with 30 Chromebooks, two computer labs (Mac and PC), Mimio bar for Smart Board (though she does not ever use this tool). Regarding how these tools are used within her classroom to meet Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), Meredith stated, “I use it in multiple ways. Sometimes we use the chrome books for group work where they will all be using/adding to a Google Doc for a specific purpose, or maybe annotating something together using the Chromebooks instead of actually printing everything out. Sometimes they have presentations where they'll use the different software available to them on the chrome books to get creative and make their presentations for class; other times, the chrome books are used for individual work where they follow prompts posted in Google Classroom for them.”
RealT	RealT who has taught ELA for 28 years, works with “12th grade students in Advanced Placement English Literature.” His students “tend to be among the best, brightest, and most intellectually curious members of the senior class.” The technology available for him to

	use includes 32 Chromebooks. Regarding how these tools are used within his classroom to meet Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), RealT said, “We use technology for research, composition, and collaboration as well as for all the ancillary activities that might be associated with those three things.”
Sally McDonald	Sally McDonald who has taught ELA for 17 years, works with “all students—from the students who struggle and are considered ‘at risk’ because of previous failing scores on standardized tests, to students who are in the top 10% of their class.” The technology available for her to use includes a teacher Macbook, projector, Mimio apparatus (though she is not really sure what it is called), and a class set of Chromebooks. Regarding how these tools are used within her classroom to meet Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), Sally McDonald said, “I typically use technology in the form of Google classroom for students to submit assignments. In the past year or two, I have used Google Docs/Google Slides for students to collaborate on presentations and other assignments so that they can work simultaneously (and they typically share the file with me so that I can chime in with constructive feedback). I use PowerPoint or Keynote quite often to present information, and I like to use the Mimio for poetry analysis.”
Reba	Reba, who has taught ELA for 11 years, works with “students who are currently taking 9th grade Lit and Comp on either the College

	Prep (CP) or Honors track.” He teaches “a variety of students from diverse cultural, religious, and socioeconomic backgrounds.” The technology available for him to use includes a class set of iPads, two computer labs, television, and projector. Regarding how these tools are used within his classroom to meet Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE), Reba said, “I understand that my students like to make use of the technology in both my classroom and in their homes. I, however, am not a particularly technologically savvy individual and find that I feel as though I am teaching myself how to catch up to where my students, who are twenty years younger than me, happen to be. I try to make all of my classroom materials available to students online. I have also attempted to make more use of digital teaching tools and study aids as a means of conveying information, but I honestly can't say with 100% confidence that I am doing it right.”
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Appendix J

List of Questions Used for Each Data Collection Phase

Phase I: Student Survey

As you know, I'm very interested in how digital literacies are used within school classrooms today, and perhaps more importantly, how students like you are using social media in ways that may or may not be connected to your work in English language arts class. For this reason, I have a brief survey for you to complete that will give me some information before we head into our focus group interview.

Student name:

Student nickname for study:

1. How would you describe yourself?
2. What are your thoughts about English language arts class?
3. How would you describe yourself as a student in English language arts class?
4. What online/digital activities do you do in your English language arts class?
5. List the social media networks you use regularly and describe how you use them.
6. What is your favorite social media network? Why is it your favorite?
7. How would you describe your profile(s) within your social media networks?
8. What information do you regularly share on social media networks?
9. How do you think others would describe you on social media?
10. What do you wish your English language arts teacher knew about you? What do you wish your English language arts teacher knew about your social media use?

Phase II: Teacher Interview Guide Questions

As you know, I'm very interested in how digital literacies are used within school classrooms today, and perhaps more importantly, how students are using social media, too. I would like to get your input and see how 1) you understand your students' social media use, 2) you consider digital literacy practices within your classroom, and 3) you

view some of your students' comments on social media use and English language arts class.

The guide I have here contains some general questions that come to mind when I think about digital literacy and social media use; however, I imagine that as we talk, there may be a few more questions that come up from our discussion together.

As stated in the consent form that you signed, the information generated will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the transcription for the interview. Again, while the interview will be recorded to help with transcription, I will delete the audio-file at the completion of the project.

Please keep in mind that you may decline any question or stop the interview at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. The interview will last for approximately one hour.

1. Describe the students you work with in your classroom.
2. Describe the technology available to you in your classroom.
3. Describe how you use technology in your classroom to complement the Georgia Standards of Excellence (GSE).
4. Define digital native.
5. Are your students digital natives?
6. What do you see as the purpose of social media?
7. How often do you use social media?
8. How do you construct your social media profile(s)?
9. Do you have separate accounts for personal and professional spaces within social media?
10. How do you use social media in the classroom? If you don't use social media, why don't you use it in the classroom?
11. How do you think your students use social media?
12. What do you think are the top social media sites your students use?
13. How do you think your students consider your audience on social media?
14. How do you attempt to connect students' out-of-school digital literacy practices to their in-school literacy practices?
15. How often do you talk to your students about their digital literacy practices?
16. Where do you think students should learn about safe/effective uses of social media practices?
17. How do you see technology and social media playing a role in your students' lives now and in the future?
18. What social media spaces do you think have the potential to build bridges to the ELA classroom?
19. How can teacher educators help other teachers become more open to considering how students are creating (digital/multimodal) literate identities?
20. What do you think the focus should be on when considering how schools should incorporate digital literacy practices and social media in the English language arts classroom today?

Phase III: Student Focus Group Questions

As I've stated before, I'm very interested in how digital literacies are used within school classrooms today, and perhaps more importantly, how students like you are using social media in ways that may or may not be connected to your work in English language arts class. For this reason, I'd like to talk to you some more about some of the questions I asked you in the initial survey you completed.

The guide I have here contains some general questions that come to mind when I think about students' social media use; however, I imagine that as we talk, there may be a few more questions that come up from our discussion together.

As stated in the consent form that you and your parent/guardian signed, all information will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the transcription for the interview. Again, while the interview will be recorded to help with transcription, I will delete the audio-file at the completion of the project.

Please keep in mind that you may decline any question or stop participating in the focus group at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. The interview will last for approximately 1-1.5 hours. I want to know about your experiences and thoughts since they will help me become a better teacher and help me help others become better teachers, too!

1. Why do your teachers not need to know anything about you?
2. How do you feel about your teacher's engaging with you on social media?
3. How do you think you may or may not act differently on social media than you do in the ELA classroom?
4. What are your thoughts about using social media in ELA class?
5. What are your thoughts on school being a place where teachers are telling students about social media use?
6. How do you all create your social media profiles?
7. How could your teachers help you if they knew how and why you use the social media spaces that you do?
8. How do you all understand the top social media sites that you shared (Twitter, Snapchat, and Instagram) to have different purposes?
9. Is it important for your teachers to be active in those same social media sites? Why or why not?
10. What is a digital native?
11. Do you consider yourself a digital native?
12. What is the coolest thing you have seen, created, or posted on social media lately?

Phase IV: Student Focus Group Questions

Thank you all for taking the time to meet with me again. During this meeting, I'd like to talk with you about some of the points your teachers brought up regarding students and social media.

The guide I have here contains some general questions that came up for me after I talked with your teachers. However, I imagine that as we talk, there may be a few more questions that come up from our discussion together.

As stated in the consent form that you and your parent/guardian signed, all information will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the transcription for the interview. Again, while the interview will be recorded to help with transcription, I will delete the audio-file at the completion of the project.

Please keep in mind that you may decline any question or stop participating in the focus group at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. The interview will last for approximately 1-1.5 hours. I want to know about your experiences and thoughts since they will help me become a better teacher and help me help others become better teachers, too!

1. Your teachers said you all use social media for three things: 1) to communicate 24/7, 2) to share pictures 24/7, and 3) to gain approval from others. Based on our previous discussion, you all might agree with 1 and 2. However, why do you think they would say #3?
2. Your teachers wonder if you all share too much information on social media. Why do you think that might be? Do you agree? Why?
3. You all mentioned that you appreciated when your teachers had multiple accounts (such as a personal and professional account). Why should it be important for your teachers to model how to navigate social media in that way? Why do you think teachers wouldn't?
4. Your teachers were on the fence about whether you all considered to whom you are posting. Some said yes, you all had a specific audience in mind, others said you all didn't really think about your audience. What do you think?
5. Your teachers said they don't really need to teach you about your digital literacy practices, such as creating content. Why do you think they believe this?
6. Your teachers envision a future world in which you might be using social media in your career? Why do you think social media could/should be used?
7. How do you think teachers could become better at using technology in the classroom to help you all be better readers and writers?
8. How could students, like you all, help teachers become better at helping their students be better readers/writers?
9. How do your teachers use technology to supplement your ELA standards?
10. What is the coolest thing you have seen, created, or posted on social media lately?

Phase V: Student Focus Group Questions

Thank you all for taking the time to meet with me again. During this meeting, I'd like to talk with you about some of the ideas I'm starting to put together after learning from you all through our previous discussions.

The guide I have here contains some general questions that came up for me when I thought about everything you all have shared. However, I imagine that as we talk, there may be a few more questions that come up from our discussion together. Also, don't worry if you aren't sure of a term I use or if you are giving me a right or wrong answer. Just say whatever comes to mind when I ask the question.

As stated in the consent form that you and your parent/guardian signed, all information will be confidential, and pseudonyms will be used in the transcription for the interview. Again, while the interview will be recorded to help with transcription, I will delete the audio-file at the completion of the project.

Please keep in mind that you may decline any question or stop participating in the focus group at any time should you become uncomfortable with it. The interview will last for approximately 1-1.5 hours. I want to know about your experiences and thoughts since they will help me become a better teacher and help me help others become better teachers, too!

1. What does multimodal literate identity mean to you? (Note: Ended up giving them definition as noted in Chapter One after discussion.)
2. How do you understand your social media connections to be multimodal? How are you multimodal in the ELA classroom?
3. What does literacy mean to you? (Note: Ended up giving them definition after discussion.)
4. How do you understand your social media practices informing your multimodal literate identity? In other words, how does social media influence who you are as a reader and writer?
5. How do you understand the writing or composition process in ELA?
6. How do you understand the writing process in terms of your social media?
7. How do you understand your social media identity? In other words, have any of our talks influenced how you look or view your identity on social media and how that connects to the ELA classroom?
8. Many of you mentioned some serious topics in things you've read or seen. Things that are important to you. How can young people use social media to create change? In the "real" world?
9. How can the ELA classroom help you become a "change agent?"
10. Thinking about all we have discussed in our previous talks . . . is there anything you wish your teachers knew about who you are (outside of the classroom on social media) and who you are in their classroom that would help them help you be a better student (reader, writer, or thinker)?
11. What is the coolest thing you have seen, created, or posted on social media lately?

Appendix K

Example of a Class Assignment Inspired by Focus Group Discussions

By MARCIE

Article:

"Trump Takes Aim at First Amendment." *CNN*. Cable News Network, n.d. Web. 30 Nov. 2016.

Topic:

Donald Trump's tweets, specific to those about the burning of the American flag.

Main Points:

- On November 29, 2016, Donald Trump set the media on fire by releasing a tweet that suggested those who burn the American flag should endure consequences of losing citizenship or going to jail.
- Trump's tweet contradicts policies that his inauguration is supposed to promise that he will protect. In other words, there is a Supreme Court ruling in place that lists the burning of the American flag as a form of freedom of speech, which is guaranteed to all American citizens. Trump's wish to punish those who do so is stripping Americans of one of their most important rights.
- There is much debate over whether Donald Trump's actions on social media are a reflection of how he will behave in office or if his tweets are just a tactic familiar with his political campaign where he uses the account as a weapon of destruction for the output of thoughts and ideas.

Rhetorical Devices:

Logic- One of the most important factors in this article is the use of direct quotes from Trump's social media posts. Direct quotes from the subject in discussion are a great way to secure the value and reliability of the topic at hand.

Multiple points of view- As with anything relating to politics, it is important to analyze any issue from both sides of the argument or campaign. Regardless of which side a reader may choose on this topic, the article is a much less argumentative and much more informational read because the author offered thoughts from those who are offended by Trump's social media use *and* from those who think his tweets are to be taken with a grain of salt.

Personal Reaction:

This controversy has been yet another example of why the United States is in danger of being tormented by a leader who is unfit to control the country. Not only is President-elect, Donald Trump, unaware of the practices his own position is supposed to preach but he uses his social media accounts to intentionally cause unrest in his own society and

throw an unreasonable amount of anger and debate towards the American people. Yes, Donald Trump is also allowed to express his own freedom of speech, and yes, social media is an outlet where anyone can say and do anything he or she may wish, but someone who has been given such a massive position of power in this country should be more focused on leading the American people and protecting them on a global scale than dividing the nation through a series of tweets. If you ask me, any adult who chooses to antagonize others through social media instead of solving major issues as quickly and as efficiently as possible is not in any way bound to “make America great again.”