Digital Culture & Education (DCE)

Publication details, including instructions for authors http://www.digitalcultureandeducation.com/

"When I make a film, it's out of my head": Expressing emotions and healing through digital filmmaking in the classroom

Brian Bailey

Nazareth College

Online Publication Date: 15 December, 2011

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

"When I make a film, it's out of my head": Expressing emotion and healing through digital filmmaking in the classroom

Brian Bailey

Abstract

This article examines how adolescents are using digital video production in school to express emotions, deal with personal and community problems and even draw on their multimedia compositions as a form of healing. In this sense, youth are using literacy to help them to make sense of their lives while attempting to make changes within themselves and their communities. The data for this paper comes from a two-year ethnographic study in two high schools. Field observations, interviews, video data, pre-production texts (storyboards, scripts, screen plays etc.) and student films were analyzed to understand what language and literacy look like when students use digital video production and distribution in school to tell stories. Drawing on a New Literacy Studies theoretical framework, I argue that the literacy practices in this study allow students to make sense of issues and emotions in their lives and cope with their life circumstances by showing their stories to real audiences both within and beyond their schools.

Keywords: New Literacy Studies, healing, digital video production, education, emotional literacy practices, critical literacy, critical multimodal literacy, digital storytelling, youth media production

Introduction

Tom visits a coffee shop as a potential location to shoot his film.[1] With a pen and a notebook, he writes down a list of shots that he envisions as scenes in his movie. The next day he will use his shot list as he looks through the camera lens and gives directions to the actors. His film tells the story of a young man who is fighting depression and looking for happiness in all the wrong places. After multiple versions and hours of editing, Tom shows his movie at his high school film festival where he is recognized by his school and community with a "Best Music Video" award. More importantly, Tom uses his video to reflect on his life and how it helped him overcome an eating disorder and deal with a bout of depression.

Julisa writes a powerful poem in her English class about a friend who was recently shot and killed. Later that week, she selects a Tupac Shakur song for her soundtrack, shoots video footage of her city neighbourhood and browses the internet for images of handguns and other symbolic materials that she can use to tell her story. Over the coming weeks, she will spend countless hours at the computer in her classroom combining her collection of print and non-print resources into a final cut. Her movie is a tribute to her 17 year-old friend who was gunned down in front of his house and a public statement about the poverty and violence that plagues her city. When the movie is completed, it will be shown on YouTube, at three different film festivals, and on a local television channel. Tom and Julisa's activities are illustrative of a rich set of literacy practices and show how digital video production technologies can offer new

opportunities for students to tell their stories and be heard by various audiences. The analysis of student movies, excerpts of interviews with student filmmakers and ethnographic field notes in this study indicate that students like Tom and Julisa are using storytelling with digital video technologies to express personal problems, to heal from painful experiences, and to attempt transformations in their lives and their communities.

Prior to conducting this study, I attended a youth film festival at a local high school. That night, I saw about ten student-produced films including one particularly poignant music video about the shootings at Columbine High School. The student films contained stories and meanings regarding racial tension, friendship, family, fun times, sexuality, fears, relationships, violence, gender, and substance abuse. Many of the films moved me, made me laugh, and based on the crowd noises and applause, clearly moved the audience in the theatre that night. While students might address similar topics in school through a paper they write in English class or a painting that they make in Art, their movies felt different that night, and I wanted to know why. Was it that their ideas were reaching a larger audience? Was it a more 'real' and familiar way for them to communicate their ideas? Was it the powerful ideas that they communicated through a multimodal medium? Why didn't this feel like a typical school assignment? It was this experience that led me to start thinking about youth filmmaking as a literacy practice and developed into the following research question that informed the study: If literacy is something that people use in their lives for specific purposes within specific contexts (Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic, 2000), then how are students using the opportunity to produce and distribute their stories through digital video in school?

New Literacy Studies

New Literacy Studies provides the framework for this study by helping to conceptualize how new technologies transform the numerous ways in which one might use literacies in one's life (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Gee, 2000; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; C. Lankshear & Knobel, 2002; 2003) and what is required to fully participate in society (Gee, Hull, & Lankshear, 1996). Literacies, in this sense, change and are changed by new technologies and social arrangements. I define literacy as how people use a wide range of semiotic resources and texts in order to communicate meaning, solve problems, and make sense of their lives in a variety of social and cultural ways (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Fairclough, 2000; Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Because this study examines how students actively use digital video production, I situate their literacy practices as lived experience within and beyond their classrooms. Barton and Hamilton (1998) drawing on Heath (1983) and Scribner and Cole (Scribner & Cole, 1981) have found that people actively "use" different texts and literacies, in different discourse communities, to solve a range of problems and make sense of their lives. By framing literacy as a social practice, we can see video production as more than just a set of technical skills such as using the camera, writing scripts, and editing footage. Rather, for the youth in this study, telling their stories through the moving image was a way of making sense of difficult situations.

Digital Video, Multimodality and Storytelling

Digital technologies have placed the affordances of digital video production in the hands of many people including some youth. Several changes in recent years have helped this democratization of the medium occur more rapidly, including:

1) every personal computer now comes with free digital video editing software like iMovie and video digitizing interfaces like USB and Firewire;
2) the reduced cost of digital video camcorders, mobile devices with video, and flip video cameras;
3) the video distribution capabilities of the Internet have increased through larger bandwidth and streaming capacity.

A promising segment of studies, primarily conducted outside formal school settings, have looked at how youth are *using* digital technologies to create and show videos and other multimodal texts (Burn & Parker, 2003a; Dowdy et al., 2003; Hull et al., 2006; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Ranker, 2008). Multimodality refers to the ways in which meanings are produced and distributed through the combination of different modes in a specific cultural context (Jewitt & Kress, 2003; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). For example, digital video is multimodal because it is able to combine many modes such as still image, moving image, text, music, etc. to express meaning. Furthermore, because it combines modes that compliment each other, foregrounds modes within parts of a text depending on the mode's strengths, and backgrounds modes because of its limitations; digital video offers unique affordances for making meaning and communicating ideas Affordances, based on the work of Gibson (1979) and Kress & Van Leeuwen (2001), refer to the ways in which different modes have different advantages and disadvantages, depending on the purposes and discourse community in which it is used.

Glynda Hull and Mark Nelson's work in Oakland's Digital Underground Story Telling for (You)th (DUSTY) and Stephen Goodman's work in New York's Educational Video Centre (EVC) are indicative of research that looks at how students are *using* the opportunity to create multimodal texts to do things in their lives like construct identities (Hull & Nelson, 2005), re-define gender (Hull, et al., 2006) and participate as citizens in critical thought and democratic social change (Goodman, 2003). Hull's research has illuminated some of the purposes and uses for students' digital multimodal stories such as exploring alternative definitions of masculinity, offering a tribute to family members or friends, recounting or interpreting a pivotal moment or key event, representing place, space, or community, preserving history, creating art or an artefact; playing or fantasizing, healing, grieving, or reflecting, reaching, informing, or influencing a wider audience (Hull, et al., 2006; Hull & Nelson, 2005). While Hull's groundbreaking research has mainly focused on how youth are using their digital stories outside of school to construct identities and mediate gender roles with multimodal literacies, she has yet to explore some of the other purposes that she and Nelson have identified above, specifically "healing".

Situated Identities

Stuart Hall has shown how identity is not a fixed entity but rather a constantly negotiated work in process with multiple manifestations as it is performed, manipulated, constructed through the process of representation (Hall, 1990, 1996, 2001). I draw on the work of Holland et al. (1998) and Sfard & Prusak (2005) to think about how students' movies served as cultural spaces for students to build allegiances with and in opposition to socially constructed symbols, texts and meanings. I argue that across the research sites, students used their movies to shape, mediate, and transform representations of their lived cultural and social life worlds. As such, I take "situated identities" to refer to how students used their digital movies as cultural artefacts (Holland et al., 1998) to position themselves through literacy practices (Gee, 1996) and storytelling (Sfard & Prusak, 2005) in order to negotiate and construct their sense of self

and represent themselves in specific ways. The situated identities of youth and the movies that students made are not isolated from the socio-cultural contexts in which they are constructed; rather they are created and enacted in practice through institutions, communities, and a wide range of social spaces.

Drawing on Hall's work in British Cultural Studies, several studies have investigated how students use their digital video productions to construct, express, and explore possible representations and multiple identities. For example, De Block et al. (2004) argue that children use video production within social contexts for specific purposes such as negotiating cultural identity, challenging stereotypes, and developing an understanding of differences. By analysing student films, Burn and Parker (2003ba) investigate the ways that students use the tools of digital video production to mediate their identities as skateboarders. They articulate how modes like sound, printed text, and images relate to each other in order to communicate meaning in their study of student-produced skateboarding films. Burn and Parker claim that the kineikonic mode (the mode of the moving image) is capable of combining modes and thus offers opportunities to foreground certain modes depending on the affordances that are possible. For example, the students in their study chose to use loud metal music (the foreground mode) in their video to drown out the speech (the background mode) of an adult character in their film in order to show opposition and resistance to authority. In this sense, students used the combination of modes to define and represent an allegiance to the skateboarding community as well as opposition to adult authorities who try to restrict their skateboarding activities.

Contexts

This study took place in two high schools in Rochester, N.Y during portions of the 2004-2005 and 2005-2006 school years. Rochester provides an appropriate setting for the study due to its rich history with filmmaking (as the world headquarters to the Eastman Kodak Company) and its connection to the Civil Rights and Suffrage Movements. Rochester is home to the longest running independent film festival in the country, which was started in 1964 by a local organization called Movies on a Shoestring. Rochester also plays host to the annual 360/365 Film Festival (formerly High Falls Film Festival) that has historically featured exceptional work by women in film and video. Given that this study examines how student films are produced and distributed, Rochester provides a unique opportunity for research in a community that places a high value on the moving image and civil rights.

While statistics are only part of the picture, I include them here to provide additional context for the stories of the youth filmmakers in this study. The student body of the Rochester City School District is diverse in that it includes children from 28 foreign countries speaking 35 different languages. Munson High School is one of fifteen high schools in the Rochester City School District and is considered a comprehensive high school as opposed to the selective magnet schools in the district that specialize in The Arts, Sciences, etc.[2] In the 2009-2010 school year, the New York State School Report Card reported that only 40% of the students that enter Munson High School as freshmen go on to graduate. Munson High School is representative of many urban schools in the United State's highly-segregated education system in that the student population is 86% African-American and Hispanic-American as opposed to the suburbs of Lakefront that are predominantly European-American. Poverty is a pervasive problem with over 80% of the students eligible for free and reduced lunch. Despite the racial and economic segregation, poverty, and lack of resources, many of the Munson High School students and faculty possess a wide range of academic, athletic, and artistic

talents. Rochester has many cultural and community resources including a vibrant public market, a nationally known slam poetry team and an international museum of film and photography within two miles of Munson. Munson High School is located in a working-class neighbourhood of Lakefront but students who attend the high school come from all parts of the city. The class where I collected data for this study consisted of nine students (five male, four female: two European-Americans, three Hispanic-Americans, three African-Americans, one Asian-American) in a year long, elective course called *Video Art.*

Garcia High School is located in a suburban area, approximately 12 miles outside of the city of Rochester. Like many other suburban schools in the United States, Garcia reflects the segregation of races and classes in school districts and communities. The Garcia High School student population is approximately 92% white and has a low poverty rate, with 8% of the students receiving free and reduced lunches. The school district is considered one of the best in the Rochester region according to local newspapers and real estate brochures. According to the district's website, 98% of Garcia High School students go on to attend two or four year colleges and a 97% graduation rate. The participants for this study consisted of 20 European-American students (seventeen male and three female). Garcia students take two half-year courses together, one in *Analysis of Film* in the English department and *Production of Film* in the Technology department. Garcia is known for its academic achievements, state championships in athletics as well as highly regarded artistic programs.

In addition to the race, class and academic differences, the two schools in this study offered filmmaking in different curricular areas. Munson High offered students the opportunity to make films in a year-long course in the Art department, therefore art was one of the ways that social context mediated the students' filmmaking. As such, filmmaking at Munson was framed as a form of self-expression that encouraged students to start with their life experiences. This added a personal aspect to students' productions as filmmaking was positioned as a way for students to make movies for their own expressions and communicative purposes. The teacher at Munson, Mr. Clickner sent me an e-mail (that read like a poem) when I asked him about where he asks his students to start the construction of their movies.

> They start from what they know
> photos from home, tell me their story, tell me who they love
> where they love to go and the hopes and dreams they might have
> who do they respect
> I want them to share their worlds with others through media
> we talk about private and public
> what is too sensitive to talk about diaries
> this is very risky for them, showing their feelings is a hard thing
> to do
> telling their stories is hard and being free to do this is something
> they have not been asked to do in their other classes
> this is where we start…..one on one

Mr. Clickner's e-mail reveals the importance of using students' emotions and feelings to construct a meaningful story about one's personal experiences. Through their movies, students use their lived experience as a starting point for showing people who they are and where they come from. Mr. Clickner valued the funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992) that students brought from their home lives to school. That said, there was little structure or scaffolding for student filmmaking at Munson. Many students did not know

how to get started with their video productions as Mr. Clickner simply gave them a camera and told them to "make something interesting". Sometimes this resulted in students at Munson struggling to start and/or finish their movies.

Garcia students developed their movies in the context of an English Language Arts classroom. Their filmmaking was framed by teachers who placed an emphasis on "storytelling" and "traditional English skills". There were several instances where teacher-developed worksheets were part of the writing that students were expected to do before they shot their movies. The *Storytelling Guide for Directors* was a worksheet that the students were given by their teachers at Garcia HS in order to develop and clarify the story that they wished to tell through their movie. A short paragraph at the top of the *Storytelling Guide for Directors* worksheet reads:

> Directors are storytellers. If you want to be a director, you first have to create a story to tell your audience. While your short video project will be short on character development and conflict development, there should still be a basic story with a character and a conflict.

The guide consists of a set of questions for students to think through in constructing their story including: Who is your main character? How will you show us this character? What conflict is your character facing? How will you show the audience this conflict? How many locations do you have? What are these locations? The students wrote their responses to these questions after spending a couple of days of discussing potential ideas for a video with their teachers and classmates. Their responses to these questions represented the beginnings of the social interactions and printed texts that mediated the construction of their stories. At times, the storytelling guides and other worksheets at Garcia seemed to over-pedagogize students' literacy practices. Over-pedagogized refers to the ways that schools often co-opt potentially innovative practices into restrictive routines for school purposes (Street, 2005). The worksheets were rigid in terms of what should be included in students' stories, yet the teachers at Garcia felt as though they needed to provide this structure for students to keep them organized, believing that if they did not have students address certain questions about their movie ahead of time, that their stories would be "flawed". Writing responses to worksheets was seen as the first step to making a movie. In an interview, Mr. Rogan (Garcia English Teacher) spoke about how writing played into the "skills" that students used when working on their movies:

> I mean they have to write it, they have to type it, they have to hand it in and of course that gives me the opportunity as an English teacher to talk about those basic concepts, those traditional skills that you remember from your 7th grade class or 9th grade class, or whatever … topic sentences, concluding sentences, introductions, conclusions, examples, specific sentences, overused words. I mean these are the traditional English language art skills that are traditionally taught through a text whereas I can teach the traditional language arts skills through the study of film. The medium changes, the skills don't change and you know I tell teachers in my department, you know, I'll say tell me the skills, tell me the English language art skills that you want my kids to know when they leave my classroom and I will teach them. What do you want, you want the grammar lessons, we'll do the grammar. You want the mechanics of writing, I mean whatever you want me to cover I will take those skills and inject them into the curriculum.
> -Mr. Rogan

Mr. Rogan refers to "traditional language arts skills" as an important aspect of his students' movies and perhaps the justification for the class. He sees writing as a universal "skill" regardless of the medium. Mr. Rogan's conception of writing and literacy as a set of autonomous skills contradicted many of the lessons that he taught on the expressive nature of "film language" and the way he encouraged students to "tell their own unique story" through their movies. The way that Mr. Rogan situates movie making in the service of "traditional language arts skills" is indicative of the way that school practices can reduce literacy practices like filmmaking to responses on worksheets and discrete cognitive skills—even when a teacher intends a creative, personal storytelling endeavour for their students. The differences between the art (completely open-ended and unstructured process) and English (highly structured linear process emphasizing skills) contexts may be telling of how different curricular ideologies work to influence the practices involved with youth media production. As such the filmmaking literacy practices of students at the two schools looked quite different depending on the curricular domains in which students operated.

Methodology

Ethnographic case study was the qualitative research approach that I used to collect and analyse data at the two schools. Ethnographic case study, as a qualitative research strategy, is aimed at exploring "how", "why", and "what" questions through a detailed investigation of an individual, a group, an event or a setting (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Stake, 2000; Yin, 2003). Underlying a case study approach to research are epistemological footings that define what one can know by identifying "how" and "what" questions directed at a specific setting or phenomena. According to Stake (2000), at the heart of a case study lies the epistemological question: What can we come to know about human activity (such as literacy and multimodal communication) from studying a single case (such as a classroom or a group of students who are making films)? In response to this question, Stake (2000), suggests that case studies can construct new insights through a focus on the particulars of a specific, bounded phenomena. By specific and bounded, Stake means that the case is narrowed down to a smaller unit and thus temporarily separated from a larger system. I focused on two classrooms as multiple cases where video production was a specific bounded unit of study.

Within the situated nature of the filmmaking in this case study, there is a clear connection to Street's (2003) argument for the hybrid examination of the local and global aspects of literacy, which he provides in response to Brandt and Clinton's (2002) argument that New Literacy Studies as a theoretical framework, places too much emphasis on the local and neglects the larger social forces that shape and are shaped by literacy. Drawing on Street (2003, 2005), as well as Barton and Hamilton (Barton & Hamilton, 1998), I argue that we must pay close attention to how student films are shaped by and work to transform both local domains as well as larger social arrangements. This is particularly important given that multimodal media is an increasingly important form of communication, yet students have limited access in school to the transformative potential that is afforded by the production and distribution of the moving image.

Data sources for this study include participant observation field notes and videotapes, interviews with students and their teachers, and various print and non-print texts such as scripts, storyboards, and assignments as well as the students' movies. I videotaped students as they wrote their scripts, drew their storyboards, shot their

footage, edited their files, and exhibited their movies. On multiple occasions, I videotaped students outside of school while they shot footage. The collection of data over the course of the study resulted in a corpus that consists of approximately three hundred pages of field notes, one hundred ten hours of videotaped classroom activities, thirty student interviews, eight teacher interviews and video footage from three film festivals. It also resulted in one hundred twenty-two classroom documents, sixty-five digital images and twenty-one student-produced digital movies.

In order to analyse the data, I used the constant comparative method for reducing the data sources. The constant comparative method is an inductive process of data analysis that is often used in building grounded theory from the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Corbin & Strauss, 1998). The constant comparative method involves inductively coding, categorizing, connecting and collapsing data in order to identify patterns, construct themes, and make knowledge claims (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin & Strauss, 1998). I used the constant comparative method in order to go back and forth between reducing the data and putting it back together into possible explanations. All data that was collected during the study was reduced through a process of open coding. From these codes, I wrote memos comparing different data sets to each other and began to develop categories, constantly searching for evidence in the data that disconfirmed any emerging ideas. I identified themes inductively from the data and then deductively applied these themes back to the data in order to develop new ways of looking at the data.

By going through the constant comparative process, I identified student films as something that warranted foregrounding in my analysis. Drawing on New Literacy Studies, I viewed the students' multimodal texts as important tools that students used to mediate their experiences in the world. As such, the films that students constructed served as important evidence for determining how students are using filmmaking in school and what purposes these texts are serving. After summarizing and coding each of the 21 student films scene by scene, I developed larger categories by focusing on possible uses and messages contained in the student movies. I also interviewed students after watching and summarizing their films to ask them specifically what they were trying to say and do with their movie. This back and forth comparison between moving in and out of the data is referred to as fragmenting and connecting data analysis (Dey, 1993).

One of the prominent themes that emerged from the data analysis is the idea that students are using their movies to address problems in their lives and to heal from difficult circumstances. Drawing on Marc Lamont Hill's concept of "wounded healing" (2009) and Shawn Ginwright's "radical healing" (2010), I define "healing" as the process of constructing positive identities by finding insight, relief, support, empathy, and understanding through telling one's story to an audience. For this paper, I selected two out of the twenty-one student-produced movies as illustrative of how students in this study attempted to address problems and heal through storytelling with video. I include descriptions of the movies (*Welcome to the City* and *How to be Happy*) along with excerpts from interviews with the student filmmakers (*Julisa* and *Tom*).

Julisa – *Welcome to the City*

Welcome to the City is a short film created by Julisa, a 16 year-old student at Munson High School who self identified as half-Phillipino and half-European. The film was made in response to the fatal shooting of a 17 year-old African-American male student at Munson High School named Donatello. He was shot in the back by a jealous boyfriend who did not like Donatello smiling at his girlfriend. Donatello was a well-liked football

star and honour roll student. The movie features a poem that Julisa wrote and then reads as a "voice-over" audio track for her movie. Julisa talked about how she used her movie, *Welcome to the City*, in the excerpt below:

> So, I figured that I would take that opportunity and make it into a film, publicize it, let people watch it and then hopefully enter it in the film festivals and let other people watch it from outside the city and just pass around the word and hopefully have people change, change their minds about fighting, change their minds about pulling out a gun before they even talk it out and stuff like that. So, I just wanted to change at least one person. If I could do that, that would be fine cause it'd be making a difference. I just wanted to make a difference because I thought it was horrible that a 17-year-old boy who could have gone really far in life, you know, just died over something that could have been easily talked out.
>
>   -Julisa

In the excerpt above, Julisa defines her movie as a way of engaging people in her community. Julisa refers specifically to using her movie as a way of changing people and making a difference. Her description was indicative of how many students in this study saw their movies as a way of expressing a problem and attempting to do something about it. Julisa uses her poem (see below) and combines it with a Tupac Shakur song called *Changes*, video footage of high-poverty parts of Lakefront, images from Donatello's funeral and interviews with fellow classmates to construct a memorial to her friend while making a statement about the problem that gun violence presents to her community. The poem reads:

> *A mother cries because her baby boy is gone*
> *At 17, MVP of the football team*
> *A friend, a student, a brother, a son*
> *His life cut short because of the carelessness of a gun*
> *Our heads are down as we pray*
> *For this crazy world to change some day*
> *I heard a girl say*
> *"We're not safe in our own homes"*
> *My generation has nothing to lean on*
> *Nothing to count on*
> *This is what the world has come to*
> *We're shooting ourselves over a girl, a chain*
> *It doesn't matter*
> *It could be you*
> *Look at the streets we walk*
> *Look at the way we talk*
> *We've got so much more to live for*
> *The richest country and we're still begging for more*
> *Guns, Knives, Blue, Red, Black, White*
> *Start being a man*
> *If your gonna fight then fight*
> *Not with guns, use your hands*
> *Have some common decency for the life of a man*
> *Imagine the tears and the pain that it caused*
> *We all sat back and took a good look at our lives*
> *This is the life we're living today*

Stand up
Be strong
and change it in some way
After all that's happened
All you got to do is hope that
People will wake up in the morning the next day
And go out there and make a change

Through her poem, Julisa takes on a number of issues that are important to her, especially in light of her classmate's murder. She starts by using the poem to pay tribute to Donatello by recalling his various identities and the value of his life. In numerous interviews with Julisa, she indicated that it was important for her to make sure that the video depicted Donatello as more than a statistic as she used her poem to represent Donatello as a "student, athlete, friend, brother and son." Julisa then focused her writing on criticizing how gun violence is a prevalent problem in her community. She uses the pronoun "we" in her poem to speak to her fellow Lakefront community members to stop "shooting ourselves over a girl, a chain". In this sense, it appears that Julisa is placing the blame for the violence on the shoulders of those who live in the City of Lakefront. Julisa is concerned with those people in the city who use guns to settle disputes and encourages people to rethink how they act. At the same time, Julisa identifies her audience as "the richest country" and to people outside of Lakefront in her title *Welcome to the City*. Julisa uses words and images to critique the ways in which the poverty that is created by an inequitable economic system are partially responsible for the violence within her community. She uses her poem as a call to people inside and outside the City of Lakefront to make changes to the violent way we treat each other. The "change" theme in her poem provides the foundation for other modes (still images, music, moving images, etc.) that she creates and combines in the video. For example, the Tupac lyrics to her sound track refer to people making changes in their lives as Julisa shows a shot in her video of the sun shining on her neighbourhood.

In terms of school-based literacy practices, Julisa's poem and subsequent movie were not prompted by a classroom worksheet or governed by a specific school-based assignment; rather Julisa decided to use her poem to convey the sadness, grief, anger, and hope that she feels over the murder of her classmate. Eventually she used the poem in the process of making her movie to identify visual representations of her feelings about Donatello's death and violence in her community. The poem was written the day after the shooting when many of the students were mourning their classmate's death.

I wrote the poem. It was during English actually because Mr. D that day had said, all right, well, there's a lot of kids crying right in this class. And he said, all right, you know, write whatever you want. I wrote that poem that day. And it just came flowing out of me like there was no tomorrow. I think that's the best poem I've ever written because it all rhymes. It all made sense. And it just all came out on paper. And it was just perfect. You know, I read it to myself and I was like, this is perfect. And I read it to my class that day. And they really liked it. You know, there was crying afterwards and, you know, whatever. And I was scared about reading that poem too because I wasn't exactly sure how people were going to react.
   -Julisa

Julisa talks about her poem "flowing out of her" and how it was created in the midst of a tragic event in her school where students were crying in class. Her poem suggests that she was highly invested in her writing and it was important to her that her classmates "really liked it". Julisa's English teacher used the shooting to give students the space to process what happened to their classmate and encouraged the students to "write whatever you want". The freedom that the teacher provided in this instance added a certain amount of authenticity to Julisa's writing in that the purposes for writing were her own. Julisa's poem offers stark contrast to the reductionist literacy practices that dominate many high school English classes with superficial prompts and decontextualized writing skills (see Mr. Rogan's quote) for school purposes on standardized tests. It was interesting that Julisa wrote her poem in English class, which contradicts how English class, as a curricular context, framed student filmmaking at Garcia HS as a linear, worksheet-driven activity.

Julisa refers to her poem "making sense" and "being perfect", which shows that the writing in her poem was able to capture how she and her fellow students were feeling about the tragic loss of her friend and the senseless act of violence in her community. In other words, Julisa's writing about Donatello was a meaningful way of coping with her classmate's death. In my interviews with her, Julisa expressed her opinion about how crime in her community affects her on a personal level. Julisa had strong feelings about how unfair it was that her innocent classmate was killed but she was also angry that she and her peers had to grow up in a city and country where people are killed regularly by gun violence.

> I think all of that was in my head because it was so, like, sad to be in school that day. That's all. I was sad, but, yeah, I was angry because this shit happened. So, my main purpose and my main motivation to make the film was—Donatello was the death of him and knowing that something like this could happen to any one of us. And it's ridiculous that it has to happen. And it's ridiculous that the city, you know, is looked down on because of what we do to each other. And we can't blame anyone else but us because we do it. You know, we do it and it's publicized more than anything else in Lakefront. And I wanted to just get that out. I wanted to wake people up, especially people in the city, to think about it. You know, there's a breaking point. It's ridiculous. So, that was my only purpose, basically. I thought of the one thing that I would really make a film about, the one thing that I would really want to get out to the world because film is a way of, you know, spreading the word …you know, rather than words I mean film you see it and you hear it and you feel it, and it's a way to share it with other people.
> -*Julisa*

Julisa represents herself as a person who takes an active role in dealing with problems she perceives in her community. By writing her poem, and combining it with other modes (music, voice, moving images) in her movie, she was able to "craft an agentitive self" on a problem affecting her community. "Crafting an agentitive self" is a phrase that Hull and Katz (2006) use to show how adults and children take control over their life situations by using digital storytelling to "articulate pivotal moments in their lives and to assume agentive stances toward their present identities, circumstances, and futures". I argue that making a movie gave Julisa a sense of control over how she defined her experiences and how she made sense of Donatello's murder. Julisa also talks about the power of digital video in that it allows people to see, hear and feel her story. Nelson (2006) has shown how *amplification of authorship* in multimodal texts can increase

the communicative power by the author. In addition to expressing her ideas to an authentic audience, it is the amplification of using multiple modes of communication that allowed Julisa to express her feelings in more powerful ways than printed texts alone (Callahan, 2002; Harvey, Parker, & Skinner, 2002). As she puts it, *"rather than words I mean film you see it and you hear it and you feel it, and it's a way to share it with other people"*. Perhaps, it is the emotion that she can express through the combination of multiple modes that adds power to the feelings expressed and heard through literacy practices like digital video production.

Tom - *How to be Happy*

> I was thinking oh, my girlfriend just split up with me after 13 months, my parents are just going insane. Why is my mom's ex-boyfriend coming back into her life? That whole deal was horrific and then I realized that I haven't been eating really. My mom noticed me one day when I went downstairs to ride the exercise bike and my shirt was off that she was freaked out of her mind. Right then and there she called the doctor's office and the next day we went in there and my doctor said, "ahhh Jesus Christ you've lost 25 pounds over the course of three weeks. That's not good." So he sent me to Samaritan (hospital) to get evaluated and they diagnosed me there with Anorexia. Which I'm still working on. Basically I've been going there once a week and its slowly improving due to the fact of this whole deal (pointing around the production studio). Cause around the same time that Lynn (ex-girlfriend) crashed down on me and that whole situation crashed on me, I started getting obsessed with watching movies and evaluating them and just looking at them, critiquing them and just getting into that whole entire thing and they're just amazing. I can do this. I wanna make a movie that's better than this. I wanna pursue this, this thing right here is getting my mind off of Lynn, its getting my mind off of my mom, my parents, and my mom's ex, and everything so that was the key thing that took me away.
> *-Tom*

How to be Happy was a film created by Tom, a 16-year-old European-American, male student at Garcia High School. Tom made *How to be Happy* during a time when he was experiencing the pain of his parents' divorce and a difficult break-up with his girlfriend. Over the course of two months, Tom had dropped a significant amount of weight from not eating. Tom told me how one day his mother saw him with his shirt off and became so alarmed that she took him to the emergency room. While Tom's movie is not directly about anorexia, it shows symbolically how he was feeling depressed and alone at the time. While Tom chose to make some bad decisions in dealing with his problems (not eating, isolating himself from friends, missing school), by making his movie he was able to bring those issues to the surface and express them in his story. In Tom's storytelling guide, he writes that *How to be Happy* is a story about:

> a man who is very lonely and depressed and feels like he is nothing. He discovers through little notes and clues and going to places that he is depressed because he really misses his friends. But what he does not know is that his friends are slowly giving him clues to lead him back to their lost friendship.

Tom made *How to be Happy* in response to a specific assignment from their teacher in Garcia High School's *Production of Film* course. The assignment instructed students to

make a music video of less than three minutes. The movie starts with the lead character, Larry, reading a hand-written note while walking down a street in the City of Rochester. The note tells Larry that his first step towards happiness is to be found at a cafe. Both the viewer and Larry do not know where this note came from or who wrote it. While at the café, Larry receives another clue that leads him to another spot in his neighbourhood. At each spot, he has flashbacks to happier times but maintains a frown throughout the movie (as directed to do so by Tom). What Larry does not know but the viewer finds out later is that at each site, Larry's friends are behind the clues that lead him to another spot. At each spot there is a flashback to better times, when Larry was in the company of his friends, before his personal problems and depression took hold of him. When Larry receives his final clue, he is led to a pool hall where his friends are waiting for him to show him that true happiness and the way to feel better is to spend time with friends and family. Throughout the film, Larry carries with him a book entitled *How to be Happy*.

At the end of the movie, Larry throws the book away symbolizing that happiness cannot be found in a book. The film, as Tom explained much later in the study, is a metaphor for the events surrounding Tom's life as he struggles with depression, family troubles, a painful break up with his girlfriend, his own eating disorder and the isolation from his friends that ensued. The movie uses only moving images of Larry and a music soundtrack by the band Autumn Divers. There are no lyrics, dialogue or voice-over narration in the video.

> Movies took me away from bad. Movies and friends, those were the two things that kept me alive, that kept my brain still running….kept me still on this Earth, if it wasn't for him (pointing at his friend Matt) if it wasn't for movies, if it wasn't for other people like him and like you (pointing at me), I would not be here. And that's a true fact. And that's why I'm so picky about movies…that's why I'm so into movies. That's why I am so caught up in them because they really changed my life. They really did. I mean I can express myself in here. I can show my emotions; how I'm feeling…if I don't want to express it out physically or mentally, I can express, I can put it into movies and people can be like "wow, you know someone can go through that and still survive"? You know it's like Larry (the main character in his movie) and I think a lot of me was in Larry.
> *-Tom*

By making his film, Tom spent time reflecting on the problems in his life, realizing how he was feeling, and thinking about how he might take steps to get better. Tom was clear about how making this movie helped him when he says, "I can show my emotions; how I'm feeling". As I listened to Tom, I wondered how often school-based literacy practices offer students real opportunities to show their emotions and tell their stories to audiences beyond their teachers and fellow students. Despite the emphasis on worksheets and "traditional English skills", Tom was able to use his movie to address a problem that was important to him. He started his movie as a fictional narrative and then started to realize that it was really about his struggles with anorexia and depression and how his friends and the act of making movies made him feel better. In this sense, Tom used literacy in similar ways to Julisa in that they both used their multimodal texts to express their feelings and make sense of a problem by communicating their story to an audience.

Tom did not set out to make his movie to communicate a fixed message. Rather the construction of his text, the reflection on its meaning and the distribution of his movie to an audience allowed him to make sense of what he was going through at the time. In

fact, until he talked to me about his movie, he did not fully realize that the movie was really about him. New Literacy Studies theorists argue that literacies entail more than the mere communication of ideas: the composition of texts can allow us to carry out various social activities, enact different social identities, and serve a range of cognitive purposes (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Gee, 2005; Heath, 1983; Street, 1995). Tom does more than just use his movie to metaphorically represent how his friends were able to gradually pull him out of his depression. He literally uses his movie as mechanism for reflecting on how the story in his video relates to his own struggles. What Tom does through creating his movie and telling his story is to use literacy for thinking about his life and for contemplating the changes he is making in order to heal.

Expressing Emotions and "Healing"

The production and distribution of the students' digital movies through YouTube and various local film festivals are examples of how school-based literacy practices can allow youth to be heard and understood in new ways. As a result of constructing and distributing their digital movies, students in this study had opportunities to tell their stories to and be heard by audiences within and outside of school. An analysis across the entire data corpus reveals that one of the many ways students used their digital movies to "be heard" occurred when they addressed problems in their lives. Many students in this study, including Tom and Julisa, used their digital video productions to address issues such as: neglectful parents, superficial work in school, violence in the community, breaking up with a girlfriend, divorce, anorexia, depression, boredom in school, disrespectful teachers, drug use, growing up, confusion over sexual orientation, fears, issues with friends and insecurity.

The list of problems above is far from exhaustive of all the problems that students expressed through their movies or all the genres and topics for the students' movies. In fact, some students in the study made comedies, cheerful music videos and nostalgic personal memoirs that did not necessarily deal with problems at all. Some of the emotional dimensions of digital storytelling at both sites included happiness, celebration and fun. However, it was hard to ignore the number of students who, when given the chance to construct multimodal texts, chose to focus on problematic personal issues. Maxine Greene (1988) has argued that the role of schooling is to help students make their everyday life experiences and difficult situations more visible in order to help them make sense of their problems. For Tom, Julisa, and many of the students in this study, digital video production offered ways of using literacy in affective ways in school to illuminate, express and reflect on their thoughts, feelings, fears and emotions.

The ability for people to use their digital movies and literacy practices to express emotions and heal from difficult circumstances represents an aspect of literacy that is under-theorized within New Literacy Studies. While there have been multiple shifts in the field toward the social, cultural and critical dimensions of literacy, very little attention has been paid to the emotional aspects of literacies and new technologies. Having a friend shot and killed made the students at Munson High School feel upset, confused, angry, scared and sad. Going through a divorce, a break up and struggling with an eating disorder left Tom depressed and confused. These are difficult emotions for anyone to deal with especially a 16 year-old student. Many people might not deal with these emotions in productive ways and feel a loss of control in their life. Furthermore, many adolescents feel silenced in schools and their lives (Fine & Weis, 2003) and indicate an interest in "being heard" by adults (Hedlund, 1993). In an interview, Julisa alludes to both escape and agency in her explanation of how writing

and specifically digital video production helped her to address her feelings and problems.

> Julisa: Everyone has their bad days, and everyone has to cope with those bad days, you know some people take it out by like boxing or getting into fights, or listening to music … the one thing I do is write and that's my escape from the world is to write and I love writing poems, I love writing essays, I love writing stories and that's my way of keeping memories, that's my way of letting feelings out so I don't get into fights, so I don't do things that are stupid and that's … I just love writing, that's always been a way out of the world for me….

> Brian: Okay, relate that to what it's like to make a video.

> Julisa: Basically when I make a video or I make a film it's out of my head … like I write the film when I write the story line and that's coming from my heart and that's coming from me. So whatever film that I do make that's a piece of me that you're seeing and that I'm, you know, making and this film is like from my perspective and this is who I am. There is a little bit of me in every single film that I write or produce or you know act in.

> Brian: You said writing is like an "escape and letting feeling out"…How much is video a way of "escaping and letting things out", especially like the Donatello video?

> Julisa: Video? I mean it's the same kind of thing as writing, sort of, I mean I get to let out my feeling in film, I get to make a point because when Donatello died I mean the first thing I did was write and then I wanted to make a statement because I was so angry because something like this had happened and shouldn't have happened at all … and I get angry and video is kind of a way of escaping too just because you're making a film about your feelings, about how you feel about something, especially about my Donatello tape, it was all about how I felt, it was about how this world is today and I just wanted to let that out.

Julisa expresses her anger through *Welcome to the City* and sees this expression as a healthier choice when compared to fighting or adding more violence to her community. She also puts a positive twist on her video by saying, in her film, "you've got to get through it" and "hope that people will wake up in the morning the next day, and go out there and make a change". These statements were indicative of the agentitive stance Julisa took when making her video in order to do something about a problem and express her feelings. James Pennebaker (1997) has shown that writing about emotionally traumatic events allows people to experience significant improvements in physical and mental health. Wissman and Wiseman (in press), through their study of youth poetry in middle school classrooms, speak to the need for students to have safe spaces to share their stories in what they refer to as "Trauma Narratives". Their work shows us how schools, despite the risks of vulnerability and rejection of students' complex stories, can offer youth potentially healthy ways of reflecting and exerting control over their life stories. For Julisa, "Letting feelings out" and "keeping memories" was a way being heard by an audience and perhaps an act of

healing from the pain of losing a fellow classmate. She is also aware that it is not just the process of writing her poem and putting her video production together, but that her powerful statements are actually reaching an audience that will see her production on the screen. Below, Julisa talks about the act of showing her film to real audiences at local film festivals.

> Julisa: And then, when I got in the film festival, I was like, you know, this is really cool because at a film festival there's a bunch of people from all over the place. There's, you know, probably kids from Garcia watching it and probably kids from, like, Center Ridge or, you know, way out somewhere not in the city. And also, there's lots of city kids there as well and adults. So, everyone—I was glad to see that every one of all races, all ages, you know, from all over got to see it. Take it in and—obviously, it was a really influencing film. And hopefully it changed your mind about some stuff.

> Brian: What was that like?....showing it—like, 'cause I remember you came out to Lakeville and showed it.

> Julisa: It's really overwhelming because when I first—Garcia, I think, was the first… like, the premiere or whatever. I was really, really nervous because of—like, my first work and, you know, it was a really touchy subject. I didn't know how people were going to react and stuff like that. But knowing that it was out at least, it was a little relieving. And it was really great. I felt good. I felt really good. You know, it's kind of like me saying something for Donatello and him getting it out to the world or whatever. So, it feels really good for a lot of people to watch the film because it's not about me. It's not—you know, whatever. It's about Donatello.

To Julisa, it "felt good" to get her message about his death "out into the world" and "recognized". When she says "hopefully it changed your mind about some stuff", she is talking about using her voice to interact with the people who see her movie. Julisa sees the important role the audience plays in her movie when she says "after it got recognized" as a way of indicating that her voice was heard by people. Voice is a concept that is used to show how people resist oppression as seen in many feminist and post-feminist theories (Belenky et al., 1986; Fine & Weis, 2003; hooks, 2000; Lather, 1992; Madoo, Lengermann & Niebrugge-Brantley, 1988). For the purposes of this study, voice also refers to instances where youth attempt to overcome and resist the ways in which schools work to silence (Fine & Weis, 2003) and marginalize students by reproducing inequalities on account of race, class, gender, disability, and sexuality (Bowles & Gintis, 1976; Oakes, 1985). Fortunately, in this case Julisa's story was not rejected by her English teacher as inappropriate for school or marginalized by her art teacher as not worthy for her video art.

One way that Tom and Julisa found their voice was by showing their movies at local youth film festivals. The film festivals allowed Tom and Julisa an opportunity to see how audiences responded to their movies and to realize that they are actually being heard by an audience, something Julisa refers to as being "recognized". In this way, digital video production is an example of how school-based literacy practices might offer youth new ways to move beyond just expressing issues that are important to their lives but extend to actually "being heard" by an audience within and beyond school.

Tom also talked about the good feelings that he got from showing his film to an audience.

> It's fun as heck. I can tell you that because if you look at it on the big screen and you're like wow, I produced that, I directed it, I edited it, it's my work and now people are looking at it and going wow … it's really cool—it's an awesome feeling.

Tom liked seeing his story on the big screen and talked about the fun of having your movie viewed by an actual audience. Showing your movie was considered to be "fun" to many of the students in this study and an important emotional dimension of multimodal literacy. Yet, making a movie was more than just "fun" to many of the students. It was also a way of positioning themselves as real filmmakers. Tom's movie was selected as an award winner at his school's film festival, which further cemented his identity as a filmmaker. At the time of writing this article, Tom is in a college filmmaking program and has worked on multiple films and television shows in Hollywood. In this sense, "being heard" by an audience helped Tom (and Julisa) open up new ways of seeing themselves and their role in the world.

Critical Multimodal Literacy

In their work with urban youth, Ernest Morrell (2008) and Marc Lamont Hill (2009) broaden our understanding of critical literacy by showing how people use literacy practices as a way of caring for themselves and their own emotional well-being. Morrell (2008, p. 167) argues that "reading and writing can play a crucial role in self-healing and self-definition for urban youth". Hill argues that public expression of everyday problems through storytelling offers youth a form of release and relief in order to heal life's wounds. Critical literacy is not just a way of reading and writing the world in an external sense, but it is also an opportunity to re-define who we are and how we might change society toward more just social arrangements. Digital storytelling puts the power of critical literacy in the hands of the youth who seek to change people's minds about unjust circumstances like violence against youth. Using her movie, Julisa positions herself as someone with a message to stop violence in her community and someone who cares about what she perceives as unjust. By showing her film to her classmates, families of violent crime victims, viewers of community television, and film festival audiences, she is able to bring attention to a problem that she perceives in her community. Using his movie, Tom reflects on problems in his life, anorexia, depression and the changes he would like to see in his life.

   The students in this study show how local definitions and uses of literacy connect to larger social issues like poverty, gun violence, anorexia, and mental illness. In terms of literacy practices, we can see how local uses of literacy and school-based literacies like digital video production need not be separated from larger social, cultural, political, historical, and economic arrangements in which they are situated. At the same time, Julisa places more blame on individuals in her community than on larger socio-economic inequities. Tom also fails to question how his situation is connected to larger social arrangements with regard to sexualities, body image, and relationships. Filmmaking at these two schools had the potential to be used in ways that included more questions about taken-for-granted social constructs such as violence, poverty, race, sexuality, gender, etc. and confront unjust social arrangements in the students' lives. As such, teachers could have, but failed to, encourage students to use video production to create their own visual stories that challenge of hegemonic conceptions of

reality, especially urban life and how it's often negatively represented in popular media. Therefore, while we are seeing critical literacy practices that connect personal circumstances with broader social issues, there were missed opportunities for critical literacies in the students' movies.

I recognize the critical multimodal literacy in Julisa's astute use of digital video production to conduct an analysis of social, cultural, historical and political arrangements both inward and outward. By inward, I mean that she used her digital movie to address the feelings that emerged when a tragic act of violence ended her friend's life and the emotional affect it had on her and her classmates. By outward, I mean Julisa resisted the notion that poverty and violence are the natural order of things and that social justice is possible with change. She used her movie to critique how we settle disputes and use guns in our society. The problem is that Julisa (and her classmates) were not encouraged by Mr. Clickner to explore the topic further in order to ask questions about the root causes for urban poverty and reframe violence as it is practiced through United States government policies. She was not challenged to consider why there is poverty concentrated in minority populations in urban centres or the economic conditions that are part of living in a capitalist society or how that connects to her friend Donatello's death. The students at both schools were not encouraged to question institutionalized racism, gender bias, violence against LGBT youth, cultural stereotypes, etc. In fact, at Garcia High School, one of the students made a profound movie about her friend who was questioning her sexuality only to have it banned from the school film festival by the principal for dealing with an "inappropriate topic". This is a missed opportunity for educators who believe that schools are potential sites of critical literacy, meaning making and transformative resistance. The data in this study suggests that much work needs to be done in terms of how multimodal literacy and digital video production might be re-framed with respect to critical thinking and thoughtful questioning of unjust power arrangements in society.

Conclusions

> These days it's hard to believe that my generation will survive long enough to see the next generation. Someone's dying every day, from a murder, a shooting, a car crash, or suicide. It becomes hard to try and make a change in a world where this kind of stuff is normal. Three years in video art has opened doors to three years of possible change. Through video art we get the ability to say anything and show it everywhere. It's become a new way of expressing our feelings. Not only does video art help make a change in the world and ourselves but we learn a sense of creativity. Mr. C doesn't write the scripts, we do. We imagine what we want our video to look like, and what our message is.
> *-Julisa*

In the excerpt above, Julisa talks about all the ways that video production allowed her choices to express her feelings, write the scripts, and determine the message for her video. Julisa's movie is indicative of how new literacy practices might be understood in contrast to autonomous approaches to literacy in school. An autonomous definition of literacy refers to the way that reading and writing is often reduced to a discrete set of technical and phonetic skills (Street, 1993, 1995). This is exemplified by school-based literacy programs that emphasize a 'back to basics' approach whereby students develop efficacy with coding and decoding printed words for school purposes as opposed to all the ways that people use literacy in everyday life. One teacher in this study justified opportunities to construct digital videos by saying that he can still teach students

'traditional English skills' and serve school purposes in the process of making a movie. Unfortunately, it is often in urban schools like Munson where we hear the loudest calls for reductionist conceptions of literacy 'skills' and 'back to basics'. Julisa's quote above suggests that a high degree of choice and flexibility in determining the uses and purposes for her movie made the literacy practices authentic. The authenticity came from students telling their stories to real audiences that reached beyond school as well as determining how they used literacy in school. Julisa and Tom's experiences with digital video production offer an argument for more opportunities in school for youth to tell their digital stories in authentic ways to real audiences.

I cannot claim that making a movie about their problems always solved the problems that adolescents face in their lives. Despite Julisa's powerful video, there is still a problem with violence in Lakefront that has yet to be solved and there are still many youth being shot on the streets. Tom and young people like him still struggle with depression, family dynamics, eating disorders and painful break-ups. I can, however, claim that making a movie, for some students, was a real opportunity to use the power of multimodal literacy to cope and heal from difficult circumstances. From my observations, I can say that when Julisa made a movie about her feelings regarding her friend's death, her life became a little better by publicly honouring his life in video. Tom clearly understood more about his life when he could express himself and be heard by an audience.

This study builds on New Literacy Studies as a theoretical framework in that it shows how students often used their movies to express deep emotional feelings about their lives and communities. I argue that New Literacy Studies theorists and classroom practitioners alike need to place more emphasis on the emotional affordances that multimodal literacies provide students in school. Recently, researchers like Morrell (2008), Ginwright (2010), Hill (2009), Wiseman and Wissman (2011), Hull and Nelson (2005) have begun theorizing what may be an affective turn in how we conceptualize literacies in the lives of youth as they have placed more emphasis on the intersection between the emotional and intellectual power of multimodal composition. As educators, it is our responsibility to be mutually invested in our students' intellectual and emotional wellbeing. This study makes a compelling argument that we consider classrooms and digital movies as spaces where students use literacies as a powerful means for addressing their own wellbeing. By offering students more opportunities to use digital video production in school and listening to the stories they tell in multiple mediums and formats (including printed texts), we might envision new ways of how we think about literacies and school in the lives of youth. Perhaps the most important purpose for filmmaking, literacies and schooling are to create spaces for engaging one's emotions, coping with emotional upheaval, dealing with socially toxic environments (Gabarino, 1995) and understanding one's place in the world.

Notes

[1] Pseudonyms are used to conceal the identity of the participants in this study.
[2] Pseudonyms are used for the names of specific high schools to conceal the identity of the participants in this study.

References

Barton, D., & Hamilton, M. (1998). *Local Literacies: Reading and writing in one community*. London: Routledge.

Barton, D., Hamilton, M., & Ivanic, R. (2000). *Situated Literacies: Reading and writing in context*. London: Routledge.

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). *Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind*. New York: Basic Books.

Bogdan, R., & Biklen, S. K. (1998). *Qualitative Research for Education: An Introduction to Theory and Practice*. Needham Heights, Massachusetts: Allyn and Bacon.

Bowles, S., & Gintis, H. (1976). *Schooling in Capitalist America: Educational Reform and the Contradictions of Economic Life*. New York: Basic Books.

Brandt, D., & Clinton, K. (2002). Limits of the local: Expanding perspectives on literacy as a social practice. *Journal of Literacy Research, 34*(3), 337-356.

Burn, A., & Parker, D. (2003a). *Analysing Media Texts*. London: Continuum.

Burn, A., & Parker, D. (2003b). Tiger's Big Plan: Multimodality and the Moving Image. In C. Jewitt & G. Kress (Eds.), *Mulitmodal Literacy* (pp. 56-72). New York: Peter Lang.

Callahan, M. (2002). Intertextual Composition: The Power of the Digital Pen. *English Education, 35*(1), 46-65.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory*. London: Sage.

Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (Eds.). (2000). *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures*. London: Routledge.

Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

De Block, L., Buckingham, D., Holzwarth, P., & Niestyo, H. (2004). *Visions Across Cultures: Migrant children using visual images to communicate, report for EC-funded project CHICAM (Children In Communication about Migration)*. London: University of London.

Dey, I. (1993). *Qualitative Data Analysis: A user friendly guide for social scientists*. London: Routledge.

Dowdy, J. K., Birney, S. M., & Reedus, N. G. (2004). College Bound Filmmakers: The journey to a screening. *The High School Journal, 88*(1), 14-26.

Dowdy, J. K., Reedus, N. G., Anderson-Thompkins, S., & Heim, P. L. (2003). The Making of Griots: One Black Filmmaker's Journey with Six Teenagers. *The High School Journal, 86*(4), 49-62.

Fairclough, N. (2000). Multiliteracies and language: Orders of discourse and intertextuality. In B. Cope & M. Kalantzis (Eds.), *Multiliteracies: Literacy learning and the design of social futures* (pp. 162-181). Melbourne: Macmillan.

Fine, M., & Weis, L. (2003). *Silenced Voices, Extraordinary Conversations: Re-imagining urban education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Gabarino, J. (1995). *Raisng Children in a Socially Toxic Environment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.

Gee, J. (1996). *Social Linguistics and Literacies: Ideology in Discourses*. London: Falmer.

Gee, J. (2000). Teenagers in new times: A new literacy studies perspective. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 43*(5), 15-23.

Gee, J. (2005). *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis Theory and Method*. New York: Routledge.

Gee, J., Hull, G., & Lankshear, C. (1996). *The New Work Order: Behind the Language of the New Capitalism*. Sydney, Australlia: Allen & Unwin.

Gibson, J. (1979). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Ginwright, S. (2010). *Black Youth Rising: Activism and Radical Healing in Urban America*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Goodman, S. (2003). *Teaching Youth Media: A critical guide to literacy, video production, and social change*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Greene, M. (1988). *The Dialectic of Freedom*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Hall, S. (1990). Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In J. Rutherford (Ed.), *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (pp. 222-237). London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Hall, S. (1996). The meaning of new times. In D. Morley & K.-H. Chen (Eds.), *Stuart Hall: Critical dialogues in cultural studies* (pp. 223-237). New York: Routledge.

Hall, S. (2001). The work of representation. In S. Hall (Ed.), *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices* (pp. 13-74). London: Sage.

Harvey, I., Parker, D., & Skinner, M. (2002). *Being Seen, Being Heard: Young People and Moving Image Production*. Leicester: The National Youth Agency.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with Words: Language, Life, and Work in Communities and Classrooms*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Hedlund, D. (1993). Listening to rural adolescents: Views on the rural community and the importance of adult interactions. *Journal of Research in Rural Education, 9*(3), 150-159.

Hill, M. L. (2009). Wounded Healing: Forming a Storytelling Community in Hip-Hop Lit. *Teachers College Record, 111*(1), 248-293.

Holland, D., Lachicotte, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

hooks, b. (2000). *Feminism is for Everybody*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.

Hull, G., & Katz, M. (2006). Crafting and Agentive Self: Case Studies of Digital Storytelling. *Research in the Teaching of English, 41*(1), 43-81.

Hull, G., Kenney, N., Marple, S., & Forsman-Schneider, A. (2006). *Many Versions of Masculine*: The Robert Bowne Foundation.

Hull, G., & Nelson, M. (2005). Locating the Semiotic Power of Multimodality. *Written Communication, 22*(2), 224-261.

Jewitt, C., & Kress, G. (2003). *Multimodal Literacy*. New York: Peter Lang.

Kress, G., & van Leeuwen, T. (2001). *Multimodal Discourse: The modes and media of contemporary communication*. London: Arnold.

Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2002). Do we have your attention? New literacies, digital technologies, and the education of adolescents. In D. E. Alvermann (Ed.), *Adolescents and Literacies in a Digital World* (pp. 20). New York: Peter Lang.

Lankshear, C., & Knobel, M. (2003). *New literacies: Changing knowledge and classroom learning*. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Lather, P. (1992). Critical frames in educational research: Feminist and post structural perspectives. *Theory Into Practice, 31*(1), 87-99.

Madoo Lengermann, P., & Niebrugge-Brantley, J. (1988). Contemporary feminist theory. In G. Ritzer (Ed.), *Sociological theory*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

Merriam, S. (1988). *The Case Study Research in Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and com-munities. *Theory into Practice, 31*(2), 132-140.

Morrell, E. (2008). *Critical Literacy and Urban Youth: Pedagogies of Access, Dissent, and Liberation*. New York Routledge.

Nelson, M. (2006). Mode, Meaning, and Synaesthesia in Multimedia L2 Writing. *Language, Learning & Technology, 10*(2), 56-76.

Oakes, J. (1985). *Keeping Track: How Schools Structure Inequality*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Pennebaker, J. (1997). Writing about emotional experience as a theraputic process. *Psychological Science, 8*(3), 162-166.

Ranker, J. (2008). Making meaning on the screen: Digital video production about the Dominican Republic. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy, 51*(5), 410-422.

Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1981). *The psychology of literacy.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Sfard, A., & Prusak, A. (2005). Telling Identities: In Search of an Analytic Tool for Investigating Learning as a Culturally Shaped Activity. *Educational Researcher, 34*(4), 14-22.

Stake, R. (2000). Case Studies. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (pp. 435-486). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.

Street, B. (1993). *Cross Cultural Approaches to Literacy.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Street, B. (1995). *Social literacies: Critical approaches to literacy development, ethnography, and education.* London: Longman Group Ltd.

Street, B. (2003). What's "new" in New Literacy Studies? Critical approaches to literacy in theory and practice. *Current Issues in Comparative Education, 5*(2), 1-14.

Street, B. (2005). Recent Applications of New Literacy Studies in Educational Contexts. *Research in the Teaching of English, 39*(4), 417-423.

Wissman, K., & Wiseman, A. M. (in press). "That's my worst nightmare": Poetry and trauma in the middle school classroom. . *Pedagogies: An International Journal.*

Yin, R. (2003). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Biographical Statement

Brian Bailey is an Assistant Professor of Education at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY (USA) where he teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in Adolescent Education. Brian earned a Bachelors of Science Degree from Cornell University (1992), holds a Masters Degree from Nazareth College in Educational Technology (2000) and received a Ph.D. in Teaching and Curriculum at the University of Rochester's Warner Graduate School of Education and Human Development (2009). His research focuses on the intersection of school-based curriculum and contemporary youth culture, particularly when adolescents use digital technologies to create forms of digital media such as short films, music videos, documentaries, etc in school. He is the co-founder and co-director of The Rochester Teen Film Festival and the Rochester Teen Summer Camp, both of which grew out of his research on Youth Media Production and Literacy. Prior to Nazareth College, Bailey held faculty appointments at The College of Saint Rose in Albany, NY (USA) and Yale University in New Haven, CT (USA).

Email: bbailey2@zimbra.naz.edu