What Counts as Writing? An Examination of Students' Use of Social Media Platforms as Alternative Authoring Paths

by

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ABSTRACT

In this article-style dissertation, I explore how students used digital technologies, specifically three social media platforms, as multimodal writing platforms while creating a digital portfolio in a senior English class. These platforms are 1) Weebly pages: a website building platform, 2) Weebly Blogs: a feature of Weebly, and 3) Instagram: a photo/video sharing application. Under a multiliteracies lens, I examine the changing nature of literacies and the educational practices surrounding learning literacies when mediated through social media.

First, I conducted an analysis of how the students in this class designed their portfolios. This is done through an examination of each students' Weebly homepage as well as an in-depth analysis two focal students across each of the social media platforms as illustrative cases. Findings show the students designed complex multimodal compositions that would have otherwise not been possible with the more formal, rigid forms of writing typical to this classroom. Implications for this study include embracing alternative authoring paths in classrooms beyond traditional forms of text-based writing to allow for students' interests to be included through their designs.

I also examined how students used each of the platforms and the pedagogical implications for those uses. I found that students used Instagram to write multimodally, which allowed them to express ideas in non-traditional ways that are often not present in classrooms. Students used Weebly pages to publically showcase their writing, which afforded them an opportunity to extend their writing to a larger audience. Students used Weebly Blogs to communicate informally, which allowed them to reflect on connections to the text. I offer implications for how teachers can use social media in the classroom.

Finally, I outline how Ms. Lee and her students oriented to the value of writing in this unit. Findings indicate that Ms. Lee, like many others, privileged print-based forms of writing, even in a more expansive project like the portfolio unit. The students oriented to this value by predominantly making meaning through textual modes throughout their portfolios. Implications extend to teachers expanding their classroom practices beyond the traditional forms of literacy for which they are trained.

For my Bubs and my Bug.
I couldn't have done it without you.
You are my favorites.

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"Ms. Lee," you gave up your class and time to help a stranger work on her dissertation. As a former classroom teacher, I know how hard that can be. I can't thank you enough for you time, enthusiasm, and trust in this project. I hope that I have done you justice in this dissertation. #GoCats

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly, people are interacting with others around the world to communicate and share information, especially through social media; one of the largest groups of people using social media are teenagers (Lenhart, 2015). In the Pew Research Center's seminal review in 2015 of the changing nature of teenagers' online habits, they reported that 92% of U.S. teenagers go online daily, and 71% use at least two social networking sites (Lenhart, 2015). These numbers have undoubtedly continued to grow as more and more people turn to social media for news, content sharing, and communication (Greenwood, Perrin, & Duggan, 2016). These communication practices are not exclusively relegated to online contexts, as they infiltrate and inform most every part of internet users' lives, which for teens and young people, includes school (Mills & Exley, 2014).

The ways that students interact and learn in schools continue to change as well, and many may thrive in learning situations where creativity, social interactions, and collaboration through technology are fronted (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Nichols, 2007). With this change in modern information sourcing and learning, many scholars, educators, stakeholders, and policy makers debate the ways in which learning should occur in schools. Many stakeholders further argue over what actually constitutes learning and how this can be seen and measured (Green, Skukauskaite, & Castanheira, 2013). In this dissertation, I focus on the changing nature of literacies and the educational practices surrounding developing literacy practices. Specifically, I examine the ways in which forms of writing are privileged in classrooms and how alternative authoring paths can

afford students potentials for meaning making beyond the traditional forms of text-based writing.

In this introductory chapter, I discuss the ways in which literacies and literacy education are continuously changing in light of the more globalized and digital lives of students and teachers. I approach these changing practices with a multiliteracies framework in tandem with a focus on multimodality, which I discuss briefly in the next section of this chapter. I then introduce the background to the problem for my dissertation, in which I describe the changing view of what constitutes writing as well as a need to better understand how scholars, teachers, and students view and use social and digital media for learning in the classroom (both of which are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2). I next discuss the context of the dissertation study, providing details about the participants, school, and the project before moving into my research questions that drive the study. Finally, I explicate the structure of the dissertation and provide a brief synopsis of each chapter.

Framing the Study: Multiliteracies and Multimodality

The role of literacies in education, a widely studied and heavily debated topic, is only further complicated by the changing landscape of communication mediated through increased digital technology use; continued research on this use is needed, as our views of reading, writing, and literacy continuously evolve (Street, 2013). Research suggests that the use of digital technology in the classroom is shifting from assisting and supplementing traditional literacy practices to the become main focus of the classroom that is beginning to drive curricula (Collin & Street, 2014). Subsequently, students' learning experiences are progressively shaped by the incorporation of new forms of

communication as literacy practices become enmeshed with digital technologies (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013; Magrino & Sorrell, 2014; O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014). With persistent curricular and research foci on technologies and their role in classroom literacy practices, the importance of examining the affordances of using technologies as classroom tools cannot be underestimated (e.g., Bialostok, 2014; Moje, 2016).

In the present study, I adopt a multiplicitous view of literacy (*multiliteracies*) as a lens with a complementary framing of meaning-making (*multimodality*) to acknowledge and embrace the many forms of literacies that students bring with them to the school context (McVee, Bailey, & Shanahan, 2008; Moje, 2009). As Kress and Street (2006) argue, multiliteracies concerns practices, events, and participants while multimodality is focused on modes (units of potential meaning), their design, and their affordances. Thus, scholars conducting studies framed through a multiliteracies lens in conjunction with multimodality aim to understand what the participants are *doing* (i.e., how are participants enacting literacy practices and events) as well as the *tools* with which those participants are enacting what they are doing (i.e., the modes, the design, and the affordances, Kress & Street, 2006).

According to a multiliteracies framework, a shift in classroom discourse (language in use for a specific context; Gee, 2014) occurs when teachers move beyond the traditional forms of literacy (i.e., paper and pencil), which, in turn, can lead to more engaging, inclusive, and open curricula and pedagogies (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Mills, 2009). As a result, many scholars over the last two decades have called for the need to more effectively integrate multimodal texts into the classroom through both reading and

composition/design to promote more engaging and inclusive curricula (e.g., Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kalantzis & Cope, 2000; Kellner, 2000; Leu, et al., 2013; McVee et al., 2008; Moje, 2009; Serafini, 2013).[1]

Consequently, in this study, I explore how students used digital technologies, specifically three social media platforms, as multimodal writing platforms while creating a digital portfolio in a senior English class. These platforms are (1) Weebly pages: a website building platform, (2) Weebly Blogs: a feature of Weebly that allows for interactive communication, and (3) Instagram: a social media photo and video sharing application. Each of these platforms will be discussed in detail later in this chapter. By employing a multiliteracies lens in conjunction with a focus on multimodality, I attempt to understand what the students in this class did with each of the platforms, how the students composed complex, multimodal texts across the platforms, and ultimately, what counted as writing within this particular context while working on each of these platforms.

Background to the Problem and Purpose

As many western societies continue to insist on traditional forms of learning, literacies, and writing through linguistic modes, the ways in which students are learning and writing are confined (Kress, 2000; Perry, 2012). Thus, scholars continually call for action in schools to address the more globalized and digital world in which students are learning and practicing literacies (e.g., Green et al., 2013; Kelly, Luke, & Green, 2008 New London Group, 1996). One opportunity for embracing this changing and expanding

[1] It is important to note, however, that simply because a text is paper and pencil does not mean that it is not multimodal and/or beneficial to students (see Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013).

nature of literacies is through social media, which can connect students to contexts beyond the walls of the classroom (Hughes & Morrison, 2014; Magrino & Sorrell, 2014; Robbins, & Singer, 2014). In the following section, I briefly discuss a multiliteracies-framed approach to the changing nature of writing before moving on to a discussion of social media's potential role in reshaping and renegotiating traditional views of writing in education. Through my brief review of these areas, I highlight the perceived gaps in the literature that this study helps to fill, examining how a teacher negotiates what counts as writing in digital contexts that allow for non-linear, multimodal compositions and what the use of social media as a writing platform can afford students and teachers in the classroom when tied to a strong theoretical framework such as multiliteracies.

The Changing Nature of Writing

Contemporary researchers, especially those employing a multiliteracies framework like the one used here, often take writing to be progressive, multimodal, and constantly changing. While even as recently as two decades ago, writing was seen as the singular textual mode, many literacy scholars now acknowledge the multimodal nature of texts and the design involved in their production (see Bezemer & Kress, 2014). For many, writing now refers to literacy practices that expand the traditional notions of modes, media, and genre (Mills & Exley, 2014). While linguistic modes are traditionally valued in schools (King & O'Brien, 2002; Miller & Borowicz, 2006; Nelson, Hull, & Roche-Smith, 2008; Shanahan, 2013), this view is changing as the nature of literacy and what people recognize as literacies changes (Lankshear & Knobel, 2003; Miller & McVee, 2012; Unsworth, 2006).

Thus, framed by a multiliteracies lens, the conception of writing has begun to

shift as more scholars, students, stakeholders, etc. begin to acknowledge and accept a broader definition of writing. According to Breuch (2002), writing has transformed into "an indeterminate activity rather than a body of knowledge to be mastered" (p. 139), which is tied to social, political, and systems (Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Kress, 2003; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016). As more people involved in education begin to shift their understandings of what writing can be, what it means to write, and how writing is framed, literacy education has been expanding beyond the traditional views of print-based writing that is confined to the space of the classroom. Because the purview of writing now includes broadened ideas of context, media, genre, and modes, more research is "needed to investigate how literacy practices in the current times become integrated within writing curricula in the formative years of schooling" (Mills & Exley, 2014, p. 435). The transformative ideas about writing affect school curricula, and these changes need to be analyzed, a goal to which this dissertation contributes.

Multiliteracies scholars attempt to critically engage and expand the notion of what counts as literacy and learning while also trying to understand the factors that impact how "what counts" is negotiated, especially in schools. Many multiliteracies scholars have examined questions of what counts to better understand what it means when students are learning, reading, and writing (all described broadly) multimodally (e.g., Mills & Exley, 2014; Shanahan, 2013). Many studies tout the benefits of multimodal authoring, especially for marginalized students (e.g., Anderson, Stewart, Kachorsky, 2017; Archer, 2006; Bezemer & Kress, 2014). Yet scholars still argue that more research is needed regarding what counts as writing on digital platforms, according to whom, and how the context of where writing occurs might affect this judgement (Green et al., 2013; Mills &

Exley, 2014). Because writing can occur in non-linear forms and take many shapes in digital media, its definition becomes slightly more blurred than in traditional forms of text-based writing. Furthermore, students may hold an open idea about what counts as writing in informal contexts, but hold another in formal contexts such as school. Thus, while researchers have investigated how students are using multimodal composition tools in particular contexts, the multiliteracies field continues to reimagine the concept of literacies and how digital media can offer new pathways to make meaning (Gleason, 2016; Hull & Nelson, 2005; Smith, 2016; Sperling & DiPardo, 2008).

However, not all people, including those involved in classroom writing practices, take the same open view on writing; many students and/or teachers still hold a more traditional view of literacies and writing, where writing is based in textual modes and may be reluctant to accept broadened curricula (VanKooten & Berkley, 2016). Thus, this study examines the experiences and the context around the implementation of a multimodal project wherein the opportunity to renegotiate what counts as writing and the contexts in which writing can occur was presented, specifically through social media platforms.

Social Media in the Classroom

Because of its fluid and globalized nature, there are many definitions of social media. Generally, the term social media "refers to any technology that facilitates the dissemination and sharing of information over the Internet" (Robbins & Singer, 2014, p. 387). Social media can be hosted through a myriad of platforms (the hard/software used to host a program or application) and can have many different, often overlapping, uses, for writing. For example, social media can be used broadly for writing through sharing,

designing, and communicating via photos, videos, text, and remixed and sourced information. Such writing can occur primarily with friends and family (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube) or with more professional contacts (e.g., Academia.edu, ResearchGate). Social media can also be used for more specialized tasks like blogging and publishing content (e.g., Twitter, Blogger, Tumblr, WordPress, Weebly), sharing photos, videos, drawings, and/or text, (e.g., Vine, Snapchat, Instagram, Twitter), connecting professionally and/or finding employment (LinkedIn), sharing sourced information and discussing it (e.g., Pinterest, Reddit, Twitter), gaming (e.g., Farmville, Gardens of Time, Mob Wars), archiving and categorizing information (Pocket, Google+, Pinterest), reviewing businesses (e.g., Yelp, Angie's List), etc. There is considerable overlap in the use of many of these social media platforms, and people use each in distinct ways, often representing themselves and taking up varying literacy practices differently on each (Buck, 2012; Halverson, 2009).

Thus, social media platforms uniquely offer learners potentials to reach beyond the classroom for writing contexts, sourced information, inspiration, and connections that can be crucial resources. As a result, numerous scholars have argued for decades that, given these changes catalyzed by digital technologies, school curricula must also change and adapt to the new literacy practices associated with said technologies that can effectively reframe pedagogical practices to acknowledge the changing nature of literacy practices as mediated through social media (e.g., Ajayi, 2015; Kalantzis & Cope, 2001; Mills, 2009; Moje, 2009, 2016; New London Group, 2000). While social media have long been included in classrooms as writing tools (see Stewart, 2016), the primary focus on those platforms was oft on the linguistic modes for meaning making (Jewitt, 2005;

Shanahan, 2013) and not on the complex interplay of modes for design and writing multimodally that digital and social media platforms can afford.

However, even though social media and other multimodal texts are sometimes viewed as revolutionary, their implementation can be relatively inconsequential. According to Bazalgette and Buckingham (2013), terms such as *social media*, *digital*, *multimedia*, and *multimodal* "seem to function merely as eye-catching ways to spice up a promotion, rather than having any specific meanings" (p. 96) when used in educational marketing. The terms may ring hollow when they are not grounded in a strong theoretical model (i.e., viewed as more than just skills; Street, 2003). Thus, their implementation is supplemental or trivial as teachers are left with the burden of understanding how social media can effectively fit within their practices to enhance learning. Therefore, even though participatory tools like social media are now quite common in and outside of school, according to some scholars (e.g., Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013; Collin & Street, 2014; Crook, 2012; Shanahan, 2013), many classroom teachers still need more support in understanding how to bring these elements into effective alignment with their practices, despite the many asserted benefits an interactive classroom can offer when implemented in conjunction with complementary ideology.

Consequently, more research is needed on the potential uses of social media in the classroom when tied to a strong theoretical framing such as multiliteracies. Many argue that because a teacher's role is to prepare students for the future and many of the not-yet-thought-of careers that it may hold, the practices associated with navigating digital technologies must be incorporated into the classroom (e.g., Kelly et al., 2008; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013). Moje (2016) further posits that, in accordance

with a multiliteracies framework, an ability for students to interpret, analyze, and reflect on textual design differences across domains (specialized spheres of knowledge or activity) should be a hallmark for today's increasingly more technology-based education. By understanding how to write within various social media platforms, students may become more familiar with the nuanced differences of designing across various domains.

While many scholars agree that including non-traditional literacies and authoring paths is important, many teachers may still feel ill-prepared with how to do so (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013; Crook, 2012; Shanahan, 2013). Thus, in order for social media use to be of value in the classroom, teachers need to know how to scaffold and discuss how to compose multimodally (New London Group, 1996; Shanahan, 2013). In their seminal piece defining multiliteracies, the New London Group (1996) suggested that teachers need to incorporate four critical elements into their pedagogy: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Briefly, situated practice refers to building on a student's previous life experiences; overt instruction means teachers explicitly teach and scaffold classroom activities; critical framing encourages students to engage critically with texts to better understand the context and design perspectives; and transformed practice asks students to critically examine meanings and design new ones (Hughes, & Morrison, 2014; Mills, 2009; New London Group, 1996). These tenets are meant to be incorporated into instruction simultaneously and revisited frequently by teachers (New London Group, 1996). However, these suggestions were made over 20 years ago, and still, researchers continue to call for more research into understanding the best ways to shift classroom literacy practices to meet the demands of an ever increasingly digital world.

There are many unresolved questions surrounding the use of social media in the classroom. For example, there still remains little research "demonstrating the significant shifts that might be involved for teachers in terms of the temporal and spatial arrangements in digital composition classrooms, and of the changing evaluative requirements for legitimate texts to be produced by students as evidence of 'learning'" (Mills & Exley, 2014, p. 436; Mills, 2010). Understanding these shifts in compositional arrangements and the changes in assessments is critical to recognizing how teachers' practices much change. Specifically, there are questions surrounding what changes need to be made to teachers' ideas of what counts as writing in the classroom and how they renegotiate this within their curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Furthermore, while there are numerous studies about social media's general communicative uses (including in the classroom, which will be discussed in Chapter 2), questions remain about the pedagogical implications of these uses for various types of social media platforms within the same classroom (see Conole & Dyke, 2004; Greenhow & Gleason, 2014; Manca & Ranieri, 2013; Oliver, 2005; Stewart, 2016; Stornaiuolo, Higgs, & Hull, 2013). This study hopes to address these gaps in the literature to better understand social media as an authoring path for students while also examining the ways in which the teacher privileges forms of writing based on her beliefs and experiences.

Context of the Study

This study adds to the body of literature exploring how social media can be incorporated into the classroom to expand notions of writing, in alignment with a multiliteracies framework, by examining how a class of 26 high school senior English students used Weebly pages (a website building platform), Weebly Blogs (a blogging

feature of Weebly), and Instagram (a photo and video sharing mobile app) to create a reflective digital portfolio about their literacy practices throughout their schooling.

The study took place in a public, charter K-12 school in the Southwestern U.S. that serves predominantly first generation college-bound students and helps to prepare them for university attendance. I worked with a junior and senior English teacher, Ms. Lee, to create a unit for her capstone-level senior English (12th grade) students for the final quarter of the year (April through May).[2] Though we had never met before, Ms. Lee volunteered to be a part of the study after she expressed interest in working with social media in her classroom for a reflective unit for her students' last semester of high school. She expressed to me in a pre-study meeting that she wanted to include some new kinds of writing wherein students would be reflecting on their literacy practices via modes and platforms that they had not yet used, and she felt that including social media as a writing platform may offer such opportunity.

After meeting together, Ms. Lee and I discussed the goals and direction of the unit. I presented Ms. Lee with a general idea for the unit, as I did not want to dictate how her class would be run. The original idea for the unit was based on a pilot study I conducted in a university-level course for which I was the instructor wherein I had students reflect on the process of creating a Weebly-based portfolio through Instagram. Though the Weebly-based portfolio was not originally part of the idea presented to Ms. Lee (rather, simply reflecting on a project of her choice using Instagram), Ms. Lee liked the digital portfolio idea and wanted to include it in the unit. Based on these original ideas presented in planning meetings, Ms. Lee more thoroughly designed the unit, asking

[2] All names are pseudonyms.

me for input and ideas during her planning. This input included feedback on prompts, ideas for Weebly designs and pages, and information from my previously conducted pilot study. Thus, while I presented the idea for the unit, Ms. Lee predominantly designed the unit, keeping me up-to-date with her decisions and occasionally asking for minimal input.

In accordance with my original idea, Ms. Lee created the unit to give students relative agency over their time and priorities as they wrote within three very different social media platforms to create complex, multimodal compositions on each platform that was opened to a larger audience. This kind of open-ended, multimodal, student-centered project was atypical for Ms. Lee, who usually provided heavily-structured templates and rubrics for her students.

Furthermore, as this course was a capstone-level English Literature course, Ms. Lee characterized her typical assignments as quite formal, requiring students to predominantly write literature analyses through linguistic modes while citing texts and making critical commentary. I witnessed this characterization during my classroom observations, which Ms. Lee corroborated during an interview. Thus, by her own admissions and in what I observed, the class normally featured little creative or expressive writing and hardly any multimodal composition. As a result of the formality of the writing environment, Ms. Lee expressed that she did not know the students as well-rounded people, but more as specific types of academic writers and students in the context of her classroom, even though she had taught this group both their junior and senior years of high school for English. The context that Ms. Lee and the students had created was one where the focus was on critically engaging and analyzing texts wherein the students were relatively removed from personal reflection. However, the unit under

study, the portfolio unit, included a moderately open-ended assignment where students chose pieces to showcase, designed their portfolios using multiple modes and working across platforms, expressed personal ideas and reflections, and directed their time as needed (see Figure 1 for the portfolio assignment sheet given to students). Ms. Lee designed the portfolio unit (in consultation with me) for students to be able to reflect on their literary lives for the past 12 years, creating a sort of narrative of important literary moments, changes, and growth, from their perspectives.

Before the portfolio unit began, I provided Ms. Lee with a tutorial activity to help students become familiar with the social media platforms, which required them to create a practice Weebly page, a Weebly Blog post, and an Instagram post. I also provided Ms. Lee with examples of Instagram posts ranging from "exemplary" to "needing improvement" from the aforementioned pilot study I conducted with undergraduate students (judgement of "exemplary" or "needs improvement" was based on multimodal meaning-making within the posts, i.e., the interaction of the modes to create a larger meaning than the modes alone). Ms. Lee also created an example portfolio consisting of Weebly pages required as part of the unit, a Weebly Blog post, and an example Instagram post. Ms. Lee often directed students to the Weebly pages for instructions and information, and her URL was on all daily projected agendas. However, compared to the typical classroom assignments with heavily structured templates and rubrics, there was little other scaffolding provided to the students for how they should complete their portfolios. Ms. Lee allowed the students to personalize their portfolios with relative agency as long as they included the required posts and pages. This was in part because she was unsure of what to expect from such a comparatively new and open project and

because she wanted the portfolios to be meaningful to the students beyond their use for this class assignment.

To create their portfolios, student worked within three social media platforms, each of which were used differently and for varying authoring purposes. I next discuss each of these platforms and for what purposes they were used in the portfolio unit.

NAME PERIOD

SENIOR WRITING PORTFOLIO
A-Level English Literature
DUE FRIDAY, MAY 13, 2016

Please use the following checklist as you prepare your Senior Writing Portfolio for final assessment.

- **Landing/Home page** of Senior Writing Portfolio is professional-looking and conveys the purpose/content of website.
- **Header/Title** of each page is labeled clearly and professionally.
- **Scavenger Hunt/Sandbox** page is hidden as a sub-page under 'About' or 'Home'.
- Portfolio is free of spelling/grammar errors and typos, including blog posts.
- Portfolio has professional/academic content on all pages.

- **Portfolio has FIVE (and only five) main sections:**
  - **ABOUT THIS PORTFOLIO** - includes an image/photo representing you and three sections: yourself, your reading, and your writing
  - **ACADEMIC WRITING** - includes three items (as sub-pages or all together):
    - **Original Essay** - Embed using "Document" element or copy/paste into a "Text" element.
    - **Revision of Essay** - Provide a download link using "File" element and/or email to Ms. Lee.
    - **Reflection** - Answer all four questions.
  - **PERSONAL & CREATIVE WRITING**
    - **3 Writing Samples** - Show a range of styles and content. Showcase your best writing skills. Revise. Edit!
    - **Reflection** - Answer all four questions.
  - **LITERACY MEMOIR**
    - **Literacy Timeline** - Use the "Embed" element and a code from edu.hstry.co (ask Ms. Lee for help).
    - **Literacy Memoir -** Provide download link using "File" element and/or email to Ms. Lee.
    - **Reflection** - Answer all four questions.
  - **BLOG** - all labeled with post #

• **Blog Post 1** • Blog Post 2 - extra credit • **Blog Post 3** • **Blog Post 4** • **Blog Post 5**	• **Blog Post 6** • **Blog Post 7** • **Blog Post 8** • **Blog Post 9**

- **INSTAGRAM** - all labeled with your unique hashtag (Lee + class + First name + Last initial) (Ex: #LeeM2AmberL)

• **IG Post 1 #LeeM_sh** • **IG Post 2 #LeeM_essayrevision** • **IG Post 3 #LeeM_talkingwriting**	• **IG Post 4 #LeeM_mypoem** • **IG Post 5 #LeeM_litmemoir**

Figure 1. The assignment directions given to students and posted on Ms. Lee's example portfolio for students to use.

Weebly pages. The Weebly pages comprised the bulk of the portfolio unit, as the

students spent the most time and effort working on them. Ms. Lee also graded these the closest, using a rubric and grading each item carefully. For this component, students worked within Weebly (a website building tool) to create multiple pages to showcase their writing. Students could design their websites from scratch or select any theme of their choice (a premade set fonts, colors, and pictures where applicable) and edit this theme as they saw fit (e.g., including/changing other pictures, changing fonts, changing header types). Because of the drag-and-drop design features of Weebly, students could arrange pictures, text, and embedded items in a multitude of ways (see Figure 2 for Weebly elements design toolbar). This ease of arrangement allowed the students to quickly design the layout of their pages and include multiple modes (potentially working in conjunction) for meaning making.

Ms. Lee impressed upon the students many times that the portfolio was meant to stand alone outside of the class as well, and thus, they needed to consider the larger audience for which they were designing. This consideration helped to situate the portfolio, especially Weebly pages, outside of the class, which is an important tenet of multiliteracies. As students designed their Weebly pages, they then had to consider the focus of the reader and the potential interpretations that he/she may have based on their designs.

Though students had relative agency over the design of their Weebly pages, they were required to include four sections, which predominantly focused on linguistic modes. These required sections were: Academic Writing, Personal and Creative Writing, Literacy Memoir, and About Me. For the *Academic Writing* section of the portfolio, Ms. Lee asked students to pick an essay they had written for her class that they would either

like to improve or did not complete, then revise (or write) the essay and reflect on the process. For the *Personal and Creative Writing* section, Ms. Lee requested that students to pick a range of three pieces to showcase their writing. The pieces could be from any time and for any purpose (i.e., they did not have to be for Ms. Lee's class). Students at this school keep a Google Drive to house most of their writing and assignments, and consequently they had access to writings for the duration of their time at the school. While most students included solely text-based writing for this section, several also included multimodal writing that included image, text, and layout as prominent modes of meaning making. The *Literacy Memoir* was a new essay where students textually wrote a reflection about an important moment in their literacy practices. Ms. Lee did set aside specific class time to scaffold lessons about the Literacy Memoir, as it was a large focus of the portfolio unit and students were writing a new essay. For each of these three sections, Ms. Lee also provided students with four required reflection questions to prompt reflection on their growth as writers, which they answered using textual modes.

Students also included an *About Me* section, textually introducing the reader to the portfolio and giving some description about themselves as readers and writers. Students also included a picture or other representation of themselves on the About Me page as well. The directions as well as the reflection questions for the Academic Writing, Personal and Creative Writing, and Literacy Memoir sections were also located on Ms. Lee's detailed sample Weebly website.

Though Ms. Lee used a rubric to grade the students' Weebly pages (see Figure 3), the rubric was much less detailed than some of the others that she used (especially for literary analyses). Ms. Lee expressed to me that she was unsure of the authoring

capabilities with an open platform and open-ended assignment, and thus, did not want to stifle creativity or have students follow a heavily-guided rubric.

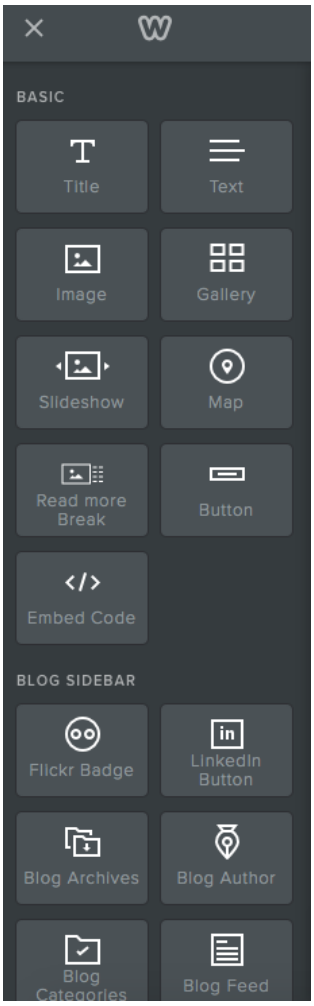


Figure 2. Drag and drop Weebly elements design toolbar.

NAME PERIOD

SENIOR ENGLISH PORTFOLIO FINAL ASSESSMENT - Capstone-Level English Literature

FEATURE & POINT VALUE	QUALITY ASSESSMENT				POINTS
About Page (10 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Academic Writing					
Revised Essay (Score incorp. into Q3 grade)	Posted or Submitted		Missing		
Reflection (10 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Personal & Creative Writing					
Three Writing Samples (10 points)	Posted		Missing		
Reflection (10 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Literacy Memoir					
Timeline (10 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Memoir (25 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Reflection (10 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Blog					
Post 1 (10 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Post 2 (5 points extra credit)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Post 3 (10 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Post 4 (10 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	
Post 5 (10 points)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor	

COMMENTS:

Figure 3. Ms. Lee's rubric for grading the Weebly pages.[3]

Weebly Blogs. I separate Weebly Blogs from Weebly pages in that they served different functions through their features and how they were used in the unit. For example, the layout for each is different, and students could use Weebly Blogs for commenting, posting chronologically, and archiving. Furthermore, Weebly Blogs were treated as different platforms in the class (through the assignment sheet, discursive interactions, etc.) and were graded separately. Though most students used textual modes

[3] Only the first five blog posts are listed on this side of the rubric.

to make meaning in their Weebly Blogs, some included other modes and personalization such as pictures, changes in font and font size, and pop-culture references.

Students wrote eight blog entries as part of the portfolio unit (with one optional post). Ms. Lee used Weebly Blogs as a way for students to reflect on the progress of their Weebly pages as well as their reading for the class. Thus, many of the blog prompts centered around a project on which the students were working wherein they re-read a book and reflected on the differences they noticed between their first time reading the book and now (see Table 1 for a complete list of Weebly Blog prompts). Ms. Lee used the Weebly Blogs as a way for students to quickly and informally reflect on aspects of their assignments, and she generally gave students about ten to fifteen minutes to complete the blog posts in class. While Ms. Lee did not originally provide length requirements, two of the last three prompts read "write at least one paragraph," and the other read "write for at least 10 minutes." Ms. Lee read each blog post carefully and graded the students on the thoroughness of their text-based response.

Students' Weebly Blog posts were much more informal than the text-based writing on their Weebly pages, in part because blogs are typically viewed as more informal and journal-like (Liew, 2010; Manca & Ranieri, 2013; Rambe, 2012; Stornaiuolo, Higgs, & Hull, 2013). Recognizing this rhetorical feature, students often wrote with less prescriptive grammar and included personal reflections and interests throughout.

Table 1.

Weebly Blog Post Prompts with optional Blog post #2

POST #	***PROMPT/DIRECTIONS***
1	Write about your reading choice for The Great Re-Read project. What are you re-reading? Why are you re-reading it? What do you hope to gain from re-reading it?
2 (BONUS)	Embed your Instagram post into a blog post. Add whatever additional related text you'd like.
3	Where are you in your re-reading right now? If you're at least a few pages in, how is the beginning different/similar to how you remembered it? If you haven't started your re-read yet, why/why not? What do you remember from the beginning of the book?
4	Sometimes we are pulled toward one or two characters in the story. We identify with them or feel sympathy for them. With which characters do you identify in the book, and why do you believe you identify with them? Is your understanding of particular characters different this time than the first time you read the book? How? Why do you think this has changed?
5	Consider your work on the Senior Writing Portfolio over the past week. Give yourself a rating from 1 to 5 stars. Explain why you deserve this rating. Describe what you plan to do to keep up with the requirements of the Senior Writing Portfolio in the next few weeks. Discuss any questions, worries, anxieties, or problems you have had with

	the project so far. How do you plan to address these?
6	Sometimes when we read, certain words or phrases or images stand out. Maybe they are words or phrases that make an impression because of their sound, or maybe the meaning or image they make strikes us. Sometimes we find words or expressions we just do not understand. Perhaps there is something you're noticing on this re-reading that you didn't notice the last time you read it. Share those that you have come across and describe why you listed them. Write at least two paragraphs with clear examples (providing direct quotation and page numbers if applicable).
7	If you could ask any character a question, what would you ask? If you could ask the author a question, what might that be? Explain why you chose these questions. Write at least one paragraph.
8	Choose ONE item from the literacy timeline you created today and tell the story of that experience. What makes this moment memorable? Write for at least 10 minutes.
9	As you (hopefully) wrap up your re-reading of your book in the next week, reflect on your experience. What have you gained from your re-reading of this book? Are you glad you re-read it? Explain why or why not. Write at least one paragraph.

Instagram. Ms. Lee created five prompts to elicit students' posts to Instagram

(see Table 2 for the Instagram prompts). These prompts were designed to encourage students' reflection on the creation of their portfolios (specifically their Weebly pages) as well as their literacy practices in and out of the classroom. For safety reasons, students did not create individual accounts but rather shared a class account. Therefore, to identify the students' posts, they hashtagged each with their names, the assignment hashtag, and any other hashtags they felt were appropriate. For all but one post, Ms. Lee also required students to include captions beyond the required hashtags, and most posts (95.2%) did. Students could post to Instagram in or out of class, though many chose to post during class time.

Table 2.

Instagram Posts Prompts

DATE	*POST #*	*PROMPT/DIRECTIONS*
3/31	1	Take a picture/video of this page [Weebly practice page] and post to Instagram with a reflection of how easy/difficult you felt that this assignment was. Use the hashtags #LeeM3FirstnameLastinitial (You'll use this for EVERY IG post you make.) AND #LeeM3SH (SH for Scavenger Hunt) as well as any other hashtags you feel are appropriate.
4/4	2	Post about your progress/experience revising an old essay. You can be literal (a shot of your actual essay) or figurative (something more abstract) in your choice of image. Include a caption that explains what you're thinking/feeling. Don't forget to use #LeeM3FirstnameLastinitial and use #LeeM3EssayRevision for this post.
4/7	3	Post about someone you talk to about your writing, personal or academic. (You MUST have their permission if you post a photo of their face!) This could be a person you talk through your ideas with, a person who reads your drafts, etc. Explain what makes this person a good source of writing help for you. Use #LeeM3TalkingWriting for this post, and don't forget to use #LeeM3FirstnameLastinitial to identify all your posts.
4/14	4	Post at least one of the poems you wrote or worked on today. A work-in-progress (#WIP) is okay! What is one thing you like about your poem? Use #LeeM3MyPoem for this post, and don't forget to use #LeeM3FirstnameLastinitial to identify all your posts.

5/10	5	Post an image to represent your feelings/experience writing a literacy memoir so far. Include a reflective/explanatory caption with your image. Use #LeeM3LitMemoir for this post, and don't forget to use #LeeM3FirstnameLastinitial to identify all your posts.

The Instagram posts could feature either a picture or a video, though most (98.4%) were of still pictures. Pictures and videos generally focused around computers, people, poems, and illustrative pictures as per the provided prompts. Neither Ms. Lee nor her students had used Instagram as a classroom writing platform before, and Ms. Lee was slightly hesitant about how to use it in an English language arts class. Furthermore, Ms. Lee expressed that she struggled with how to grade the Instagram posts because it was not something she was "trained in." Perhaps because of this, Ms. Lee focused on the text-based modes of students' posts for grading, assessing the picture based on "if it was there." Despite this, most students adeptly attended to the interplay of modes, allowing for greater meaning making as a result (Jewitt, 2005).

Participants. Twenty-six 17 and 18 year olds representing a range of racial identifications and SES (though the majority were lower SES and Hispanic) participated in the study in their last semester of high school (April through May; see Table 3 for demographics and relative familiarity with the platforms). Before the study began, I surveyed the students for baseline demographics and to better understand their perceptions surrounding writing and using social media as writing platforms (two students were absent that day). I then selected six focal students, in part based on their responses to a question on the pre-study survey, "I like to write." I selected two students

who responded with a 1 (strongly disagree), two who either selected 2 or 3, and two students who selected 4 (strongly agree). I also based my selection of the focal students on classroom behaviors, focusing on a mixture of students who seemed gregarious, quiet, rebellious, etc. This selection was to ensure a diverse group of students that might approach school and school activities differently. Furthermore, I selected an equal number of males and females and students whose racial identification represented that of the class and the overall school (i.e., predominantly Hispanic). I then observed these students more carefully than the others, conducting more frequent in-situ interviews with them than non-focal students, focusing on their physical relationship to technologies and other students, noting their class activities, and detailing their portfolio development. I also interviewed four of the six focal students on the final day of the unit (two were absent). These final four focal students were Marta, Carla, Daniel, and Julio, whom I now introduce in more detail.

Table 3

Student Demographics, N=24

Gender	66.7% Female 33.3% Male
Age	50% 17 50% 18
Race/Ethnicity	58.3% Hispanic 20.8% Caucasian 8.3% African American

	4.2% Asian American 4.2% Native American 4.2% Other
Experience with Technology	66.7% "I use it all the time" 33.3% "I use it frequently"
Used Instagram Before	87.5% Yes 12.5% No
Used Weebly Before	83.3% Yes 16.7% No
Used Weebly Blogs Before	29.2% Yes 70.8% No

Note. Two students were absent the day that the pre-study survey was taken.

Marta was a relatively friendly but somewhat quiet student who indicated a love of writing (selecting 4 in response to "I like to write" and voiced this throughout my time in the classroom) and identifies as Hispanic and female. Carla was a very quiet, thoughtful, and shy student who indicated that she likes to write (selecting 3 in response to "I like to write") and identifies as Hispanic and female. Daniel was an outspoken, joking, and emotionally expressive student who responded that he did not really like to write (selecting 2 in response to "I like to write") and identifies as Caucasian and male. Finally, Julio, a quiet and disinterested student, identified as hating to write (selecting 1 in response to "I like to write" and voicing this numerous times) and as Hispanic and male

Research Questions

I began my dissertation study with two questions that directed my focus to the ways in which students used these three social media platforms, first looking at a comparison of the platforms and what they offered students and focusing on how the focal students created complex, multimodal texts across each of the platforms. However, as I became immersed in this classroom and the data, another issue arose: what counted as writing in this particular classroom while working on an open-ended, student-centered, multimodal project that was atypical for this class wherein students were positioned agentively and using multiple platforms to write and make meaning? This question became a guiding force as I interviewed my focal students on our final day and as I began my data analysis. Thus, the question of "what counts" became an important part in understanding the context of this classroom and the implications of my study that builds on my other two questions. Therefore, my final research questions became:

- How did students design their portfolios in ways that otherwise may not have been possible in this classroom? (Article One, Chapter 3)
- What were the predominant student-uses of each of the social media platforms and what were the resulting pedagogical implications of those uses? (Article Two, Chapter 4)
- What forms of writing did Ms. Lee privilege and how did her students orient to this value? (Article Three, Chapter 5)

To answer these questions, I collected and analyzed all student artifacts across each of the platforms, pre- and post-study survey responses, video-recordings from 12 classroom visits, field notes from those classroom visits, numerous in-situ interviews

with six focal students as well as other students who were working in the class, four focal-student interviews, a reflective interview with Ms. Lee five months after the unit, and a reflective essay that Ms. Lee wrote as a piece of professional development one month after the portfolio unit. All of these data were analyzed differently according to the research questions, though my analyses were overlapping and my understanding from research question added to each other (see Chapters 3-5 for methodological details for each article).

Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is an article-format dissertation wherein I answer each of my research questions through an article-style chapter that is intended to stand alone. This format expedites the process of my dissertation making published contributions to the field over traditionally formatted dissertations (Berelson, 1960; Breimer, Janssen, & Damen, 2005; Gilman, 1974; Topper, 2016).

In the first article (Chapter 3), "Multimodal composition through social media platforms: Alternative authoring paths for meaning making," I examine the ways in which the students in this class designed complex, personal, multimodal portfolios. I begin with an analysis of each student's Weebly homepage to provide a brief look at how students designed their portfolios. I then conducted an in-depth analysis of the ways in which two focal students designed across each of the social media platforms as illustrative cases. Findings show that the students created multimodal portfolios that conveyed information that may not have otherwise been possible through the more formal, text-based forms of writing that were typical to this classroom. One student, Marta, created a relatively consistent tone across the platforms, including multiple modes,

personal interests, and humor through the interplay of modes in her design. The other focal student, Julio, juxtaposed various tones and modes throughout his portfolio, creating a more inconsistent tone. Implications for this study include embracing alternative authoring paths in classrooms beyond traditional forms of formal text-based writing to allow for students' interests to be included through their designs (Domingo, 2012; Kress, 2003; Vasudevan, 2010).

For the second article (Chapter 4), "Students' use of social media for classroom writing," I examined how the students used each social media platform and the pedagogical implications of those uses. To do so, I conducted a close examination of each of the platforms using descriptive matrices (Bazerman, 2006). I supplemented this analysis with interviews from the focal students as well as students' open-ended responses from the post-study survey and an analysis of my interview with Ms. Lee. I found that students used each of the platforms distinctly. In brief, I found that the students used Instagram to write multimodally, which allowed them to express ideas in non-traditional ways that are often not seen or valued in classrooms, especially in this one. For their Weebly pages, students publically showcased their writing, which afforded them an opportunity to extend their writing to a larger audience. Finally, students used Weebly Blogs to communicate their ideas informally, which allowed them to reflect on their connections to the text. Implications extend to the notion that social media platforms may offer unique benefits based on the platform and how students take them up within a given context. Understanding these uses can allow teachers to effectively incorporate social media into their classrooms as potentially beneficial authoring platforms. Furthermore, simply examining how students use social media is not sufficient; the

pedagogical implications must also be explored to better understand how social media can be used in the classroom to enhance literacy practices.

Finally, the third article (Chapter 5), "The changing nature of literacies in modern classrooms: What counts as writing?", outlines how Ms. Lee and her students oriented to the value of writing in this unit and the activities and products that comprised it. I draw primarily on interview data with Ms. Lee and the focal students as well as an analysis of the students' multimodal designs across platforms. This chapter's findings indicate that Ms. Lee, like many other teachers, privileged traditional, formal, print-based forms of writing, even in a more expansive unit like the portfolio unit studied here (Ajayi, 2015; Domingo, 2012; Vasudevan, 2010). The students oriented to this value by predominantly making meaning through textual modes throughout their portfolios. The exception to this was on Instagram where students were much less formal and used multimodal posts for meaning making. Implications extend to teachers expanding their classroom practices beyond the traditional forms of literacy for which they are trained. Further, I argue that we need to better understand the types of support that teachers need when implementing a project like the portfolio unit (Mills & Exley, 2014; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016).

I conclude with a chapter (Chapter 6) that aims to bring the findings and implications from each of the articles together for a broader understanding of the significance of my dissertation as a contribution to the literature on multimodal authoring from a multiliteracies perspective. In this chapter, I discuss the changing nature of literacies in the classroom and how multiple authoring paths can afford students opportunities for expression and meaning making that might otherwise not be present in other forms of text-based writing. I also explore the challenges that teachers face while

incorporating these kinds of writing into their classrooms effectively. Finally, I conclude with the limitations of the study, both practical and theoretical, and include potential areas for future research based on my analyses.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I address some of the constructs and theories that inform my research. Therefore, I discuss multiliteracies and how this frames progressive views of writing as well as social media and its asserted benefits for the classroom. Though they are discussed briefly in each of the next three chapters in which I employ them, I review these constructs here in more depth to provide a greater understanding of each. First, I begin with a discussion of multiliteracies (nested within a sociocultural theoretical framework) and how multiliteracies frames my view of literacies and the context in which literacies are studied. I then discuss the changing nature of literacies with respect to writing specifically. I next describe how this shift in understanding of writing has led many scholars to question what counts as literacies, learning, and specifically writing in classrooms and the power dynamics behind those negotiations. Finally, I discuss social media's use in the classroom and the claimed affordances that it may offer.

Multiliteracies

Much like other contemporary scholars (e.g., Burnett, Merchant, Pahl, & Rowsell, 2014; Smith, 2016), I bring together a multiliteracies lens and multimodal view of the changing scape of literacies nested within a broader sociocultural theoretical frame; I specifically apply the social and contextual aspects so entrenched in sociocultural theory to contemporary views of literacies (see Perry, 2012). However, I view multiliteracies as a nested and more specific aspect of the larger sociocultural frame. While sociocultural theory examines the practices surrounding literacies (e.g., what literacy is, what it can do, how it is framed, how it is researched), here, I examine the literacy practices from an

expanded view of how literacies can be represented. Thus, while strongly informed by sociocultural theory, this study uses a multiliteracies frame.

Multiliteracies grew out of seminal ethnographic studies of situated literacy practices[4] (e.g., Heath, 1983; Scribner & Cole, 1981; Street, 1984, 1995). Traditional definitions of literacy generally refer to mainstay forms of classroom communication (i.e., reading and writing), which Street (1984, 2003) refers to as the autonomous view of literacy in which literacy is seen as the skills and resulting cognitive effects that are separate from their surrounding contexts. Views that have developed since the 1980s frame literacy as more than these traditional notions of decoding and encoding of signs and symbols through reading and writing sans context but rather as social practices surrounding those signs that are determined and shaped by the socio-historical contexts, institutions, and power-relations influencing them (Archer, 2006; Gee, 2010; Kellner, 2000; Street, 1984, 2003). Therefore, I take up the view of *literacies* as multiple, contextual, and socially situated (Ajayi, 2015; Gee, 2010; Street, 1984). According to this sociocultural view of literacies as socially constructed and situated in institutional discourses and practices (Gee, 2003, 2010; Kellner, 2000; Kress, 2003; Leu & Kinzer, 2003; Rowe, 2008), researchers study and focus on individuals' literacy practices change as the contexts and tools that mediate them change as well (Leu, Kinzer, & Coiro, 2013; McVee et al., 2008). Thus, under a multiliteracies frame, I contend that literacies are not simply inherited representational systems but rather are fluid and expanding designs for

[4] Literacy practices are the social models that people conceptualize as a result *literacy events*, or the interactions and interpretive processes around a text (Heath, 1983, Street, 1984, 2003). According to Street (2003), the term literacy practices "not only attempts to handle the events and the patterns of activity around literacy events, but to link them to something broader of a cultural and social kind" (p. 78).

meanings that are continually shaped and reshaped (Towndrow et al., 2013).

Multiliteracies was a term first coined by the New London Group (1996) in their manifesto calling for a reconsideration of traditional literacies to help better prepare students for an increasingly more digital world (Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; New London Group, 1996). Some scholars use the term *New Literacies* (e.g., Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Leu et al., 2013) or *New Literacy Studies* (see Mills, 2010). However, I use the term *multiliteracies* because scholars such as Moje (2009) and Gee (2010) assert that the media through which students are enacting literacy practices are new but the literacy practices themselves are not.

Generally, multiliteracies refers to the idea that there are many types of literacy practices, not just one traditional way of viewing, enacting, teaching, and learning literacy (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Leu et al., 2013; Mills, 2009; New London Group, 1996). Thus, multiliteracies scholars recognize that students bring with them a multitude of literacies to the classroom. Furthermore, multiliteracies frameworks work to examine the globalized and changing nature of literacies with respect to multimodal forms of meaning making and representation "particularly, but not limited to, those affiliated with new technologies" (Jewitt, 2008, p. 245). While technology is often a part of a multiliteracies-framed study, it is the context around those digital technologies that is the focus. According to Thorpe (2009), **"**…to perceive technology as an inert container or tool, separate from the practices of which it is a part, obscures the ways in which technology-mediated contexts are constructed and impact on learners" (p 120). Thus, the technologies under study cannot be separated from their context of use.

While other scholars studying literacy practices recognize the fluidity of culture

and literacies, multiliteracies scholars emphasize the fluctuation of the world, how this affects the power relationships within, and the ways in which communication adapts in response to these changes and relationships (Perry, 2012). This changing nature means that people and their practices surrounding both literacies and texts (used here broadly to refer to meaning-making artifacts, in line with a multiliteracies framework) continue to adjust and adapt based on the context, culture, and power of a situation.

Because of the focus on a multiplicitous view of literacies, multiliteracies scholars value the social contexts of literacy practices (Archer, 2006; Kellner, 2000), as it allows for a more peopled view of literacy. For example, according to Kalantzis and Cope (2008), in traditional literacy learning, a student's prior language experiences are not valued when expected to learn traditional grammar because these are irrelevant in the one-size-fits-all reproduction of traditional literacy practices. Under a multiliteracies lens, however, students' social practices and experiences are valued in the meaning-making process, thereby tailoring the curricula to include and value these practices, which in turn, may lead to more engaged learning practices. For the past two decades, multiliteracies scholars have aimed to shift educational literacy practices from traditional, formal, print-based texts to more open-ended multimodal forms of communication (discussed in the next section) that are more informal and promote diversity (Bialostok, 2014; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Mills, 2009). Thus, a multiliteracies framework emphasizes a need for current literacy curricula to better reflect the diverse range of (multimodal) texts that students are now using, including digital texts like social media (Mills, 2009).

Multiliteracies has been used in many disciplines from analyzing Brazilian students' multimodal textual practices of published digital song lyrics and comic strips

online (Junquiera, 2008) to carefully examining the self-presentation and digital literacy practices of an undergraduate students across social media platforms (Buck, 2012). Multiliteracies has also been used in many ways to draw attention to the importance of various kinds of literacies like emotional literacy (A. Liau, G. Liau, Teoh, & Liah, 2003), information literacies (Hodgman, 2005), visual literacies (Burton 2006; O'Brien 2001), scientific literacies (Weinstein 2006), etc. Because a multiliteracies approach focuses on bringing non-traditional literacies into the classroom, many scholars have also taken up a multiliteracies lens in conjunction with social media as a way to empower students (e.g., Curwood, 2013; Halverson, 2009; Hughes & Morrison, 2014; Rogers, Winters, LeMonde, & Perry, 2010), which will be further discussed later in this chapter.

The Changing Nature of Writing

Though briefly addressed in Chapter 1, here, I address the changing views of what constitutes writing, as the ways and contexts in which people write are changing as a result of the more digital and globalized spaces available in which to write. Therefore, I address the push for multimodal compositions and the benefit that they can offer for the classroom.

Contemporary researchers, especially those employing a multiliteracies framework like the one used here, often take writing to be progressive, multimodal, and constantly changing. Even as recently as two decades ago, writing was seen as the singularly as linguistic-based composition; however, many literacy scholars now acknowledge the multimodal nature of texts and design involved in their production (see Bezemer & Kress, 2014). Furthermore, Kress (2003) asserts that "writing now plays one part in communicational ensembles, and no longer *the part*" (21, emphasis in original).

Thus, even though traditional focus has been on writing and linguistic modes as the primary forms of communication and meaning making, particularly in schools (Domingo, 2012; Shanahan, 2013), there can be more elements and modes in writing that allow for unique meaning making (Kress, 2003; Mills & Exley, 2014; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016).

Under a multiliteracies framework, writing is described as "inclusive of socially organized sign-making practices that make use of both print and digital technologies for producing meanings" (Mills & Exley, 2014, p. 435). This notion of writing is one that reflects a change in understanding writing and where it is going. According to Breuch (2002), writing has transformed into "an indeterminate activity rather than a body of knowledge to be mastered" (p. 139), which is tied to the social, political, and systems (Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Kress, 2003; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016).

According to Street (2001), the deep cultural variation in the practices and conceptions of reading and writing in different contexts "leads us to rethink what we mean by them and to be wary of assuming a single literacy where we may simply be imposing assumptions derived from our own cultural practice onto other people's literacies." (p. 430). Thus, more progressive approaches to reading and writing in schools are changing based on the people and practices within it that make up the classroom context. VanKooten and Berkley (2016) argue that because of this changing nature, classroom writing should not focus exclusively on the product, but rather on the context and interactions that occur around the space of composition (i.e., what is happening as texts are written/designed and the process of creation).

However, many classrooms still follow a traditional view of writing, and these

views are often based in what is assessed through standardized testing and framed in contrast to the "official" (i.e., traditional) views of learning and literacies. (Kelly et al., 2008; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016). Therefore, multiliteracies scholars argue that education needs to better address the changing contexts in which literacies are situated (e.g., Unsworth, 2008) in order to better prepare students for the current and future literacy practices (Green & Beavis, 2013; Kellner, 2000; New London Group, 1996). In doing so, instructors and schools recognize that literacies have moved beyond the traditional sense of reading and writing and that there are multiple ways for students to communicate their understanding of content and contexts (Bialostok, 2014; Edwards-Groves, 2011).

Thus, many multiliteracies scholars call for a greater focus on multimodality into the classroom. In brief, multimodality is an approach to understanding the meaning-making process of texts ("text" here used broadly to represent the artifact of study) that are comprised of multiple modes in combination (e.g., text, video, picture, sound, gestures, etc.). Since its inception, multimodality has grown in various ways, drawing on multiliteracies, linguistics, film theory, game theory, discourse theory, etc. (Jewitt, 2008). Rapidly expanding in the mid-2000s, multimodality is widely taken up today with most educational stakeholders acknowledging that communication is fundamentally multimodal and that literacies are not simply represented in language (O'Halloran, 2011). Over the last two decades, many scholars have called for the need to more effectively integrate multimodality into the classroom through both reading and composition/design to promote more modern and inclusive literacy practices (e.g., Edwards-Groves, 2011; Kalantzis & Cope, 2000; Kellner, 2000; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013;

McVee et al., 2008; Moje, 2009).

For writing, multimodal composition "involves the fluid interweaving of visuals, sounds, movement, and text to create synergistic messages" (Smith, 2016, p. 1). It is a complex process, often referred to as design (e.g., Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; New London Group, 1996). The term *design* indicates a purposeful focus on the contextualized, personal use of multiple modes in conjunction for meaning making (Anderson et al., 2017; Jewitt; 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Unlike traditional views of literacy pedagogy that adhere to prescriptive rules and can be taught without consideration of students' backgrounds, when applied to pedagogy this design process highlights students' agency and variability (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Rowsell et al., 2013). This means that their backgrounds and interests are reflected in the design.

Many researchers have studied how tools for multimodal composition can engage students, offer an outlet for expression, and provide agency over writing (e.g., Buck, 2012; Halverson, 2009; Lam, 2006; Rogers, Winters, LaMonde, & Perry, 2010; Pinkard, Barron, & Martin, 2008). Others theorize and analyze the literacy practices available in the infinite spaces and temporalities beyond traditional writing (e.g., Leander, Phillips, & Taylor, 2010; Vasudevan, 2010). Still others argue that more research is needed regarding what counts as writing when doing so digitally and how context might affect this judgement (Green, Skukauskaite, Castanheira, 2013; Mills & Exley, 2014). This will be addressed in the following section.

What Counts?

Because of the changing nature of literacies and writing, much of "what counts" as literacies, learning, and writing, especially in schools, is in flux. In this section, I

discuss the negotiations that transpire in classrooms and research communities around what counts as literacies, learning, and more specifically, writing, within the classroom and how students may orient to the negotiated values.

Historically, linguistic modes of representation have been privileged over other modes such as visual, audio, etc. in schools (Domingo, 2012; Nelson, Hull, & Roche-Smith, 2008; Shanahan, 2013; Smith, 2016). Shanahan argues that this is, in part, due to the material tools that are standard in the classroom (i.e., pens, pencils, paper, word processors) and that the "sociocultural mediation of the these tools, as in the activity of writing, leverage the notion of representation of knowledge through words over other modes of communication" (p. 195). Thus, traditional forms of writing continue to be privileged as the modes to advance learning in classrooms (Leander, 2009; Shanahan, 2013; Smagorinsky, 1995).

Thus, to alter this privileging of traditional forms of writing, many scholars have studied what counts as literacy and learning in classrooms to varying degrees and under varying content areas (e.g., Green et al., 2013; Kelly et al., 2008; Sperling & DiPardo, 2008). Sperling and DiPardo (2008), for example, explore the multiple contexts in which scholars have attempted to understand "what counts" in English Language Arts classrooms in their review of the literature, citing numerous studies spanning the past 30 years. They found that both students' and teachers' beliefs and experiences influence what is perceived as counting. Furthermore, context plays a vital role in understanding what counts in the English Language Classroom and beyond, as these beliefs are influenced by surrounding cultural, historical, and political factors (Green et al., 2013; Prinsloo & Rowsell, 2012). They also found that "Many of these studies viewed teachers,

students, and classrooms through a critical lens, exposing the ways historic privileging profoundly affects what counts as knowledge and learning," (p. 87). Thus, the power structures of these classrooms in conjunction with the experiences of the teachers and students greatly influence how questions of what counts are negotiated for all involved.

In their article, Green and colleagues (2013) also examine how power structures and notions of what counts are determined from the beginning of the year through interactions between parents, students, teachers, and administrators. They argue that to understand these relationships, one must ethnographically study how participants are discursively constructing a new understanding of a text/event through their social interactions. They therefore argue that "what counts as…" questions "provide a systematic basis for examining interactions to understand what participants are doing together, how and in what ways, under what conditions, with what outcomes or consequences for what participants can do and learn" (p. 129). Examining how certain practices become and are privileged helps to shed light on the underlying assumptions and interactions within a classroom that affect their learning.

Much like teachers, students' perceptions, conceptions, and notions of what counts as literacies are also entrenched in their experiences and beliefs and also greatly influenced by their context as well (Fairclough, 1992; Marshall, 2000). In their study, Moje and Lewis (2007) analyzed the discourse in an eighth-grade English classroom to understand language's role in shaping identity and privilege and how that informed how students constructed classroom identities, relationships, power dynamics, and literacy practices. Their findings indicate that students were unwilling to speak against the classroom and social norms, and thus, their learning was constrained as they could not

express ideas freely based on the power dynamics of that class.

According to Street (2001), the deep cultural variation in the practices and conceptions of reading and writing in different contexts "leads us to rethink what we mean by them and to be wary of assuming a single literacy where we may simply be imposing assumptions derived from our own cultural practice onto other people's literacies" (p. 430). Because a teacher's experiences, beliefs and practices affect the ways in which they teach and what they privilege in class (Appleman, 2000; Barr, 2001; Grossman, 2001; Hamel, 2003), it is important to recognize this potential influence. Thus, many scholars' findings in this area emphasized the interplay of the learning and literacies with the cultural/social practices that exist in the classroom (see Gutierrez & Stone, 2000). They also highlight how understanding literacies, especially those that "count" in the classroom grant exceptional privileges beyond the context of the classroom (Sperling & DiPardo, 2008).

However, scholarship focusing on expanding the notions of literacies and learning has often "rested on the assumption that such insights can lead to knowing both how to teach varied students and what to teach" (Sperling & DiPardo, 2008, p. 73). Though many teachers are willing to work against the historical and institutional constraints often found within the classroom, how to do so becomes a more serious and practical question (e.g., Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). Norms are generally constructed at the beginning of the year (Green et al., 2013) and the power within those norms may or may not be renegotiated through the year as teachers, students, administrators, and stakeholders continue to change the context of the classroom. Many teachers may not know how to renegotiate those dynamics in a way that can benefit

themselves and the students, as this is not something with which they are familiar.

Thus, some scholars argue that digital/social media are a viable option because they allow for a shift in expertise as well as knowledge construction, a shift that often leads researchers, teachers, and students to question what counts as knowledge, to whom, and who is in power to decide (e.g., Knobel & Lankshear, 2007; Mills & Exley, 2014). This potential shift and how both the teacher and students negotiate that shift is what I hope to address in the present study, particularly in Chapter 3.

Social Media in the Classroom

The section addresses some of the most commonly cited affordances of social media use in the classroom. I begin with a short definition of social media as is it used today. I then I discuss commonly cited affordances for social media in the classroom and the potential limitations of these affordances.

Social Media

Because a multiliteracies approach focuses on bringing non-traditional literacies into the classroom, many have taken up multiliteracies in conjunction with social media as a way to empower students (e.g., Curwood, 2013; Halverson, 2009; Hughes & Morrison, 2014; Rogers, Winters, LeMonde, & Perry, 2010). As internet and web-based communications like social media are a large part of our cultural and social context (Beneito-Montagut, 2011; Collin & Street, 2014) where people's literacy and communication practices are increasingly more digital and occurring both online and offline (Leander & McKim, 2003), many researchers feel that the literacy events and practices that these engender need further recognition, study, and incorporation into schools (e.g., Ajayi, 2015; Collin & Street, 2014; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007;

Stornaiuolo, Higgs, & Hull, 2013).

Many studies of educational use of social media focus on online education (e.g., Blaschke, 2014; Conole & Dyke, 2004; Dabbagh & Kitsantas, 2012) or higher education (e.g., Moran, Seaman, & Tinti-Kane, 2011; Okoro, Hausman, & Washington, 2012). Other scholars have focused on social media use in education to examine the expressed identities that can be seen in the final products (e.g., Halverson, 2009; Hughes & Morrison, 2014), while still others focus on attitudes about social media in the classroom (e.g., Mao, 2014; Vie, 2015) or assessment (e.g., O'Byrne, 2009; Unsworth & Chan, 2009). Although studies adopting a multiliteracies lens to examine social media use in the classroom have suggested benefits to embracing students' multimodal literacy practices, it is still unclear what social media (especially those that foreground the use of photos and videos) can offer students for writing.

To better frame the discussion of social media, I must first define it and provide some background. Social media is a term that has evolved to encompass numerous platforms for various forms of online communication. Under the umbrella of *Web 2.0*, a term developed in 2004 that refers to internet infrastructure and communication practices for collaboration (Crook, 2012; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Web 2.0 if often referred to as the participatory web (Crook, 2012), and allows for collaboration where people of varying expertise and knowledge come together to create (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007; Stewart, 2016). Examples of Web 2.0 are wikis (like Wikipedia), blogs, and forums.

Social media originated on Web 2.0 websites before mobile applications (apps) became ubiquitous, and were referred to as social networking sites (boyd & Ellison,

2007; Forkosh-Baruch & Hershkovitz, 2012). With the prevalence of apps for mobile devices, many users now use mobile apps rather than social networking sites for their social networking. There are many social media apps that are now exclusively hosted on apps (e.g., Snapchat, Instagram), while others (e.g., Facebook, Twitter) can be accessed through websites or apps. Therefore, I use the term *social media* to refer to both social media apps and websites.

A specific type of platform for social media are blogs. Unlike email or learning management systems (LMS), blogs allow users to archive posts and easily publish material (Kim, 2016; O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014). Blogs are a consistently used platform for school use, in part because they seem to reflect traditional classroom writing practices, and because they are bounded texts, they may be easier to study than more open platforms (Stornaiuolo et al., 2013).

However, with the rapidity with which new apps and social networking sites are invented and continue to grow, scholars are studying social media beyond the traditional blog (Moje, 2009; Stornaiuolo et al., 2013). Many have shifted foci to highly-interacting social media such as Twitter (e.g., Buck, 2012; Forkosh-Baruch & Hershkovitz, 2012; Greenhow & Gleason, 2012; Greenhow 2016) and Facebook (e.g., Rambe, 2012, 2013; Roblyer et al., 2010; Wodzicki, Schwämmlein, & Moskaliuk, 2012). Studies that push the boundaries of classroom communication can provide additional insight into how students' literacy practices continue to change.

Cited Uses of Social Media in the Classroom

Before delving into studies surrounding social media and their use in the classroom, let me first echo the sentiments of Brian Street: "Technologies set off changes

only when they are embedded in socioideological projects. Strip away the latter, and all you have is an amusing gadget or, in the case of literacy, a mental trick" (Collin & Street, 2014, p. 353). It is not just the use of social media that is of interest to this study, but rather the ways in which they can be used to influence students' literacy practices when embedded in multiliteracies-framed, multimodal projects. Therefore, I discuss the following studies as well as some of the problematic underlying assumptions around social media's supposed classroom uses.

Flexibility of Design. An important use that scholars assert that social media can offer students in the classroom is the flexibility of design, or "the process of organizing what is to be navigated and interpreted, shaping available resources into potential meanings realized in the context of reading multimodal texts" (Serafini, 2012, p. 28). Furthermore, according to Kalantzis and Cope (2008), within a multiliteracies framework design is seen a dynamic process of reflecting self-interest and transformation of modes. Students may be free of prescriptive rules when designing, and have relative agency to reflect their own interests and choices (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Miller, 2013; Rowsell et al., 2013).

Because of the open-ended uses that social media platforms may offer users, students can remix (use and edit) sourced materials and/or create and edit new materials, all while showcasing their own designs to better reflect their ideas (Honeyford, 2014; Jenkins, 2006; Vasudevan, 2010). Thus, scholars assert that social media can allow for remixed multimodal texts (comprised of many modes such as pictures, text, video, audio, etc. that are both sourced and student-generated) that provide an opportunity for students to express ideas (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014), where they can

draw on the meanings of multiple modes to do so (Kress, 2003).

Furthermore, scholars argue that social media allow for more room for students to express themselves as they work across multiple modes to represent and communicate meanings in new ways (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Kress, 2003; Matthewman, Blight, & Davies, 2004). Smith (2016), in her study of students working on three different social media-based multimodal projects, found that particular platforms afforded students opportunities to design with modes differently. While some platforms (Weebly) allowed students to work across and switch between modes as many as 40 times while designing in one sessions, others (such as audio letters) were less conducive to multimodal design as students worked predominately with linguistic modes. Thus, "multimodal composition involves the dexterous orchestration and traversal of modes in order to see how they generatively combine to create a digital message" (p. 15). The students in Smith's study had to understand the ways in which they structured their designs and how to move between modes to do so.

However, Lewis, Pea, and Rosen (2010) claim that even though most ostensibly think of social media as an open space, the curated nature of what is being chosen to share can actually make it more confined. They note that rather than expressing oneself openly, "users produce and consume media more as if in a hall of mirrors than in a jointly created carnival of collective expression of selves," (p.357). Bezemer and Kress (2014) raise a similar concern, noting that students are often simply just copying and pasting information when sourcing materials rather than writing creative, original material. This distinction, of course, would rest on the activities and the ways in which those activities are structured by the teacher.

Increased, Interactive Audience. Many scholars assert that one of the most important benefits of social media in the classroom is that they can allow for an increased, interactive audience (Hughes & Morrison, 2014; Magrino & Sorrell, 2014; Robbins, & Singer, 2014). With a wider audience, students can communicate and publish for an audience beyond their teachers and fellow classmates, which is a cardinal tenet of multiliteracies. For example, Cochrane and Bateman (2010) argue that social media offer students an opportunity to engage with other students and teachers as well a larger audience that may have more insight or information around the world. They argue that as a result, digital writing through social media can be set apart by its ability to allow users to expand the spaces of classroom, create content, and work together. Even though traditional writings are confined to the walls of a classroom, social media-based writing can reach a larger audience and can connect to other online resources via interactive features such as hashtags and hyperlinks (Arizpe & Styles, 2008; Edwards-Groves, 2011; Magrino & Sorrell, 2014).

Using social media in the classroom may provide students with the ability to post comments, use hashtags, and communicate with multiple people (O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014; Shirky, 2008; Wandel, 2007). Robbins and Springer (2014) argue that students are then making the choices about to whom and when to reply and in what ways as well as how they might use hashtags to categorize their posts; in this, they have created new writing environments. Furthermore, because of the interactive features of social media, some scholars assert that students' learning becomes more visible through their posts and comments (e.g., O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014; Rambe, 2012). As a result, they also assert that students can then also see what other students are sharing/writing in their posts, their

progress on projects, and what kind of feedback they are receiving from other people on their posts and can use this information to continually shape and reshape their own writing in a project. While this may be beneficial for improving a project, it may also lead to student comparison or even embarrassment, which may deter students from participating (Crook, 2012).

Overall, when tied to a strong theoretical framing such as multiliteracies, social media can offer students many affordances for writing. They can offer students expanded authoring paths through a flexibility of design through multiple modes. Furthermore, the expanded, interactive audience can provide students with an authoring platform beyond the context of the classroom wherein materials and information can be shared and created collaboratively. Social media may also offer students an opportunity to showcase their work to a larger audience, which allows students opportunities to represent themselves as writers outside of the classroom.

Conclusion

In the following three chapters, I further highlight both how this literature informs my dissertation study as well as how I contribute to discussion in the literature surrounding social media uses and what counts as writing in classrooms. Chapter 3 investigates the ways in which the students in this class designed multimodal compositions in a class that was otherwise predominantly based in formal, linguistic forms of writing. I explain that they did so through a comprehensive look across all students' Weebly homepages as well as deeper analysis of two focal students' complete portfolios. In Chapter 4, I explore the primary uses that each platform offered students while using them to create their digital portfolios. I not only analyze the uses of the

platforms, but the benefits that those uses offered the students and teacher as well. Finally, Chapter 5 will address the changing nature of writing and how what counts as writing was negotiated in the classroom of study. I also analyze how the students then oriented to what the teacher privileged as writing. Each of the following three chapters are meant to stand alone as individual manuscripts, and I conclude with a synthesizing chapter (Chapter 6), which brings together the implications for multimodal compositions as expanded contexts for meaning making in schools.

CHAPTER THREE

MULITMODAL COMPOSITION THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS: ALTERNATIVE AUTHORING PATHS FOR MEANING MAKING

While digital media design authoring paths can be rich with choice of modes, design, genre, and expression (Kress, 2003; Paley, 2004; Vasudevan, 2010), most classroom curricula still do not incorporate such options as they focus on limited standards and traditional methods of meaning-making (e.g., VanKooten & Berkley, 2016; Vasudevan, 2010). While traditional texts (i.e., those based in predominantly linguistic modes) offer authoring paths that remain prioritized in many school contexts, multimodal texts can provide students with different opportunities for making meaning through modal ensembles (the ways in which modes are put together) that might otherwise not be available through linguistic-dominant modes (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Halverson, 2009; Kress, 2003, 2010). Thus, authoring multimodal texts can allow students to express ideas in different ways through different modes and modal resources (Anderson, Stewart, & Kachorsky, 2017; Domingo, 2012; Panaleo, 2013; Rogers & Marshall, 2012; Shanahan, 2013; Vasudevan, 2010). Despite this understanding, many curricula do not include opportunities to author multimodal texts.

In this study, I examine how students in a typically formal, linguistic mode-dominant English Language Arts class designed complex multimodal, digital compositions while creating digital portfolios across three social media platforms: (a) Weebly pages (a website building tool); (b) Weebly Blogs (a blogging feature of Weebly pages); and (c) Instagram (a video and picture sharing app). The digital portfolio was one

in which the students reflected on their literary practices throughout their schooling to create an illustration of their strengths and growth as writers. I examine these compositions from two varying levels: first, I present a broad multimodal analysis of all of the students' Weebly homepages to provide an understanding of the breadth of designs in this class; I then present a more detailed analysis of the complete portfolios of two focal students to show two contrasting cases that provide a rich understanding of the ways in which students designed across the platforms. In brief, I take design to be "the process of organizing what is to be navigated and interpreted, shaping available resources into potential meanings realized in the context of reading multimodal texts" (Serafini, 2012, p. 28). Design is seen a dynamic process of reflecting self-interest and transformation of modes (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008). The following research question drives this study: How did students design their portfolios in multimodal ways that otherwise may not have been possible in this classroom where the focus was exclusively on linguistic modes?

Theoretical Perspective

As I focus on the possibilities of multimodal authoring for students that otherwise wrote in a class where traditional, formal types of writing were privileged, I take up sociocultural theory as my theoretical framework. Framing the study through sociocultural theory is congruous with my social semiotic multimodal analysis (Panaleo, 2013; Serafini, 2010) to better understand "how modal resources are used by people in a given community/social context" (Jewitt, 2009, p. 30). It is important to understand the context in which these texts were produced, as writing (or design, as I refer to it here) is always influenced by social, cultural, and historical factors (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001;

Prinsloo & Rowsell, 2012; Shanahan, 2013). For example, semiotic resources such as color, images, text, and even photography may carry different meanings and carry those meanings differently (Kress, 2003). The sociocultural associations of those resources help to provide and shape meaning and interpretations for the creators and the viewers (Serafini, 2010).

As meaning-making structures of language continue to evolve alongside ever-changing social systems with digital platforms offering users new ways to represent ideas, understanding the social context of the ways in which it influences how individuals design is essential (Unsworth, 2006). New and digital literacy practices involve textual design, designers' relationships with language, context, and their cultural influences, all of which fluidly affect how they design texts (Bakhtin, 1981; Domingo, 2012; Prinsloo & Rowsell, 2012). Thus, it is important to recognize students' backgrounds as they create multimodal texts as well as how the context of their composition environment (in this case Ms. Lee's classroom) affects the ways in which they design multimodally.

Multimodal Texts and Metafunctions

A mode is a "socially and culturally shaped resource for meaning making" (Bezemer & Kress, 2008, p. 171). Serafini (2014) defines modes as a "system of visual and verbal entities within or across various cultures to represent or express meaning" (p. 12). They can be time-based (gestures, speech, dance) or space-based (art, photographs, writing, architecture) (Kress, 2003), and all modes are created and manipulated for specific actions to make meaning in particular contexts (Aiello, 2006; Bezemer & Kress, 2014). In other words, texts are always designed for a specific purpose (Aiello, 2006). Thus, there are differences in the ways that modes are composed and read. For example,

visual modes are generally more reliant on spatial layouts, whereas linguistic modes are typically more linear (Serafini, 2010). Thus, it is important to understand how multimodal texts are created and the meanings associated with them within a specific context and culture.

Halliday (1995) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) argue that "language and visuals simultaneously function for three purposes: ideational/representation, interpersonal/interactive, and textual/compositional" (Shanahan, 2013, p. 216). These three purposes represent what they termed "metafunctions", or ways to understand and discuss the relationships between modes and what can be done with them (Jewitt, 2014)—i.e. the types of meaning-making functions available in communication (Shanahan, 2013; Unsworth, 2006).

Halliday (1985, 1994) introduced the three metafunctions under his system of functional grammar (SFG). The ideational metafunction refers to the content, what is represented in one's experiences of the world, or events. The interpersonal metafunction refers to the ways in which relationships between texts and individuals are constructed, and the textual metafunction refers to the ways in which a text is structured to create a complete and coherent whole.

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) adapted Halliday's work (originally intended for language) for visual communication (how images are produced and interpreted). They used the terms *representational*, *interactive*, and *compositional* to describe the three metafunctions. Despite the varying terms, the general meanings of each metafunction have remained. According to both Halliday (1985) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996), the three metafunctions work together simultaneously.

The representational metafunction concerns how modes are used to convey an idea (e.g., color might represent a political party on a sign, Carvalho, 2013). The interactive function is discussed in terms of exemplification (the objects within the image) and communication (the creator and reader of the image, Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Using this metafunction, images and texts can be described analyzing the demand (participant gazes at the viewer) and offer (participant is looking away from the viewer), framing and social distance, perspective and subjective and objective images, and horizontal and vertical angles (Lewis, 2001) as well as words (e.g., "you", "sir", Carvalho, 2013). The interactive metafunction can also be defined in terms of modality, or how true or close to "real life" the image/text appears to be (Lewis, 2001). Finally, the compositional metafunction concerns the composition of the text through the multimodal ensemble and how this affects how the reader views it.

Unsworth (2006) expanded on the ideational (or representational) metafunction and segmented it into three parts. The first is concurrence, meaning "one mode elaborates on the meaning of the other by further specifying or describing it while no new element is introduced by the written text or image" (Daly & Unsworth, 2011, p. 61). This can be done through exemplification (modes provide examples of the other), exposition (modes provide the same information in different forms), homospatiality (multiple modes occur in a spatially bonded entity), and equivalence (modes are redundant to each other such as a textual caption for an image). The second is complementarity where one mode extends, enhances, or projects the meaning of another. This can be done through augmentation (i.e., meanings are additional) or divergence (i.e., meanings are opposed). The third is connection where meaning is made through projection (typically quoting or reporting

speech or thoughts) or conjunctive connection (relationships of time, place, and cause). The ideational metafunction (in combination with the other metafunctions) help to create the attitude, or the tone of the composition.

I use these metafunctions to explore the ways in which the students in this class designed their multimodal portfolios. The metafunctions drive my analysis, particularly for the whole-class analysis of the Weebly homepages. Many scholars have used these metafunctions to discuss and analyze multimodal designs (e.g., Anderson et al., 2017; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; New London Group, 1996; Shanahan, 2013), and I hope to add to that discussion through my study that examines how students were able to design multimodally in an otherwise primarily linguistic-mode dominant class.

Methods

Context of the Study

This study took place in a public charter K-12 school that serves predominantly first-generation, college-bound students and helps to prepare them for university attendance. I worked with a junior and senior English teacher, Ms. Lee, to create a unit for her capstone-level senior English (12th grade) students for the final quarter of the year (April-May).[5] While I presented the initial idea to Ms. Lee to include a reflective unit wherein students would be creating multimodal compositions through social platforms, Ms. Lee designed the unit, occasionally asking for my input and feedback on prompts and ideas.

The class was typically characterized as formal and traditional with a primary

[5] All names are pseudonyms.

emphasis on literature analyses throughout the year with little creative writing and few opportunities for multimodal composition. I observed this characterization in the two class periods I attended before the unit under study, the portfolio unit, began. This characterization was also corroborated many times in my discussions with Ms. Lee, as she described writing in her class as "very academic," "one specific genre," and "a really limited subset of the realm of writing." Ms. Lee also noted that she provided students with detailed rubrics and templates for writing and note-taking. This formal, traditional classroom context meant that students were often removed from their writing. Ms. Lee even noted that even though she had taught this same group of students for both their junior and senior year of English, she felt that she only knew them as writers in this one specific context.

However, the portfolio unit included relatively open-ended, potentially multimodal assignments wherein students could choose pieces to showcase, design their portfolios, express personal ideas, and direct their time as needed (see Figure 1 for the portfolio assignment provided to students).[6] Ms. Lee designed the project for students to be able to reflect on their literary lives for the past 12 years, creating a narrative of important literacy moments, changes, and growth. Because students were reflecting on their literacy practices over time, personal narratives, reflection, and inclusion of personal interests were inherent components of the portfolio unit (Bruner, 2002; Giddens, 1991; Ranieri & Pachler, 2014).

Before the portfolio unit began, I provided Ms. Lee with a tutorial activity to help students become familiar with the social media platforms. This activity prompted

[6] Figure 1 is located in Chapter 1 on page 15.

students to create a practice Weebly page, a Weebly Blog post, and an Instagram post. I also provided Ms. Lee with examples of Instagram posts ranging from exemplary to needing improvement from a previous pilot study I conducted where judgements were based on modes interacting to create posts that were more than the sum of their parts (Jewitt, 2005). Ms. Lee and the students discussed the examples together and considered which were more successful and why. Both students and teacher reasoning for better posts was largely based on how long the captions were, which echoed the focus on meaning making through linguistic modes that I had already observed.

Ms. Lee also created an example portfolio consisting of all required Weebly pages (discussed in the following section), some Weebly Blog posts, and one example Instagram post. Students were often directed to Ms. Lee's Weebly pages for instructions and information, and her URL was on all daily projected agendas. However, compared to Ms. Lee's typical classroom assignments with their heavily structured templates and rubrics, there was little other scaffolding provided to the students for how they should design their portfolios in this unit. Ms. Lee allowed the students to personalize their portfolios with relative agency as long as they included the required assignments. This freedom of design was in part because she was unsure what to expect from such a comparatively new and open project and also because she wanted the portfolios to be meaningful for students beyond just her class.

Weebly pages. There were four required (predominantly text-based writing) sections for the Weebly pages: Academic Writing, Personal and Creative Writing, Literacy Memoir, and About Me. For the Academic and Memoir writing sections, students wrote new essays and reflected on their growth as writers in teacher-provided

questions. For the Personal/Creative writing, students selected a range of three piece from any time and any class to showcase their best writing. In the About Me page, students introduced themselves as writers and readers.

In addition to these sections, students also included a homepage that served to function as something of an introduction to their portfolio for the potential audience. The only requirements for the homepage that Ms. Lee provided were that it must be "professional looking" and convey "the purpose/content of the website."

The majority of the students' time and energy was spent working on their Weebly pages, as this was the largest part of the portfolio and required the most writing. Ms. Lee also graded these the closest, using a rubric and grading each text-based item carefully.

Weebly Blogs. Students wrote eight blog entries as part of the portfolio unit (with one optional post). Ms. Lee used Weebly Blogs as a way for students to reflect on the progress of their Weebly pages as well as their reading for the class. Thus, many of the blog prompts centered around a project the students were working on wherein they re-read a book and reflected on the differences they noticed between their first time reading the book and now (see Table 1 for Weebly Blog prompts).[7] Ms. Lee generally gave students about ten to fifteen minutes to complete the blog posts in class, and read each blog post carefully, grading the students on the thoroughness of their text-based response.

Instagram. Ms. Lee created five prompts to direct students to post to Instagram (see Table 2 for Instagram prompts).[8] These prompts were designed to have students reflect on the creation of their portfolios as well as their literacy practices in and out of

[7] Table 1 is located in Chapter 1 on page 19.
[8] Table 2 is located in Chapter 1 on page 22.

the classroom. For safety reasons, students shared a class account and therefore hashtagged each of their posts with their names, the assignment hashtag, and any other hashtags they felt were appropriate. Ms. Lee also required that students include reflective captions beyond the required hashtags, and most posts did (95.2%). Students could post to Instagram in or out of class, though many chose to post during class time. Ms. Lee expressed that she struggled with how to grade the Instagram posts because it was not something she was "trained in," and therefore, she graded the Instagram posts holistically based on if the students completed them.

Participants. All students who were working on the project (26) participated in the study (see Table 3 for demographics).[9] Before the study began, I surveyed students for demographic information and to better understand their feelings about writing and using social media as writing platforms. I originally chose six focal students that I closely watched throughout the unit and with whom I conducted regularly occurring in-situ interviews. I watched these students carefully, making notes about their body positioning and paying closer attention to their classroom responses and activities. I selected these focal students based on: 1) responses to the Likert-type question "I like to write" on the pre-study survey, selecting one student who responded to each of the four options (1-4); 2) equal mix of male and female students; 3) outspoken to quieter students; 4) students who did not sit together often; and 5) students who ethnically represented the range in the class, which was predominantly Hispanic.

Because my goals of richly understanding the nuanced ways in which students designed their portfolios and the depth of analysis required to do so, I selected two of the

[9] Table 3 is located in Chapter 1 on page 25.

focal students on which to focus my analysis as two contrastive, maximally-variant cases (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Ravitch & Mittenfelner Carl, 2016). Marta (a self-identified Hispanic female, bilingual in English and Spanish who expressed loving to write, and was always eager to participate in class) and Julio (a self-identified Hispanic male, bilingual in English and Spanish who expressed hating to write, and often appeared disinterested in class, sitting in the corner with his backpack on his lap).

Analysis of Students' Multimodal Designs

This study aims to provide a rich, deep understanding (Ajayi, 2015; Creswell, 2013; Gleason, 2016) of how students in this class designed multimodally across three social media platforms to quite different ends. I analyzed their designs across platforms through iterative rounds of coding, focusing on multimodal analysis informed by Halliday (1984) and Kress and van Leeuwen's (1996) metafunctions.

I begin with a brief analysis of all participating students' designs of their Weebly homepages to provide contextualization of the in-depth analysis of Marta and Julio's designs across platforms. This contextualization helps to situate my in-depth analysis of the focal students' designs and provide a more expansive understanding of the design possibilities taken up within this particular class. Though other analyses of this data set include thorough analysis of the field notes, surveys, interviews with focal students and the teacher (Chapters 4 and 5), the focus of this manuscript is of the student-created artifacts—i.e. the students' multimodal designs on their Weebly pages, Weebly Blogs, and Instagram posts.

Whole-Class Weebly Homepage Analysis. For the analysis of the Weebly homepages, I began with open, emergent coding of all 26 students' homepages to identify

multimodal design choices and their rhetorical effects (e.g., images index personal connection to the school, explanation of what reader can expect). Because these naturally fell into categories based on the metafunctions, I then moved into axial coding, using the metafunctions to help guide the analysis (e.g., Anderson et al., 2017). This analysis focused on how the students realized the metafunctions in their designs that included iterative rounds of coding (Saldaña, 2015). For example, "explanation of what reader can expect" became "addresses the reader directly" and "first person", which reflect the student's realization of the interpersonal metafunction. See Table 4 for the axial codes for each homepage. Because students did not include any embedded video or sounds, the analysis focused on the image-textual relations as they were realized through the metafunctions (e.g., Shanahan, 2013).

Table 4.

Weebly Homepage Analysis

Pseudonym	*Ideational*	*Interpersonal*	*Textual*
Julio	Complementarity between the image and images	Punctuation indexes excitement about topic, direct audience address, informal tone; first person; close social distance	Personalized theme, included "About me" text, text divided into categories
Enid	Concurrence between Images and	Professional and formal tone; addresses	Chose a ready-available theme;

	text (exposition)	the reader directly; third person; impersonal social distance	included pictures to personalize
Leticia	Concurrence between Images and text (exposition)	Professional and formal tone; addresses the reader directly; first person	Personalized theme; Text is centered and goes from largest to smallest; text is highlighted to indicate importance
Zach	Concurrence between Images and text (exposition)	Informal tone; Humor through text and image; addresses the reader directly; first person	Personalized theme; Text varies in size to indicate humor
Daniel	Complementarity between the image and the assignment theme (little text)	Professional and formal tone, addresses the reader directly; first person	Chose a ready-available theme; included other elements (button to link); text varies in size to indicate importance

Carla	Complementarity between background image and text in tone; text is primary focus	Personal quote conveys informal, joyful tone; Does not address reader	Chose a ready-available theme; text varies in size to indicate importance; Text is highlighted to indicate importance
Marta	Complementarity between Image and text as they add to each other in tone	Personal, moody tone; addresses audience directly; first person	Personalized theme; Text varies in size to indicate importance; sourced image
Michael	Divergence between image and text for humor	Tongue-in-cheek tone through image and text combination	Personalized theme; sourced image; image is the focus
Alicia	Complementarity between background image and text in tone; includes video to further this; Linked video and quote are by the same artist (concurrence)	Light, informal tone; quotes convey personal connections to literature; addresses reader directly; punctuation indexes excitement; first person; close social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; included other elements (button to link; quote element; dividers); text varies in size to indicate importance

Alejandra	Complementarity between background image and text in tone	Light, informal tone; addresses reader directly; punctuation indexes excitement; close social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; included other elements (button to link; link to Instagram)
Jen	Complementarity (divergence) between image and text for rhetorical effect	Humor through portfolio title; formal and academic tone	Chose a ready-available theme; included other elements (button to link)
Adriana	Complementarity between background image and text in tone	Informal tone; punctuation indexes excitement about topic; first person; close social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; text varies in size to indicate importance; Text is highlighted to indicate importance; text aligned with larger elements of the picture
Katie	Complementarity (divergence)	Formal tone; addresses the reader; impersonal	Chose a ready-available theme;

	between image and text as text is formal and image is flowery	social distance	included other elements (button to link within and outside of the prtoflio-personal writing and photography blog)
Margarita	Complementarity between background image and text in tone; Complementarity between images and text in tone and assignment theme	Informal tone; punctuation indexes excitement about topic; first person; close social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; included pictures to personalize; included other elements (button to non-functioning link); Text is highlighted to indicate importance
Rosa	Complementarity between the image and the assignment theme (little text)	Formal tone; little text to convey impersonal social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; text varies in size to indicate importance; negative space is used to highlight the picture
Rebecca	Complementarity	Formal tone; addresses	Chose a ready-

	between background image and text and assignment theme	the reader; first person; impersonal social distance	available theme; included other elements (button to link; quote element; dividers); text varies in size to indicate importance
Juan	Complementarity between background image and text and assignment theme	Formal tone; addresses the reader; third person; impersonal social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; included other elements (button to link); text divided
Carlos	Divergence between image and text to no strong rhetorical effect	Informal, unfinished tone; intimate social distance with use of nickname	Chose a ready-available theme; text varies in size to indicate importance; negative space is used to interrupt the picture
Sedona	Divergence between image and text	Formal, academic tone; third person; impersonal social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; text varies in size to indicate importance

Martin	Divergence between image and text to show personal connection	Formal, academic tone; third person; impersonal social distance	Personalized theme; image and name are the focus; includes other elements (link that does not link to anything)
Silvia	Complementarity between background image and text (tone)	Serious, academic tone; does not acknowledge reader; third person; impersonal social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; text varies in size to indicate importance
Elizabeth	Complementarity between background image and text (tone); little text	Does not acknowledge reader, third person; inviting image; impersonal social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; text is only at the top; image is the focus
Ana	Concurrence between Images and text (exemplification)	Informal, academic tone; does not address the reader; first person, impersonal social distance	Chose a ready-available theme; included other elements (button to link; quote element;

			dividers); text varies in size to indicate importance; text is in different colors to off-set
Juana	Divergence between image and text to no strong rhetorical effect	No text; impersonal social distance (incomplete)	Chose a ready-available theme; text is only at the top; image is the focus
Brian	Complementarity between background image and text and assignment theme	Formal, academic tone; third person; impersonal social distance	Chose and edited a ready-available theme; included other elements (button to non-working link); text is same size to indicate equal importance
Lainie	Complementarity between image and text to show journey and movement	Informal tone; punctuation indexes excitement about topic; first person; close social distance	Text varies in size to indicate importance; negative space to highlight text and picture

Focal Student Portfolio Analysis. To provide an in-depth analysis of the

students' complete portfolios, I focused on two focal students: Marta and Julio. I conducted similar analysis as the Weebly homepages by using first and second round coding of each Weebly page, Weebly Blog post, and Instagram post (Saldaña, 2015), guided by the metafunctions.

For the two focal students' Weebly pages, I analyzed how they used themes, background pictures, heading pictures, landing pages, fonts and font changes, layout, and the ways in which they incorporated materials (embedded, linked, pasted) in their Weebly pages. For the focal students' Weebly Blogs, I analyzed the layout of blogs, font (size, color, changes in font), background, colors, length of posts, and pictures accompanying posts and how these features affected the design of the blogs. Because Instagram is predominantly an image-forward platform, I focused heavily on the visual elements of the focal students' Instagram posts. These elements included the overall composition of the pictures/videos, the ways in which each post was edited, the colors featured in the post, and where the picture/video of the post appeared to be taken (i.e., was it in the classroom, outside, at home, etc.). I also analyzed the captions for each post and their relation to the visual modes of the post (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996), communication on the post, and any hashtags or emojis used. In keeping with my focus on metafunctions, I examined how the students used these modes on each platform for meaning making in conjunction and how that affected the ways in which the potential audience may perceive the portfolios.

Analyzing these students' text-based writing and how it interacted with the visual modes was also of importance, as this is a traditional form of meaning-making, especially for this class. Specifically, based on Unsworth's (2006) description of the ideational

metafunction, I explored Marta and Julio's attitudes (emotional reactions) or tone within their portfolios, which were often presented via linguistic-based modes and supported/enhanced/augmented/divergent through complementarity or concurrence between the modes. I also focused on identifying and analyzing ways in which the students personalized their writing to create social distance and index personal interests, which included humor, cultural references, language-use etc.

Findings

I begin with a description of my analysis of the students' homepages on their Weebly pages as a whole. While space does not permit an extensive description of each of the 26 homepages, I provide a brief analysis summarizing the findings with illustrative examples of how the class designed multimodally. I then move into a more nuanced description of how two focal students, Marta and Julio, created complex multimodal designs across each of the platforms to create rich, personal portfolios.

Students' Weebly Homepages

In this section, I explore the students' multimodal designs of their Weebly homepages to provide an understanding of students' complex, personal representations that would not have been possible through linguistic modes alone (Kress, 2003).

As previously noted, the portfolio unit, including the Weebly pages, was very different than the assignments that Ms. Lee typically included in her class, in that her typical class assignments were formal, critical literary analyses for which she provided clear directions, thorough rubrics, and even templates for how to take notes. In contrast, the only requirements for the homepage that Ms. Lee provided to the students was they the homepage must be "professional looking" and convey "the purpose/content of the

website." While the homepage was required as per the instruction sheet for the portfolio, it was not graded, and thus, perhaps not accorded the same formal attention as the other, graded elements (Domingo, 2012; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016).

In what follows, I explore the students' multimodal design of their Weebly homepages using metafunctions to structure my descriptions and providing illustrative examples. While I describe the metafunctions individually here for a heuristic distinction for analytic purposes to more distinctly illustrate how students created complex, multimodal texts, which were uncommon in this classroom, I acknowledge that they are not actually separate in practice (Halliday, 1985; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Unsworth, 2006).

Ideational/Representation Metafunction. The majority (22) of the students' homepages realized complementarity between the images through either augmentation or divergence. While some students did not appear to have a strong rhetorical connection for the divergence, others skillfully used divergence to rhetorically highlight specific differences in tone or ideas between the images and text. For example, many students included light, flowery images as their backgrounds and then had more formal, academic, removed text (e.g., an image of a pink-hued snowy tree with a description that reads more academic, using words like "owner of this website" and describing the portfolio as "being used to display" each type of writing that she included for the school and course, see Figure 4). In doing so, students sometimes struck a balance between the personal choices for aesthetics and the professionalization expected in their portfolios. One student, Michael, who was particularly sarcastic and even slightly seditious in class, included a cropped, low-demand image of basketball player Denis Rodman, wrestler "Macho Man"

Randy Savage, and wrestler Hulk Hogan with the title "**EVERYTHING MAKES SENSE**". Michael's use of the 1990's photograph seditiously pokes fun at the assignment as his title contradicts the use of the image for a writing portfolio (see Figure 5). Others included divergence to highlight personal interests (e.g., an image of a video game controller as the focus of the background).

Figure 4. A homepage demonstrating complementarity through divergence in tone of the image and text.

Figure 5. Michael's homepage demonstrating complementarity through divergence.

However, the majority of the students used complementarity through augmentation, including images and text that played off of each other in either literal or more figurative senses (e.g., bright, cartoon confetti background image with a joyful greeting or images of writing utensils with an introduction to the writing portfolio, see Figure 6).

Figure 6. Homepage demonstrating complementarity through augmentation.

Five students had concurrence between their text and images (one student had both concurrence and complementarity). This concurrence was through exposition for three students, as they included images that presented the same information in different forms. For example, Zach included a welcome message for the reader and a picture of Spock giving the Vulcan greeting, staring directly at the reader with strong demand (see Figure 7). Others used concurrence through exemplification (e.g., an image of a coffee cup and writing materials accompanied by the statement, "I was the kid that always got out of reading and writing. I am now the kid that will enjoy a cup of joe and will read or write.").

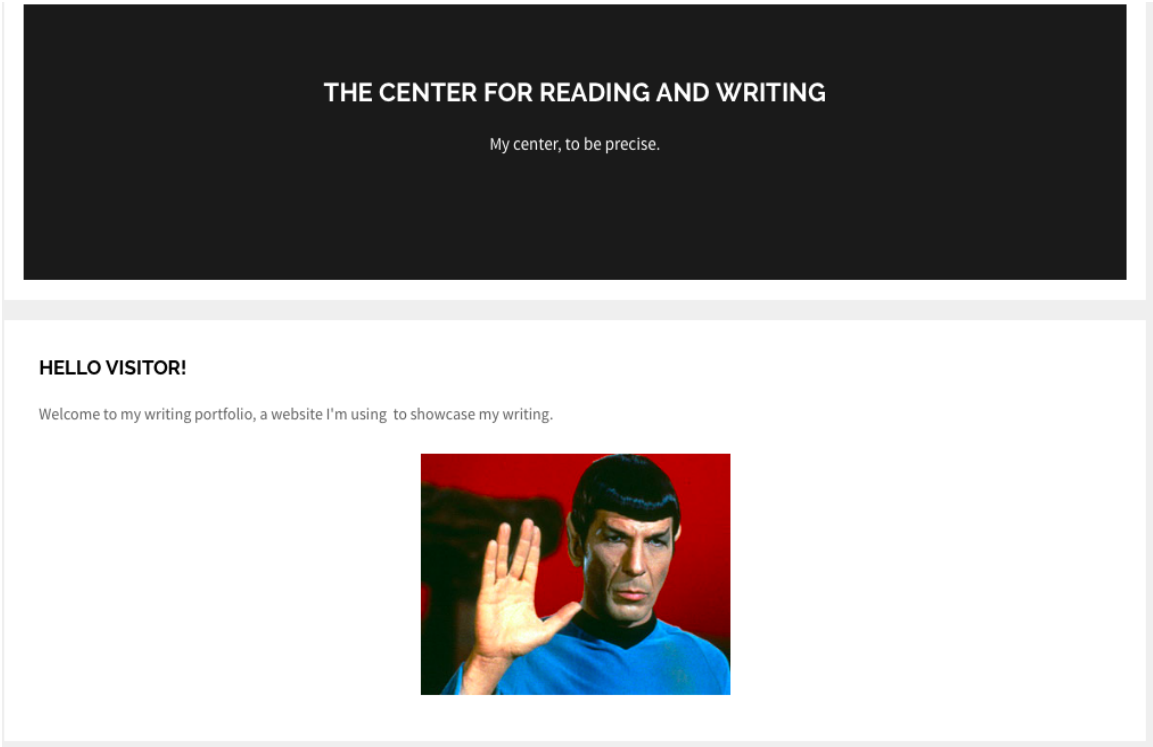


Figure 7. Zach's image of Spock giving the Vulcan greeting which incorporated concurrence through exposition.

By considering the ways in which the text and visual modes related to each other, the students created sophisticated multimodal designs. Though this class typically only focused on the importance of linguistic modes, the students were still able to take up the features of Weebly to create homepages that reflected their self-interests and personas while still meeting the requirements of the academic portfolio.

Interpersonal/Interactive Metafunction. The students' take up of the interpersonal metafunction was quite varied. Some chose to have close personal distance, using more informal and excited punctuation often in combination with relatively informal or personal images (e.g., "Welcome!!!!!!" with a picture of the student taking a mirror selfie). Some students also chose to include humor (like Michael and Zach). For

example, Zach's portfolio (Figure 7) includes a few small jokes ("My center, to be precise") as well as Spock greeting the visitor. Others were more formal, but still personal, using the first person and introducing their portfolios in academic ways (e.g., a cartoon image of a student working on a computer at a desk with the tagline "This portfolio shows my work of writing from my senior year and also give explanations to where I stand as a reader, writer, and in language." see Figure 8). However, others were much more formal with impersonal social distance (e.g., a grey-toned image of an elaborate ballpoint pen with an open notebook and the text "BRIAN STEPHENS/ENGLISH PORTFOLIO") or even academic, including the name of the course or semester (e.g., "**SILVIA CISNEROS' WRITING PORTFOLIO**/Silvia's Writing Portfolio for Capstone English Literature." over a sepia-toned picture of a car-lined street in a busy city).

Figure 8. Formal yet personal example of a student's homepage.

This range of interpersonal meaning making was not something that was often seen in this class, as Ms. Lee frequently characterized the class as quite formal and relatively devoid of students' personal reflections and interests (as is common with literary analyses). However, with this unit, the students could choose the formality, social distance, and perspective to create portfolios through which they could connect and communicate with their audience.

Textual/Compositional Metafunction. Much like the interpersonal metafunction, students' use of the textual metafunction also varied widely. This was in

part because of the relatively open-ended authoring paths that students could take when designing their portfolios. Despite the variation, students, for the most part, used traditional conventions of formatting for a website homepage (i.e., centered heading, smaller text where applicable below the heading, quotes in italics, centered images). By including the heading as the largest text at the top, the students recognized that that information was given and the most important —or "ideal"—and the descriptions included below were new information and concrete—or "real" (Unsworth, 2006). Students skillfully arranged their homepages to meet these standard conventions.

Students' textual choices were in part likely based in what the students wanted in their portfolio designs, their understanding of design structures, what was provided in their selected theme (and potentially edited), and in the available design elements that Weebly provides (e.g., selecting a "quote" element automatically formats the quote into italics and changes the color and font of the text). Students could edit their themes and add elements to design their portfolios in ways that they felt were most appropriate for their goals and potential audience. Some students emphasized particular elements (e.g., highlighting their names like in Figure 8, including buttons with links to other pages of their portfolio or to external links such as personal blogs or the class Instagram account, etc.).

In doing so, the students personalized their portfolios through their designs that would not have otherwise been possible in other forms of writing. In her final interview, Ms. Lee noted to me that the portfolio unit may have been more of a learning experience for her than even for the students, as she was unaware what the students were capable of when given more open platforms through which they could make meaning through

multiple modes.

Focal Students

All of the students' Weebly pages, Weebly Blogs, and Instagram posts were strikingly different, and the focal students were no exception. Because the students' Weebly pages contained the most information (with students creating at least 11 required pages) about how they represented themselves as writers, I begin each focal student's section with an analysis of their Weebly pages. I then move on to my discussion of students' eight Weebly Blogs and five Instagram posts. By examining each of these platforms individually, I explore how the students designed modal compositions and included personalization and personal interests to design on each platform. Each of these analyses are also guided by the metafunctions, but I present the analyses of the metafunctions as they are taken up simultaneously (Halliday, 1985; Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Unsworth, 2006). In doing so, I explore how the students were able to multimodally design their complete portfolios to reflect their personal interests and make meaning in ways that would not have been possible in the traditional forms of writing in this classroom.

Because of the amount of data (Weebly homepage, About Me, four Writing sections and reflections, Literacy Memoir and reflections, nine Weebly Blog posts, five Instagram posts), I present here a small sample of the larger analysis.

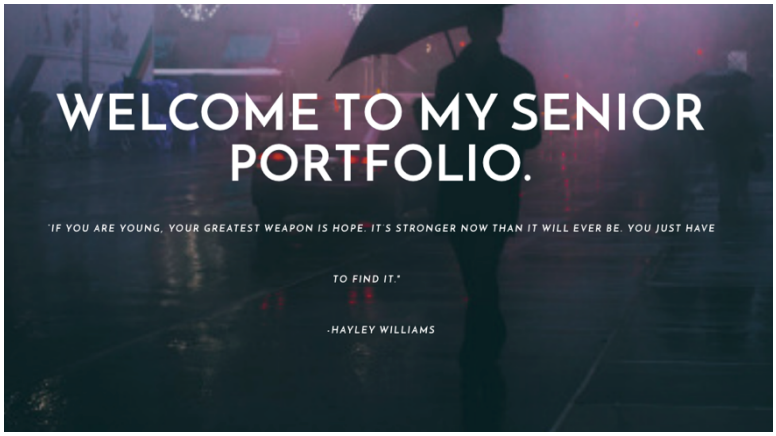
Marta

Marta's Weebly pages. Rather than keep a consistent background image throughout her Weebly pages, Marta marked different categories of pages by changing background images (i.e., different backgrounds for the Home and About Me pages than

the three Writing sections). However, her pictures were consistent in color palate and tone (see Table 5 for all backgrounds). The background on Marta's homepage is of a shadowy man walking down a rainy street in the city, carrying an umbrella. The colors are greys, blacks, dark purples, and a splash of magenta from a car's break lights. These colors carry throughout the rest of her webpage backgrounds: a close-up photo of a grey succulent plant on her About Me Page, a dimly-lit field of flowers at sunrise/sunset for her Writing sections, and a streetlight at sunrise/sunset (which Marta took herself) for her Weebly Blog page.[10] These darker, softer images in cool tones offer complementarity with the pensive, emotional nature of Marta's portfolio and of her linguistic modes.

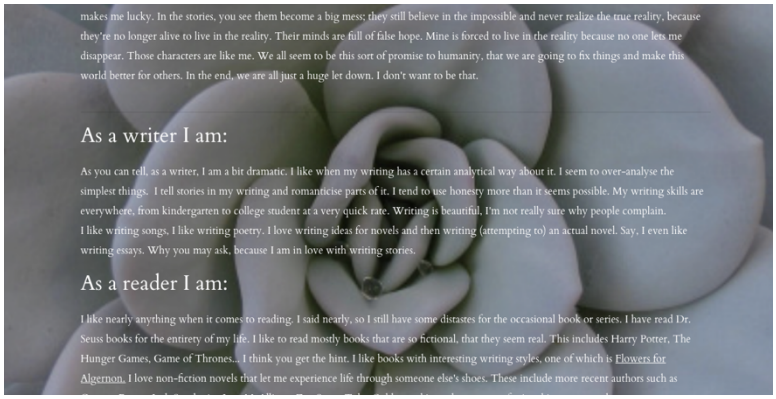
Table 5.

Marta's Backgrounds on Her Weebly Pages and Weebly Blogs

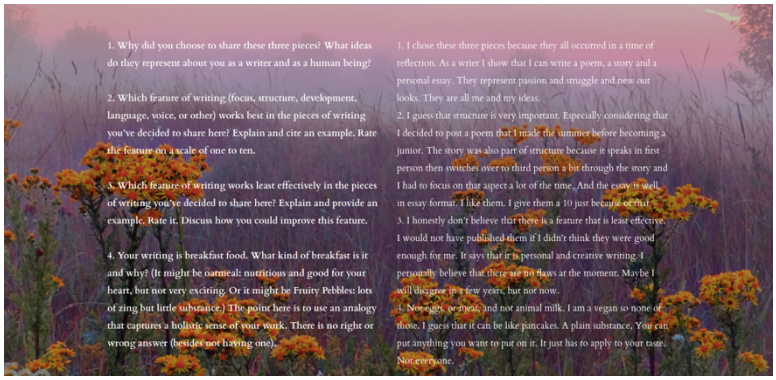
Homepage	

[10] Though I analyzed the Weebly Blog separately, it was located within the Weebly pages and added to the overall color scheme of the Weebly pages; thus, it is included here.

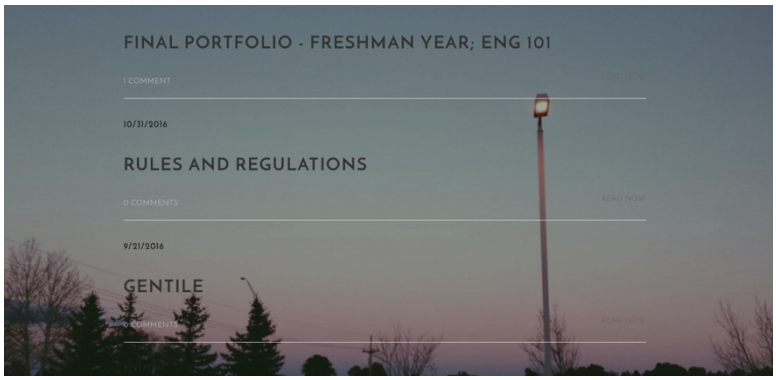
About Me



Academic Writing, Personal and Creative Writing, Literacy Memoir



Weebly Blog



Marta's homepage is relatively minimal with simple white text that reads: "WELCOME TO MY SENIOR PORTFOLIO." This is followed by a quote that Marta attributes to Hayley Williams, the lead singer for a pop-punk band called Paramore, whose brooding songs like their first and biggest hit "Misery's Business" offer complementarity with the emotional, angsty tone of Marta's website. I further discuss Marta's inclusion of other musical lyrics in her Weebly Blog section, but it is important

to note that she included popular-cultural interests throughout her portfolio, creating a close social distance by indexing her outside interests through text (and potentially through her photos through less overt references).

Marta's next page, her About Me page, continues the dramatic and emotional tone of the portfolio with her close-up photo of a grey-toned succulent as the predominant focus of the background. Her white text is divided into three parts with headings for each ("This is who I am," "As a writer I am," and "As a reader I am" as per the directions). In her "This is who I am" section, Marta compares herself to an unspecified book-character in that she is an "overachieving dreamer that ends up getting caught up in her own brain." Her textual self-description shows her interest and connection to the traditional literary world, comparing herself to book characters (over movie/other types of characters). Marta's dramatic descriptions of these characters echoes the dark, emotional tone that she maintains throughout her Weebly pages and the other platforms as well. Here, Marta's meaning-making is done predominantly through written text; however, it is made more powerful through the layering of this text with other modes that offer complementarity—i.e. the selection of background images, the colors that she chose—as well as the inclusion of her outside literary interests, which from the perspective of the interpersonal metafunction, makes the design more personal.

Marta continues the close social distance and complementarity throughout the other sections of Weebly pages, which include portions of her writing embedded in front of an out-of-focus purple field with in-focus orange flowers at sunrise/sunset. The complementarity between the background image and Marta's text is in keeping with that which she creates throughout the portfolio as the general emotional tone (purple) is

contrasted with bright spots of passion (orange) through both image and text.

Textually, on her Academic Writing page, Marta embedded her original essay side-by-side with her revised essay. Even though the text is then harder to read, it is easier to make comparisons between the two versions to see the changes that she made. Marta was the only student to embed her writings side-by-side, and her design of the layout of the pieces shows her invitation for comparison. Because of the freedom of layout, Marta was able to embed and move the documents in a way that focused the reader's attention on the differences between drafts, straying from the layout in Ms. Lee's example portfolio and showing ownership over her design, which was not always available in this class.

Marta's selections for her Personal and Creative Writings were: "A Poem called: Notice Things," "TRUTH - A short story (so far)," and "Piano Lessons - Auto Ethnography."[11] Though all dark, dramatic, and emotional, in the interest of space, I discuss only Marta's first piece, titled "A Poem called: Notice Things". The four-page, free-verse poem mixes Spanish, English, literary references, and mythical references while detailing how Marta felt like she was drowning, which from the perspective of interpersonal metafunction, continues Marta's close personal distance, as she invites the reader into personal events. From the perspective of the textual metafunction, Marta's layout of the poem offsets particular words, forcing the reader to emphasize them more (see Figure 9 for the first stanza).

[11] Marta also included a link to her Google Drive for updated versions of "TRUTH - A short story (so far)" that led readers to an updated version of her story.

I don't know if it's just me
But
I have felt myself
drowning
over and
over again...
Constantly really.
Trying surface air.
to reach
the
just for

Have I mentioned that I don't know
how
to
swim?
Yeah, well, I don't.

But everything else does.

Figure 9. The first stanza of Marta's poem, "A Poem called: Notice Things" in her Personal and Creative Writing section on her Weebly pages.

Embedded on the same purple and orange floral image, Marta's Literacy Memoir, "The Porcelain Doll," describes a moment in her childhood when she heard her family gossiping and how this sparked her interest in stories. The flowery two-page story includes a few words of Spanish (e.g., tia, chismosa), which was in keeping with the personalization of her Personal and Creative Writing pieces. She also addresses the reader directly at times ("Now, I told you that this story would reflect badly on me…"), which indicates a level of informality that not many other students included in their literacy memoirs and created a very close social distance that was echoed by the inclusion of her native language and the tone of the story.

Marta's Weebly Blog. Overall, Marta's Weebly Blog posts are comprised mostly of text. Through this text, Marta created an even more informal tone than in her Weebly pages and does so with less structured reflection. Instead, Marta's Weebly Blog posts are

heavily personal, including references to bands and informally working through her ideas, like one might in a journal, recounting her feelings and locations of events. In doing so, Marta takes up the common features of blogs that allow for this kind of personal writing (Liew, 2010; Manca & Ranieri, 2013). By treating her Weebly Blog as a journal, Marta also exhibited ownership over her blog, writing several more prompts than was required. Though Marta did not include many substantive pictures that contributed denotative meaning to her blog posts, she did include an original photo as her background, again personalizing the blog in ways that she did not with her Weebly pages. The interplay of the dark, bleak photo with her personal text adds to Marta's overall dramatic, emotional tone, done so in a personal way.

Marta's blog was unique in its layout. While all other students created their blogs to include the title and visible text where the reader could scroll through the page and read each of the blog posts (also mirroring Ms. Lee's example), Marta designed hers to have only the titles visible, where readers must click on the titles to be directed to a new page to read each post. Textually, this layout serves to make each post feel unique, as they are not easily read through all at once. Instead, the reader must read each title and then select a post on which to click and read the full text.

Aside from the background image, Marta only included two other images on her Weebly Blog: an optional Instagram picture and an illustrative picture of the book she was re-reading. Marta's focus on meaning making through primarily textual modes on her blog shows her preference for designing with written text and is in keeping with her designs throughout the blog and beyond. The picture of the book that she included is not referenced in her post; instead it is merely placed to the side of her textbox, seeming to

serve an illustrative function (Jewitt, 2005; Unsworth, 2006). Marta's decision to not include images on her blog focuses the reader's attention to the small white text on the stark background, which maintains Marta's consistent dark tone.

Much like her Weebly pages, Marta included references to her interests in popular culture in the form of quotes at the end of most required blog posts (eight out of the nine posts for Ms. Lee's class). Seven of those quotes were from a British pop-rock band called "The 1975". Each of these quotes seem to relate to her responses peripherally, while still reflecting Marta's interests and design. By referencing the band's lyrics, Marta includes personal out-of-school interests that index her within a larger culture without directly stating her interests in music, the specific genre, or the particular band.

Marta's Instagram. Instagram offered a unique opportunity for Marta and her classmates to attend to visual modes for meaning-making in direct ways. The combination of visual modes in the posts as well as the text-based captions allowed students to create multimodal compositions that featured multiple modes in concert for meaning making that would not have been possible through linguistic modes alone.

Marta posted a total of six times to Instagram. Two of the posts were poems that she created (blackout and book spine), though the two posts were quite different. The blackout poem was a photocopied page from *Fahrenheit 451* with many words and sentences marked out in black marker (students were permitted to use any color they chose, see Figure 10). The content and caption of the post read quite dark ("I found it interesting how my poem came out pretty sad and negative, but for others it came out positive"), and Marta was able to achieve this tone through the interplay of her image, which she edited with a filter to appear gritty and dark, the text of the poem, and her

caption.

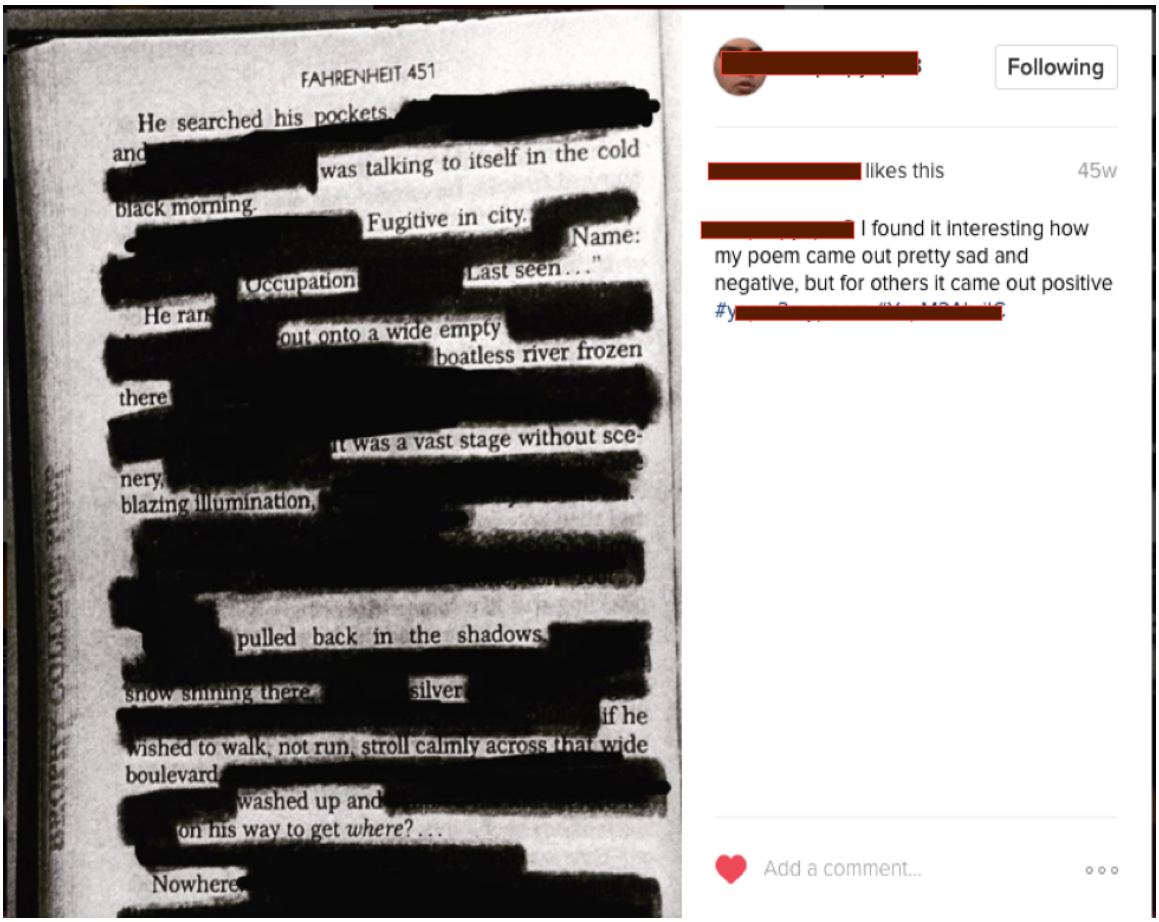


Figure 10. Marta's blackout poem post on Instagram.

Marta's other posts also seem to reflect her dark design. For example, Marta posted a heavily-edited picture of a pearl ring on a computer with the caption "Sara is always available to help me with my writing. She is kind when telling me what I should fix without making my essays seem better then they are [sic]." The black and white picture of the ring on a computer, in combination with her thoughtful caption (compared to some of her peers) create a close social distance that is still pensive and dark. Through the use of her pictures in combination with her text-based captions, Marta is able to multimodally design her portfolio to be thoughtful, dark, and emotional.

However, one of Marta's posts deviated from her typical emotional tone. Like many other students in the class, Marta used humor on her Instagram page for meaning making through memes. Memes are internet jokes that consist of a picture with an apt caption (usually on or below the picture), generally reflecting those who share the joke's culture (Gleason, 2016). Her post shows a cartoon character from *Spongebob Square Pants*, a common meme, spinning out of control (see Figure 11) with the caption "When you're trying to finish your memoir but can't remember anything about your life all of a sudden." By including a meme, Marta again displayed her connections and interests outside of school, indexing her interests beyond the classroom, which would have not been possible through other forms of writing in this class.

Figure 11. Marta's meme Instagram post.

Summary. Marta's entire portfolio was consistent in her dark, emotional design. Though she took up both visual and textual modes for meaning making throughout her portfolio, Marta did so differently on each platform. For example, in her Weebly pages, Marta relied on textual modes as her main form of meaning making, while writing

personally about her heritage and outside interests (e.g., Spanish language, literature, mythology). With the exception of the pop-star quote on her homepage, the interests that she included were relatively academic, which was in keeping with the formality of the Weebly pages. However, Marta's inclusion of other personal interests on her Weebly Blog (music lyrics for most posts, non-required posts about her feelings, personal picture as the background) showed a less formal, more reflective tone (Liew, 2010; Manca & Ranieri, 2013).

Furthermore, in Marta's text, she was overtly thinking through ideas, directly addressing the reader as she did so. While her background on her blog contributed to a darker tone, Marta's other pictures were largely decorative rather than directly attended to (Jewitt, 2005). Marta heavily attend to the interplay of modes for meaning making on her Instagram posts, wherein she connected both visual and textual modes to allow for greater meaning making than the modes could have on their own. Her inclusion of humor and other personal reflections in her Instagram posts also showed a connection to outside interests that would not have otherwise been possible in this class.

Julio

Julio's Weebly pages. Julio's Weebly pages were markedly personal throughout. He had consistent headers on every page that included a professional-looking picture of his face with his school uniform shirt just barely visible and out-of-focus fellow students in the background (see Figure 12). His gaze is directly at the reader, insinuating strong demand. Below this header, each of his pages had grey, sans serif text on a white background. The predominant colors on his pages were maroon (found on Julio's shirt and on the out-of-focus doors behind him in the picture), grey (text), and white

(background). By including a picture of himself as the theme, Julio likely signaled to the reader that this was, in fact, a personal portfolio of which he was the focus.

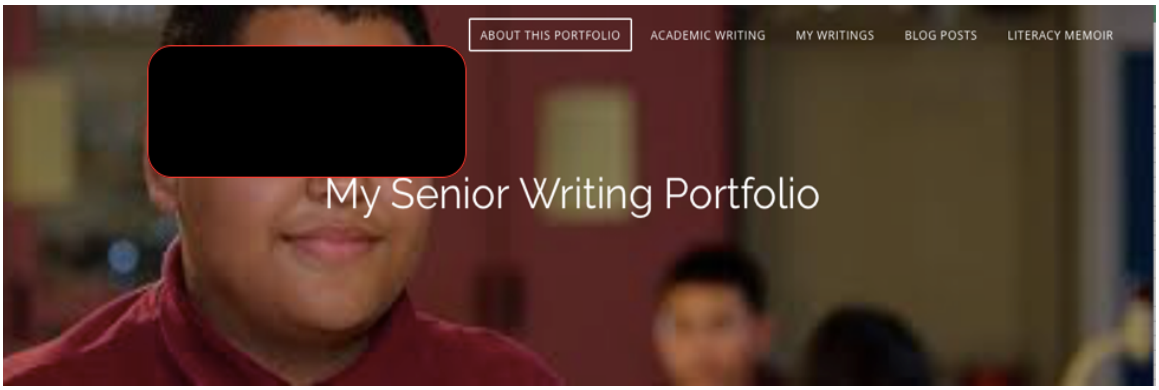


Figure 12. Julio's header for his Weebly pages.

Like Marta, much of Julio's meaning making on his Weebly pages is relayed through textual modes. Julio did not include a homepage, but instead opens with his About Me page, which begins with a seemingly enthusiastic "Welcome!!!!!!" From an interpersonal perspective, this greeting indicates a close social distance through both the enthusiasm and through the informal punctuation. As was required, he included a section introducing himself (titled "About Me"), a section about his writing (titled "About My Writing"), and a section about his reading (titled "About My Reading"). He also included an untitled section about his portfolio where he wrote directly to the reader as a sort of substitution for his homepage ("This is my portfolio. Here you will stumble upon several pieces of my writings…. You will also see blogs about my progress and my feelings. I hope you enjoy all of my works!"). In addressing the reader directly, Julio created a personal tone with close social distance for his website, one that contrasts the typical formal, third person literature analyses that were common to this classroom. Next to this introduction, Julio also included a full-length selfie of himself in the mirror, which

contrasts the professional photo that he uses as his header, signaling two levels of formality. This personal tone of his modal ensemble of textual and visual modes (specifically the pictures of himself) helps to form a more informal design wherein Julio expressed ideas that were atypical for this classroom where the writer was often removed from the text.

In the next section of Julio's About Me page ("About Me"), he introduced himself as "just a small town boy from Mexico" and discusses how much he dislikes the school and how it has caused him so much stress□a candid, seditious comment for school-based assignment. Even though there is complementarity between the personal images of Julio and his candid text, there is divergence in some of Julio's text, as his statements seem to have different attitudes and social distances. In each of his introductory sections, Julio expresses his dislike for school and school-related literacy practices. However, he contrasts these with things that he does enjoy (poetry and creative writing, books about space and superheroes). This complex juxtaposition in tone as disinterested versus emotional and reflective is present throughout his portfolio and will be addressed further in each section.

Julio's other Weebly pages ("Academic Writing," "Literacy Memoir", and the Personal and Creative Writing section that he titled "My Writing") are divided each of these sections into different pages, including one piece of writing on each page and the reflections for each section on their own pages as well (see Figure 13). Julio's layout for his Weebly pages and the separation that he chose to have between each of his pieces (rather than someone like Marta who included them all on one page) mirrors Ms. Lee's example profile (see Figure 14), which may show Julio's deference on her example as a

template, following the general norms of the class that had been followed throughout the school year (Green et al., 2013).

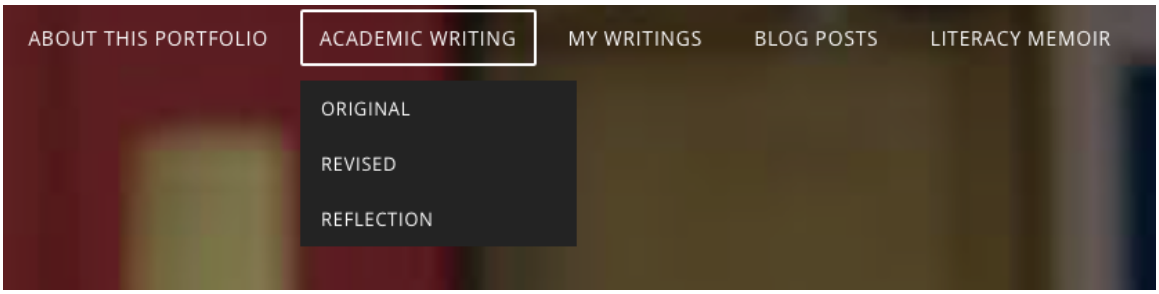


Figure 13. Julio's menu for his Weebly pages showing the layout of his Academic Writing section.

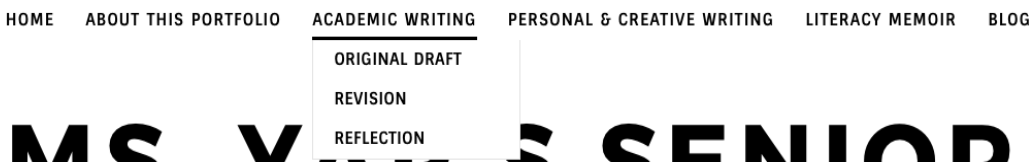


Figure 14. Ms. Lee's menu for her Weebly pages showing the layout of her Academic Writing section.

The ways in which Julio labeled his pieces in his Personal and Creative Writing section also mirror that of Ms. Lee's example ("Selection" A-C and divided onto separate pages). Though Ms. Lee requested that students select a wide range of types of writing to showcase their varying writing styles, Julio chose three poems (two of which were in his native language, Spanish). The two Spanish poems were relatively short (10 and 11 lines each), and Julio included a summary of their meaning in a separate textbox at the end.[12] Both poems are about emotional experiences: killing a deer while camping, and nearly

[12] As a Spanish speaker, I was able to both read the poem and Julio's summary of the poem for analysis.

drowning in a river but being saved by his now late uncle. His emotional writings in his native language contrast those of his Academic Writing section, which had much more impersonal social distance as it was more academic. This change may suggest that Julio's sense of freedom as a writer could shine through in his poetry in ways that essays would not allow. He could rise above the institutional constraints of the classroom (e.g., English, formal literature analysis, prescriptive formatting) to include pieces that he felt more connected to, that included the personalization that he expressed that he valued in writing.

Julio's Weebly Blog. Julio completed the eight required Weebly Blog posts. He did not include any pictures, which again shows his propensity toward text, and his blog's formatting was generally consistent (simple title and uniform grey text). Julio's responses were also relatively similar in length, and the uniformity of design and length may indicate little exploration of the other design features for which Weebly Blogs allows. Thus, similar to his Weebly pages, Julio's meaning making and design within his Weebly Blogs was largely text-based.

Julio's blog posts were filled with emotion and candid expressions of his own experiences and pain as well as reflections on his connections to the text. For example, Julio made strong connections to the characters in a book, *Speak*, that he was re-reading as per the assignment. *Speak* is the story of a high school student who is ostracized at school, ditches class, and eventually turns to self-harm, which the reader later finds out is because she was raped by an older student. Julio explains in a blog post that he did not like the book when he first read it as a freshman, but now that he is older, he can better relate to Melinda, the main character. Julio revisits this notion of relating to Melinda and

her pain throughout his blog posts, drawing comparisons to her experiences. In doing so, Julio wrote emotionally and candidly about his own struggles (albeit slightly vague) that serves to create a close social distance while also making strong, personal connections with the text and possible audience. Though the meaning is not relayed multimodally necessarily, this kind of ideational expression would not have been possible in other forms of writing that were typically found in this classroom.

Julio's Instagram. Julio again used predominantly textual modes for meaning making, even in a visual-forward platform like Instagram. Three of his posts were pictures of text, which for someone who described himself as hating writing, shows a heavy reliance on traditional linguistic forms of meaning making. Unlike many other students, Julio did not include any memes in his posts, despite his mention of enjoying writing with humor in his final interview. He also did not include much personalization that would have belied much information about Julio beyond his class-based reflections.

Julio posted to Instagram five times. Most of these posts were relatively upbeat, which seems slightly at odds with the kinds of writing that Julio showcased on his Weebly pages and Weebly Blogs. His first post, a picture of his tutorial page is captioned, "Man, this was the easiest/funnest thing I've ever done. It was not bad and the directions made it easier." Despite the concurrence between the caption and image, the visual modes of the picture reflect very little meaning making, as most of his meaning is created through his text-based caption (Jewitt, 2005). This use of textual over visual modes was also in keeping with how Julio used Weebly pages and Weebly Blogs.

Two of Julio's posts were pictures that featured himself. One of these was a picture of himself at school, leaning against the wall and pursing his lips with strong

demand as he looked at the camera. This was captioned, "Revising my essay was really hard and stressful. I had to dig in my bag for notes from a long time ago." Julio's expressed disinterest for school is presented through this post and both image and caption offer complementarity in tone, as his face shows clear dissatisfaction and his caption further explains the reasons for this dissatisfaction. Julio was able to use both visual and textual modes to create a more complete representation of how he felt about writing his essay. By showing a picture of himself and then commenting about his progress on his essay, Julio's reflection appears more personal as the reader can see his physical reaction through his facial expression, creating a close social distance.

Julio also posted a picture of his blackout poem, for which he used a purple maker to non-uniformly cross out words to create his poem (see Figure 15). His captioned discusses what he likes about the poem, which is the mystery of it and includes several sarcastic hashtags. Because of the size of the document in the picture, the poem is illegible, making his caption more subjective to his interpretation.[13] However, the concurrence between the picture and the caption help to create a text that is multimodal, where both modes add to the meaning of the composition. Julio leads with what he likes about the poem and keeps his focus on the darker side of writing ("something bad happened"). Even though he writes that he liked his poem, Julio then seditiously undermines his reflection through his included (not required) hashtags, creating a closer social distance. These hashtags also serve to add more personalization to his post through humor, slightly poking fun at himself ("HarHardWroker" and "OMG") and expressing his unenthusiastic feelings about the assignment ("#ehhhhh").

[13] This was posted before Instagram allowed users to zoom in on pictures.

Julio created complex, multimodal posts on Instagram that met the requirements of the assignment while also including his personal reflection and personal elements (such as his humor). As expressed in in-situ interviews and surveys, Julio did not enjoy writing, especially in this class. However, his Instagram posts showed that there were some elements to writing that he enjoyed that may not have otherwise been possible in the typical class assignments.

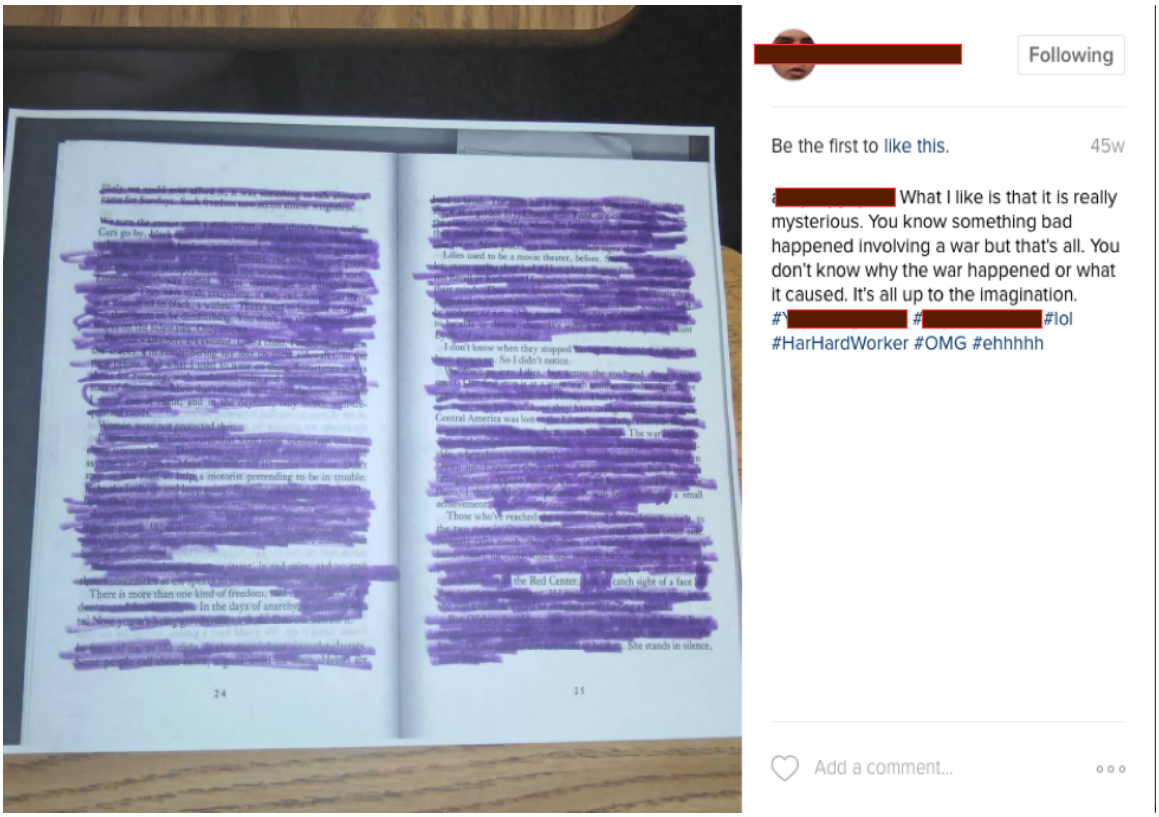


Figure 15. Julio's blackout poem on Instagram.

Summary. Overall, Julio's complete portfolio relayed very personal ideas through his interplay of modes that would not have been possible in the typical forms of writing in this class. Even with the included visual modes, Julio's meaning making was often through predominantly textual modes, even on visual-forward Instagram. His use of mostly text indexes Julio's writing within the more traditional forms seen in schools

(Vasudeva, 2010), despite his resistance to school and school-based writing.

Unlike Marta, Julio did not bring in many of his out-of-school interests into his portfolio, and it tended to be more straightforward and followed Ms. Lee's example closely. He did, however, include and highlight pictures of himself both on his Weebly pages and in his Instagram posts, which few other students did, showing a more personal tone and giving his portfolio and reflections a face. Julio's seditious but personal reflections across each of the platforms helped to create a larger, complex design that may not have been possible through the typical literary analyses typical to this classroom.

Discussion and Implications

In this study, I examined how a class of 26 students designed digital portfolios to create personal, complex, multimodal compositions that would otherwise not have been possible in this class, which was typically based in more formal, linguistic-mode dominant, print-based literary analyses. Through the examination of two focal students, I explored in greater depth students' portfolio designs across each of the three platforms, which reflect strong affect and personal interests. Because of the open-ended nature of the unit, students could design their portfolios to reflect personal interests or interact with the audience through the interplay of modes, creating compositions that were more than the sum of their parts (Kress, 2003).

Layering and attending to the interplay of modes in design can lead to powerful, effective communication (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). However, when modes are taken up in specific and isolated ways, their effectiveness for communication becomes more limited as one mode becomes the focus over another (Shanahan, 2013). Ms. Lee's classroom focused predominately on linguistic-dominant modes for meaning making

before the beginning of the portfolio unit. In doing so, students were restricted to expressing ideas through specific types of modes and in specific contexts where essay-based forms of writing were more privileged than others. However, when given the opportunity to design using multiple modes, the students flourished.

Students expressed themselves in their writing through an expanded array of design choices afforded by multimodal platforms. For example, Marta's portfolio was markedly personal, including pictures that she had taken, band lyrics, other languages, cultural references, etc. Ms. Lee even commented specifically about Marta's page during her interview, noting that "You could see [Marta's] personality was in her backgrounds that she picked, or the banners that she chose or the headlines that she wrote. And so that was really, really cool to see." Ms. Lee's understanding of Marta expanded as Marta's ability to represent her ideas in different modes began to expand as well.

This shift in design and meaning making was one that profoundly affected the ways in which Ms. Lee approached writing in her classroom. In her final interview, Ms. Lee said, "I liked that I was saying to them, 'this is also valid writing', and I like that I could also see them[…] work through that and wrestle with that, and do that." Because she gave students an opportunity to express ideas in different forms and through a combination of modes, she saw many of her struggling students succeed and felt more confidence in their writing abilities.

However, even though the students designed multimodal compositions that expressed complex ideas through the interplay of modes, in my observations and confirmed in my interview with Ms. Lee when she emphasized the visual modes' role during the portfolio unit to be that of decoration (to make the portfolios look more

appealing through concurrence or complementarity). While Ms. Lee's role is explored in-depth in another publication (Chapter 5), she presented the assignment to focus on a limited scope of just the ideational metafunction, rather than as all three metafunctions working simultaneously together, as Halliday (1985) and Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) purported, which may constrain opportunities for multimodal composition (Shanahan, 2013).

This focus was based on Ms. Lee's training as an English teacher and the context of the school wherein students in the capstone English class were expected to focus on traditional, college-readiness writing. Had Ms. Lee perhaps felt that she had more freedom and training to critically engage multimodal texts (in their consumption and production), the students (especially those like Julio who relied heavily on textual modes for meaning making) could have designed using even more apt modes for expressing ideas (Kress, 2003). Thus, a potential implication for teachers is that focusing on one mode over others may put students at a disadvantage, as they position some modes as *supportive* to others (Shanahan, 2013; Unsworth, 2006). For example, Shanahan (2013) found that students who were explicitly asked to focus on visual modes in their multimodal compositions may not have relayed the information that they knew about the project topic. Similarly, many students in this class relied on linguistic modes for meaning making based on the norms of the class (Green et al., 2013), and may have been able to relay the information in more apt ways through other modes (Kress, 2003).

Many scholars suggest that one way to help both teachers and students understand the interplay of modes is through a metalanguage wherein the metafunctions discussed here are used to critically engage with multimodal texts (Archer, 2006; Mills, 2009; New

London Group, 1996; Unworth, 2006). Both educators and students need to understand and discuss texts using the metafunctions because "Understanding the complexity, interrelatedness, and interdependence between image and language is essential in developing metatextual awareness" (Shanahan, 2013, p. 213). Understanding the ways in which modes work together to create new and enriched meaning beyond what the modes can do singularly may help to engender more fruitful compositions.

CHAPTER FOUR

STUDENT'S USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA FOR CLASSROOM WRITING

Literacy practices have been rapidly changing as students' and teachers' lives become increasingly more globalized and digital, but many teachers struggle with how to adapt to a changing landscape (Stewart, 2016, Shanahan, 2013). Because many teachers would like to incorporate digital tools into their classrooms to help engage students, offer new authoring paths, and mirror students' literacy practices outside of class (Mills, 2009; Shanahan, 2013), it is important to understand how students can use digital tools in the classroom and the potential implications of those uses for authoring in the classroom.

In this study, I examine how students used three social media platforms (Instagram—a social media photo and video sharing application, Weebly—a website building tool, and Weebly Blogs—a feature of Weebly that allows for interaction around posts) to create a digital writing portfolio in a high school English classroom. I explore how students used each of the platforms for writing and their implications for classroom literacy practices and pedagogical uses in the classroom.

To understand students' uses these platforms and their implications for classroom use, I examined students' writing on each platform, their responses to interview and survey questions, and a reflective interview with the classroom teacher in order to better understand how the students used the platforms and to what pedagogical effects. I found that students designed multimodal texts on Instagram to make new meanings that may not have otherwise been possible in this classroom, showcased their writing on Weebly pages to extend their work to a larger audience, and expressed ideas informally on their Weebly Blogs to reflect on their connections to texts—all hallmarks of multiliteracies

approach to literacies and writing in the classroom. In doing so, the students in this classroom expanded the typical context of the class to include other kinds of writing beyond the traditional linguistic forms, which can allow for greater meaning-making paths for students (Kress, 2003). In the following section, I briefly discuss how I frame this study through a multiliteracies theoretical lens that focuses on the context of literacy practices with an emphasis on bridging in- and out-of-school literacies.

Multiliteracies

Multiliteracies refers to the idea that there are many types of literacy practices, not just one traditional way of viewing, enacting, teaching, and learning literacy (Kalantzis & Cope, 2008; Leu et al., 2013; Mills, 2009; New London Group, 1996). From a multiliteracies lens, students' social practices and experiences are valued for their contribution to the meaning-making process, thereby calling for tailored curricula that include and value these practices, which in turn, may lead to more engaged learning practices (Vasudevan, 2006).

For the past two decades, multiliteracies scholars have aimed to shift educational literacy practices from traditional, formal, print-based texts to more open-ended, multimodal forms of communication that are more informal and offer diverse paths for literacy practices (Bialostok, 2014; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Mills, 2009). Through my analysis below of three different types of social media platforms for writing within a classroom that was typically more formal and text-based, I aim to shed light on how students can use the features of social media to expand their meaning making practices in the classroom from these more traditional forms. Thus, this study aims to add to the growing body of multiliteracies-framed research attempting to understand how social

media can be used as classroom tools to enhance literacy practices that other forms of writing may not for students and teachers.

Because of the open-endedness of many social media platforms, students can remix (use and edit) sourced materials and/or create and edit new materials (Honeyford, 2014; Jenkins, 2006). Thus, social media tools allow for remixing multimodal texts to express ideas (Knobel & Lankshear, 2008; O'Byrne & Murrell, 2014; Stewart, 2016) and to work across multiple modes to construct meaning in new ways (Edwards-Groves, 2011; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Kress, 2003; Matthewman, Blight, & Davies, 2004) based on the features of that platform (see Table 6 for each platform's features). Edwards-Groves (2011) asserted that the design within social contexts like social media allowed students into a new "pedagogic territory" (p. 51) wherein they could more efficiently express ideas through their writing and design.

Table 6.

Examples of Features of Each Platform

Weebly pages	Weebly Blogs	Instagram
text, picture, embedded documents, themes, pages, layout	text editing, picture elements, hyperlinks, layout	pictures or video settings, filters, hashtags, photo/video editing

Context of the Classroom

This study took place in a capstone-level, high school senior English literature class in the Southwestern U.S. I began working with the teacher, Ms. Lee, after she

expressed interest in incorporating a digital writing project into her classroom.[14] Twenty-six 17 and 18-year-old students participated in the study in their last semester of high school (see Table 3).[15] The school functioned as a college preparatory, predominantly serving and preparing first-generation college students for university attendance.

Because the course was a capstone English Literature class, Ms. Lee characterized her typical assignments as quite formal, requiring students to write literature analyses while citing texts and providing critical commentary. This characterization was confirmed in my observations of two class periods before the beginning of the portfolio unit and in the ten I observed during the portfolio unit.

While I offered the general idea for the unit, Ms. Lee was largely in charge of the assignments and prompts.[16] The portfolio unit consisted of writing across the three aforementioned platforms (or mediums): *Weebly pages* (website building platform), *Weebly Blogs* (blogging platform housed within Weebly pages but considered separate here because of the design and interactive features), and *Instagram* (photo and video sharing mobile app). The eight-week unit required students to create digital portfolios reflecting on their literacy practices over the course of their time in school (see Figure 1 for the assignment).[17] The Weebly pages portion of the unit consisted of four parts:

- Academic Writing section: students re-wrote a previous essay to improve it (or write it if they did not turn it in)

[14] All names are pseudonyms.
[15] Table 3 is located in Chapter 1 on page 25.
[16] Ms. Lee and I did not know each other before this study, and we were paired based on her interest to incorporate a multimodal project mediated through social media into her classroom.
[17] Figure 1 is located in Chapter 1 on page 15.

- Personal and Creative Writing section: students selected three differing pieces of their choice to showcase their best work
- Literacy Memoir section: students wrote an essay based on an important literacy moment in their lives
- About Me page: students introduced themselves and the portfolio to the potential audience and included a picture

Ms. Lee gave the students the assignment sheet for the Weebly pages, and students structured their time working on each section how they saw fit. There were times, however, set aside specifically for the Literacy Memoir, as this was a new essay and required some scaffolding.

For the Weebly Blogs, students completed eight required blog posts and one optional post (see Table 1 for the Weebly Blog prompts).[18] Ms. Lee did not initially provide any length requirement for the blog posts, though she would often encourage students to keep writing. However, the last three prompts included either a length requirement ("at least a paragraph") or a time requirement ("Write for at least 10 minutes"). Students also could include images or other elements in their blogs, though these were not required.

The final segment of the unit entailed posting reflective pictures or videos to Instagram in response to teacher-created prompts (see Table 2 for Instagram prompts).[19] Ms. Lee required students to post a total of five times to Instagram (though some posted more) for a total of 128 posts for the class. All students shared one account for the class

[18] Table 1 is located in Chapter 1 on page 19.
[19] Table 2 is located in Chapter 1 on page 22.

to avoid any privacy issues; to self-identify, students hashtagged each post with their names. They also wrote another hashtag that indicated the prompt to which they were replying. Students generally posted to Instagram during class, though they could respond to the prompts out of class as well.

Analyzing Students' Uses of Social Media[20]

I examined what students were able to do with each of the platforms in terms of making meaning and literacy practices and their resulting implications for classroom practices. For example, many students discussed that they were able to write informally on their Weebly Blogs (the use) with a resulting pedagogical implication of being able to reflect on their connections to text that would not have otherwise been possible through other forms of writing.

I drew from multiple data sources for my analysis, including pre- and post-study surveys (see Appendix B for the instruments) with Likert-type and open-ended questions, students' Weebly pages, Weebly Blog posts, and Instagram posts, in-situ interviews with students, semi-structured interviews with four focal students (Marta, Daniel, Carla, and Julio) as well as Ms. Lee, and video-recorded observational data and field notes during my 12 classroom observations (two before the portfolio unit and ten during).[21] When data appeared to be lacking, I returned to the video recordings to supplement and look for further rich points (Erickson, 1992).

I chose the focal students for a range of those who self-identified as liking/not liking writing on the pre-study survey, an equal gender mix, variations in temperament,

[20] For a more detailed description of my analysis, see Appendix A.
[21] Post-study survey responses were anonymous to allow for maximum honesty, and therefore, their responses here are identified by letters (e.g., Student A).

and variations in self-identified ethnic background. The inclusion of focal students' interviews allowed me to better understand their unique perspectives on how they used each of the platforms for writing, and Ms. Lee's input gave me further insight into how she perceived both the what the students did with each of the platforms and the pedagogical implications for the classroom for each of the platforms.

Data Analysis

The bulk of my analysis centered around what students did using each of the three platforms, which I analyzed to better understand how they capitalized on the features of each and the larger implications for these uses. This analysis included careful examination of every page students created on each platform as I took holistic analytic notes about my observations, which I then further analyzed through descriptive matrices to examine each element, using content analysis (e.g., Bazerman, 2006) to analyze each page or post, looking for general descriptors about them (see Appendix B). These analyses allowed me to better understand how students took up the features of the platforms for their writing and the potential affordances therein.

For the Instagram posts, I created categories of the types of posts (i.e., the focus of pictures or videos, see Table 7). These resulted in several categories, which allowed me to gain a greater understanding of what the students were doing with Instagram. I also examined the captions of the posts to understand how students combined textual and visual modes (Jewitt, 2005, see Table 8).

Table 7.

Categories of Instagram Posts

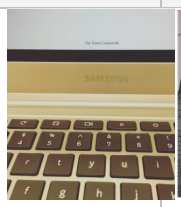
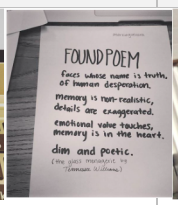
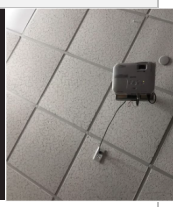
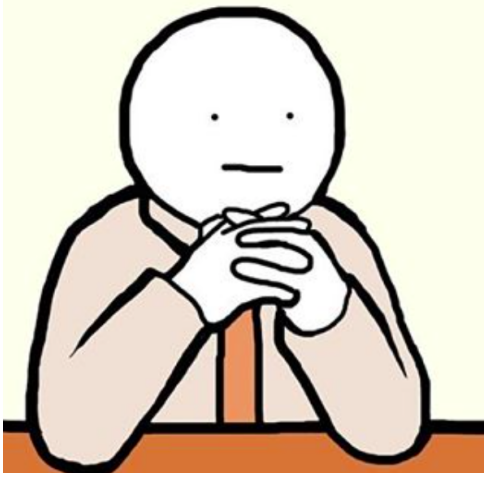
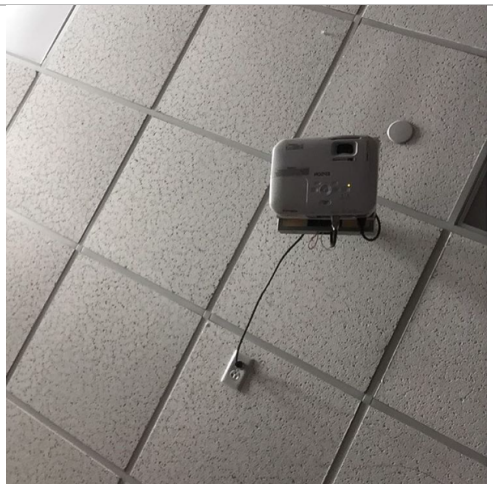
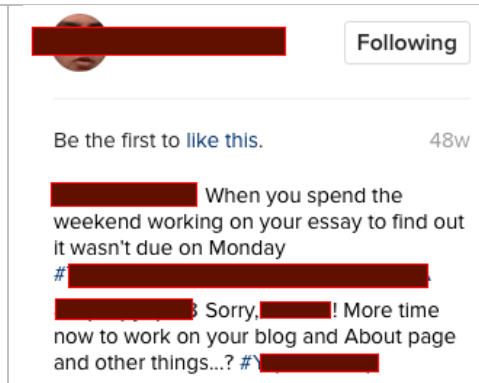
Type	*Computer*	*Poems*	*Students*	*Illustrative Picture*	*College Pride*	*Other*
# of Posts	42	34	16	22	3	11
Example						

Table 8.

Attending to the Interplay of Modes

	Multimodal	Not Multimodal
Photo		

Caption		
Reason/ Evidence	*Both caption and picture give information on their own, but together, the create a larger picture of how this student feels about his memoir.*	*While the caption provides information responding to the prompt, the picture does not seem to coordinate.*

I supplemented this analysis with an examination of the focal-student interviews to better understand students' own descriptions of how they used each platform and the implications of that use. I coded the interview transcripts as well as the open-ended survey responses using thematic coding to organize ideas based on each platform (Saldaña, 2015).

I then turned to my interview with Ms. Lee to provide further understanding of how the students used the platforms and the implications for these uses, coding them in similar ways as the students' interviews to examine how she perceived the students' writing with each of the platforms, what she may have gleaned or gained from this writing, and what she thought the students gained from this writing (Deng & Yuen, 2011). I then further analyzed the instances in which she discussed what she or the students gained in terms of how she perceived how it affected the students' literacy

practices.

Findings

I now discuss the most prominent ways students used each of the three social media platforms for writing. In brief, I found that students used Instagram to write multimodally, which afforded an opportunity to express ideas in non-traditional ways that are often not seen or valued in classrooms, especially prior to this unit in Ms. Lee's class. For their Weebly pages, students publically showcased their writing, which allowed them an expanded audience. Lastly, students used Weebly Blogs to communicate informally, which offered the implication of reflecting, specifically on their connections to the texts.

Instagram

In this section, I discuss students' Instagram posts and how multimodal design offered students an opportunity for meaning making beyond the linguistic modes typically used in classrooms (Domingo, 2012; Shanahan, 2013). Because of the visual-forward nature of Instagram, most students had to attend to visual modes in their posts, despite the typical text-based focus of the class. While there were multimodal elements of design in both Weebly pages and Weebly Blogs, students did not attend to the design of multimodal resources as keenly and overtly as they did with Instagram (likely because of Instagram's inherent focus on the interplay of modes as a platform).

Designing multimodally to make meaning. Humor appeared to be a large feature of students' compositions on Instagram. The most common use of humor was through the use of memes, as 15 of the 128 posts were of memes (analytically categorized as "illustrative"). A meme is "an idea, behavior, style, or usage that spreads from one person to another in a culture", and now more commonly refers to "an amusing or

interesting picture, video, etc., that is spread widely through the Internet" (Merriam-Webster.com, 2016). Memes are commonly seen on and created for Instagram as well as other social platforms.

This meme humor appeared to be unique to the Instagram platform, as students did not include memes on Weebly pages or Weebly Blogs. Memes offered students an opportunity to index their ideas within a larger cultural joke that served to draw some of the strongest connections between the posts and the captions (Gleason, 2016). See Figures 16-19 for examples of students' multimodal memes.

Each of these memes illustrated how the students felt about their literacy memoirs at the time in a humorous way that situated their ideas within the larger context of meme culture. In Figure 17, the student referenced the content of the picture in his caption through his pun, his reflection about his memoir, and his peripheral comment to the teacher about his grades. Without the interplay of the picture and the caption, the joke would have rested solely on the picture, and the other meanings (i.e., the pun, the comments) would have been lost. In doing so, Brian's post conveys how the students used Instagram: as a visual expression of ideas in response to a prompt (a hyperbolic representation of how he was feeling about his assignment) where the visual and textual modes interacted to allow for more expressive meaning making.

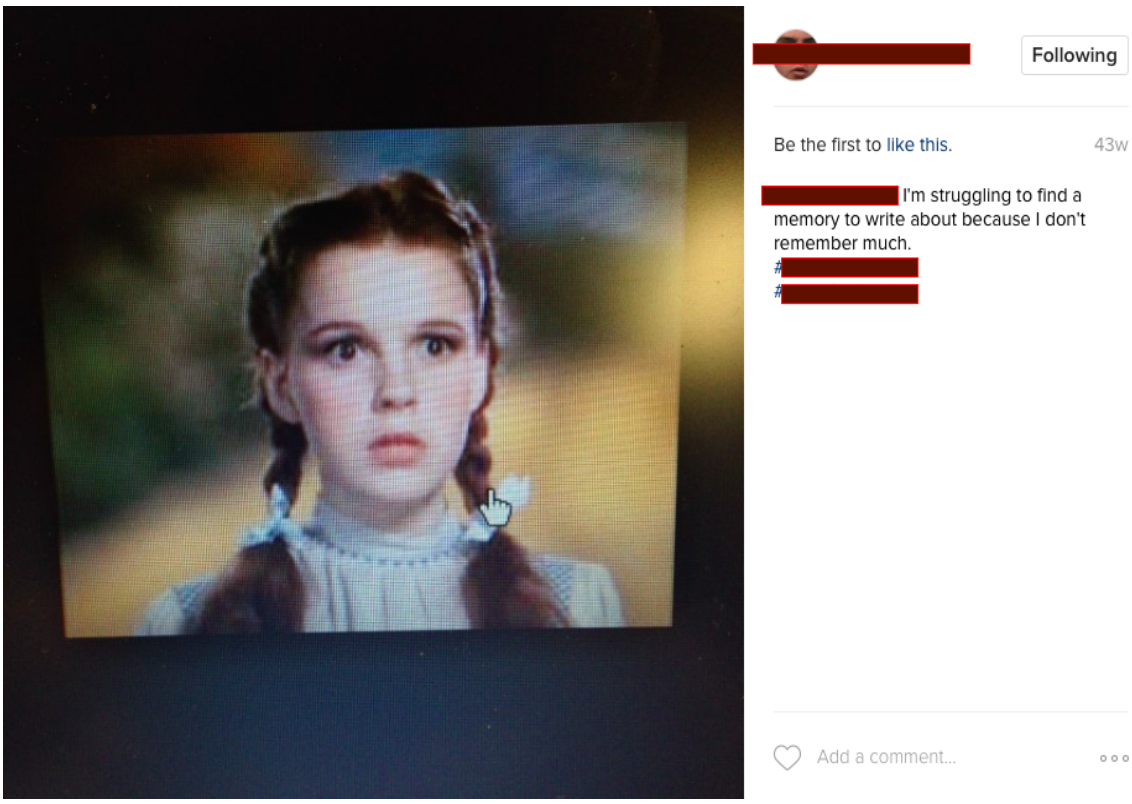


Figure 16. Instagram post featuring Dorothy

Figure 17. Instagram post featuring Nicholas Cage

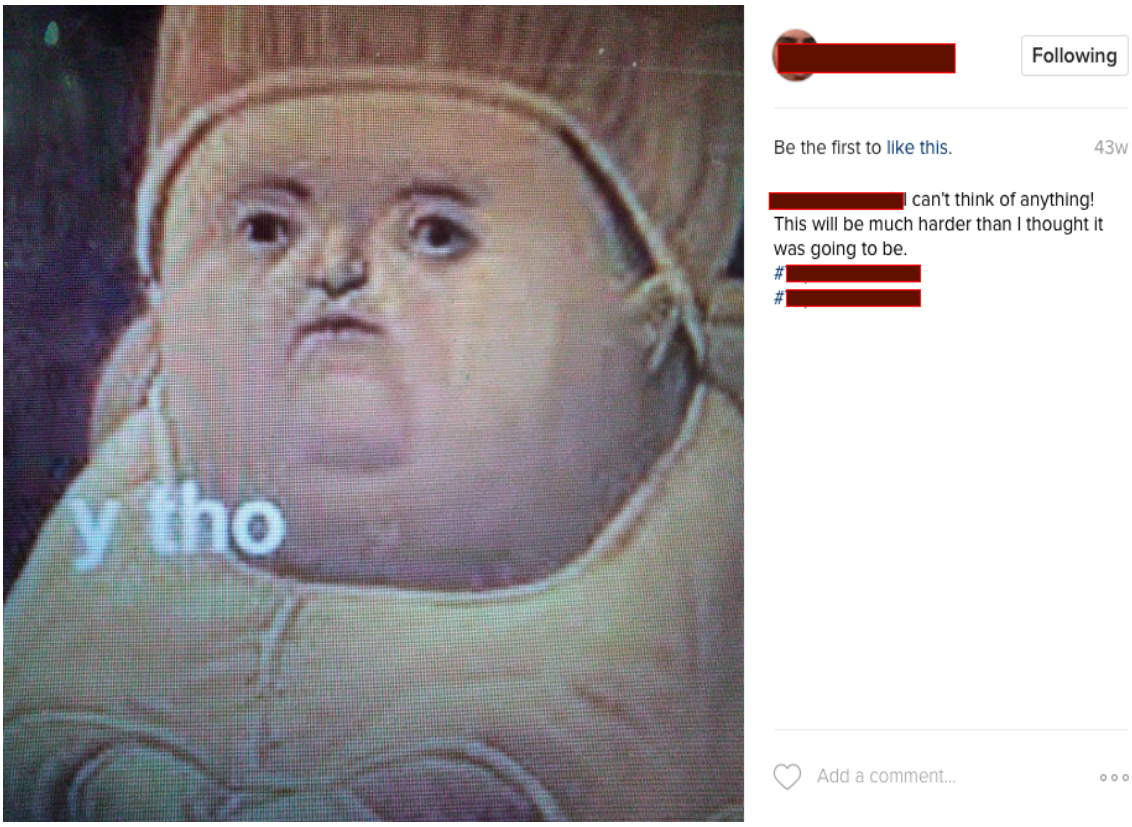


Figure 18. Instagram post featuring Fernando Botero oil painting

Another post was of a smiling, bright-eyed SpongeBob with a rainbow between his hands and text that read “DISSAPOINTMENT” (see Figure 15). Silvia captioned the picture, “I thought my essay was good, but...”. Here, Silvia used the text of the meme to finish her sentence in an interplay between the visual design of her post and the text-based caption. Her caption and image interact, creating a more complete response of how she viewed her revisions.

When designing multimodally, the inclusion of multiple modes means that the semiotic resources of modes are attended to rather than seen as decorative (Jewitt, 2005). These example posts express ideas through the hyperbolic humor in the visual pictures, in the text-based captions, and in the interplay between them where all modes are attended

to and no modes are simply decorative.

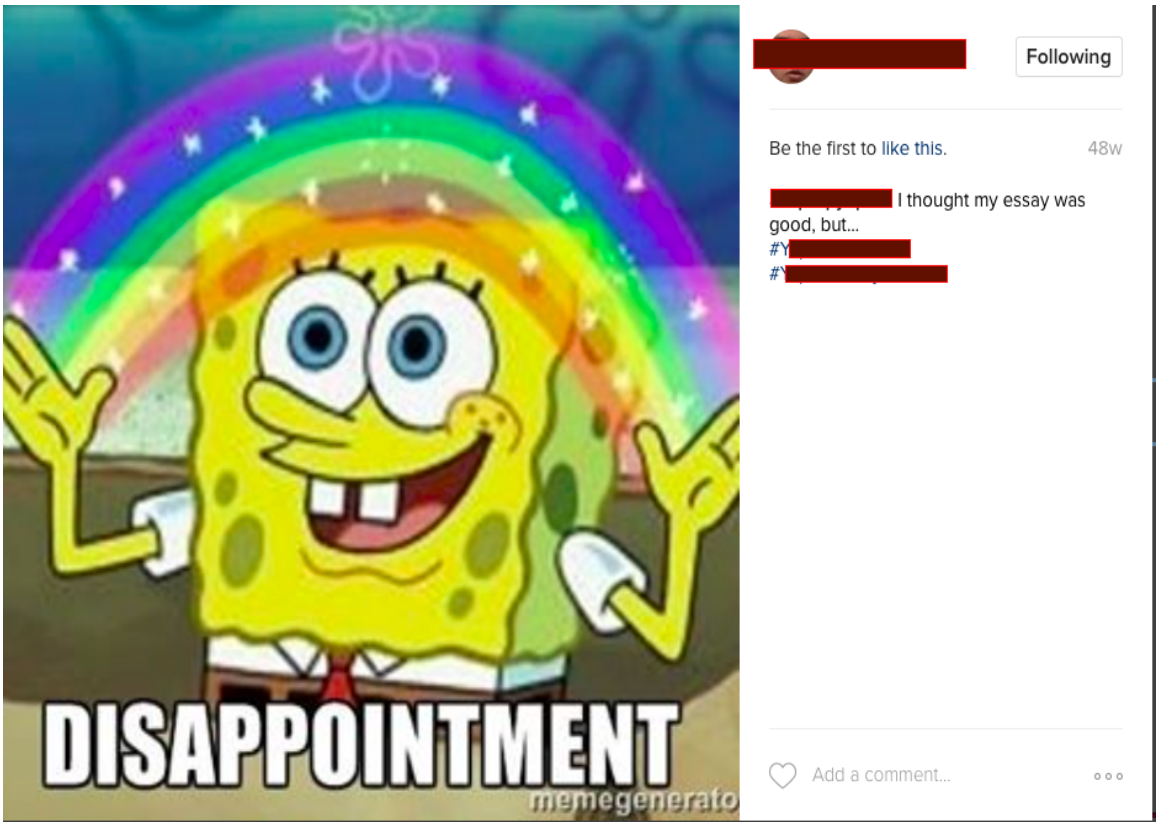


Figure 19. Instagram post featuring SpongeBob Square Pants

Thus, students used Instagram to express their ideas multimodally in ways that perhaps may have been unavailable in traditional print-based text (Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Jewitt, 2005; Kress, 2003; Smith, 2016). Because Instagram posts are, by nature, either pictures or videos with/without a caption, students' Instagram posts were fundamentally image-forward. As a result, students in this class designed their posts using multiple modes through the combination of the visual image/video and the text-based caption required for this class. Though many students primarily relied on one mode or the other for meaning making (e.g., pictures that did not relay much information in combination with reflective captions or visa-versa), many did take up the modal resources and designed multimodal posts that served to express their

ideas in ways that may not have been possible through a singular use of modes.

Another example of multimodal designs on Instagram are images in the caption, a traditionally text-based area for communication. Nine posts (and one comment on a post) included emojis, or small pictures used in text to express an idea, humor, or an emotion, as part of their captions. Emojis can be used in place of, or to further illustrate, written ideas within text. In this case, all nine emojiis were used as the latter. For example, on a stock photo of revisions or corrections on an essay, Zach wrote, "It's been a really stressful process  , I'm glad we have more time to dig into the revision process  ". Here, he used emojis both to express his emotions and illustrate his ideas. The first emoji conveys anger as steam comes out of the nostrils of the character. The second is less informative about Zach's feelings, but it ties in with his posted picture of a pen on paper. In this case, Zach used the emojis as further expression of the text, which, in combination with the image in the post, allowed Zach to express ideas in several ways that would not be possible or as easily feasible through traditional text-based writing that was common to this classroom.

Perhaps because of the ease of meaning making that multimodal design offered students, several expressed that they enjoyed using images as a way to represent their ideas (e.g., "I really liked Instagram because I enjoyed using pictures to show my thoughts" and "being able to express myself visually [was the best aspect of this project]") in the final course survey. In focusing on the meaning-making potentials within the images and videos on Instagram and how these potentials could be designed with corresponding captions, students attended to the ways in which the modes interacted (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009; Smith, 2016), rather than

simply using image as something supplemental to the text like students did in other platforms.

Furthermore, in our follow-up interview, Ms. Lee also expressed her satisfaction with students' interplay of modes for meaning making. She said, "I loved that they got to use pictures and words together in a way that was really compact and concise- and… I think that that encourages thoughtfulness in that way." By nature of the social restrictions of Instagram (i.e., generally not incorporating long captions), the students designed posts to create meaning through the interplay of the visual and textual modes of the posts rather than focusing solely on textual modes like they did with most other assignments in this class.

Weebly Pages

In this section, I discuss how students showcased their writing to share their work with a larger audience. Showcasing their work allowed the teacher, Ms. Lee, to see what writings (genres and subjects) were important to the students, as they self-selected the pieces to represent a range of their writings for an audience beyond the classroom. While Instagram and Weebly Blogs also offered students outlets to reach a larger audience through their work (because students selected a variety of writing pieces for their Weebly pages) it was most prevalent within Weebly pages.

Showcasing writing to an expanded audience. One of the most prominent uses of Weebly pages was students' ability to showcase their work publically. Ms. Lee reiterated many times that the portfolios were meant to be used within the class *and* outside of the class for personal and professional use. The reiteration of this idea likely influenced how the students perceived their audience, and this perceived audience may have influenced

the ways in which students viewed and created their portfolios (Ramirez, 2011).

More than simply displaying their writing for the public to see, many students expressed that they felt able to choose to whom they would showcase their writing. For example, both Daniel and Marta said in their interviews that they used Weebly pages to display information and showcase it to people on the public platform in some instances. This contrasts with other platforms like Instagram where newly posted content is automatically displayed to a user's followers. Instead, on Weebly pages the content becomes semi-public, meaning that it is available on the internet, but one will likely not find it unless searching for it or aware of its existence. In this case, students expressed that they could remind friends to check their websites, showcase them in person, or send others a link to their page. Focal-student Daniel said that this made both Weebly pages and Weebly Blogs more "personal" and made him more open to both as opposed to Instagram where "everyone had access to seeing" posts. Thus, many students were acutely aware of the potential audience for their writings on their Weebly pages, and selected pieces accordingly (Eynon, 2009; Nelson et al., 2008; Ramirez, 2011).

For the Personal and Creative Writing section, Ms. Lee encouraged students to select a range of pieces from any time in their lives and from any class. The pieces that students chose were telling of their interests and reflected what was important to them. For example, focal-student Marta, a self-proclaimed lover of writing, chose three pieces, which she described in the titles that she used:

- "A Poem called: Notice Things": a four-page, free-verse poem that addressed feeling like she was drowning while mixing Spanish, English, literary references, and mythical references

- “TRUTH - A short story (so far),”: a continuation of a short story that Marta started a young child
- “Auto Ethnography”: a two-year old essay in which she vividly described her first piano lesson

Marta’s selections were relatively representative of the range that most students chose for their Personal and Creative Writing section. Being able to showcase these writings was important to Marta, as she expressed in her final interview. She said that these pieces represented that “there are different forms of me being myself and different ways that I changed.” Thus, a major pedagogical implication of the use Weebly pages was the ways in which students could showcase their writings to a larger audience through their selection of writing pieces to include in their portfolios.

Marta also included a link in the form of a button under the embedded short story, TRUTH, reading “CLICK HERE FOR MORE ABOUT TRUTH.” The button led to her Google Drive where she houses the story. By including a link to see the future versions of the story, Marta acknowledged her potential audience and their interest in the way that her story might progress beyond what she had embedded in her Weebly page. While she was the only student to include a button like this, other students included links to their outside works, such as Tumblr. By including external links with their showcased writing to other outside writings, Marta and others bridged the personal and professional styles of writing for their audience.

Other students also shared similar sentiments about the ability to showcase their writing. For example, on an open-ended survey response one student wrote, “I was able to show people my past writings from this year and it showed growth.” Because this

student looked back over her writings and displayed those that she was most proud of, the student could then show other people a curated expression of her growth as a writer. Similarly, another student on an open-ended survey response wrote, “I could say that using weebly [sic] allowed me to show who I was as a writer and to convey my feelings.” Because students were creating a public portfolio of their work, they could choose what they wanted to showcase for others to see and to design a collection that expanded beyond the context of the classroom.

Albeit not for every student, Ms. Lee felt that what students chose to showcase of their work allowed her to get a better sense of who the students were as writers. In her follow-up interview, Ms. Lee said:

> Reading, hearing, the way that they negotiate an idea… Or even just the choices that they made-… some of them had chosen things that we had done in class together, some of them had chosen things that they had written for scholarships or for other classes, and so it was cool to see what was interesting to kids and what stuck to them, which pieces they were proud of out of all of the things we had done.

Ms. Lee expressed that, through the students’ showcased work, she could see where they “felt successful in their writing” based on what pieces they included as part of their portfolio. She went on to give specific examples of students, including Brittany who chose to include an essay that she had written for a leadership program at the school. Ms. Lee said, “And that was really telling me that like this is really important to her, and this is where she really feels like she's expressing who she is.” Through their selections of works to showcase, students provided their audience with a curated expression of what

they wanted to highlight about their writing (Nelson et al., 2008; Ramirez, 2011; Rogers & Marshall, 2012).

Weebly Blogs

In this section, I address the informality of the platform, Weebly Blogs, which I compare to the formal literature analyses typically written in this class and how students were then able to reflect on their connections to the text.

C**ommunicating informally to reflect on connections to the text.** Most blog posts were relatively informal in style, tone, and content, as blogs tend to be (Liew, 2010; Manca & Ranieri, 2013; Rambe, 2012; Stornaiuolo et al., 2013). While typical academic assignments require editing and revising, blogs may present a different platform for writing where students can be less formal (O'Byrne and Murrell, 2014; Rambe, 2012; Shirky, 2008). This informality allowed students to express their ideas more fluidly and openly. Even though students knew that Ms. Lee was going to read (and grade) their blog posts, most students were still very informal and candid in their writings. While this informality of communication seemed to be typical in discursive interactions in this classroom (seen through my observations in the class as well as my interviews with Ms. Lee about her interactions with students), it was not commonly seen in students' writing, which was much more formal and based on literary analyses. Thus, the students' informal communication through Weebly Blogs was unique to the context of this portfolio unit.

One of the ways in which students were informal was through their word choices. For example, Michael, whose Weebly pages and Weebly Blog (and classroom responses) were filled with tongue-in-cheek jokes and comments, consistently mixed informal and academic insights. In response to Blog Post 3 (or as he titled it "THE GREAT

REREADINGREREAD POST DREI"), he wrote, "Right now I am getting into the great Gatsby [sic] and things are getting spiiiiiiicy, with Tom having Nick meet his mistress."[22] "Spiiiiiiicy" here conveys both intonation as well as his personal reaction to the events in the book. However, in the next portion of his post Michael addresses the prompt in a more academic and reflective way, while still keeping his informal tone:

> Scenes that involve setting up the surrounding environment in stories has always been an issue for me. I guess never really pay attention enough and sometimes I even skip straight to the dialogue. Thankfully the way that Fitzgerald writes is more than interesting enough to keep my attention.

His honesty coupled with the analysis of his own writing allowed Michael to respond to the prompt in a reflective, informal way that conveyed aspects of his outwardly sarcastic persona while still meeting the requirements of the prompt. His reflection circles around the ways in which he relates (or doesn't relate) to texts through authors' styles of writing. Because Michael could write informally using the Weebly Blogs platform, he could then reflect in an honest, candid way about his connections to the text (Deng & Yuen, 2011; Farmer, 2004; Manca & Ranieri, 2013; Xie et al., 2007).

Despite the option for informality that some students chose to embrace in their Weebly Blogs, other students still opted to write more academically. They used school-like language and responded to the prompts by including the language directly from the prompt. For example, Katie began a post by writing, "I have begun re-reading The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald. I'm currently on the second chapter of the book." Here,

[22] Of the eight required blog posts, six were concerning a project called "The Great Re-Read" where students revisited a book that they had previously read and wanted to understand better, read with a new perspective, etc.

Katie addresses the prompt directly (what she is reading and how far along she is in the book) without including any extra reflection or informal communication. In doing so, Katie's blog post feels like an academic piece of writing rather than a personal reflection like Michael's. By not using the blogging platform for informal communication, Katie also did not reflect on her connections to the text, as she only discussed the book and not herself.

Overall, however, students used Weebly Blogs as an informal, less-academic platform through which they could express ideas and personally reflect on their connections to the text (e.g., how have they changed as readers, how do they notice changes in books as they re-read them), as directed by the prompts. An example of this personal reflection and honesty can be seen in focal-student Julio, a quiet student who often expressed his strong dislike for writing. In his response to Blog Post 4, Julio wrote:

> I can identify/relate to Melinda the most in my book. She got raped. I personally have not been raped but I can relate to feeling like a victim. In the book, Melinda is too afraid and scared to tell anyone about what happened to her. I feel the same way with some things that have recently happened to me. I feel like I don't want anyone to know because people might treat me differently. This is the same way Melinda feels so she just tries to forget it ever happened. Before, I couldn't relate to this because I was still innocent. I still played with toys and nothing bad had happened to me and that point.

During my interactions and interviews with Julio, he was generally reluctant to speak much, and I rarely heard him talk in class. However, his blog posts included personal reflections like this very candid one, which was uncharacteristic based on my

observations. During in-situ interviews with Julio, he was usually very shy and answered questions with one or two answers. His other writings showcased on his Weebly pages were formal, prescriptive, and short. Thus, the informality of Weebly Blogs allowed Julio to personally reflect on the connections of the text and how his connections to the text changes as his experiences did over time (Deng & Yuen, 2011; Xie et al., 2007).

Though not quite as personal, other students also expressed candid reflections about their experiences while re-reading their books in their posts. For example, Christina wrote about her book, *1984*:

> I think that I don't remember much of it because i didn't care or was interested in it. It was so slow when I was a freshman. I preferred book thats had some romance and action. AKA. Twilight series and Hush Hush. but now I feel like I found a new appreciation for these conspiracy sort stories and different worlds that people have created. I even took the time to figure out how to take notes on the pdf 'cause I really want to understand it. [sic]

Christina's informal honesty concerning her reflection about originally disliking *1984* showed that she felt comfortable expressing her ideas about the book ("i didn't care or was interested in it") and her preferences for reading materials as a younger student ("I preferred book thats had some romance and action"). Typically, this kind of honesty about not caring about a project is not likely to be found in academic writing (especially in this class), but the informality of a blog blurred the lines for expressing such honesty. Because she could personally reflect on the changes that she experienced as a reader, Christina conveyed her newfound enthusiasm for *1984* in a convincing and candid way that also showed her reflection on her connections to the text.

Furthermore, in response to an open-ended question on the final survey, one student wrote, “I feel like when it comes to my blogs I am able to express who I am and what things mean to me. Also I am able to show what things represent to me and how I view things in my perspective.” This feeling of personal reflection differs from what can be done through the more traditional academic assignments such as essays and writing prompts typically seen in this class, as it allowed students to reflect on their own experiences and write about them honestly and informally.

In her follow-up interview, Ms. Lee described the blogs as “necessarily personal” as she requested via the scaffolded prompts that students reflect on how they have changed, who or what the related to in the books they were reading, etc. (Hungerford-Kresser, Wiggins, & Amaro-Jiménez, 2012; Zawilinski, 2009). Specifically, she noted that the students were quite personal and candid in their blog responses, saying, “some of the kids were really honest about like ‘I hadn't thought about this’ or like ‘when I read this the first time, I was in sixth grade, and now I have such a different perspective…’ So that was interesting!” Because the students were “really honest”, they were able to reflect in ways that were not typically seen in this classroom about personal connections and ideas while they were reading.

Ms. Lee discussed a particular student, Rachel, who she described as “*really quiet* in class” who did not talk “unless you make her.” Because of Rachel’s personal reflection in her Weebly Blogs, Ms. Lee felt that she got to know Rachel:

> getting to know her- because I never hear her voice, so getting to hear her voice through her writing was a really interesting experience. And I kind of felt like “gosh I had been missing out on all of this for two years.”

Rachel used the blogs as an informal platform to personally reflect on connections to the text, which allowed Ms. Lee to get to know Rachel in a way that she otherwise would not have through the more formal writing typically done in this class wherein students' voices were often muffled through the formal style of writing.

Discussion

While I join the many other scholars who have explored the affordances of digital/social media in the classroom (e.g., Cochrane & Bateman, 2010; Manca & Ranieri, 2013; Stewart, 2016; Stornaiuolo et al., 2013), the present study examined how students used three social media platforms for classroom composition and the pedagogical implications of those uses. Findings indicate that students used Instagram to write multimodally, Weebly pages to showcase their work, and Weebly Blogs to communicate their ideas informally. While understanding how students used these platforms to write within this context sheds light on students writing practices with social media, it is the pedagogical implications of these uses that offer the greatest impact to the field. Understanding the implications of students' use of digital platforms can allow researchers and teachers to better incorporate social media into the classroom in ways that serve to support students' literacy practices (Mills, 2010), which many argue is still underdeveloped but needed (Derry, 2007; Stornaiuolo et al., 2013).

The findings of this study echo other scholars' discussions surrounding the uses of multimodal design, reflection, and personalization in classrooms to change the context of formal, text-based literacy practices (e.g., Anderson et al., 2017; Deng & Yuen, 2011; Dyson, 2013; Mills & Exley, 2014; Shanahan, 2013; Vasudevan et al., 2010). I explored the ways in which students used each of the platforms in this class to express ideas that

may not have otherwise been possible with linguistic modes alone. While multimodal authoring entails attending to the complex ways in which modes work together to form new meaning (Jewitt, 2005, 2008; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), teachers and students must attend to the ways in which modes are working together to create meaning, rather than simply looking at their presence as is often done in multimodal projects (Shanahan, 2013). This attunement and discussion may be a challenge for teachers, as multimodal texts do not carry the same assumptions that linguistically-based texts do (Jewitt, 2005; Shanahan, 2013). By attending to the interplay of modes, teacher and students can convey information in new ways, such as Brian's post that expertly conveyed humor and his feelings while meeting the requirements of the prompt. By including Instagram, a visual-forward platform in a typically linguistic-based class, Ms. Lee allowed for other forms of expressive meaning making and supported students' literacy practices.

Additionally, students also had a space in which they could design and present their writing to a greater audience beyond the walls of the classroom. Many argue that digital portfolios present a space for students to curate and interact with an audience through their selection of included works (Ramírez, 2011). Much like an artist creates a portfolio of their works to share publically and represent their body of work as an artist, so too do students with digital portfolios (Chen, 2009; Ramírez, 2011). The students in the present study curated their own portfolios through their selection of works to display a range of pieces that served to reach an audience beyond the walls of the classroom. Because of the publishing capabilities, social media can allow for an expanded, potentially interactive audience (Hughes & Morrison, 2014; Magrino & Sorrell, 2014; Robbins, & Singer, 2014). Thus, students' curated work can reach a wider audience

(perceived or actualized) than just the teacher or even other students through social media, which is a cardinal tenet of multiliteracies.

Furthermore, the students in this study used Weebly Blogs to personally reflect on their connections to the text. Blogs are often not evaluated or evaluated holistically based on their completion, which can allow users to express ideas about their experiences and personal connections more freely (Deng & Yuen, 2011). This reflection can lead students to greater connections to activities and a better understanding of ideas (Deng & Yuen, 2011) as well as a better connection between students and teacher, as Ms. Lee expressed. However, because many other scholars have found that students' reflections may be superficial (e.g., Bennett, & Maton, 2010; Homik & Melis, 2006; Krause, 2004), many argue that strong, scaffolded prompts from teachers are needed to help guide students in their writing (e.g., Hungerford-Kresser, Wiggins, & Amaro-Jiménez, 2012; Zawilinski, 2009). The classroom teacher in this study did just that, and thus, Ms. Lee provided the students' a context in which they could express personal and emotional reflections in candid ways that allowed for greater connections to the text.

While Ms. Lee capitalized on the uses of each of the platforms and their pedagogical implications for her class, she still encountered struggles as she felt ill-prepared for the open-endedness of social media and its potential authoring paths. Thus, educators may need more understanding of what it means to design using digital media to help prepare students for multimodal composition. Many teachers are taught how to incorporate digital technologies into the classroom in ways that focus on the tools rather than the practices (Miller, 2008; Shanahan, 2013). This type of education perpetuates "the view that writing is unaffected by the material tools and available semiotic resources

used for writing production with digital technologies" (Shanahan, 2013, p. 197). The focus of the digital technologies should not be simply on the platform, but on the pedagogical practices possible with that tool (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013), as was the case in this study. Without the buy-in from teachers and students about the importance of the potential practices with a platform, its use becomes stale and may not be the most apt medium for writing. Instead, the focus should be on (1) *why* the platform is used, (2) *how* the platform is used, and only then (3) *what* is created with the platform.

As many multiliteracies scholars attempt to shift educational literacy practices from traditional, formal, print-based texts to more inclusive, open-ended, multimodal forms of communication, (Bialostok, 2014; Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Mills, 2009), cases like this study can add to the understanding of how social media can be incorporated into the classroom to enhance literacy practices in ways that traditional forms of writing (like those common in this classroom) may not.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHANGING NATURE OF LITERACIES IN THE MODERN CLASSROOMS: WHAT COUNTS AS WRITING?

Current ideas about knowledge and education as well as literacy practices are continuously being reformed and reshaped by a more global and digital view of the world (Kelly, Luke, & Green, 2008; New London Group, 1996). Within the discussion around these changes are questions about what counts as learning and literacies (Green, Skukauskaite, Castanheira, 2013). Often, scholars who call for a more open framing of these educational concepts frame them in contrast to the "official" (i.e., traditional) views of learning and literacies. (Kelly et al., 2008). Thus, questions of "what counts" challenge this notion of the key basic 'skills' on which much of the educational standards and policy are based (Kelly et al., 2008; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016).

Multiliteracies scholars attempt to critically engage and expand the notion of what counts as literacy and learning while trying to understand the factors that impact how these questions are negotiated. Multiliteracies scholars have examined these issues to better understand what it means when students are learning, reading, and writing (all described broadly) multimodally (e.g., Mills & Exley, 2014; Shanahan, 2013). Though many studies tout the benefits of multimodal authoring, especially for marginalized students (e.g., Anderson, Stewart, & Kachorsky, 2017; Archer, 2006; Bezemer & Kress, 2014), researchers still argue that more research is needed regarding what counts as writing when doing so digitally and how the context of composition might affect such conclusions (Green et al., 2013; Mills & Exley, 2014).

Contemporary researchers, especially those employing a multiliteracies

framework like the one used here, often take writing to be progressive, multimodal, and constantly changing. Even as recently as two decades ago, "writing" was seen as the singular mode of composition; however, many literacy scholars now acknowledge the multimodal nature of texts and the design involved in their production (see Bezemer & Kress, 2014). From a multiliteracies framework, writing is described as "inclusive of socially organized sign-making practices that make use of both print and digital technologies for producing meanings" (Mills & Exley, 2014, p. 435). This notion is one that reflects a change in understanding about writing and its future implications. According to Breuch (2002), writing has transformed into "an indeterminate activity rather than a body of knowledge to be mastered" (p. 139), which is tied to the social, political, and systems (Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Kress, 2003; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016). Thus, writing is no longer viewed as a set of cognitive capabilities but as embodied and peopled (Street, 1984).

However, those involved in the actual practice of writing in classrooms may not take such an open view; many students and/or teachers may still hold a more traditional view of literacies and writing, where writing is based in textual modes (VanKooten & Berkley, 2016). I investigated this disconnect in a high school English classroom, driven by the following research question: what types of writing did the teacher in this classroom privilege while implementing a multimodal project mediated by social media and how did students orient to this value in their writing? From a multiliteracies framework, I examine this question in relation to the changing nature of literacies and the elements that define them. While other scholars studying literacy practices recognize the fluidity of culture and literacies, multiliteracies scholars emphasize the fluctuation of the

world, how this affects the power relationships within, and the ways in which communication adapts in response to these changes and relationships (Perry, 2012). This changing nature means that people and their practices surrounding both literacies and texts (used here broadly to refer to meaning-making artefacts, in line with a multiliteracies framework) continue to adjust and adapt based on the context, culture, and power of a situation.

Thus, in this article, I focus on how a classroom teacher, Ms. Lee[23], framed what counted as writing in a senior English class where students created a digital writing portfolio using three social media platforms (Weebly, Weebly Blogs, and Instagram). The teacher and I co-designed the portfolio unit to encourage students to express their ideas multimodally and reflect on how they had changed as writers in a social media format. The eight-week unit focused on students' development of individual senior English Language Arts portfolio websites, which they created, structured, and designed themselves (mediated by the features of each platform, the requirements of the assignment, and the input of a teacher).

The question of "what counts as writing", particularly within this ELA classroom, became a question that began to play an important role in my discussions with students as well as my later data analysis as part of the overarching study out of which this article grew in which I examine the ways in which students used the three social media platforms to represent themselves as writers as well as the affordances of those platforms. Though many worthwhile studies focus on the extent to which students read or write, in this study, I focus more on the context around those practices and what came to count as

[23] All names are pseudonyms.

writing within that particular context. VanKooten and Berkley (2016) argue that due to the changing nature of writing, classroom writing should not focus exclusively on the product as many classes do, but rather on the context and interactions that occur around the space of composition. Therefore, I analyzed the following data: 1) classroom observations of the social exchanges between the teacher, students, and technologies before and during the portfolio unit, 2) a reflective interview and essay in which Ms. Lee described how she framed writing in her classroom aside from and during the portfolio unit, 3) what the students actually wrote (broadly) for their portfolios, and 4) how focal students described what counted as writing in this classroom during semi-structured interviews.

Theoretical Framework

The ways in which I frame this study inform how I represent "what counts" as writing and the power dynamics between students and teachers for how this question is negotiated in this particular context. Thus, I next outline the role that a multiliteracies lens takes in this study and how it supports my framing of power in answering my research question.

Multiliteracies

Much like other contemporary scholars (e.g., Burnett et al., 2014; Smith, 2016), I bring together a multiliteracies lens and multimodal view of the changing scape of literacies nested within a broader sociocultural theoretical frame; specifically, I apply the social and contextual aspects inherent to sociocultural theory to contemporary views of literacies (see Perry, 2012). An important distinction of multiliteracies is the focus on multiple channels for communication (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000). Furthermore, both

multiliteracies and sociocultural theories also include an emphasis on power structures (discussed further below), which often shape how literacies are perceived in multimodal texts.

According to a multiliteracies lens, I place emphasis on the changing landscape of literacies and meaning-making, focusing on multimodal authoring paths that are no longer flat, print-based, and letter-based (Kress, 2000). As such, literacies are not viewed as mode-specific, cognitive skills that someone can or cannot have, but rather they exist on a field and are influenced and created by the social aspects surrounding the communication (Archer, 2006, New London Group, 2000; Street, 1995). According to this multiliteracies view of literacies as socially constructed and situated in institutional discourses and practices (Gee, 2003, 2010; Kellner, 2000; Kress, 2003; Leu & Kinzer, 2003; Rowe, 2008), individuals' literacy practices change as the contexts and tools that mediate them change as well (Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013; McVee, Bailey, & Shanahan, 2008). Thus, literacies are fluid and expanding designs for meanings that people continually shape and reshape (Towndrow, Nelson, & Yusuf, 2013).

Texts are also viewed as dynamic under a multiliteracies lens. Because texts are cultural artifacts that belie how one engages with and communicates to the world (Bezemer & Kress, 2014), they can show how a person or group of people view meaning-making and culture around it within a particular context. Just like literacy practices, these views undoubtedly change based on that context and the multifaceted elements that make up that context at that specific time.

With the changing nature of texts and literacies in an increasingly digital world, separations between formal/informal and standard/vernacular are no longer as relevant

because lines of authorship and audience are blurred (Alvermann, 2008; Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Perry, 2012). Thus, with regards to writing, Bezemer and Kress (2014) argue researchers need to analyze 1) each instance of writing that is specific to that context, 2) the platforms (mediums) and resources within that context for meaning making and disseminating that meaning to the audience, 3) and the institutional norms for writing and how these norms shape what is being communicated.

Because this study is positioned within a multiliteracies view, I take literacies to be situated deeply within the context(s) that give them meaning (Barton & Hamilton, 1998; Burnett et al., 2014; Gee 2010; Prinsloo & Rowsell, 2012; Smith, 2016). This meaning, however, can bound the notion of literacies within that particular context (Burnett et al., 2014), which is especially important given my focus of what constitutes writing in a particular and specific context. I take literacies to be inextricably tied to culture, power, and context, and writing is tied to reading and other broad forms of communication in this classroom. Therefore, my unit of analysis is the social interactions around the literacy practices of this classroom during the digital portfolio unit.

Power and Literacy

Theoretical frameworks such as multiliteracies "are part of a particular view on literacy that has implications for how we think about learners, how we think about what they ought to learn and how this could be achieved" (Papen, 2005, p. 12). Thus, it is necessary to examine the ways in which what ought to be learned is decided/negotiated/expressed in a classroom. As students move into more forms of multimodal composing□remixing materials and expressing ideas through multiple modes in combination for interactive audiences to consume in real time□the power structures

move from the more linear, hierarchical structures typically seen in education to more open as audience is expanded and reimagined (Bezemer & Kress, 2014). However, these power structures are negotiated, valued, and created through the culture of a classroom.

Moje and Lewis (2007) describe power as "produced and enacted in and through discourses, relationships, activities, spaces, and times by people as they compete for access to and control of resources, tools, identities" (p. 17). Thus, power is situated within interactions and can be negotiated accordingly. According to Bourdieu (1991), language is not simply a system of words, but is also a hidden struggle for power over particular ways to communicate. Thus, when those with more power in a situation (such as teachers in a classroom) privilege certain practices over others, they define that balance of power in a specific direction (Bourdieu, 1991; Moje & Lewis, 2007; Perry, 2012). Furthermore, Bourdieu (1990) argued that epistemological frameworks within disciplines are shaped by the relationships of power as well as the political and institutional cultures. The progressive debates over what counts within schools and research communities reflect these relationships (Kelly et al., 2008).

Scholars further argue that to be able to understand institutional practices of schools, researchers need to understand underlying institutional structures and how they came to be (Mehan, 1979). Additionally, Mehan contested that through the shaping of these structures, students learn what counts within that particular context with regard to participation and knowledge as well as how orienting to these values affords students opportunities. Furthermore, what counts as knowledge, learning, and literacies, who gets to decide the answer to these questions, and how students have access to each of these are dependent on the "institutional, political, and economic fields where knowledge is

constructed" (Kelly et al., 2008, p. ix). Thus, power dynamics are affected not only by the culture of the classroom, but of the larger contexts surrounding them as well (i.e., schools, legislation, standards). Though a deep analysis of these contexts is beyond the scope of the data addressed here, it is important to note that they have a large impact on the context of the classroom.

Moreover, scholars emphasize that engaging in literacy practices that get recognized in ways that count create opportunities within and beyond the context of the classroom (Sperling & DiPardo, 2008). Street (1984) argued that traditional writing associated with school is part of an array of available communication practices, which is dominant and privileged by those in power based on the practices that take shape and the contexts in which they have meaning. Those who have the power to name and define literacies can change how they are privileged, and thus, researchers must consider the larger political power structures surrounding literacy practices and those that are valued (Domingo, 2012; Kirkland, 2004; Luke, 1993; Street, 2004).

Many argue that a multiliteracies lens blurs distinctions between learner and teacher, allowing for more open and free communication and learning between both parties (e.g., Alvermann, 2008; Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Perry, 2012). However, blurring these lines can only occur when power dynamics rooted within the social, historical, and institutional fields of the classroom are amenable to such change. In many cases, students may not see the value in renegotiating the power dynamics of a classroom, as they are contented with the traditional ways in which information is delivered by adults as the experts and value this expertise (Anderson & Weninger, 2012; Daniels & Street, 2013).

In their article, Green and colleagues (2013) examine how power structures and

notions of what counts are determined from the beginning of the year through interactions between parents, students, teachers, and administrators. They argued that to understand these relationships, one must study how participants are discursively constructing a new understanding of a text/event through their social interactions. They therefore argued that questions about "what counts" "provide a systematic basis for examining interactions to understand what participants are doing together, how and in what ways, under what conditions, with what outcomes or consequences for what participants can do and learn" (p. 129). Thus, scholars have and continue to call for a nuanced understanding of the complex interactions and context of the classroom to "fully understand what it means to read and write in school contexts" (Sperling & DiPardo, 2008, p. 72). This study hopes to add to that understanding through an analysis of the use of social media as writing platforms in a high school English classroom.

Methods

Context of the Classroom

The study took place in a university-affiliated K-12 public charter school that predominantly served first-generation college-bound students. The school holds teachers and students to high standards, enforcing school-wide goals and specialized curricula. They also provide students with extra support in the form of a homeroom teacher to whom the students are paired for four years of high school and their first year of college. Each grade level has about 100 students, and they must apply to be accepted to the school. Ms. Lee, who taught both Junior and Senior Capstone-Level English sections, also taught Junior English to most of the students in this study. However, in comparing the participating class of students, i.e. Group A, with her next group of students, i.e.

Group B, (and for whom she has also served as a homeroom teacher), she described her relationship with Group A as more formal and one-note (educational), sharing that she and Group B know each other on a more complex, complete level beyond the teacher-student relationship crafted in the singular context of the ELA classroom. However, Ms. Lee and the participating group of students exhibited a high level of regard for one another through the student agency granted by both the teacher and school (e.g., no bells to signal the start or end of class, no restroom passes or permission needed to leave for the restroom, freedom to eat and drink in class, cellphone use permitted, no assigned seats, not raising hands to answer questions or address other students during class time).

Ms. Lee also participated in classroom activities alongside the students and involved them in her decision making. For example, they began every class with sustained, silent reading (SSR) wherein Ms. Lee sat in front of the class and read her book as well, despite the many other things she could have done during that time (i.e., grading, attendance, etc.). She also expressed in her follow-up interview that she and the students collaboratively "agreed upon in the beginning of the year [the things] that I would assess them on." Furthermore, during the portfolio unit, Ms. Lee created an example portfolio that she shared with students and also posted to Instagram, following the same prompts as the students.

The Study

This analysis is part of a larger study that examined how students used social media platforms (Weebly, Weebly Blogs, and Instagram) to author texts in a high school English classroom, investigating the affordances of each platform and how students represented themselves as writers across each platform. While I presented the original

general idea for the portfolio unit to the classroom teacher, Ms. Lee, she largely designed the unit, consulting me with questions or ideas periodically.[24] In it, students created a digital portfolio using Weebly, which is a platform that allows users to create free websites, blogs, or online stores with very basic understandings of website-building. Users can customize their sites through various themes that change the colors and design of the entire website, page layout, and "elements" (see Figure 2 for elements examples).[25] Students in this class responded to numerous prompts and embedded documents into pages on their Weebly website, adding visual design elements as they felt were appropriate (e.g., pictures, large quotes, headers). Students worked within the traditional *Weebly pages* as well as the *Weebly Blog* feature, which are webpages on the Weebly site that allow users to interact around the blog posts, adding comments, liking, and sharing material. Though few students included pictures or edited textual elements on their Weebly pages, several students did so on their Weebly Blogs.

The portfolio assignment required students to have at least 11 Weebly pages (see Figure 1 for assignment direction) focusing on elements of their writing.[26] These were:

1. Academic Writing section: students re-wrote or edited a previous piece of academic writing and then wrote a short piece reflecting on their changes.
2. Personal and Creative Writing section: students chose three pieces of creative writing to showcase their best writing skills as well as their reflection on these pieces.

[24] Ms. Lee and I met just prior to the study when she expressed interest in including a social-media based, multimodal, reflective project in her class.
[25] Figure 2 is located in Chapter 1 on page 18.
[26] Figure 1 is located in Chapter 1 on page 15.

3. Literacy Memoir section: students wrote an essay about an important moment of literacy in their lives, a reflection about this piece, and students could include a timeline outlining their literacy history that they also created.
4. About Me page: students introduced the reader to the portfolio and provided some description about who they are as readers and writers.

The first three writing sections included reflection prompts that Ms. Lee structured according to four questions that students answered on their Weebly pages.

Another part of the portfolio included *Weebly Blogs*. I separate Weebly Blogs from Weebly pages in that they served different functions (via their different features—commenting, posting chronologically, archiving), were treated as different spaces in the class, and were graded separately. Ms. Lee provided prompts for each of the eight required blog posts and one optional post (see Table 1).[27] Ms. Lee provided students with in-class time to work on their Weebly Blog posts (usually about 10-15 minutes at the beginning of class). Nine students included pictures with their blog posts, but these were not required nor graded. Ms. Lee originally did not provide length requirements, but for the last three prompts, two read "write at least one paragraph" and one read "write for at least 10 minutes."

Students also used *Instagram* to reflect on the progress of their portfolios throughout the portfolio unit, using five prompts that Ms. Lee provided (see Table 2).[28] Instagram is a photo and video sharing mobile application (app) that allows users to create complex, multimodal texts (e.g., audio, picture, video, text, font, color, filters,

[27] Table 1 is located in Chapter 1 on page 19.
[28] Table 2 is located in Chapter 1 on page 22.

emojis, drawings) to convey meanings that each of these modes may otherwise not be able to communicate alone (Bazalgette & Buckingham, 2013; Kress & Street, 2006). In addition to the prompts for each of their Instagram posts, students were required to use identifying hashtags according to those prompts (e.g., #blackoutpoem) as well as to mark posts as their own, as the class shared one Instagram account for safety purposes.

To help guide students with their portfolio creation, Ms. Lee created an example portfolio in which she included all the required Weebly pages, an example Weebly Blog posts, and an Instagram post. She often directed students to the example portfolio for directions, the reflection questions, and to illustrate the requirements. Ms. Lee introduced the portfolio assignments as a whole, and while the prompts for Weebly Blog posts and Instagram posts were relatively spaced out, students could structure their time and pace for the Weebly pages with relative agency (some days were spent working on specific pieces). Some students finished early and had extra time to work while others were scrambling to finish at the last minute.

Participants and Data Sources

While there were 27 students (17-18 years old) in this high school capstone English class in the Southwestern United States, 26 participated in the portfolio unit (1 student was working on an optional online English 101 course). Because two students were absent during the pre-study survey, 24 students completed the survey and provided their demographic information; of those, 66.7% were female, 58.3% identified as Hispanic, 20.8% as Caucasian, 8.3% as African American, and 4.2% identified as Asian-American, Native American, or other.

The class met three times per week (Mondays for 45 minutes, Tuesdays and

Thursdays for 90 minutes). I observed two class periods that Ms. Lee described as "typical" before the study began. The purpose of these visits was to better understand the classroom context before beginning the new portfolio unit, which was unique in its structure, modalities, formality, and personalization as compared to the typical classroom assignments. I then observed ten relatively evenly-spaced classroom periods during the eight-week portfolio unit. All 12 of the observations were on Tuesdays or Thursdays (see Appendix C for timeline). I video recorded all classroom visits, took detailed field notes, conducted in-situ interviews with students, and debriefed with Ms. Lee for approximately 30-60 minutes following each visit. Field notes primarily focused on student-teacher, student-student, and student-text interactions, tasks assigned and discussions around assignments, and observable literacy practices of the classroom (Bezemer & Kress, 2014). These notes often included exact quotes from Ms. Lee and students.

I selected six focal students, in part based on their responses to a question on the pre-study survey, "I like to write." I selected two students who responded with a 1 (strongly disagree), two who either selected 2 or 3, and two students who selected 4 (strongly agree). I also based my selection of the focal students on classroom behaviors and gender, trying to get a mix of students who seemed chatty, quiet, rebellious, etc. as well as an equal number of males and females. Furthermore, I selected students whose identified ethnic backgrounds represented that of the class and school overall (which was predominantly Hispanic). I then observed these students slightly more carefully, conducting more frequent in-situ interviews with them than non-focal students and noting their portfolio development. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with four of these students on the final day of the unit (because of time constraints and absences). The

final four focal students were Marta, Julio, Carla, and Daniel. Each of these students were equally spaced in their like/dislike for writing and diverse in their observable personality traits. Marta and Carla identified as female and Hispanic, Julio as male and Hispanic, and Daniel as male and white.

Though not originally part of my set of driving research questions for the overarching dissertation study of which this is a part, the question of "what counts as writing" arose during my final interviews with the four focal students. During these interviews, they expressed an idea of writing in the negative (i.e., what writing is not), but often had a harder time defining how they view writing (i.e., what writing is). I therefore asked two students directly "what is writing to you" as the question became increasingly important in shaping their responses to my other questions. After I completed the study, I returned to the data to better understand how what counts as literacy, and more specifically writing, was shaped and negotiated within this class. I turned to my field notes, interview transcripts, the pre- and post-study surveys (pre-survey n=24; post-survey n=21), numerous in-situ interviews, and video recordings to attempt to better understand how what counted as writing was negotiated in this class.

Because a teacher affects the ways in which writing is viewed in a classroom environment (Dalton, 2013; Ranker, 2008; Smith, 2016), I needed to better understand Ms. Lee's role in shaping what was privileged in this classroom during this project and through her interactions with the students. Thus, five months after the study concluded, I conducted a follow-up interview with Ms. Lee regarding how she viewed writing in her classroom and how this may have differed during the portfolio unit. The semi-structured interview lasted one hour and was guided by three original questions ("How you feel the

unit actually went?"; "What would you have changed, if you could change anything?"; and "How do you view writing in your classroom?") as well as several follow up and clarifying questions.

During the interview with Ms. Lee, she also mentioned that she had written a short, reflective piece about her experience "decentralizing" her classroom (i.e., making it more student-centered wherein students could work in different environments) as part of a professional development writing project separate from the school. She shared this document with me, and (with her permission) I included it in the analysis here, as it provided valuable insights into her reflections on the project one month after its completion. For a complete timeline of data collection, see Figure 120.

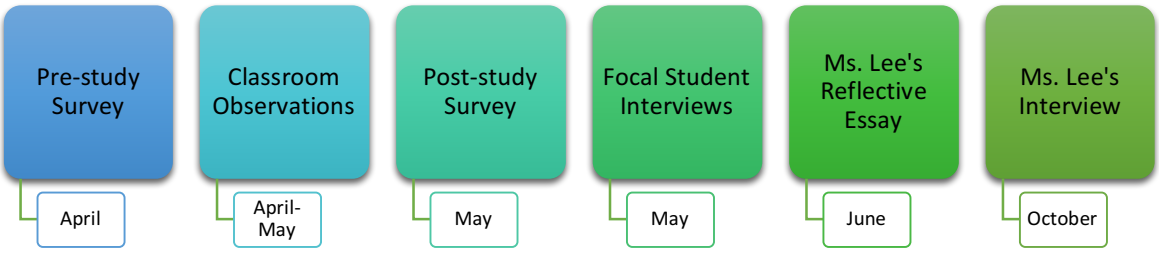


Figure 20. Timeline of data collection.

Data Analysis

Like Heap (1979, 1980, 1989) and Green et al. (2013), I examine what counts as writing in a particular context. I analyze a ten-week period of observation, exploring multiple events over the course of the eight-week portfolio unit as well as the two weeks of pre-unit observations. In doing so, I aim to provide a rich understanding of the ways in which *what counts as writing* was determined across the time span of the unit while providing context of what counted before the portfolio unit as well as how Ms. Lee viewed what counted after.

As an interdependent relationship exists between methods and theory (Green et al., 2013), I situate the ways that a multiliteracies framework heavily informs my unit of study, requiring a strong analysis of the context around the ways in which the teacher and students in this classroom negotiated and oriented to what counted as writing during the portfolio unit. Thus, to understand the relationships between the students, teacher, and context of the classroom, I analyze the ways in which new understandings of "what counts" were discussed, negotiated, and oriented to through social interactions (verbal and written) in the classroom. The majority of my analysis was guided by an interpretivist, abductive examination (Green, Skukauskaite, & Baker, 2012; Lillis, 2008), which included iterative first and second cycle coding of participant interviews (Saldaña, 2015). I also analyzed instances of writing via the platforms and resources within those platforms for meaning making and the institutional norms for writing within this classroom (Bezemer & Kress, 2014).[29] These analyzed instances of writing were

[29] Because of the forms of writing included in this unit and the ways in which students took them up, I predominately explore visual and textual modes of the platforms. I acknowledge, however, that multimodal composition can encompass many other modes, with some scholars including more physical modes such as gesture and gaze (Jewitt,

primarily from the four focal students, but I also included general trends, descriptive figures, and illustrative examples from other students' portfolios as well.

Interviews. Because I take discussions to be texts (Bloome & Egan-Robertson, 1993; Fairclough, 1992; Green et al., 2013), I analyze them here as artifacts that illuminate how Ms. Lee privileged certain forms of writing and how students oriented to the ways in which they perceived what counted as writing in this classroom.

I analyzed the video-recorded student interviews by first transcribing each according to stanzas, which allows for more effective coding as each stanza only contained one topic (Gee, 2014). This transcription by stanzas also allowed me to see what topics surround each other and how topics may be grouped and/or related. As I transcribed the interviews, I made analytic notes about each of my research questions and what each participant was saying with regard to those questions (Smith, 2016). I then analyzed each transcription and summarized each stanza, making further analytic notes about what each participant said about writing, what counts/does not count as writing, and how they wrote in and out of this classroom (Saldaña, 2015). For the students, this analysis allowed me to better understand how the students framed what counts as writing and how this evaluation might change based on context.

For the follow-up interview with Ms. Lee, I selected each stanza in which she described the context of the classroom, what constitutes writing in her classroom, and how the portfolio unit may have affected the ways in which she views writing in her classroom. I then analyzed these stanzas in light of the main ideas in each one to look for

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2005).

commonalities across each section to help characterize the context of the classroom that helped to shape the ways in which Ms. Lee framed and valued writing and specific forms of writing. This analysis also allowed me to see how Ms. Lee viewed the changing nature of writing before and during the portfolio unit and any changes in value between those two contexts.

Observational Data. Because discourse (i.e., the language and ways of being in a particular context) is not simply based on the words themselves but on the context (what came before and will occur later), what I observed in this classroom was of particular importance to my interpretations of participants' negotiating what counted. By understanding the context of the classroom, I could also better understand the norms and expectation that Ms. Lee and the students (as well as other institutional factors) had previously negotiated and how these changed during the portfolio unit (Green et al., 2013).

Based on the detail in my field notes, I was able to use them as a primary data, referring back to video recordings as needed to supplement the notes (Erickson, 1992). I carefully read through each day of detailed notes (two pre-study observation days and ten study observation days). The observational data allowed me to revisit statements of what constituted writing, discussions around writing, and what Ms. Lee privileged through what she assigned, graded, and spent the most time on in class. Field notes also allowed me to revisit my unfolding interpretations of the ways in which students oriented to these judgements through their responses and through how they structured their time. By selecting a few representative examples of interactions (Smagorinsky, 2008), I aim to provide an illustrative picture of the ways in which writing was characterized in this

particular environment.

Students' Portfolios. According to Fairclough (1992), meaning-making interactions, such as conversations or pieces of writing, are both texts as well as social practices that reflect traces of prior experiences, social processes, and discourses. Thus, I examine what kinds of traces students showed during the creation of their portfolios while orienting to what they perceived as what counted the context of this classroom. To provide further context for how students oriented to what counted as writing in this context, I analyzed their portfolios in their entirety (Weebly pages, Weebly Blogs, and Instagram posts). With 26 students, each creating a required minimum of 11 Weebly pages, eight Weebly Blog posts, and five Instagram posts, there was a total of 598 pages and posts in the overall corpus of portfolios. Thus, to provide a comprehensive (yet manageable) understanding of the ways in which students oriented to what they perceived as counted as writing in their portfolios, I focus here on the focal students' work as well as those students that Ms. Lee mentioned in her final interview as particularly memorable.

For each of the platforms, I began with descriptive coding and frequency counts for focal elements, which I organized into descriptive matrices (Bazerman, 2006). For students' Weebly pages, I examined what they chose to include (i.e., what kinds of writing, when the writing was done, for which class the writing was done, pictures included). This analysis helped to shed light on what students felt was appropriate for the platform as well as the class (which may indicate orienting to norms of the classroom). To analyze the Weebly Blogs, I examined the use of visual and textual components (e.g., length of written posts, pictures used, visual textual modes used such as variation in color

or font, other Weebly "elements" used, embedded content, hyperlinks).[30] Finally, I analyzed the Instagram posts by examining the use of the textual, visual, and auditory modes where applicable to understand how students were using the different modes (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Kress, 2003).

In the second round of coding, I further analyzed these focal elements, examining the potential interplay of modes and the formality of posts/writing. I also analyzed the example portfolio that Ms. Lee created as a template for the students, and how the students' portfolios compared to hers in terms of their layouts, modes, titles, personalization, and content. By understanding how these were different or similar to Ms. Lee's example portfolio, I was able to see how students were orienting to Ms. Lee's paradigm.

Findings

The findings are organized into four sections to convey how I analyzed how Ms. Lee communicated what counted as writing in this classroom and how students oriented to that value. In the first section, I discuss how Ms. Lee orchestrated the portfolio unit and analyze the ways she created opportunities for students to write, participate, and learn. I do this through a comparison of the context of the classroom and the forms of writing that I observed before and during the portfolio unit as well as a comparison of what forms of writing Ms. Lee appeared to value during these two timeframes. The second section examines how Ms. Lee framed the portfolio unit retrospectively as recounted in her follow-up interview and reflective essay. I then analyze the students'

[30] Because there was very little personal interaction around the blog posts, I did not examine comments or likes.

writing within the portfolios and how students appeared to orient to what counted as writing in the third section. Finally, I explore what some of the focal students said about what counted as writing and how this may have changed or been affected by the context of the classroom. Together, these four sections help to illuminate how what counted as writing was constructed and orientated. In brief, classroom observations as well as Ms. Lee's reflective writing and interview show that she continued to privilege text-based modes of writing, and students' portfolios and interviews reflected a strong but not submissive orientation to this value.

Orchestrating the Portfolio Unit

Ms. Lee seemed to strongly distinguish between types/genres of writing, and privileged writing that was more formally academic to help prepare her students for college writing (what she referred to as literary analysis). She mentioned this focus to me several times: before beginning the unit, during the unit, and after the unit in our follow-up interview. I further examine her discussion of this focus in the next section. Here, I explore how I saw this privileging manifested in the classroom interactions. Therefore, I analyze here key, observable interactions between Ms. Lee and students as well as Ms. Lee's announcements that may shed light on how she negotiated and outwardly expressed what counts as writing in this classroom. I begin by discussing the general classroom context with a specific focus on what counted as writing before the portfolio unit began. I then explore how these general values were upheld during the portfolio unit, despite the opportunities to challenge traditional notions of meaning making and writing.

Because of the self-described (and observed) formal academic literary focus of her class, Ms. Lee noted that:

> I think I see kids in a specific kind of context, right? We read stuff together, we write stuff together. It's stuff that I've chosen for them; it's conversation topics that I've chosen for them, writing topics I've chosen for them. And so I only know them in one certain way, and I'm really aware of that.

This influence greatly affected the forms in which her students wrote and the ways in which writing was valued within the classroom. Because Ms. Lee was the person selecting the texts, writing styles, writing prompts, and conversation topics, she was explicitly showing students what she valued, how she wanted information to be presented, and the potential meaning-making options that counted as writing. The students, therefore, had little opportunity to respond in any other forms than what Ms. Lee was asking, and the precedent was set throughout their time together that certain forms of writing were valued in this class.

Before the Portfolio Unit. To contextualize the classroom dynamics, I discuss one of the lessons that I observed before the portfolio unit began, a lesson that Ms. Lee characterized as "typical" for her classroom: a Socratic circle (students debating and supporting ideas) to prepare for a mock trial. I argue that this lesson had a traditional approach where writing was text-based and consisted of paper and pen/pencil writing or computer typing (Mills & Exley, 2014). The lesson began with students taking notes for 11 minutes from a PowerPoint presentation about Aristotle and his notion of tragic heroes. The slides were predominantly filled with text and did not include pictures, sounds, or other modes (as was typical). Furthermore, the slides' text and background were consistent in color and size throughout the presentation (black font on white background). Ms. Lee explained to me in an interview that she often provided students

with templates for how to take notes in her class, and as a result, students' notes were relatively uniform, which indicated a strong understanding of the norms that Ms. Lee had established in her classroom, even for non-graded items such as notes.

After students took notes, Ms. Lee distributed a piece of paper about Othello as a tragic hero, which students were asked to read and use their books to find evidence to argue for or against their claims. Half of the students then sat on the floor in a circle and the other half sat in chairs, working in Socratic circles discussing *Othello* and whether they thought he was a tragic hero. The directions for the assignment were projected overhead. During their discussion, students often cited examples from the book and one even made a joke about Iago not being reliable because "he doesn't cite his sources". Thus, students' ideas were based in those that they could support using the text, a practice of which Ms. Lee did not need to remind the students, but rather one that appeared to be pre-established.

Students then returned to their seats where Ms. Lee said, "OK, if you haven't already, let's answer that last question on your sheet; is he a tragic hero?" This focus on the formal, textual component of the Socratic circle gave the impression that the discussion was an exercise to prepare students to complete the worksheet, which was the graded element of the activity, and therefore potentially seen as more privileged.

Ms. Lee designed both the Socratic circle and worksheet to prepare the students for a larger activity: a mock-trial where they would then put Othello on trial and call other characters as witnesses. After students got into their respective groups (prosecution and defense), they had to write down their main arguments, citing the text, and deciding which witnesses they would call to try to prove that point. Ms. Lee collected these papers,

along with the previously discussed sheet, at the end of the class period. Upon the conclusion of the trial three class periods later, students were expected to turn in a group paper outlining their arguments, ideas, and final decisions. Thus, students' grades for the activities done during this mini-unit were based on the written components of the class activities, as was consistent with the typical classroom norms.

In this example, which Ms. Lee noted was "typical", students were engaging with multiple modes of communication, expressing ideas verbally and through play. However, the parts of the assignments that were graded (and thus, were ostensibly accorded more value in the classroom based on the historical emphasis on products in schools and classrooms, VanKooten & Berkley, 2016), were those that were physically written through a textual mode. In doing so, Ms. Lee likely continued a precedent that written text is valued in the classroom more than ideas expressed orally, visually, or through other modes.

During the Portfolio Unit. Lessons like the Socratic circle, conducted before the portfolio unit I analyze here, focused on literary analysis, while the portfolio unit did not. Instead, the latter focused on students' reflections about themselves as writers throughout their lives. Further, Ms. Lee and I designed the portfolio unit to allow students to work through each of the Weebly pages sections (i.e., Academic Writing, Personal and Creative Writing, Literacy Memoir, About Me) with relative agency (though there was some structuring for the Literacy memoir because of Ms. Lee's overt focus on the new essay). Students could also design the pages as they pleased, choosing colors, fonts, and themes, and focusing on whatever they felt to be most pertinent at the time. They also included informal reflections through Weebly Blog posts and Instagram posts. Thus, the

portfolio unit was markedly different than what both Ms. Lee and the students were accustomed to doing in this class in genre, formality, medium, modes, and structure.

Though the students were enculturated into the traditional models of school and school-type formal writing in Ms. Lee's class, this project was far removed from their typical classroom practices.[31] Thus, even though this group had already begun constructing the norms for this classroom (a process to which I was not privy) over the course of the school year, because of the "new" nature of the portfolio unit, some of the structuring process (Green et al., 2013) began anew as the teacher and students once again negotiated the literacy practices and norms of the classroom while working through a novel project.

Early into the portfolio unit, Ms. Lee expressed to me after a class period that she did not normally have students working as independently as they were in this unit. Typically, her lessons entailed some lecture and a large amount of group work, and although she thought it was going well, she expressed nervousness about such a self-directed, student-led project. This nervousness belies a shift in the classroom context to which both Ms. Lee and likely the students were accustomed as Ms. Lee began to change her practices and those of the students that had been pre-established.

However, to help guide students, as previously mentioned, Ms. Lee created a thorough example portfolio for students to use as a reference. The URL for the website where her portfolio was posted was included on all projected classroom agendas and

[31] In the pre-study survey, some students expressed that they had used Weebly for other class projects before, but it was not a long-term project where they could design their sites over the course of several weeks. Three students had used some form of blogging in other classes as writing platforms, but they had never used Instagram or other visual-forward platforms in a class.

printed directions. Students could reference her portfolio for layout as well as directions and prompts, as she wrote these specific directions on the landing page for each section. Ms. Lee even included four creative writing pieces of her own for her Personal and Creative Writing section and her literacy timeline in the Literacy Memoir section. Additionally, Ms. Lee included a lengthy About Me page, which was also required of the students. Ms. Lee's only visual element not included in the Weebly theme that she selected (i.e., background image) was a photo of herself on the About Me page. All text was uniform in size and font throughout the website, and her headings were straightforward, matching those on the assignment sheet she provided to students (e.g., "Personal and Creative Writing").

Furthermore, the portfolio unit did not have assignments that were submitted each class period as scaffolding throughout an assignment as Ms. Lee's previous units tended to have. Instead, it was a long-term project (eight weeks) where students submitted a final version of their portfolios that included at minimum the 11 required Weebly pages assignments and the eight required Weebly Blog posts. The Instagram posts were the exception to this grading style, which were graded periodically throughout the project. Ms. Lee mentioned to me in an in-situ, after school interview that the Instagram posts were easier to grade for her because they were "visual and in chronological order." However, in our follow-up interview, Ms. Lee told me that she was predominantly grading the Instagram posts based on if they were done and if they met the requirements of the prompt, because she was unsure how to grade them without a predetermined and agreed upon set of standards. She said, "[in] thinking about how to assess [the Instagram posts], and I had no idea and I had to just shoot in the dark. You know if…they had a

picture and they responded to what I asked them to." Here, Ms. Lee focuses on the textual modes of the predominantly visual platform for how she assessed the students, where the pictures became less important and were merely assessed on their inclusion. Ms. Lee likely did not assess the meaning-making potentials of the pictures because the inclusion of pictures befuddled Ms. Lee as they were foreign to her classroom and her standards of grading (e.g., "How do I assess the quality of that piece of visual information? You know, that's not something that I'm trained in and it's not something that [the students and I] had talked about in class.").

This confusion will be discussed further in the next section focusing on Ms. Lee's impressions, but it is important to note here, given how it affected her focus on Instagram and the use of images as writing on other platforms within the classroom. Ms. Lee often characterized using other modes of representation as breaks or bonuses for the students that were extraneous to the lesson. On one occasion, Ms. Lee referred to posting to Instagram as a "brain break" for students. The next week, she again referred what would be characterized as multimodal composition (organizing and adjusting the layout of students' Weebly pages) as a brain break ("If you are done with that or you need a brain break from that, kind of clean up your portfolio"). On both of these occasions, students would have been composing multimodally because of the interplay of modes needed to convey meaning in such platforms. Because Ms. Lee was insinuating that these were easier tasks than working on their literacy memoirs (more traditional writing), she showed that she potentially valued the more traditional types of academic writing, particularly those focusing on textual modes more. Thus, students may have not valued these less-traditional assignments or their weight in conveying ideas as much.

Even though Ms. Lee appeared to value text, especially traditional texts, over other modes, she still encouraged students to include other modes in their textual writing. For example, when discussing students' blog posts, she announced to the class, "You guys can add- if you want to add pictures and things to your post, do it! Makes my life more interesting." However, in saying this, she privileged the textual writing as a given and insinuated that the images were merely bonuses that may made the blog posts more interesting to readers. Thus, she again did not give equal weight to each mode for meaning making.

Furthermore, students also created a literacy memoir and a literacy timeline as part of the portfolio. The assignment for the literacy memoir was to "Tell the story of an important moment (or important moments) in your journey as a reader and/or writer and explain how the impact on who you are today." Students also created a visual timeline of the important moments in their lives connected to reading and writing that could include pictures to illustrate or represent important milestones. This visual literacy timeline, however, was given much less attention than the literacy memoir, as only one class period was spent on the timeline and about six were spent on the memoir. Additionally, though originally required, including the timeline on the website became optional for the students and was not a required assignment like the literacy memoir. Because more time was allocated for work on the essay in class, Ms. Lee implicitly conveyed to the students that it was more important. Even though the students could potentially represent more ideas in an efficient or more apt way through the literacy timeline (Kress, 2003), Ms. Lee placed more value on the literacy memoir essay.

A common assignment in the class both before and during the portfolio unit was a

peer letter of feedback, structured heavily by questions from Ms. Lee. To include feedback in the portfolio unit, Ms. Lee gave students options about on what pieces they wanted their peers to give feedback, but the options were for traditional forms of writing such as essays and blog posts. There was no discussion about how students could improve or give feedback to each other on the visual aspects of their portfolios, including Instagram posts. Thus, some of the privilege that she showed was in what was said (allowing students to critique essays and blogs), but also in what was *not* said as an option (Instagram posts, Weebly pages/Blogs layout, pictures accompanying the Weebly Blog posts if included). Thus, in this instance, Ms. Lee signaled to the students that their feedback needed to be about traditional forms of textual writing, which indicated the high value placed on those forms of writing.

Ms. Lee also appeared to value more traditional texts over less formal texts, like the peer-review letters. Though in the form of traditional writing, Ms. Lee positioned the peer review letters similarly to the visual elements of the unit: as a break or added bonus. In one instance, Ms. Lee addressed the class as they were slightly behind her planned schedule for the unit. She said, "Guys… if we're still working on our peer review letters, we need to get those finished up today to use the rest of the class for writing. We're using peer-review time to stall." In this case, Ms. Lee's announcement suggests that she did not consider the peer review letters as part of writing, despite their textual mode. Because the students were overhearing audiences (Larson, 1996) that could internalize the implications of the forms of writing that Ms. Lee appeared to privilege—i.e. print-based, formal writing—they internalized these off-handed comments. Table 9 provides a brief synopsis of the forms of writing that I observed and discussed in this section, whether it

was privileged, and a short summary of the evidence for that distinction.

Table 9.

Privileged (or not) Forms of Writing and Evidence for that Decision

Forms of Writing	**Privileged/Not**	**Evidence**
Literacy Memoir (essay)	Privileged	Ms. Lee gave students a lot of class time to work on this and often encouraged them to work on it over designing their Weebly Pages; peer feedback
Blog Post writing	Privileged	The required and graded portion of the Blog posts; peer feedback
Peer Review Letter	Somewhat Privileged	Required assignment; Ms. Lee encouraged students not to spend too much time working on them
Instagram Captions	Somewhat Privileged	What Ms. Lee discussed with me when talking about grading the posts; no peer feedback
Weebly Layout Design	Not Privileged	Ms. Lee referred to this as a "brain break" from other traditional writing activities; no peer feedback
Instagram Pictures	Not Privileged	Ms. Lee graded them based on if they were there; no peer feedback
Literacy Timeline	Not Privileged	Ms. Lee allotted one class period to working on the timeline; was required but became optional; no

		peer feedback
Blog Pictures	Not Privileged	Not required and Ms. Lee encouraged students to include them to make her "life more interesting"; no peer feedback

Note. This table only includes the forms of writing discussed in this section. The forms of writing in the Academic Writing and Personal and Creative Writing sections were also highly privileged.

Ms. Lee's Retrospective Framing

Because scholars have found that teachers' beliefs about learning and literacies as well as their own experiences influence their teaching and practice (e.g., Appleman, 2000; Barr, 2001; Grossman, 2001; Hamel, 2003), it is important to examine how Ms. Lee's personal beliefs influenced how she framed what counted during this unit. Therefore, in this section, I examine how Ms. Lee framed the portfolio unit retrospectively in order to better understand how she believed she valued writing in class before and during the portfolio unit, her perceptions about the portfolio unit, and how the unit influenced her views on writing in her classroom. I examine the follow-up interview that I conducted with her five months after the unit as well as a two-page reflective essay that Ms. Lee wrote one month after the unit as part of a writing workshop outside of the school. This analysis provides an important perspective on how what counted as writing was negotiated in this context. For the portfolio unit specifically, Ms. Lee described it as a "really cool experiment" in the follow-up interview and then elaborated to say that she had never tried anything like the unit in her class. However, throughout the interview, she

articulated that the portfolio unit confronted and challenged some of her ideas about writing, both institutionally and individually.

Institutionally, Ms. Lee voiced to me throughout the project and explicitly in the follow-up interview that she saw her job as to prepare her students for college, particularly for writing literary analyses in college. This belief was based on many factors, including the subject and name of the course (Capstone English Literature), the standards that the school followed (including a high-stakes test associated with those standards), the school's mission to prepare students for college, her training as an English teacher, and her personal goals. In the follow-up interview, Ms. Lee said, "…learning how to navigate that world [of literary scholarship and criticism], I think is really valuable for when they get to college." She saw collegiate writing as a separate world, one for which she herself felt ill-prepared in college. Ms. Lee continued, "Sometimes I think of it like my job is to... help them read really critically and then be able to express those really critical, amazing thoughts and ideas in kind of a form and as like a[...] to help them get into a conversation."[32] Here, Ms. Lee expressed her own desires for the students in combination with how she saw her job that worked to direct her value surrounding texts and writing.

The institutional regulations of the school, course, and curricular standards affected the ways in which Ms. Lee incorporated, framed, and therefore valued writing and what could count as writing in her class. Ms. Lee further expressed that because the course expectations were partly based on her own ideas of what "English Literature"

[32] In the transcriptions, "…" indicates that non-essential text is removed for ease of reading and the meaning of the text is still intact; "[…]" indicates a brief pause in a person's speech.

should be, she was and is unable to include creative or alternative types of writing in her class. She said:

> (deep breath) Like I said, I teach English literature, right? Like that's the title of my course, and so as a function of my title of my course and as a function of the assessment that I have to give my kids at the end of the year, I think it's very academic and it's very[...] one specific genre and one specific context. And so it's really... as a person who really believes in the kind of the value of writing for expression, it's kind of frustrating sometimes.

This statement was said lamentingly, as she compared her options to the general education English teacher whom she felt had more freedom to incorporate "cool writing" into his classroom ("…it's not the advanced course and he gets to do all kinds of really cool writing things- and I'm always like 'AAAH, you know, I wish I could do those things.' And I probably could. I think[...]"). Instead, Ms. Lee viewed her role as one who prepared students for college and collegiate writing; her priority was to ensure that students could write coherently about their ideas via linguistic modes and support them using the text. Even though she felt that she probably could include fun writing assignments in her class, based on how she perceived an English literature course, Ms. Lee felt that they were less-fitting to the requirements of the course.

Furthermore, Ms. Lee discussed with me that she struggled with what counted in the portfolio unit because it was not something that she knew how to do (in structure, modes, formality, genre, medium, etc.), as she had never done the unit or anything like it before. For example, she was unsure of the possibilities for writing within the unit and felt that we were often "making it up as we went along," despite our preliminary

planning. This is not uncommon for many teachers introducing multimodal composition as they may feel overwhelmed with possibilities for design/writing (VanKooten & Berkley, 2016). Elaborating on this unsure feeling, Ms. Lee expressed that she felt that the students needed to trust her as the unit progressed because she did not have as many detailed templates or rubrics to provide them like she normally would. She said, "the idea that I didn't have a rubric or a model for them until the very end of the project was very kind of anxiety making for me because I was like, 'how do they know what they're going to do?' (laughs)." However, as previously discussed, Ms. Lee did provide students with a thorough example portfolio that she created, including all required Weebly pages and even some of her own personal writings. The students were directed to the example often, using the site as an option for materials and directions. Her dismissal of the example portfolio may indicate that she would normally provide a much more explicit model for scaffolding students' expectations and products. A more scaffolded template or rubric, however, may have stifled the students in their writing of the portfolios, as they may have felt compelled to closely follow the provided guidelines rather than exploring writing possibilities that social media platforms can offer (Gleason, 2016; Mills & Exley, 2014).

Despite her example portfolio, Ms. Lee recognized the difficulty in preparing students for open-ended projects. She stated:

> I try to be really upfront with my students about like this what I'm looking for and like, "if you do these things, this is the grade you're going to get." We have rubrics and… standards. Like, "These are the things that you exactly need to do" and this necessarily was not like a "these are the exact things you need to do" kind of a project.

Because Ms. Lee was accustomed to (and "trained to" as she said numerous times) assessing students according to standards, rubrics, and templates that focused only on traditional forms of writing, this open-ended project that included alternative writings and platforms that forwarded visual modes challenged the typical instructional context of this classroom, a context that worked to define what counts as writing. Thus, part of the reason that Ms. Lee focused so heavily on text during the unit was that she was unsure how to focus on the other modes of composition. In her interview, Ms. Lee said, "I didn't know what I was looking for until I could see what everyone had done and be like 'oh, this is... [a good example]' because I didn't know the possibilities of what they could do…yet."

Ms. Lee's discomfort with the other modes of composition in this project were allayed as she struggled to figure out the many authoring paths that students could take and how these paths would/should be assessed fairly in relation to the expectations that she had set forth. She went on to discuss what she retrospectively valued in the Instagram posts:

> And then I was thinking… like how you said, I'm privileging the text portion of it, and what if the picture says what they want to say? How do I assess the quality of that piece of visual information? That's not something that I'm trained in and it's not something that we had talked about in class.

Because she was unfamiliar with how to assess Instagram posts and visual content (though she was aware of types of visual rhetoric), Ms. Lee felt unprepared to assess the visual modes presented and forwarded on Instagram, and therefore, did not count them as part of the graded writing.

In part because of these institutional and individual factors, Ms. Lee privileged more traditional, textual modes during the portfolio unit, and therefore determined that they are what counted as writing in this particular context, despite the multimodal opportunities for meaning making that the unit could have afforded. However, retrospectively, Ms. Lee expressed that she began to change her ideas of what counts as writing as a result of the portfolio unit. The unit provided the students with alternative authoring paths that Ms. Lee felt allowed her to get to know her students better through the "variety of having lots of different ways to know a kid as opposed to just like 'Analyze this quote, write this essay.' It was a different way of interacting with them." By embracing different styles of writing, the students were able to express different/new ideas and make meaning in other ways, and Ms. Lee was able to see how their writing could flourish through different platforms. Ms. Lee went on to say:

> I feel like doing that project really pushed me as a teacher. And that's why I felt like I was learning so much about them. Because we hadn't done that kind of writing for real, with a real space for an extended amount of time. I liked that I was saying to them, "this is also valid writing."

By viewing the alternative forms of writing as "valid," Ms. Lee's reflection belies a possible (albeit brief) shift in what counts as writing in her classroom, not in terms of modes of representation necessarily, but in genre, medium, and authorship.

In a separate document in which Ms. Lee wrote about her experiences during the unit, she expressed that she often felt like "the most well-meaning of hostage-takers: keeping 30 students locked away because I believed that students learn best when they're present in my classroom." She elaborated by writing how she felt that the environment of

the classroom was most important for students' learning, but that she learned through this portfolio unit that learning and writing can be fluid and occur through different contexts. She said that by de-centralizing her classroom and allowing for more student-centered learning and writing, she was able to free her students of the often-limiting expectations of the classroom:

> And my anxious, overscheduled students? When I released them from the cage of our four classroom walls and 90-minute block periods, they soared. Students who had struggled in the past absolutely thrived when they had open time and space for their work, particularly my chronic absentees and English language learners. Students who seemed quiet and almost invisible in the classroom possessed confident, booming voices online. Students actually devoted more time and energy to their projects than if they had only worked in my room. They felt new ownership and pride in their work. And the work they presented to me was some of the best I'd seen in the two years I'd known them.

Thus, even though Ms. Lee's notion of what counted as writing in her class remained relatively traditional, privileging primarily linguistic modes on each of the platforms, she still felt that she was able to expand her notion of forms of writing that counted (through context, medium, genre, formality, etc.). According to Bezemer and Kress (2014), "a multimodal perspective opens the full range of different contexts for text making, both inside and outside school, allowing teachers to consider connections, disconnections and gaps between these two domains" (p. 4). For Ms. Lee, this was most certainly the case as she expressed in her follow-up interview as well as her reflective writing. In the next section, I discuss students' work and its representation of what counted as writing in this

classroom.

Students' Work and Their Orientation toward What Counts

Much like teachers, students' perceptions, conceptions, and notions of what counts as literacies are also entrenched in their experiences and beliefs and greatly influenced by their context as well (Fairclough, 1992; Marshall, 2000). Thus, it is important to analyze how students oriented to what they perceived as what counted as writing during the portfolio unit based on the experiences that they had in the context of this classroom. Because this was a student-centered and opened-ended unit wherein students had multiple authoring and design paths, they had relative agency to write as they saw fit (with parts of some class periods devoted to specific tasks). However, in orienting to the traditional forms of writing that Ms. Lee appeared to value, students were simultaneously uninhibited as well as constrained by the multiple institutional sources of authority and their powers (Prinsloo & Rowsell, 2012).

Given the historical emphasis on products in schools and classrooms (Anderson & Weninger, 2012; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016), in this section, I focus on what students physically created and what they submitted for grades during the unit. Like others (e.g., Jewitt, 2008; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016; Vasudevan, 2010), I assert that the ways in which student represent ideas physically (i.e., through modes and forms of representation) reflect the ways in which they orient to how it was privileged and learned. According to Bakhtin (1979), "Sooner or later what is heard and actively understood will find its response in the subsequent speech or behavior of the listener" (p. 69). Thus, students likely created, designed, and wrote their portfolios based on their orientation to what they perceived regarding what counted as writing in Ms. Lee's class. In what

follows, I argue that students created predominantly text-based portfolios as they perceived this to be what was valued based on what Ms. Lee appeared to privilege in the context of this classroom. However, while students primarily followed what Ms. Lee presented on her example portfolio in their Weebly pages and predominantly forwarded textual modes, they strayed slightly from Ms. Lee's notions of what counted in their Weebly Blogs and Instagram posts, becoming more informal and including more personalization.

In the post-study surveys, students responded to Likert-scale items about their writing preferences broadly in terms of modal preferences (Smith, 2016). I asked these questions, however, with no context given of "in this classroom," "outside of class," "in school," etc. Most students indicated that they liked to represent their ideas visually (average of 3.23 on Likert-type scale out of 4) and even more through a combination of images and text (average of 3.27 on Likert-type scale out of 4). This preference is not uncommon, as other scholars have also found that students tend to privilege a combination of textual and visual modes when writing on digital and multimodal platforms (e.g., Smith, 2016). Students also responded with an average of 2.68 out of 4 saying they liked to express ideas through *just* text in response to Likert-type post-study survey questions.

These response rates, however, are not aligned with what the students actually did when creating their portfolios. Most students relied heavily on text to make meaning and express their ideas in their portfolios. No students included additional visual modes other than those in their themes on Weebly pages on their Academic Writing or Personal and Creative Writing sections, which mirrored Ms. Lee's portfolio that was also devoid of

additional visual modes.[33] The exception to this, however, was the inclusion of pictures of Instagram posts in the Personal and Creative Writing section wherein students created visual poetry (a book spine poem made from stacked book titles and a black out poem made by coloring over words in an existing text to create a poem). Ms. Lee used the two poems as examples of types of creative writing that could be included in the Personal and Creative Writing section of the portfolio, and thus, gave them some validity as writing. All other documents in these sections were only comprised of text-based writing for all students.

Because the sections were titled "Academic" and "Personal and Creative" *Writing*, students likely had preconceived notions about what that meant in this classroom based on how writing had been discussed and operationalized throughout the year. Because Ms. Lee had set a strong precedent for what she expected writing to look like and how it should be structured through templates, rubrics, and standards throughout the year as well as her example portfolio, students oriented to the perceived notion that text-based writing, and specifically the kinds of writing done in an English Language Arts classroom, is what counted as writing in this classroom. Therefore, students generally included this kind of writing in their portfolios. Because students did not have the typical materials to structure this portfolio unit that they were used to having (i.e., rubrics, templates, and other direct information from Ms. Lee), they may have felt slight confusion on how to be successful (or to meet Ms. Lee's standards of successful) and

[33] Recognizing that modes can vary based on "communities and their socialrepresentational needs," for the purposes of this study, I discuss visual modes as those to which the students highly attended rather than more nuanced modes (Bezemer & Kress, 2008, p. 172; Jewitt, 2005).

relied even more on the already established norms of the class with which they were comfortable.

While the Academic Writing section of the portfolios had to feature a revised essay originally written in Ms. Lee's class earlier in the year, students could include any writings that they wanted from any course, written at any time in their school career in the Personal and Creative Writing section. (Students had access to most of their writings as each student housed their writing on a Google Drive for the entirety of their tenure at the school.) In selecting these pieces, students shed light on what they valued as their best or most representative writings. Attuned to the importance of this selection, Ms. Lee stated in her follow-up interview, "When they had more choices not only in what they get to write about but what they get to show me, that was telling to me of, like, when do they feel most successful and in what kinds of contexts." For example, one of the pieces that focal-student Marta chose was a short story that she started as a child but had revisited many times. In class, Marta explained to me that even though it was not the best-written story, it was representative of her life-long love of writing. Rather than include it as it was written when she was seven years old, however, Marta revisited the story to edit and re-write large portions. Marta's selection and choice to update the piece showed that the piece was important to her, but that it still needed to be on par with the quality of writing expected in this course.

Not all students oriented as closely to Ms. Lee's notions of what counted as writing in this classroom in the same way. For example, focal-student Julio, who self-described his aversion for writing many times, included only text-based poetry in his Personal and Creative Writing section. In his reflection for this section, he wrote:

> I choose to include only poems because they are actually my favorite thing to write if I had to write. This is because they are so free. They represent the idea that I just believe that everything and everyone should be free. Just how like certain poems are. They are free. Free of verse, free rhyme, free of everything.

Poetry was not a frequent type of writing that Ms. Lee included in the course, and therefore, Julio was expressing some resistance to typical kinds of writing seen in this class (this type of sedition was typical for Julio across the platforms and explored further in Chapter 3). Julio chose to include poetry because he felt comfortable with his poetry. Knowing that he needed to showcase his "best work," he selected only poetry pieces rather than selecting a range of pieces because he felt that these were his best. Thus, the text-forward *writing* component, rather than the *range*, was highlighted in how Julio chose to orient to what counted.

For the Weebly Blog section of the portfolio, students tended to stray from what Ms. Lee's portfolio example modeled. Blogs are inherently more informal in nature (Liew, 2010; Manca & Ranieri, 2013) than traditional essays and other kinds of classroom writings, and students were attuned to this change in genre and formality. As a result, many students' page titles reflected this informality. For example, some students included descriptive headings like "Things on my mind" or "I talk about books" while others presented a less enthusiastic heading such as "The Same Old" or "I Write Stuff". Others included humor in their headings, poking fun at the assignment such as "Blog: My writing on books, Instagram, and any other randomness that is assigned to me to write on." or "Blog: One of the best blog pages you'll ever read:)". These titles were in direct contrast to the straightforward title that Ms. Lee used for her Weebly Blog section

("Blog"). They were also in contrast with the titles students used for other, more formal sections of their portfolios, which generally adhered to Ms. Lee's example titles (Academic Writing, Personal and Creative Writing, Literacy Memoir). This shift reflects a change in how students felt that they needed to orient to what Ms. Lee presented them, recognizing room for personalization and informality in the Weebly Blog section.

Even though students did not orient as closely to what Ms. Lee presented in Weebly Blogs in terms of formality, students still oriented to conveying information primarily through textual modes. While some students included pictures alongside their text, the images seemed to serve as supplemental to their ideas and not as meaning making on their own (i.e., one would not have been able to ascertain the meaning of the blog posts from simply looking at their pictures). Instead, most students included pictures of the books they were discussing or illustrative pictures (e.g., a red door for *The Scarlet Letter*). Rather than use the pictures to *write*, students were using the pictures to supplement their text-based writing or as decoration (Jewitt, 2005).

Because of the inherently visual nature of Instagram, visual modes (pictures, videos, sourced images, etc.) were forwarded. As such, students' meaning making happened through these modes, which was an uncommon and, for some, uncomfortable authoring pathway. Because they were not familiar with how to write through visual and auditory modes, like Ms. Lee, some students were unsure how to best make meaning and represent ideas through the visual modes of Instagram. A few students expressed this discomfort on their final surveys, noting that Instagram presented unique challenges where they were unsure if they were meeting the standards for success that Ms. Lee would expect. Orienting to the norms of the classroom where Ms. Lee provided rubrics,

templates, and direct instructions, some students felt slightly lost and relied heavily on their captions to convey information that met the needs of the Instagram prompts provided. For example, in response to a prompt in which students had to post a picture of/representative of someone who helped them with their writing, one student posted a picture of the overhead projector (see Figure 21). The picture did not seem to convey any information about the person about whom she was writing, but her caption (the textual element) did: "I remember talking to Brian about my writing. He was telling me how I need to be more open with it and not so straightforward and blunt bc it's boring that way." In this case, the actual post on Instagram (the visual element) did not appear to serve as a meaning-making element, and she relied on her caption do so.

Figure 21. Instagram post of the overhead projector.

Other students, however, embraced visual meaning making in the classroom through their Instagram posts. For example, in response to a prompt asking students how they felt about their progress on their literacy memoir, one student posted a picture of

Nicholas Cage with a cage full of bees on his head (see Figure 22). He captioned the picture, “When I write literary memoirs, I feel trapped and scared. I also don't want to get a B on this assignment. #notthebees.” This student played off the content of the picture in his caption, making a pun, reflecting (hyperbolically) about his progress, and also making a peripheral comment to the teacher about his grades. Without the picture, he would not have been able to maintain the informal tone, as there would have not been a joke to tell. By conveying information through an alternative authoring path that did not fit within the typical confines of the class (i.e., more informal writing through multimodal mediums), some students pushed back against what typically counted in this classroom. Ms. Lee noted that as a result, “They were expressing themselves the way they really feel as opposed to putting on their school face. I kind of liked that. Sometimes a little too candid, but I did like that.” However, perhaps because Instagram was so far removed from typical writing in Ms. Lee’s classroom, students were unable to see it as counting as *writing*. Instead, it was seen as something entirely different. The ways in which students discussed what counted as writing will be discussed further in the following section.

Figure 22. Instagram post of Nicholas Cage.

How Students Discussed What Counts as Writing

In this section, I address how students characterized what counted as writing in their interviews and open-ended survey responses, though their characterizations tended to vary based on the context about which they were referring to writing (i.e., in school, particular classrooms, at home). Some students tended to have a broad view of what counted as writing in general but were more limited when discussing their writing in relation to Ms. Lee's class. This separation, especially when discussing the class assignments for Ms. Lee, were likely heavily influenced by what she valued in the class as well as other teachers throughout their school careers.

Perhaps because of the value that Ms. Lee placed on the genre of literary analysis, students were more likely to adopt a more traditional and formal idea of what counted as

writing in this class, even if they had a broader view of writing in general. For example, during her final interview, Marta, who expressed her love for writing numerous times, said writing could be anything, including thoughts. She also described writing as transitional, and gave an example of a painting that she made in art class based on song lyrics that she considered writing. In this case, Marta's descriptions of writing are based in contexts outside of the English classroom (in her daily life, in her art class). However, Marta also expressed in the same interview that she did not count Instagram posts as writing, despite their visual nature that mirrors that of art. She even went so far as to describe Instagram as "an art gallery" with "white walls". Interestingly, Marta used art to describe how fluid and transitional writing can be when discussing her painting in art class, but when discussing Instagram in Ms. Lee's class, it was not writing because it was too much like an art gallery.

Furthermore, even though focal-student Daniel expressed that he did not like Instagram and did not enjoy using it for this project, he most outwardly expressed that meaning making through posting to Instagram counted as writing, specifically in his out-of-school contexts. In his final interview, Daniel said that he used Instagram "kind of like a blog format, so I would post pictures and then say 'this is what I did today and everything was glorious and yattyyattyyadda.'" By equating Instagram to a blog format, Daniel acknowledged writing informally for people to see (Liew, 2010; Manca & Ranieri, 2013). Furthermore, Daniel also said that he used Tumblr (a microblogging social media platform that forwards image and video but also can include text) in his creative writing class, noting that "Tumblr is a good platform for writing." Again, however, each of these platforms and forms of writing were seen as writing in contexts

outside of Ms. Lee's classroom; Daniel had little to say about alternative authoring paths for writing within the context of Ms. Lee's classroom.

However, for other students, context was not a determinant for considering visual modes as components of writing or not. For example, another focal student, Julio, commented that he did not see posting pictures as writing. Julio said that he used Snapchat (a photo and video posting app that allows users to include text and drawing on their photos), but when asked "Do you feel like Snapchat is writing?", he responded, "Not really, I just post photos." In the next talk turn, he said that he did not plan to use any of the platforms, including Instagram, for writing in the future, even though he had and used an Instagram account outside of class. Julio's responses relate to both in-class writing (posting to the class Instagram account) as well as out-of-class writing that he did at home (posting to Snapchat and his personal Instagram account). Thus, I infer that he did not view posting to Instagram as writing, either in or outside of class.

In an in-situ interview with Carla, she explained that she was looking for pictures to accompany her blog posts. When pressed for why she liked to include pictures, Carla responded, "I just really like to have something visual with my writing." In this case, she separated the visual modes (pictures) from her writing (text), thus showing that the visual modes were not part of the writing. This may have been in part because Carla was orienting to the notion that Ms. Lee was grading the text of the blog posts, and visual modes were only encouraged to make her "life more interesting."

Later, however, in the final interview, Carla positioned her creative writings that were quite visual (pictures posted to Instagram of a book spine poem made from stacked books and a black out poem made by coloring over words in an existing text to create a

poem) as writing. She said, “I think the creative writing with the poetry, I think that was pretty fun because mine were more visual anyways because it was the book spine poetry and the blackout poem- those were like two of my three creative writing pieces” Though not explicitly stating that these were *writing*, her discussion of them as writing indicates that Carla viewed these two visual representations as counting as writing in the class. This acknowledgement was likely because, as previously discussed, Ms. Lee gave them some validity as writing by using the two poems as examples of types of creative writing that could be included in the Personal and Creative Writing section of the portfolio.

Overall, the students seemed to have a progressive/open view of what *could* count as writing, including Marta’s idea that writing is transitional or even “a thought”. However, when discussing their actual writings that they did in class, they did not represent the same open ideas. While the focal students do not represent how all participating students oriented to and discussed what counted as writing within this classroom, their separation of what counted as writing in and outside of the classroom was particularly illuminative. This separation indicated that students were aware of the underlying assumptions about writing that Ms. Lee brought to the classroom and the need for them to orient to those.

Discussion

Because of the long-term nature of the portfolio unit, students were able to have dynamic documents where they could explore new ideas about what counted as writing. However, most students strongly oriented to Ms. Lee’s version of what counted as writing within this context, despite the opportunities for meaning making through multiple modes. While Ms. Lee included visual and multimodal assignments in her

course, these were not accorded as much weight or attention as the more traditional written essays. In our interview, Ms. Lee did not even discuss the visual aspects of Weebly Blogs or Weebly pages beyond their layout. Instead, she focused on the different forms of writing that each platform afforded, still emphasizing the textual modes. Like many other teachers incorporating new multimodal, open-ended projects into her classroom (see VanKooten & Berkley, 2016), Ms. Lee relied on her beliefs, experiences, and previous training as a teacher to help determine what to assess (Dalton, 2013; Ranker, 2008; Smith, 2016), and therefore, tended to privilege traditional forms of writing.

While Ms. Lee may not have expanded her ideas about what counted as writing in this particular class in terms of modes (as the class largely still centered around printed text), her ideas of what counted as literacies expanded to be more free, expressive, and include different contexts outside of her classroom. It is obvious that Ms. Lee focused on the textual modes of meaning-making, and by the nature of how she perceives the course, she also valued more formal, literary analyses over expressive or personal writing in this class. However, during the portfolio unit, she was able to abandon this strict allegiance and allow students to express personal ideas through a variety of genres and levels of formality. In doing so, Ms. Lee learned more about her students and their writing abilities than through her typical assignments. Thus, Ms. Lee did renegotiate her idea about what counted as writing in this class.

Students, however, in their orienting to how they perceived what was valued as writing in this course, did not appear to renegotiate what counted as writing within the context of Ms. Lee's class. While they did discuss expanded ideas about the changing

nature of writing in their everyday lives, when discussing the portfolio unit, ideas about what counted as writing were relatively limited. If students' mentality was that digital media was not considered writing (perhaps through a distinction brought about through a meeting of the contexts of both out-of-school and in-school values [Prinsloo & Rowsell, 2012]), then even though these platforms allow for communication and meaning-making, they will not be privileged as writing. This melding of ideas harkens back to the earlier-introduced notion that defining a context may, in fact, bound it (Burnett et al., 2014), when more likely we see students' various beliefs in environments bleed together and inform one another (Mills & Exley, 2014).

If the goal of school is to prepare students for their futures, then teachers, schools, and lawmakers must understand that students may be preparing for careers that are, currently unimaginable (Kelly et al., 2008; Leu, Kinzer, Coiro, Castek, & Henry, 2013; Moje, 2016). Ms. Lee clearly saw her role as one to prepare students for college, specifically writing literature analyses in college courses, and these views were backed by the approach of the school as well as the curriculum. A more expansive view of what students may study in college and beyond may have led Ms. Lee to value other kinds of writing as well.

While a teacher's beliefs and experiences influence her teaching (Dalton, 2013; Ranker, 2008; Smith, 2016), these beliefs may not always coincide. According to Sperling and DiPardo (2008):

> Research has underscored the ways varying and sometimes competing conceptions about reading and writing, knowledge and learning, can live side by side as teachers navigate such often-contradictory influences on their teaching and

> thinking as high-stakes assessments of their students' reading and writing, school-level evaluations of their teaching, English department policies and practices, district and state policies, their own ways of reading and writing, and their own professional development experiences (e.g., Franzak, in press; Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson, & Fry, 2003; Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, 1995; Sperling, 2004) (p. 85).

Furthermore, as English teachers such as Ms. Lee continually encounter and attempt to reconceptualized the traditional English education trope, they must negotiate political, historical, conceptual and institutional demands of the changing nature of literacies and what that might mean for those in power (Luke 2004; Sperling & DiPardo, 2008).

Implications

Though many teachers are willing to work against the historical and institutional constraints often found within the classroom, how to do so becomes a more serious and practical question (e.g., Fecho, Allen, Mazaros, & Inyega, 2006; Greene & Abt-Perkins, 2003;

Ladson-Billings, 1994). Even if teachers include multimodal authoring in their classrooms, many teachers are unware of how to navigate new mediums, and even more, struggle with how to assess the multimodal designs and compositions (Mills & Exley, 2014; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016). If something is unfamiliar (like new forms of writing), it is therefore more difficult to assess, and teachers may shy away from it in their classrooms as a result.

Thus, perhaps one of the strongest implications for this study is that teachers place more value on the things that they know how to assess. While Ms. Lee felt that the

Instagram posts were easy to grade because they were visual, it was more or less "did they do it?". Because teachers do not assess essays in the same way, assessment of multimodal writing can become problematic and lead teachers to shy away from more complicated or unknown authoring paths.

However, few scholars (e.g., Bruce 2008, 2009; Dalton and Smith 2012; Gilje 2010, 2011; Goodman 2003; Ranker 2008; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016) analyze the specific processes of multimodal composition and the "collaborative, recursive, and mediated process" that it entails (Smith, 2016, p. 4). Some, such as VanKooten and Berkley (2016) suggest that teachers need to include formative reflection as a large component of multimodal composition assessment and to move away from assessing solely the final product (like a teacher would with an essay). Focusing exclusively on an end product as many English and writing courses do, rather than the process of writing and designing, may result in what Wardle (2012) deems an "answer-getting disposition" that is at odds with the principles behind multiliteracies and multimodal composition.

In order to prepare teachers for this shift in context, focus, and on a more practical level, assessment, more instruction is needed for teachers during their training to better understand how to incorporate, structure, scaffold, and assess students' digital writings, especially those that are multimodal and allow for greater and more open meaning making through various authoring paths (Kress, 2003; Lemke, 2006). The New London Group, originators of multiliteracies and multiliteracies pedagogy, argued and others have echoed (e.g., Bezemer & Kress, 2014; Mills & Exley, 2014; Perry, 2012) that implementing a multiliteracies pedagogy requires a discursive and social shift in how teachers and students interact. Both parties need to value the shift in designing texts to

involve modes other than only text-based modes. For students to be able to critically understand various types and forms of writing, pedagogy must shift, and for this shift to occur, researchers, teachers, and institutions need to continue to ask not only "what counts" as literacy, learning, and knowledge, but also "what counts" in how literacy is taught (Perry, 2012).

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I offer my concluding remarks, addressing the changing nature of literacy in the classroom and how expanded authoring paths can afford students opportunities for expression and meaning making that might otherwise not be present in other forms of text-based writing. I begin first with a brief summary of each of the articles (Chapters 3-5). I then discuss the ways in which their collective findings build on each other to form a more complete picture than each article could accomplish on its own. I also offer theoretical implications of the findings as well as practical implications for educational practice. Finally, I conclude with the limitations of the study and areas for future research based on my analyses.

Summary of Articles

In Article One (Chapter 3), I explored how students designed multimodal compositions during the portfolio unit that would have otherwise not been possible in this classroom. I did so by examining all 26 Weebly homepages as well as conducting a more in-depth examination of all three platforms of two focal students. Marta was consistent in the way she designed her portfolio, keeping her emotional, dramatic tone constant across all platforms while working within layered modes and including personal features. However, Julio's design was much less consistent as he wrestled with his outward sedition and disinterest and his enjoyment of writing. While both students used rich modal ensembles, Julio predominantly relied on text for meaning making, even on Instagram where he often posted pictures of text. Through my analysis of Marta and Julio's design on the three platforms, I argue that even though the classroom norm of

focusing on linguistic modes persisted, the students designed rich, multimodal compositions.

In Article Two (Chapter 4), I found that students used all three of the platforms to compose multimodal texts to express complex ideas. However, students used each platform for one predominant use, which also had a corresponding pedagogical implication. Students used Instagram to design multimodal compositions through the interplay of the visual-forward posts and text-based captions. This multimodal design allowed students to express their ideas in non-traditional ways that were not typically part of this classroom. As also discussed in Article Three, students used their Weebly Blogs to communicate informally, expressing personal ideas and experiences, which fostered students' personal reflections, specifically on their connections to the texts (both books and their own). Students also publically showcased their writing through their construction of Weebly pages, which extended the context of the classroom to a larger audience.

In Article Three (Chapter 5), I explored how Ms. Lee privileged formal, traditional, print-based writing in her classroom, in part based on personal and institutional influences that contributed to establishing the norms for her class at the beginning of the year and throughout (Green et al., 2013). While she embraced a more open, student-centered, multimodal project like the portfolio unit, Ms. Lee still outwardly projected that she valued print-based writing through her discussions of writing, what/how she graded, and how she directed students' time and focus. The students oriented to this value and tended to privilege formal, print-based writing as well, as was evidenced by their largely text-based portfolios and their discussions of the limited nature

of writing in this class. Students did not draw on many other modes beyond print in their portfolios, and when they did, many were used as decoration rather than for meaning making (Jewitt, 2005).

However, the exception to this trend was in students' Instagram posts, which included multiple modes for meaning making, specifically visual modes, which are inherently forwarded through Instagram. As such, Instagram posts were more highly multimodal and tended to be more informal (including humor and direct address of Ms. Lee, which extend the boundaries of usual author-audience relations in this classroom). Understanding the typical conventions of Instagram (with 87.5% of students reportedly using Instagram before this project), students were attuned to the more informal and visual-forward style of communication typically used on Instagram, and they seemed to transfer this knowledge to their academic use of Instagram by breaking away from the typical kinds of written classroom communication.

Though they still adhered to the general traditional print-based writing that was valued in this class, students were also less formal on their writing on Weebly Blogs. Students expressed themselves openly and personally, reflecting on their connections to the texts and expressing personal experiences (as discussed in Article Two, Chapter 4). Based on my findings from Article Three, I argue that the context of the classroom can be expanded simply by allowing students alternative authoring paths that may include differing formalities and genres that expand the typical classroom, but that students will still greatly adhere to norms and values established by those in more powerful positions throughout students' school careers.

Discussion of Findings

Though the research question addressed in Article Three—what counts as writing in this class and how did students orient to that value—was not part of the proposal for this dissertation, it surfaced as an important issue that needed to be addressed as I began data analysis, as it theoretically grounded the context in which I examined the other questions in Articles One and Two. Analyzing what counted in this classroom, how that was negotiated, and how students oriented to that value allowed me to better understand the context of the classroom from multiple angles and how institutional constraints affected the ways in which Ms. Lee felt that she was able to expand her notion of what counted as writing. Though many multiliteracies scholars approach expanded ideas of what counts as literacies as embracing multimodal compositions (e.g., Domingo, 2012; Moje, 2010; Smith, 2016), Ms. Lee expanded her notion of what counted by embracing different forms of writing. She de-centralized the classroom to include new genres, formalities, and mediums in ways that allowed her to see her students in new light and allowed the students to feel successful in their authoring paths.

In her final interview, Ms. Lee expressed that she felt that the project allowed her to see that some of her struggling students were going to be successful in college. She said:

> Because, you know, there were kids that were negotiating like, "this play I had to read, this format that she wants me to follow." Their actual voice gets lost and they struggle, struggle, struggle. And then when I said, "OK just write this, you know, don't worry about quotes or sources or whatever." And then I could hear like, "OK this kid can express himself and I don't have to worry about him going to college not knowing how to write. He'll manage, or he'll find his way into

something that, you know[…]

She gave several examples of students with whom she saw this change, explaining that she was had new vantage points on how students could express ideas and make sense of writing in personally meaningful ways that were relatively unhindered of the traditional formatting and prescriptive styles of writing that were common in her class. This change in Ms. Lee's view of her students allowed her to expand her notion of meaning making to value other kinds of (albeit still predominantly text-based) writing for her class to recognize her students as successful writers.

Working within the expanded context of the classroom also gave students more freedom to express ideas in authoring paths that felt apt for them (Kress, 2003). Because they were not writing within limited formats and spaces, students could write in ways that felt most effective to them, using multiple modes and including personal elements to do so (Domingo, 2012; Smith, 2016; Vasudevan, 2010). As previously discussed, students used each of the platforms differently based on the features of those platforms. Many students recognized these potential uses and took them up in their writing in the ways that they found most apt for this class, the project, and their writing needs. For example, students could to write concise, multimodal posts on Instagram to express ideas in personal, effective ways. In doing so, they drew on modes that they deemed most apt for representation, combining them for enhanced meaning making that may not be possible through text alone (Kress, 2003). I argue throughout this dissertation study that this freedom of authorship was not previously possible in Ms. Lee's class given the overwhelming focus on formal, print-based literary analysis.

Though the platforms were "social media", the class did not outwardly take them

up as social, as many did not have much social interaction around their portfolios that I observed. Despite this lack of interaction, the students still used the platforms to create complex, multimodal designs that pushed back on the norms of the typical classroom writing platforms and activities.

Without these expanded authoring paths, Ms. Lee would not have realized that many of her students were gifted writers even though they may not have been particularly skilled at writing literature analyses. She also would not have recognized the possible disservice for her students of only including and valuing certain kinds of writing in her class. Instead, she found that by de-centralizing authorship and authority in her classroom, she was able to see her students "soar." In her reflective essay one month after the conclusion of the portfolio unit, Ms. Lee wrote:

> We worked online using digital platforms, creating digital portfolios and participating in an online classroom community through social media. We wrote and collaborated using online writing tools. I reworked my class routines to be student-paced, with flexible due dates and grading systems. In short, I stopped holding my students hostage in our classroom. I learned to give up my control of their learning processes. And my anxious, overscheduled students? When I released them from the cage of our four classroom walls and 90 minute block periods, they soared. Students who had struggled in the past absolutely thrived when they had open time and space for their work, particularly my chronic absentees and English language learners. Students who seemed quiet and almost invisible in the classroom possessed confident, booming voices online. Students actually devoted more time and energy to their projects than if they had only

> worked in my room. They felt new ownership and pride in their work. And the work they presented to me was some of the best I'd seen in the two years I'd known them.

In this essay, Ms. Lee refers to herself as "teacher-slash-hostage-taker" prior to the start of the portfolio unit. However, she articulates that, by expanding the authoring paths of her classroom and her ideas about what writing could be therein, she allowed students work and write in ways that they felt were meaningful to them.

Thus, the pedagogical implications discussed in Article Two (enhancing opportunities for meaning-making through multimodal compositions, expanded audience through showcasing work, and reflecting through informal writing) allowed Ms. Lee to see the possibilities available within other forms of writing beyond those that she typically used in her classroom. While Ms. Lee was likely aware of these affordances that other forms of writing may support, watching the change in her students as they did so was profoundly important to her. The juxtaposition of the formal text-based writing prior to this unit (occurring at least over the two years and likely far beyond that) with the multimodal, personally reflective, open-ended writing during the portfolio unit, highlighted the shift in student's writing practices and Ms. Lee's understanding of them as writers.

The students also felt that the unit allowed them to write beyond the context of the classroom because of nature of the platforms (and what they index), the change in author-audience relations, and by drawing from and projecting onto past and future selves. For example, Marta and Julio (Article One), both skillfully designed multimodally across the platforms wherein they included personalization such as their own interests, humor,

emotion, and their native languages throughout. For example, Julio included two emotional poems that were exclusively in Spanish, reflecting his heritage as well as his past experiences strongly in ways that he would not be able to do through literary analysis. Marta also included Spanish in her writings, but in combination with English and in ways that the reader could still understand her writing if they did not speak Spanish, recognizing her potential audience while also expressing her background. Furthermore, Marta also included overt references to her outside interests, bringing in band lyrics and quotes from pop-stars. Thus, Marta and Julio brought their outside interests into the classroom project in ways that formal literary analysis would not have allowed as readily, changing the relationship of author and audience. In accordance with a multiliteracies framework, this shift helps to reshape the context of the classroom as students can better understand classroom texts as reflections of their interests and perceived audiences as well as their modal resources mediated through the social context of the classroom (Jewitt, 2008).

Other students also included personal reflections of themselves to take up the affordances of the platforms and represent themselves as writers in ways that would have otherwise not been possible in this class. For example, in Articles One and Two, I discussed Michael whose tongue-in-cheek portfolio allowed him to express his ideas informally and through humor while still meeting the requirements of the assignment. Michael's Weebly pages featured pictures of professional wrestlers, and he included little jokes about them throughout. By renegotiating the audience-author relationship and thus the rhetorical features of his Weebly pages and beyond, Michael created a portfolio that was uniquely fitting and personal while still meeting the requirements of the assignment.

Furthermore, many students included humorous and emotional posts on their Instagram, making them notably informal or, as Ms. Lee described them, "candid." Ms. Lee was able to learn more about the students' lives (e.g., what was important to them, with whom they were friends, their senses of humor) through these candid expressions and personalization that they used to respond to the prompts in ways that she had not been able to do, despite being their teacher for two years. Because texts are also viewed as dynamic, cultural artifacts that belie how one engages with and communicates to the world (Bezemer & Kress, 2014), they can show how a person or group of people view meaning-making and culture around it within a particular context, as Ms. Lee came to better understand through the incorporation of alternative authoring platforms.

However, as will be discussed further in the limitations, some students did not feel that this project allowed them to truly express their ideas in the ways that social media may allow them to do outside of the classroom. For example, on an open-ended survey question, one student wrote, "I am not able to express my ideas through the class weebly [sic] or Instagram because we were told what to post." Because of the constrictions of the assignment, some students still did not feel as free to write and express ideas openly. Another student wrote, "I think it is hard to express my ideas through a class Instagram because I feel like it has to be too educational and this doesn't always work out for me." Even though the students were quite informal on their Instagram (and to a lesser extent, on their Weebly Blog) posts, they were still using them in an environment where the expectations and norms had been pre-established to value academic writing, and thus, social media may have felt out of place for some students as they tried to orient to the norms of the classroom as well as the seemingly conflicting

norms of informal writing platforms.

Implications for Authoring

While my original goal for the unit was one wherein students would be composing multimodally at all times or working toward multimodal compositions (i.e., there would not be any singularly text-based writing assignments), I deferred to Ms. Lee who, according to the standards of the course and school, included more traditional types of text-based writing. While still including multimodal assignments (e.g., the literacy timeline with the literacy memoir), these elements were not given the same attention or value as the text-based writings. However, as they did on Instagram (as explored in all of the articles), students were generally quite adept at designing multimodal posts wherein the modes created a design that was more than the sum of their parts. The students worked within Instagram to create multimodal designs that conveyed large amounts of information in relatively quick and concise ways. Ms. Lee even noted, "I loved that they got to use pictures and words together in a way that was really compact and concise- and […] I think that that encourages thoughtfulness in that way." Though Ms. Lee acknowledges the benefits of using concise types of writing, the focus was still on longer-form, text-based writing with other modes used as decoration for many assignments on Weebly pages and Weebly Blogs.

Thus, one of the overarching implications that I found over the three research questions echoes Kress' (2003) notion that some types of writing are more apt for conveying information than others. This can be seen through an example Kress (2003) offers where students in a biology class are asked to demonstrate their knowledge of blood circulation using one form from several options (e.g., narrative, concept map,

drawing, etc.). Certain ways of representing blood circulation through various modes offer differing levels of affordances to show meaning.

For example, assignments like literacy timeline that was accorded one class period (see Figure 23 for a segment of an example) may have provided more information about students' literacy journeys than the literacy memoir, which the students created over six class periods. In Figure 23, the student included pictures of seminal books in her life and short descriptions about what each book meant to her. The reader can quickly view the timeline and understand her literacy journey, from learning English to reading complex texts (though the more complex texts are not pictured in the provided segment). While a picture of a book may not relay much information when used as decoration (i.e., how many students used the pictures of books in their Weebly Blog posts), within this context, the pictures of books work together, succinctly creating a complex story of a student's literacy journey.

By recognizing the aptness for meaning making through various modes, a teacher can incorporate the most appropriate forms of writing for students to express ideas. Rather than including and valuing one particular form of writing, teachers can expand their ideas about what kinds of texts students can design based on the goals and practices of the assignment.

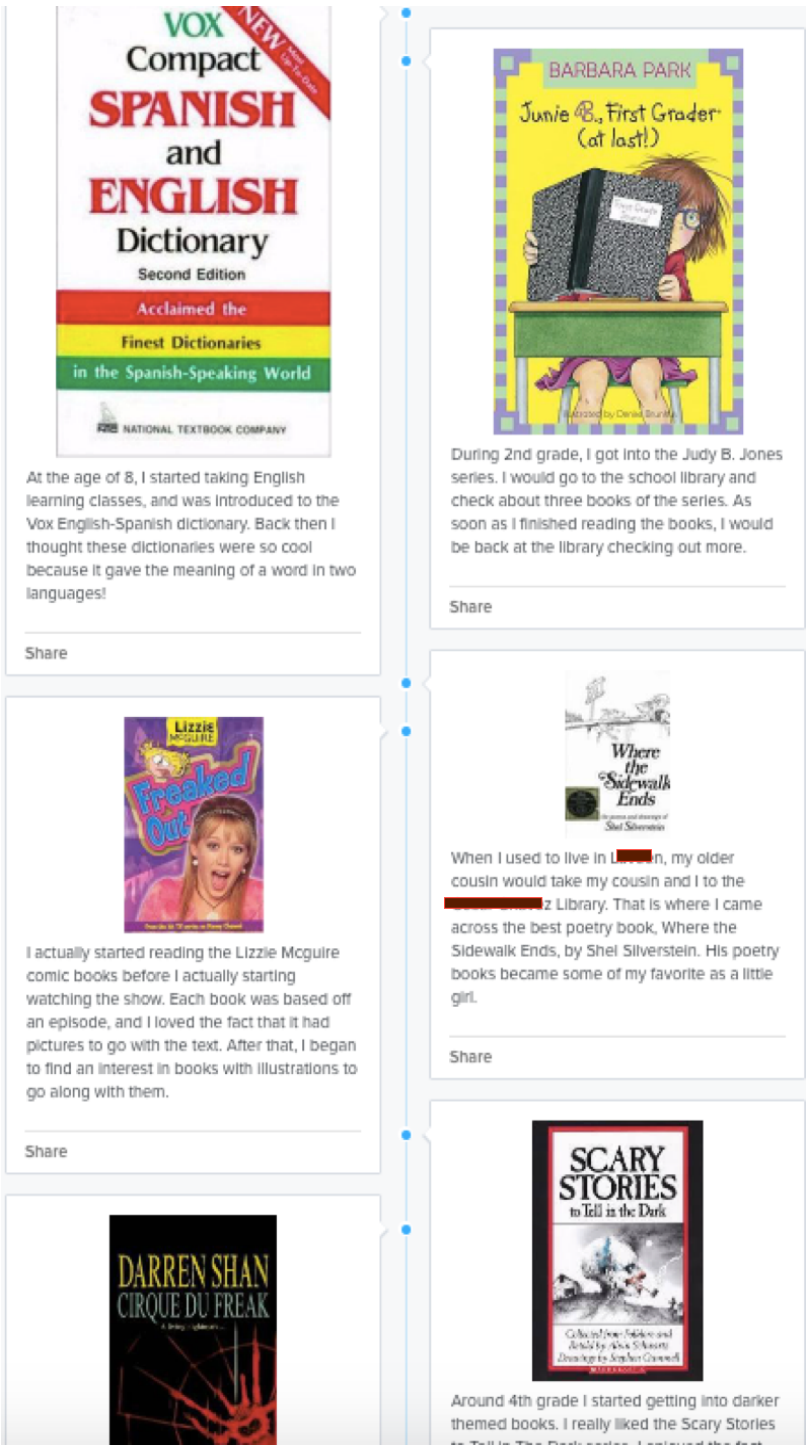

Figure 23. A segment of an example literacy timeline.

Furthermore, as I argued throughout the three articles and in the introductory chapters, multimodal texts can offer students alternative authoring paths for meaning-

making, especially for marginalized students (e.g., Anderson, Stewart, & Kachorsky, 2017; Archer, 2006; Bezemer & Kress, 2014). For example, on an open-ended survey question, one student wrote, "I like to represent my [ideas] visually because I struggle to express my self [sic] thoroughly through text." Many students may have a strong understanding of their ideas but may struggle with language barriers that prevent them from expressing those ideas clearly through written text. Multimodal texts offer these students (and all students) alternative authoring paths to be able to express their ideas without facing these barriers as strongly. However, many academically marginalized students that would benefit from such authoring paths are often excluded from expanded literacy practices and relegated to more remedial kinds of curricula (Anderson et al., 2017; Gee, 2004; Lankshear & Knobel, 2003).

For decades, scholars have found that there are great disparities between the performances of marginalized students and those of their more privileged peers in schools (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Omi & Winant, 1993). This disparity is in large part because of what is currently valued in schools (Edgerton & Roberts, 2014; Turner, 2015) as students' literacy practices are not all equally regarded in school fields. Instead, those represented by the dominant cultures tend to be those most valued institutionally (Egan-Robertson, 1998; Gadsden, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Lee, 1995; Turner, 2015). However, studies framing the benefits of a multiliteracies framework and the use of multimodal texts in classrooms show how they can enhance curricula and benefit and empower marginalized students (e.g., Anderson et al., 2017; Kalantzis & Cope 2005; Rogers et al., 2010; Unsworth, 2001).

When bringing a multiliteracies perspective into the classroom, students and

teachers change the classroom discourse as they transition beyond the traditional views of reading and writing as seen in institutionalized curricula (Domingo, 2012; Vasudevan, 2010). Students are then given new opportunities to see themselves as literate as they work through a curriculum that incorporates and values their out-of-school literacy practices. This kind of alternative authorship draws from multiple sources and allows students to repurpose them using complex visual literacies that often cannot be done with traditional texts (Luke, 2003; Manovich, 2001; Rogers et al., 2010). Learners are also given more agency while designing complex multimodal texts, drawing on and designing with multiple modes to express ideas rather than taking up existing texts (Bezemer & Kress, 2008; Halverson, 2009; Kress, 2010).

Implications for Teacher Preparation

While many scholars agree that bringing in non-traditional literacies and authoring paths is important, many teachers may feel ill-prepared with how to do so. Because digital technologies, their affordances, and their uses are not often part of teacher preparation programs, teachers may not know how to incorporate them into the classroom, even if they want to. Teachers need to know how to scaffold, discuss, and teach how to compose, critically read, and engage multimodal texts if they bring multimodal composition into their classrooms (New London Group, 1996; Shanahan, 2013). In their seminal piece defining multiliteracies, the New London Group suggested a four-pronged approach: situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice. Briefly, situated practice refers to building on a student's previous life experiences; overt instruction means teachers explicitly teach and scaffold classroom activities; critical framing encourages students to engage critically with texts to better

understand the context and design perspectives; and transformed practice asks students to critically examine meanings and design new ones (Hughes, & Morrison, 2014; Mills, 2009; New London Group, 1996). These tenets are meant to be incorporated into instruction simultaneously and revisited frequently by teachers (New London Group, 1996).

By understanding the multiliteracies pedagogy, teachers may feel more confident and prepared to incorporate multimodal texts that more accurately reflect multiple authoring paths and literacies into the classroom. As Ms. Lee mentioned several times in our interview, she felt ill-prepared for the portfolio unit and how to assess the students on their non-traditional, multimodal forms of writing. She said:

> For the Instagram posts…thinking about how to assess those, and I had no idea and I had to just like shoot in the dark. Like, "well, you know if they had a picture and they wrote something or if they had a picture and they responded to what I asked them to." And then I was thinking about, like you said, I'm privileging the text portion of it, and what if the picture says what they want to say? How do I assess the quality of that piece of visual information? You know, that's not something that I'm trained in and it's not something that we had talked about in class.

Ms. Lee felt as though she did not have a baseline of the norms for how to discuss, include, and assess multimodal compositions, and thus, she fell back on what she was trained in—text-based writing—continuing to privilege texts and finished products over process, which is institutionally common in schools (Shanahan, 2013; VanKooten & Berkley, 2016; Vasudevan, 2010).

Having some guidance for how to incorporate new kinds of texts and composition, either through the multiliteracies pedagogy outlined by the New London Group or through teacher preparation courses can provide teachers with the necessary tools to focus on the meaning-making potentials of modes beyond the linguistic to help educators and researchers alike focus less on prescriptive form and uniformity of content (Vasudevan, 2010).

Institutional Implications

I also offer institutional implications for this study as well. While teachers face constant pulls in multiple directions, they often feel that they do not have room to incorporate alternative types of texts and authoring paths into the classrooms. Ms. Lee noted several times that while she wanted to include different kinds of texts, she felt that because of the nature of the school and her course, it was inappropriate. According to Sperling and DiPardo (2008):

> As English educators counter demands at once political, empirical, and conceptual—contemplating powerful reforms on one hand and the expansive literacy demands of new times on the other (Hall, 1989/1996; Luke, 1998, 2004a, 2004b)—rethinking the familiar trope of English education research and practice as worlds apart is both necessary and overdue (p. 71).

As teachers and schools recognize the need to adapt and expand, this recognition is often at odds with the other demands placed on them (Mills & Exley, 2014). Teachers must navigate the many influences on their classrooms and practices that can be at odds with each other and pull teachers in many directions (Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson, & Fry, 2003; Marshall, Smagorinsky, & Smith, 1995; Sperling, 2004). Thus, even though

teachers may make every effort to support students and incorporate expanded ideas about what counts as writing, standardized test and curricula, institutional policies, and their own beliefs and experiences as students and teachers will affect the ways in which this change can be brought to bear on the classroom (Appleman, 2000; Barr, 2001; Grossman, 2001; Hamel, 2003).

However, these deep-rooted policies and practices cannot change overnight; instead, there need to be careful, layered approaches that are implemented with support (Compton-Lilly, 2014). Thus, a strong political and cultural shift for society writ large must occur for teachers and schools to be able to enact change. Furthermore, in order to understand the institutional practices within and around schools, researchers need to understand the structures that inform and underlie that institution and how they came to be (Mehan, 1979). In Article Three and elsewhere, I discussed the role that power dynamics have in shaping what counts as literacies, learning, and writing in education. The extent to which schools try to and successfully incorporate these "out-of-school literacy practices is a matter of power; it is about what is allowed to count, to whom, and for what purpose," (Jewitt, 2008, p. 253). Those in positions to name and define literacies for education have the power to determine how they are privileged, and thus, researchers, teachers, and stakeholders need to consider the larger political power structures surrounding literacy practices and those that are valued (Luke, 1993; Street, 2004).

Limitations

Context plays a vital role in understanding how social negotiations shape literacy practices (Perry, 2012), and the context of this study can never be repeated. Thus, my implications are not generalizable on any sort of large scale. They do, however, help to

provide insight into the ways in which teachers are practically incorporating social media and expanded authoring paths into the classroom.

Furthermore, as I touched on in Article One (Chapter 3), my researcher gaze affected the ways in which I perceived and analyzed the findings in this study. Though I have made claims about what counted in this context, the affordances of the platforms used, and how the students designed of each of the platforms to represent themselves as writers, these claims are based in my interpretations of how I perceived their representations. The claims are informed and shaped by my researcher gaze as I projected my own bias and experiences on to the data (Anderson, Stewart, & Aziz, 2016). Alternative interpretations may shed more light on these findings. Further, because a text is a cultural artifact (Archer, 2006), the interpretation of that document may be different from the intended design of the author (Gilmore, 1994). Thus, I recognized that my interpretations of the platforms may be different than what the authors may have originally intended.

Moreover, my involvement in the planning of the unit likely affected the ways in which I interpreted it. Because I had not only conducted a pilot study around a similar topic, but also helped Ms. Lee to design the unit by presenting the original idea for it, I likely brought some of my own biases to bear on the data and my interpretation of it. I wanted the unit to be successful for Ms. Lee and her students, as I was the one who brought the idea to her and had stake in it being beneficial to her class. This bias may have affected the ways in which Ms. Lee and I interacted and the ways in which I perceived the students and their work.

Additionally, though often confirmed by Ms. Lee, much of my perception about

the context of the classroom and the practices therein was based on a mere 18 hours of direct classroom observations. This is by no means an exhaustive ethnography that aims to speak to the rich, complex practices of teaching and learning literacies. Instead, it is based on my perceptions about the context surrounding these practices that I was able to observe and discuss with Ms. Lee during and after my time in the classroom.

An additional limitation of my study is that the students may have been ventriloquated based on the language and power of the classroom. According to Nelson and colleagues, "youth are particularly susceptible to being 'ventriloquated,' to use Bakhtin's (1981) term, by processes of discourse beyond their control. This is due to the fact that they may have yet to develop the ideological autonomy to fully speak for themselves" (2008, p. 420). The students in this study may have expressed genuine, personal reflections and representations of themselves, but some may also have been simply trying to fulfil the requirements of the project as they followed Ms. Lee's example profile and the pre-established norms of the school and classroom (Green et al., 2013). Thus, while I argue that multimodal texts mediated through social media may offer a host of potential affordance for alternative authoring paths, these are only taken up when students engage with them.

Ms. Lee also struggled slightly with this ventriloquation as she began to grade the portfolios and noticed that some students closely followed her example while others took up the affordances of the platforms to design complex, personal, reflective portfolios. She said:

> If a student just follows all of my directions and makes like a perfect template of my example versus if a student really goes through and makes it her own and

> really turns it into like a real writing portfolio, do I assess those differently, do I reward one and you know not punish the other but like- is that my place as their English Literature teacher to do that?

While following a provided model is often the best course of action for students in classrooms when working with traditional forms of writing, it may mean that students are not fully embracing and exploring the opportunities for authoring that can be found in expanded writing platforms. The model may serve to stifle students as they try to break free from the typical classroom norms of traditional types of writing. However, without a model, students may feel overwhelmed with the authoring possibilities and not know where to begin. Thus, it is a delicate balance, one with which Ms. Lee, who typically provided her students with extensive models and rubrics for assignments, particularly struggled.

Some students also found this balance to be off, and they felt that they were not able to represent themselves as writers because they were trying to meet the requirements of the project to the standards to which they were accustomed. For example, on an open-ended survey question, Student M wrote that "Weebly was a confusing puzzle to navigate due to the specific guidelines and procedures you had to follow to make sure it looked a certain way, so I couldn't accurately represent myself as a writer since it became more about getting it to look a certain way." Student M may have felt constrained by navigating the numerous elements for the project, implementing them through Weebly's interface, and feeling an expectation for his to mirror that of Ms. Lee.

Additionally, many students complained that the project was too complicated because of the many steps that it entailed. For example, Student K complained that there

were “Too much assignments [sic] in very little time” and later in the survey elaborated to reveal:

> Overall, I'd say that, although the project allowed me to put my writing out there, it wasn't necessarily writing I actually cared much for. Weebly and the blog became extraordinarily complicated with the laundry lists of assignments …so it became difficult to catch up when you fell behind either because of an absence or being overworked from other classes.

Even though the portfolio unit was student-centered and open-ended, which is generally regarded as positive in education (see Stewart & Jordan, 2016), some students did not like the format of the project and found it overwhelming. Though Student K could showcase writing, it was not writing that was representative of her as writer. She attributes this to the numerous tasks that students were required to complete as part of the long-term project (as well as absences and other courses). She still had to navigate the platforms to be able to include the multiple pieces of required writing, and it was perhaps because of the additional work of creating the portfolio, that this became, in her opinion, overly complicated.

Perhaps this annoyance was also based on the number of small steps that were needed to complete the project (selecting three pieces and uploading, revising a piece and uploading it) that students needed to manage and complete at their own pace during the duration of the unit. Other students also felt that this workload hindered their ability to focus on improving their writing or websites (e.g., “I would have likes [sic] to improve a lot on my work and to have more freedom but nope,” and Student R requested more “…time to figure it out so we can successfully create a website”). Thus, a possible

limitation of the project was the additional time required for students to organize, select pieces for, and design their websites that may not be present in other classroom projects.

Future Research

I began this dissertation with the hope of better understanding how students could use social media platforms as writers. When I ended, I was left with some important questions for future fodder. One area for research is examining the use of social media platforms for writing where the students have a wider, more *interactive* audience. Though the students in this study had the potential for a larger audience, there was relatively little interaction around any of their posts. Ms. Lee and I purposefully decided not to have required interaction between the students, nor were there any other interactional requirements (i.e., interacting with other users beyond the classroom). Because social media is inherently social for most of its users, this lack of interaction may have felt for some students as if they were creating their portfolios in a vacuum. Therefore, with a stronger understanding of the authoring capabilities and potentials for students working within a project such as the portfolio unit, an interaction requirement may change the ways in which the students represented themselves as writers, designed their writings and posts, etc.

Furthermore, while I examined what types of writing Ms. Lee privileged and how students oriented to this value, more research needs to be done to explore how this might change in other types of classrooms where the pre-established norms were not as starkly different from those during the portfolio unit. Students in this context valued different modes as writing because they each brought their own life worlds to bear on the project, classroom, and concept of writing (Gee, 2014; Lankshear & Knobel, 2007). Therefore,

understanding how these values and orientations shift based on varying contexts is of particular interest.

Finally, additional research is needed to find out what kinds of support teachers need for incorporating expanded notions of writing and literacies into their classrooms. Because these expanded notions may be at odds with the other constraints of the classroom (Johnson et al., 2003; Sperling & DiPardo, 2008), more research should be done to find out what shifts need to occur on a practical level and how teachers can be supported while doing so.

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APPENDIX A

EXPANDED METHODS FROM CHAPTER FOUR

Data Sources

One week before the portfolio unit began, I administered a pre-study survey to gauge students' backgrounds, familiarity with/use of social media, and how they prefer to learn in classrooms (Blaschke, 2014). I also administered a complementary, post-study survey at the end of the unit in which I asked similar questions to distinguish any changes that may have occurred over the course of the project, as well as additional questions to gauge participants' impressions surrounding the following four constructs while using Weebly pages, Weebly Blog, and Instagram to: a) represent their ideas, b) represent themselves as writers, c) design their posts, and d) communicate around those posts (see Appendix B for the instruments). While the majority of the questions were Likert-scale for both surveys, I also posed open-ended questions in which students could explain their responses after each section, which allowed me to gather more information about their scaled responses. Post-study survey responses were anonymous to allow for maximum honesty, and therefore, their responses here are identified by letters (e.g., Student A).

Visual data sources included students' Weebly pages, Weebly Blog posts, and Instagram posts. To collect these data, I took screen shots of each of the platforms throughout the unit and at the end, organizing them by student and by platform.

I also included in-situ interviews with students as well as my video-recorded observational data and field notes during my 12 classroom observations (two before the portfolio unit and ten during). Field notes were often taken verbatim, and when data appeared to be lacking, I returned to the video recordings to supplement and look for further rich points (Erickson, 1992).

Finally, I conducted semi-structured interviews with four focal students (Marta, Daniel, Carla, and Julio) as well as Ms. Lee. I interviewed the focal students on the final day of the unit (the last full class of the semester) for approximately 10-20 minutes. I chose the focal students based on a range of students who self-identified as liking/not liking writing on the pre-study survey, an equal gender mix, variations in temperament, and variations in self-identified ethnic background. The inclusion of focal students' interview allowed me to better understand their unique perspectives on how they used each of the platforms for writing.

I also conducted an hour-long follow-up interview with Ms. Lee five months after the conclusion of the unit to better understand her reflective perspective on it. I asked her three questions ("How you feel the unit actually went?"; "What would you have changed, if you could change anything?"; and "How do you view writing in your classroom?"). Ms. Lee's input gave me further insight into how she perceived both the students' uses and the implications of those uses for the classroom for each of the platforms.

Data Analysis

To better understand what each platform allowed the students to do, I first turned to interviews with focal students to comprehend their perspectives about each of the platforms. According to Li (2016), "there is a need for analytical dualism in order to explore learners' own understanding and interpretations of technologies and their interplay with material properties of technology as configured in a particular learning context" (p. 503). Therefore, I carefully analyzed students' own descriptions of how they used each platform within this particular context in order to better understand how they used these technologies and what that use afforded them.

After transcribing the video-recorded student interviews by talk turns and stanzas (Gee, 2014) and making analytic notes as I did so, I began coding the transcripts using thematic coding to organize ideas based on each platform (Saldaña, 2015). Before moving on to further coding, I turned to the post-study survey responses to understand the class as whole, focusing predominantly on the open-ended questions. These gave me further insight into how students viewed each of the platforms, specifically in terms of my original constructs for the survey, which were a) representing their ideas, b) representing themselves as writers, c) designing their posts, and d) communicating around those posts as well as their final thoughts about the portfolio unit overall. I then analyzed the survey responses using the same codes and methods from my interview analysis, adding codes if applicable. While there were nearly 30 unique codes across all platforms between the interviews and the surveys, examples of initial codes include "easy to use," "agency over time," "too many features," and "personalization through design." These codes addressed both positive and negative perceptions of the platforms.

I then continued my rounds of coding to further grasp the common (and outlying) uses of each platform across students (Deng & Yuen, 2011). To do so, I organized each piece of coded data into groups according to platform and code; data were also color-coded by student. This grouping allowed me to see what each platform allowed the students to do while working on this assignment and to have a more nuanced understanding of these uses. The color coding allowed me to see if the responses were dominated by a particular student or if it was representative of the larger group. I then refined my codes according to larger themes that I saw within each platform. For example, based on the content of the data, codes like "can be humorous," "can represent my ideas honestly," and "can be informal" became "informal writing."

Many of the student responses focused on writing practices on the platform, and thus, I needed more analysis to further understand the pedagogical implications for what those actions afforded (Cochrane & Bateman, 2010). In part to fulfill this need, I turned to an analysis of each of the students' writing and design on each of the platforms. This analysis also served to ensure that the self-reported data from the interviews and surveys was not merely a representation of students' opinions about each platform. I analyzed the students' use of their Weebly pages, Weebly Blog, and Instagram to better understand how the students used the features of each platform, what their practices were (i.e., the technological affordances), and what the larger implications for these practices were (i.e., the pedagogical affordances). This analysis included careful examination of every page of each platform as I took screenshots of each and holistic analytical notes about my observations.

For the both the Weebly pages and the Weebly Blogs, I then created a descriptive matrix to analyze each element, using content analysis (e.g., Bazerman, 2006) to analyze each page or post, looking for general descriptors about them (e.g., mean length of written posts, number of pictures used, types of headings, number of headings, example or remarkable posts, etc. see Appendix C). These analyses allowed me to better understand how students took up the features of the platforms for their writing and the potential affordances therein. For the both the Weebly pages and the Weebly Blogs, I also read all of the focal students' writings (all blog posts, Personal and Creative Writing pieces, Academic Writing pieces, Literacy Memoir pieces, reflections for each of the

writing sections, and the About Me pages). While reading these, I made analytic notes about what technological affordances they seemed to be taking up and the resulting pedagogical affordances (i.e., what was I able to better understand about their literacy practices as a result of their take up of the technological affordances).

Similarly, for the Instagram posts, I began with content analysis (e.g., Bazerman, 2006) to analyze the posts individually and as a whole. For example, I created categories of the types of posts (i.e., the focus of pictures or videos, see Table 7). These resulted in several categories, which will be discussed in further depth the following section. The categories allowed me to gain a greater understanding of what the students were doing with Instagram. I also examined the captions of the posts, including the presence of hashtags and emojis to understand how students combined textual modes with the various kinds of visual modes that they used and how students attended to the modal ensemble (Jewitt, 2005). For representative examples of Instagram posts in which students did and did not attend to the interplay of the modes, see Table 8. I examined the posts across the class as well as by individual student to look for trends and themes (Mason, 2002; Saldaña, 2015).

Table 7.
Categories of Instagram Posts

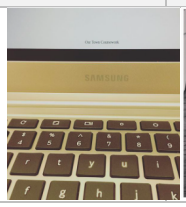
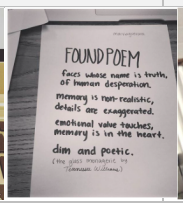
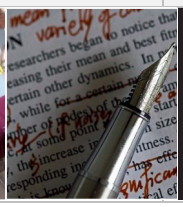
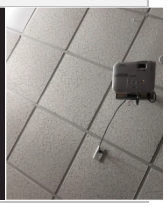
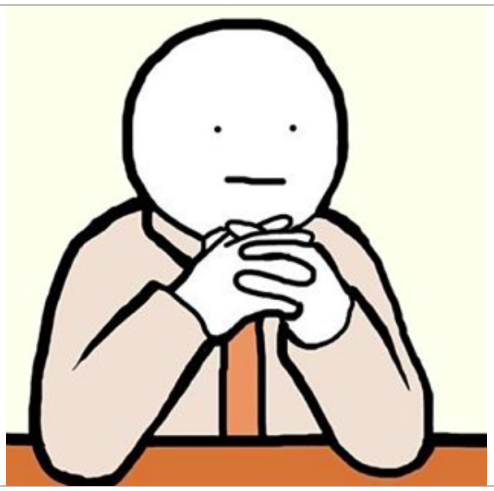
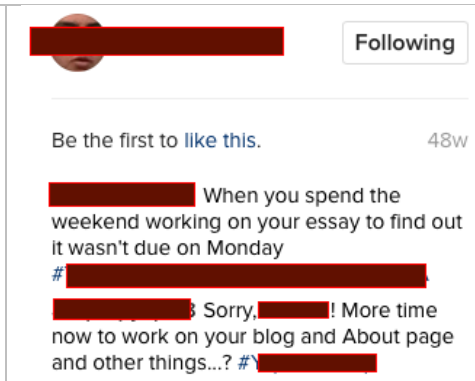
Type	Computer	Poems	Students	Illustrative Picture	College Pride	Other
# of Posts	42	34	16	22	3	11
Example						

Table 8.
Attending to the Interplay of Modes

	Multimodal	Not Multimodal
Photo		

Caption		
Reason/ Evidence	Both caption and picture give information on their own, but together, the create a larger picture of how this student feels about his memoir	While the caption provides information responding to the prompt, the picture does not.

I then turned to my interview with Ms. Lee to provide further understanding of how the students used the platforms and the implications for these uses. For my analysis of her interview, I selected each talk turn in which she described each of the platforms and made preliminary, general analytic notes about each section. I then analyzed these sections in light of my research question to examine how she perceived the students' writing with each of the platforms, what she may have gleaned or gained from this writing, and what she thought the students gained from this writing (Deng & Yuen, 2011). I then further analyzed the instances in which she discussed what she or the students gained in terms of how she perceived how it affected the students' literacy practices.

APPENDIX B

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

*Survey Questionnaire (Post-Survey questions are marked with ***)*

General Feelings

On a scale of "4" to "1" with 4 being "Completely Agree" and 1 being "Completely Disagree," please rank your agreement with each of the following statements.

1. I use social media regularly.
2. I am interested in using social media in the classroom.
3. I think social media is a useful tool for academic purposes.
4. Social media gives me an outlet to express myself.
5. I like the freedom of design that social media offers.
6. Using social media academically is a good use of my time.
7. Using social media personally is a good use of my time.

Please explain your answers to any of the above questions, if desired [open text box]

Have you ever used Instagram before?
Yes
No

Have you ever used Weebly before?
Yes
No

Have you ever used the blog feature of Weebly before?
Yes
No

Have you ever used Social Media in a class project before?
Yes
No

If "Yes," please explain what you used and how in the text box below

Learning Styles (to only be included on the Pre-Survey)

On a scale of "4" to "1" with 4 being "Completely Agree" and 1 being "Completely Disagree," please rank your agreement with each of the following statements.

1. I like to learn through hands-on projects.
2. I like to learn through lecture.
3. I like projects where I get to interact with the class.
4. I like projects where I get to be creative.

5. I like to learn on my own.
6. I like to learn in a group.
7. I like to write.

Please explain your answers to any of the above questions, if desired [open text box]

Representing Ideas

On a scale of "4" to "1" with 4 being "Completely Agree" and 1 being "Completely Disagree," please rank your agreement with each of the following statements.

1. I like to represent my ideas visually.
2. I like to represent my ideas through text.
3. I like to represent my ideas through a combination of images and text.
4. Being able to edit a post on social media (e.g., through filters, music, editing apps, embedded content) helps me to convey my ideas.
5. I am able to express my ideas to my satisfaction through my class Weebly pages.***
6. I am able to express my ideas to my satisfaction through my class Weebly blog. ***
7. I am able to express my ideas to my satisfaction through the class Instagram. ***

Please explain your answers to any of the above questions, if desired [open text box]

Representing Themselves as Writers

On a scale of "4" to "1" with 4 being "Completely Agree" and 1 being "Completely Disagree," please rank your agreement with each of the following statements.

1. I am able to represent myself as writer in this classroom.
2. I am able to be creative with my writing in this classroom.
3. I feel comfortable writing in this classroom.
4. I like to represent myself as a writer in multiple ways.
5. I like to represent myself as a writer across multiple platforms.

Communicating around Posts

On a scale of "4" to "1" with 4 being "Completely Agree" and 1 being "Completely Disagree," please rank your agreement with each of the following statements.

1. I feel comfortable communicating with my teacher through social media.
2. I communicated with my teacher through Weebly. ***

3. I communicated with my teacher through my Weebly blog. ***
4. I communicated with my teacher through Instagram. ***
5. I feel comfortable communicating with my classmates through social media.
6. I communicated with my classmates through Weebly. ***
7. I communicated with my classmates through my Weebly blog. ***
8. I communicated with my classmates through Instagram. ***
9. I like that social media offers a way to share my ideas with an audience outside of the classroom.
10. I used hashtags other than the ones required to index my Instagram posts to share them with a wider audience.***
11. I have or plan to share my Weebly portfolio with a wider audience. ***
12. My Instagram posts about my project started conversations with others.***
13. My Weebly blog posts about my writing started conversations with others.***
14. My Weebly pages with my writing started conversations with others.***

Please explain your answers to any of the above questions, if desired [open text box]

Designing***

On a scale of "4" to "1" with 4 being "Completely Agree" and 1 being "Completely Disagree," please rank your agreement with each of the following statements.

1. I used photos to document my project on Instagram.
2. I used videos to document my project on Instagram.
3. I used editing applications (like Instagram filters, Layout, PicStitch, PhotoCandy, etc.) to edit my photos and/or videos before posting them on Instagram.
4. Using editing applications allowed me to personalize my posts on Instagram.
5. Using editing applications allowed me to convey more of my ideas about my project.
6. Using Weebly elements allowed me to personalize my writing.
7. Using Weebly elements allowed me to convey more of my ideas about my project.
8. Using Weebly elements allowed me to reflect my writing style.

Please explain your answers to any of the above questions, if desired [open text box]

Platform Comparison***

Drop down, select one (includes "none" option)

1. Please select the following platform that you preferred to use:
2. Please select the following platform that had the features that you liked most:
3. Please select the following platform that you found easiest to use:

4. Please select the following platform that allowed you to represent yourself as a writer best:
5. Please select the following platform that allowed you the most freedom for design:
6. Please select the following platform that allowed for communication around posts:
7. Please select the following platform that you would use again in the future (able to select more than one)
8. Please select the following platform that was the most open:

Final Thoughts***

On a scale of "4" to "1" with 4 being "Completely Agree" and 1 being "Completely Disagree," please rank your agreement with each of the following statements.

1. Overall, I liked this this project.
2. I would like other classes to incorporate social media into the coursework.
3. I feel like my out-of-school practices were valued in this course because of this project.
4. I feel like I was able to demonstrate my knowledge of course concepts in a satisfying way.
5. I feel like I was able to demonstrate my knowledge of course concepts in an effective way.

Please explain your answers to any of the above questions, if desired [open text box]

Final Questions***

1. What was the best aspect of this unit? [open text box]
2. What aspect of this unit needs the most improvement, if any? [open text box]
3. Is there anything else you would like to add? [open text box]

Demographics

1. Gender
Male
Female
I associate with another gender [text box]

2. Age
16
17

18
19

3. Race/Ethnicity
    African-American
    Asian-American
    Hispanic
    Native American
Caucasian
Prefer not to answer
Other [fill-in]

4. Name [fill-in]

APPENDIX C

SAMPLE DESCRIPTIVE WEEBLY BLOG MATRIX[34]

[34] Names and URLs are removed.

# of posts	Pictures	Titles	Order	About the author	Description, comments	Example Post
8	No	Blog Post #1, consistent	Out	Template (Write something about yourself. No need to be fancy, just an overview.)	A lot of voice in his posts, good for analyzing RQ2	My experience so far with this book has been great actually. Coming into this project, I didn't know what to expect. I thought it was going to be sort of bring. The book has actually really interested me so far. Every time I read a chapter, I get curious to what happens next and I end up reading another chapter. This is why I got done re-reading the book so quickly. By re-reading this, I've gained a little insight into the mind of a sexually abused teenage girl. Before, I thought she was exaggerating everything, but now I understand more about why she didn't want other to know what happened to her. I am really glad I re-read this book now that I am older because I've caught some things in the book that I didn't when I was a freshman. One of them being how she sometimes didn't even want to go to school because of fear of seeing the guy and when I was a freshman, I thought this was ridiculous. Now I understand that she had a legitimate fear.
9	Just optional Instagram	Blog Post 3 - 04/05/2016, consistent	Out	Nothing	Heading reads "Blog's". Short posts, inconsistent font size, a lot of "I" statements. Some indented	I rate myself two stars, because I still need to finish things on the check list. I need to manage my time more wisely so that I can finish my work on time. I have been having a lot of anxieties that have been preventing me from finishing my work on time. In the future I will not procrastinate to finish everything.

8	No	BLOG POST 3, consistent	Out	I'm just a normal girl, trying to make my writing something that I believe is good.	"BLOG POSTS" as heading. Posts are centered; some are quite long (post 8), while others are very short. Feels informal	If I could ask any question to a character in the book that I am reading, I would ask Abby, one of the main characters in the book, to what was her main purpose in the very beginning to have all other young girls to go along with everything that Abby was telling the village people. I would ask why all of a sudden did you start talking randomly about witch craft in the village? The main reason I would ask that question is because I have been confused to why the girls would blame random people to witch craft and what was the main purpose to starting all of the nonsense that was happening in the village.
9	just optional Instagram	REFLECTING ON THE REREAD (POST IX), each one describes what he is writing about, consistent in that	IN	I write about casual things here.	"I write about things here" on menu and "Things on my mind" at the top of the page. Beautifully written, written like stories. List for #4	Throughout my life, I have read texts for school assignments. Unfortunately, I have forgotten a good number of them. I recall the titles, though I can hardly recall the stories. In order to address this, I am going to read a book that I read in middle school. One whose all but one descriptors I've forgotten: The Hatchet. The Hatchet, written by an author I can't recall (whom I will properly mention in future posts), revolves around a boy who gets stranded in the wilderness. Unfortunately, despite the fond memories I have of the novel, that's all I remember of the book. For the re-read project, I will read The Hatchet in order to re-familiarize myself with the book. I will reconcile the

details, plots, and overall story while I read it. I will also recall my middle school impressions of the book, and contrast them with impressions I form of it now. Overall, I hope to remember why I enjoyed this particular book, and reanalyze it as a graduating high-school senior.

APPENDIX D

TIMELINE OF CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

MARCH/APRIL

2016

SUBJECT **Capstone Senior English** PERIOD **3**

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SAT/SUN
1	28 Students meet Mondays from 12:10-1:00, and Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12:10-1:40	29	30	31 1st OB: survey, Weebly set up, Instagram set up, Google slides presentation, Sandbox lesson	1	
WEEK	notes					
2	4	5 2nd OB: Weebly blog post (3rd), working on catching up with other blog posts that they've missed or on essay revision	6	7 School testing- weird schedule; students to work on essay revisions and Instagram post	8	
WEEK	notes	.				
3	11 Ms. Lee doesn't have the students	12 3rd OB: Students were working on their checklists to complete the first few pages of their Weebly and through Blog #5.	13	14 4th OB: poetry writing day- write two types of poems and post twice to Instagram (rather than turning the poems in)	15	
WEEK	notes					
	18	19	20	21	22	

4	Senior day at amusement park	Students at University to meet their advisors. Blog post #6		Ms. Lee doing ACT testing		No observations 18-22, looked through Instagrams and Weeblys instead and determined focal students
WEEK notes						
5	25 Peer review/Work day	26 5th OB: Students are working on Peer feedback letters on their portfolios and starting their literacy timeline. Blog post #7	27	28 No observation today (on-campus Meeting); students working on their literacy timelines	29	
WEEK notes						

MAY2016

1	2	3 6th OB: Students in different room because of testing. Students work on memoirs (reading an example and then loop writing)	4	5 7th OB: Still working on Literacy memoirs; sharing memoirs that they read, adding to the definition, writing their drafts; Instagram post #5	6	
WEEK notes						
2	9 Started their peer review letters to each other about their literacy memoirs.	10 8th OB: Book project is due today; students were supposed to be writing peer review letters to each other about their literacy	11	12 9th OB: Students are working on their portfolios with the use of a checklist to help them see everything that is due tomorrow.	13 Weebly Portfolio due today	

		memoirs. Most were slightly off-task today though		When looking through their Weeblys, most still had a lot of work to do.		
WEEK notes						

3	16 Interviews and post survey	17	18	19 10th OB: Students take the post-survey; interviews with focal students in the hall: Marta, Julio, Carla, Daniel	20	
WEEK notes						

4	23	24	25	26 Graduation	27	
WEEK notes						

5	25	26	27	28	29	
WEEK notes						

6		1	2	3	4	
WEEK notes						