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Digital Echoes of the iGeneration: An Examination of Digital Media Used in 21st Century Education

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DIGITAL ECHOES OF THE iGENERATION: AN EXAMINATION OF DIGITAL MEDIA
USED IN 21ST CENTURY EDUCATION

by

MONICA GREENWAY RADCLIFF

(Under the Direction of John A. Weaver)

ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of digital media as three teams of middle grades students create an original film about a topic of their choosing. The impetus of the study is fueled by a personal curiosity to see how students learn when given the freedom and flexibility to research and explore outside of a standards-based environment using digital media. Equally important, I wanted to examine the participatory process; as well as how this process affected the students' views, values, and to what extent, if at all. This study was made possible due to the *2011 JOCO Film Festival*. Each of the teams of students participated in the film festival which carried the theme, "*and now you know the rest of the story*".

The study is grounded in a vast array of research as I explore the journey of the image, digital technologies, and humankind all the while viewing how each has situated itself in a postmodern, twenty-first century culture. It is with this research that I frame my study in a theoretical perspective which I have coined, digital infusion theory. I begin with technology and its questionable relations with humankind (McLuhan, 1964, Stiegler, 1998, Weaver, 2009, Lanier, 2010, Hansen, 2004, Berger, 1972, Derrida, 1974, Derrida & Stiegler, 2002). I then move into formulating aesthetic theory (Benjamin, 1935, Brownowski, 1969), image and text relationships (Heidegger, 1977, Mitchell, 1986, 2005, Ranciere, 2007, Weaver, 2009), the "theory of the present" (Manovich, 2001, Ranciere, 2006, Heidegger, 1977), and the politics

with/in the image (Ranciere, 1991, 2006, 2009a, 2009b, Weaver, 2010). I identify how the “visual image” has evolved to play a dominate role in popular culture by way of digital video, possibly aiding twenty-first century students in an “intellectual emancipation” (Ranciere, 1991) mode of creative expression and learning.

The methodology of the study is a critical media literacy qualitative case study. I am viewing each digitally infused case via a critical media literacy lens. Alvermann, Moon, and Hagood (1999) state that critical media literacy is about “providing individuals access to understanding how the print and non-print texts that are part of everyday life help construct their knowledge of the world” (p.1). According to Weaver (2009), “critical media literacy recognizes that images do not represent reality but shape and define reality” (p. 115). Hence, this study inquires about intertwined areas which are directly related to a student’s growth in agency, participatory learning, creativity, and digital media as the collaborative teams create a film.

INDEX WORDS: Critical media literacy, Case study, Agency, Creativity, Digital media, Film, Image, Participatory learning, Popular culture

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to Caroline Elizabeth Radcliff. May you always have the same love and zest for life that you currently share with everyone around you. I thank God every day for giving me you. Remember, no matter where the journey takes you, always be Caroline.



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Since this adventure began, life has had its moments of uncertainty. Being a student of Curriculum Studies has been one of the most intellectually invigorating and rewarding adventures of my life. I use the word adventure for adventure captures the ebb and flow of experiences, emotions, and the journey as it unfolds. While words fall short of describing my adventure through the past six years, I can say one thing with certainty—this journey has been a glorious awakening from within.

I would like to thank Dr. John Weaver for his endless, yet, gentle nudges which have allowed me to persevere through many, and I do mean many, life events while pursuing this degree. I shall be forever grateful, John. Also, I must thank Dr. Dan Chapman, Dr. Michael Moore, and Dr. Lyndall Muschell for serving on my committee. Your insights into my study are very much appreciated.

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To Judy, James, Caroline, Anna, Alan, Beth, Charlotte, Shelley, Stacey, along with many other family and life-long friends—all I can say is thank you for your endless support, prayers, and understanding. Your belief in me is the only fuel that allowed me to continue at times. I promise you, this endeavor has not only allowed me to become a better educator, it has made me a better person.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The bell rings as I stand in the second-floor hallway outside the classroom of a first year high school mathematics teacher. My view rarely changes as I watch the mass entrance of students ascend the stairwell. Rituals consisting of complex handshakes, hugs, loud outbursts of laughter and musical lyrics fill the once empty, sterile air. I smile widely and speak to the students as they pass. Some pass by returning my greeting while others never share eye contact for they are lost in their last few moments of teenage reality—a reality consisting of being connected 24/7 to the digital world around them. Colorful ear buds adorn their necks like fad jewelry for they are the arteries which connect to iPods, iPads, mp3 players, and cell phones—lifelines that keep these students ”plugged-in”. The final bell rings and the doors shut, severing connectivity to the world.

As a math coach for an urban high school, my challenges include disciplinary issues, truancy, and instructional concerns, to name a few. I spend a great deal of my time in a first year teacher’s room, observing, coaching, and co-teaching. Every period begins the same in Ms. Baker’s classroom. “Ladies and gentlemen,” she pleads politely. “Please put away all electronic devices. I need you listening to me. If I see any evidence of an electronic device, it will be confiscated and turned in to administration.” Heavy sighs, smacks, and grumbings from the students fill the air, lingering like bad news. She has to make this announcement, of course. She is acutely aware that her practice is under constant scrutiny and she could not risk having any students’ attention diverted toward anyone or anything other than herself. As instruction begins, students are directed to focus on the standards and essential question of the day. “Ladies and gentlemen, with your attention centered on today’s standard, MM1G2, we will explore how

geometry exists in the real world. On page 45 of your textbook look at the drawings and label the different types of triangles that you see”. Thirty seconds in and the students begin putting their heads down, misbehaving, requesting restroom passes, doing other unrelated tasks and the teacher’s attention diverts from the instructional task to behavior management. It is a well orchestrated game to the students. The students who command the game take turns initiating behaviors that require intervention and subverting a boring lesson while the ones who are tertiary to the game seem lost in a virtual world protected by their own silence. Some quietly slip their colorful ear buds in and listen to music while the teacher diffuses various conflicts between instructional attempts. The remaining class time seems like an eternity, the end of which did not result in any measurable progress toward the instructional goal. Finally, the bell rings, and class is dismissed. I speak to Ms. Baker and request that she and I meet after school. Some things have to change.

After school, I acknowledged Ms. Baker for how engaged *she* was with the students, but I asked Ms. Baker if she felt like the *students* were engaged. She agreed they were not, but—she defended any implication of deficiency by suggesting that the students needed to be intrinsically motivated. She professed her philosophy to me that her responsibility was to teach. The students’ responsibility was to learn. “They have to do their part,” she recited with the authority reminiscent of my own high school experience. This teacher, even though she is young, energetic and technologically savvy herself, is not unlike most new teachers. Their own teachers had modeled for them every day since they were six years old and because they were successful in that arena, they expect the students in their classrooms to perform likewise. Since these young teachers left high school, students have been evolving and that evolution has been greatly impacted by technology, ubiquitous technology. When she was in high school, technology was

more toy than tool. I needed to get her to exploit the students' natural propensity for twenty-first century technologies which would likely result in a win-win situation for any class of teenagers. Based on my prior educational experiences, this was my hope.

As we continued our meeting, I asked Ms. Baker if she felt technology could play a role in engaging her students. She agreed that it might but quickly responded that she was handicapped by the limited technology of a single laptop and multimedia projector in her classroom. Secondly, I asked her if we could switch roles the next day; I would teach her class, and she could observe. She agreed, albeit with a look of skeptical reservation.

The next day came, and I resumed my position in the second-floor hallway outside the classroom of Ms. Baker. My view did not change as I watched the mass entrance of students ascend the stairwell once again. Only this time when the final bell rang and Ms. Baker's door closed, something different occurred. "Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. I am Ms. Radcliff, your instructional math coach. Today I am going to be your math teacher. We are going to view geometry a little differently today so I need you to pay close attention. At the end of the class, I will want your feedback." The discussion began by referencing the geometry concepts from the prior day. I then asked the students to raise their hands if they had a cell phone on their person. They looked suspicious as if it were a trick question, so I repeated the question. Out of twenty-six students, twenty of them had cell phones with them. Those who did not have a cell phone were asked to partner with someone who did. Seventeen of the students had mobile Internet access and the ones with "older technology" were allowed to call or text someone outside of school for the same information. I then gave them their first assignment. Using the Internet, find the name of every special triangle, along with the corresponding definition, and a photographic representation of each. Within minutes, phones all over the classroom began to vibrate

frantically, and a few rang with responses. In this case, however, the vibrations and ringtones represented the classroom walls dropping and the opening of an enormous way to bring real-world application to an otherwise *boring, disengaged* geometry lesson. Ms. Baker, whose posture at the beginning of class appeared unenthused and skeptical, began to sit up and take notice of her students' engagement with geometry via cell phones. After 35 minutes, each student shared their findings and could verify their findings verbally, some could even cite their Internet sources. The next 25 minutes were spent in the cafeteria searching for examples of the triangles they had just researched in real time. Students used the same phones to photograph examples of the special triangles, each one trying to find a more sophisticated example than their peers'. On the way back to the classroom, student conversations about their findings ensued. "We can make a quick video of our geometric shapes and post to YouTube," one student stated. "Yeah, man. Put some Usher or Lil' Wayne in to dice it up. It be fresh then," added another student.

Once we returned to the classroom, the students used their texting capabilities to answer their feedback questions that I had posted on the web site, www.polleverywhere.com. I asked the students to text their responses to the following two stem statements. "I need more of..." and "I need less of..." Finally, I asked each student to text a friend who was going to come to geometry class later in the day and to tell them to bring their cell phones to class (as if they don't already do that); the purpose being to build curiosity and ignite excitement from students outside the classroom but attending school that day.

That afternoon, I shared the results of the immediate-feedback poll with Ms. Baker. She admitted that she could not believe how well the students performed for *me!* I tried to convince her that the students' performance had little to do with me. The students' performance had to do

with *how* they were engaged. I asked her to compare and contrast the day she taught with the day I taught, citing the resources and modes of learning that were involved. It was not until she saw the differences in her own analysis that she, too, agreed that *how* the students were engaged when I taught had *possibly* made a difference. The inquiry process and the use of technology were the primary differences. It was then that I challenged Ms. Baker to allow her students to use their cell phones as an inquiry tool as well as an immediate feedback tool. Ms. Baker was willing to try a new resource, digital technology that the students owned, to make mathematics more engaging and relevant to them. I am proud to say Ms. Baker's students use their cell phones regularly and are engaged in mathematics. Yet, I would be remiss if I did not point out other observations from the same geometry class. I have observed that cell phone use has also affected the classroom dynamics. As Ms. Baker has become more of a facilitator of inquiry-based learning, by all appearances there are less behavior problems, there is an outward desire to learn, and a sense of trust has been established between the teacher and her students.

As you can affirm, technology is very personal to me. My career as an educator has always included digital technologies. For the past 16 years, it has been my primary responsibility to teach in-service educators how to infuse technologies into their curriculum and instruction. Three years ago I made a startling realization while working with a group of high school students, along with a few teachers, on a student-produced film project. While creating the final project, I actually observed learning being constructed as students documented and edited footage which was filmed on location in Savannah, Georgia. I could not articulate or explain what had actually happened, but learning was definitely different. At that time, I could only ask myself—what was it that made this learning process unique? Was it just me or had this project affected the students differently as well? It wasn't until reading and researching about

participatory culture, image/picture theories, and critical media literacy a year later that I realized how innovative the film-making project and process actually was to me. The film project stirred something within me—an *uncovering* of a perspective for how I now view teaching as well as learning in a highly visual, digital, and participatory world.

Autobiographical Roots

Becoming an educator was not my first career choice. My undergraduate work was in mathematics and computer science. Not knowing what I wanted to be when I grew up, I completed my first graduate degree in management information systems. I chose this degree because businesses needed to have working computers, right? Right. My first job was working for a nationally known health insurance company as a help-desk technician. During the first year on the job, the company began decentralizing its operations along with installing wide area and local area networks. Dumb terminals were being replaced with personal computers (PCs) and all employees needed to be trained on the newest operating system, Windows 3.0. Around this same time in the mid 1990s the Internet first became available to the general population in the United States. Electronic mail was the newest craze, and if you were really into gadgets, you owned a “three pound” analog cell phone. As a help-desk technician, “training” was added to my duties and responsibilities. While I assisted individuals one-on-one daily and enjoyed helping others immensely, the thought of educating 25-30 individuals face-to-face seemed extremely intimidating. However, had I not faced that challenge I would not be an educator today. It was during that time at the insurance company that I realized how much teaching others meant to me.

After four years I left the corporate world and returned to a college in middle Georgia to complete the necessary coursework to become a certified Georgia educator. After a short time teaching ninth graders mathematics in a middle Georgia high school, I had the opportunity to

work for an Educational Technology Center (ETC) which was affiliated with Macon State College. Since I love a challenge, I took the job at the ETC. For the next ten years I trained in-service teachers in 23 middle Georgia school districts as well as Macon State's pre-service (education majors) teachers how to infuse instructional technology into their teaching. The mediums were cutting edge technologies i.e. interactive white boards, response systems, graphing calculators and more. While I loved what I was doing at the ETC, I wanted to experience the outcomes of my endeavors more personally. Hence, in 2006 I left the ETC to work in a small, rural school district, still with the primary focus of teaching instructional technologies with a shift to include students as well as teachers in my audience. While my responsibilities evolved to include more than instructional technology, every day brought different challenges that I embraced. While I feel the state of public "schooling" in the United States is in great peril due to funding and varying political realities, my days are still spent striving to make a difference by introducing and infusing digital resources in the classrooms. Currently, as a mathematics coach, the job-embedded professional development that I employ seems to *de*stress teachers for they witness, via modeling, not only the skills being taught but the engagement of the students, their students. I strive to let the classroom teacher see that technology is another tool, another resource, which can aid in assisting our students to learn. It is my belief that the majority of the students that attend school want to learn. Educators, myself included, must learn to speak their language.

A Landscape for Learning with New Literacies

I overheard a student sharing with a classmate that they were "unplugged" for the next week. Based on the tone of the conversation, I took it to have a negative connotation. After class I asked the student what "unplugged" meant. With a look of dismay and exasperation the

response was “no cell and tunes for a week, Ms. Radcliff!” Some parents of the twenty-first century obviously know how to discipline their children. Larry Rosen (2010) defines these children, the children of the iGeneration, as “the children born in the 1990s” (p. 13) and who are sitting in our classrooms today. The iGeneration is characterized as being “highly social—at least with others their own age” (Rosen, 2010, p. 15). “Their cyberworld is a place for them to explore their identity” (Rosen, 2010, p. 15). Their language of choice is text, and they have created their own abbreviated texting language. “iGeners spend hours each day writing” (Rosen, 2010, p. 131), and they have broken the boundaries “to rules of syntax and grammar...to spelling conventions” (Rosen, 2010, p. 131). Rosen’s (2010) statements fuel my curiosity and desire to better understand how students feel about using digital media during the school day to assist with their learning since they appear to embrace digital media in varying forms outside of it so abundantly. Mills (2010) states that the “current drive toward including the literacies of youth is reminiscent of Dewey (1929), who emphasized...the need to take into account the knowledge, competencies and interests of the learners as the launching point of instruction” (p. 37). It is important to educate students with the necessary literacies so that they may have a strong self-awareness that shall aid in the cultivation of their identities, hopefully positively impacting their futures and life decisions.

What are these literacies that our youth need to be experiencing? Within the context of my inquiry, literacy is defined as the process of “gaining the skills and knowledge to read, interpret, produce texts and artifacts, and to gain the intellectual tools and capacities to fully participate in one’s culture and society” (Kellner & Share, 2007/2009, p. 4, 5). Yet, there are many perspectives regarding the research of literacy. “Some commonly invoked perspectives are: behavioral, neurological, linguistic, psycholinguistic, semiotic, cognitive, sociocultural,

feminist, and critical” (Alexander & Fox, 2004; Pearson & Stephens, 1994 as cited in Baker, Pearson, and Rozendal, 2010, p. 2). With these literacies in mind, Elizabeth Baker (2001) conducted a literacy study in 2001 of a technology infused classroom where multimedia (computers, video cameras, scanners, Internet connectivity, printers) were abundant. The sociocultural literacy perspective from which she was working fueled the question driving her inquiry—“What is the nature of literacy in this setting?” From her study, four characteristics of literacy emerged. Literacy is *semiotic*, *public*, *transitory*, and *product oriented* (Baker, 2001). According to Baker (2001), to say literacy is *semiotic* goes beyond the use of printed text with use of an alphabet. Semiotic literacy includes the use of still images, video, and audio entwined to convey meaning. Baker further explained that literacy was *public* meaning students collaborated with each other, and went as far as posting their work on the Internet in order to share globally. Hence, the students were not bound by the walls of the classroom. Baker goes on to say that the literacy was *transitory*. The creations of the students allowed them to be creators and designers of dynamic pieces of communication versus a static project to be submitted to a teacher, never to be seen again. The fact that their work was shared with a global audience allowed the students to experience collaborative and ongoing communication, all the while enhancing their learning and their work “unlike a butterfly pinned to cardboard in a collection” (Baker et al., 2010, p. 16.). The final characteristic which emerged was that literacy was *product oriented*. Yet, Baker is quick to state that the products produced by the students were purposeful because the collaborative conversations among students almost always resulted in modifications of the content and how the content was presented; hence, reinforcing once again that literacy was semiotic, public, and transitory in this study. From Baker’s (2001) study, the underlying

characteristics presented yield how new forms of literacy alter the landscape of learning and dictate an expanding skill set for the twenty-first century learner.

While new literacies are changing with the social climate, media literacy has been part of the public education system in the United States since the late eighties and early nineties. With the onset of the personal computing and the birth of digitalization, media literacy was a necessary addendum to high school curriculum. Typing 101 and 102 became prerequisites to word processing classes in many U. S. high schools. It did in mine. Unfortunately, my teachers viewed media literacy education as *multimedia* education. All of the media classes were *how-to* classes, and students were coached on how to become college and career ready. Media literacy education was still in its infancy. Hence, national organizations were formed in attempts to elicit the needs of a growing media literacy movement, a movement beyond learning *how-to*. One organization, the Center for Media Literacy (CML), provides its definition for media literacy as “the ability to access, analyze, evaluate and create media in a variety of forms” (Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.org>). The CML has since modified its original definition to encompass a broader framework with inclusion of inquiry and citizenry. According to the Center for Media Literacy (CML)

Media literacy is a 21st century approach to education. It provides a framework to access, analyze, evaluate, create, and participate with messages in a variety of forms — from print to video to the Internet. Media literacy builds an understanding of the role of media in society as well as essential skills of inquiry and self-expression necessary for citizens of a democracy. (Center for Media Literacy, <http://www.medialit.org>)

Another organization that supports media literacy is The National Association of Media Literacy (NMLE). Its definition of media literacy elicits the need for “basic communication

competencies which include the ability to **ACCESS, ANALYZE, EVALUATE,** and **COMMUNICATE** information in a variety of forms, including print and non-print messages” (National Association of Media, <http://namle.net>). Interestingly enough, NMLE goes on to expand the definition by stating: “Media literacy empowers people to be both critical thinkers and creative producers of an increasingly wide range of messages using image, language, and sound. It is the skillful application of literacy skills to media and technology messages” (National Association of Media Literacy (NMLE), <http://namle.net>). From these two definitions it is apparent that media literacy provides a channel to communicate, create, and collaborate affectively. Such collaboration combined with digital media experiences of the twenty-first century has aided in altering our daily lives. Digital devices now dominate analog devices. Digital experiences include “always on” Internet capabilities with wireless access becoming more common. Digital media communication is seemingly instantaneous which aids in the pervasive encroachment of globalized mass media, compelling a participatory culture to always be available to respond.

As an educator, it is important to understand the components as well as the challenges of a participatory culture. In *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture*, (Jenkins, Purushotma, Weigel, Clinton, and Robison, 2009) a participatory culture is defined as:

having relatively low barriers to artistic expression and civic engagement, strong support for creating and sharing creations with others, some type of informal mentorship whereby what is known by the most experienced is passed along to novices, members who believe that their contributions matter, and members who feel some degree of social connection with one another. (p. 6)

It is important to realize that participants in such a culture feel validated by their participation for they are contributing part of self to something greater, something larger that extends beyond them. There is a sense of community being connected to the global Internet via digital technologies. While I may sit alone in front of my laptop or my mobile device, the rest of the world is seemingly only one click away. Even if I choose not to participate, there is significance in knowing that I *can* participate if I so desire (Jenkins et al., 2009, p. 7). Hence, this is where media literacy becomes a social process.

Out of media literacy grows the opportunity to embrace social change using a lens titled critical media literacy. Critical media literacy builds upon the media literacy ideology with a “multiperspectival critical inquiry of media culture and the culture industries that address issues of class, race, gender, sexuality, and power” (Kellner & Share, 2007/2009, p.9). Tools of multimedia lend opportunity to individuals to become empowered and to share their views. These tools have the ability to “engage with social realities that the majority of the world are experiencing” (p.9). Yet, these same tools have the ability to marginalize and manipulate if our youth are not taught that they have the right to question, to critique, and to challenge what is placed before them. For the purposes of my study, I support critical media literacy as being participatory and project oriented, allowing freedom of selection and freedom of choice in productions by students.

Many scholars who speak about creativity are cited throughout my study. Hence, I want to loosely define creativity as it relates to the human imagination. While the outcome of my study looks at the students’ *feelings* of creativity through the use of digital technologies, I feel that ideas generated from the human imagination are relevant to creativity.

James Paul Gee (1997) is an advocate for digital media use in the learning process. Actually, his research goes beyond the use of creating and using digital media, but the use of video gaming as negotiating meaning and promoting critical, creative thinking. Gee (1997) posits what he calls the four-step cycle—Probe, hypothesize, reprobe, and rethink (p.87) is present when gaming. The following describes each step of the engaging, four-step cycle.

1. The player must *probe* the virtual world (which involves looking around the current environment, clicking on something, or engaging in a certain action).
2. Based on reflection during and after probing, the player must form a *hypothesis* about what something (a text, object, artifact, event, or action) might mean in a usefully situated way.
3. The player *reprobes* the world with the hypothesis in mind, seeing what effect he or she gets.
4. The player treats this effect as feedback from the world and accepts or *rethinks* his or her original hypothesis. (Gee, 1997, p. 88)

According to Gee (1997) this engaging process is one that promotes not just creativity and critical thinking, but a social mode of participatory learning as well (p. 180). The participatory learning process is possible because the games can be played by connecting multiple controllers into one game, networking computers connected to a local area network (LAN) to one game, or the most popular, connecting to a gaming session via the Internet (Gee, 1997, p 181). Hence, to be in a participatory “space” one does not have to be physically face to face. Gee (1997) references such space as new *public spheres* for each “are worlds where people come into contact with a now global public. People of all ages, countries, and value systems meet within these worlds” (p.182). Public spheres appear to have no social boundaries. “People

of all ages, countries, and value systems meet within these worlds” (Gee, 1997, p.182). Gee speaks of “affinity spaces” in his research on gaming in addition to the “public spheres” that are inhabited by gaming participants. Jenkins et al. (2009) support Gee in that these “affinity spaces” and “public spheres” are informal, highly participatory learning environments. In such “spaces” learners are allowed to take risk and are encouraged to do so. When compared to traditional roles of public education in the U.S., Gee’s research opens up a plethora of new social learning possibilities and experiences. Jenkins et al. (2009) support such social learning possibilities as the challenges of educating our youth become more participatory in nature.

Significance of the Study

It was my good fortune to be the coordinator for the fourth annual *Jones County Schools (JOCO) Film Festival* during 2010-2011. During that year, I followed three teams of middle grades students, along with their teachers as coaches, as each participated in a district-wide film initiative titled, *The JOCO Film Festival*. Coached by a certified teacher, students spent the school year working outside of the school day to research a topic, plan, and create a production which culminated in a three minute film. It was my responsibility as the coordinator to assist the teams with any technical needs in the creation process; the research and production process was solely their responsibility. I worked with these teams, observing their collaborations while they worked, and taking notes for future improvements during my technical visits. It was my responsibility to ensure that each year the film festival was the best it could be, from start to finish. Therefore, at the end of each year, participating students completed surveys offering feedback and insight about their experiences. The culminating festival event was an awards night where the red carpet was rolled out and students eagerly arrived to view their film creations on the big screen.

The purpose of my research study is to examine the participatory process of these teams of students who used digital media, primarily digital video to make meaning. While living and learning in the digital age, our youth have the ability to explore and share their identities now more than ever. I believe that the current educational system in the U.S. has the capability to promote new and necessary media literacies if we allow our students the options to embrace participatory means, using digital technologies, to express their understanding.

I will also examine how students uncover and develop understanding about topics of interest they choose to research, all the while using digital video to document their findings and create a short film to tell their story. I chose to do this study because I am extremely curious as to how students learn when given the freedom and flexibility to research and explore outside of a standards-based environment using digital means. Equally important, I want to examine how this process affects their views, their values, and to what extent, if at all. For instance, what about a student's perspective changes due to the process of creating a short film? Also, I want to know what roles digital video plays in assisting learners in telling their stories. For instance, could the same story be told as affectively, perhaps better, without using digital video to create a short film? These are questions that fuel my curiosity as I explore how students learn in the twenty-first century.

Guiding Research Questions

Questions which will guide my inquiry are:

1. What role, if any, does critical media literacy play in twenty-first century education?
2. How does the creation of digital media projects differ from non-digital media projects?
3. How do students create and convey meaning using digital media?

Introduction of Chapters

My dissertation consists of five chapters and an epilogue. In chapter 1, I introduce the study and share my position as it relates to my life's journey in public education. I then share the significance of my study and the broad, overarching research questions that guide it.

In chapter 2, I explore the journey of the image, digital technologies, and humankind all the while viewing how each has situated itself in a postmodern, twenty-first century culture. It is with this research that I frame my study in a theoretical perspective which I have coined, digital infusion theory. I begin with technology and its questionable relations with humankind (McLuhan, 1964, Stiegler, 1998, Weaver, 2009, Lanier, 2010, Hansen, 2004, Berger, 1972, Derrida, 1974, Derrida & Stiegler, 2002). I then move into formulating aesthetic theory (Benjamin, 1935, Brownowski, 1969), image and text relationships (Heidegger, 1977, Mitchell, 1986, 2005, Ranciere, 2007, Weaver, 2009), the "theory of the present" (Manovich, 2001, Ranciere, 2006, Heidegger, 1977), and the politics with/in the image (Ranciere, 1991, 2006, 2009a, 2009b, Weaver, 2010). I identify how the "visual image" has evolved to play a dominate role in popular culture by way of digital video, possibly aiding twenty-first century students in an "intellectual emancipation" (Ranciere, 1991) mode of creative expression and learning.

In chapter 3, I identify my methodology as a critical media literacy qualitative case study. According to Alvermann, Moon, and Hagood (1999) critical media literacy is about "providing individuals access to understanding how the print and non-print texts that are part of everyday life help construct their knowledge of the world" (p. 1). In a time when public education in the U.S. is driven by standards that are to educate everyone identically by way of sharing knowledge, critical media literacy promotes creating new knowledge via individuality and freedom of thought. It is in this chapter that I share the process of my inquiry for it follows three teams of students (case studies) as they create their films for *The JOCO Film Festival*.

In chapter 4, I share each case study, for each case study represents each of the three teams' of student's digital creations. I not only share the analysis of the data but the stories portrayed in each film. I sat down and talked with each team after the completion of their films using the questions found in Appendix A. Field notes are also utilized to capture conversations among students as they collaborated in their work. I used my guiding research questions to assist in the areas which the questions were coded. Appendix A lists the questions which are included in each student survey along with a legend of the codes.

In chapter 5, I correlate the outcome of the data and share my findings, addressing the guiding research questions. I also share the impact that the study has had on my philosophy and practices as an educator in the twenty-first century.

The epilogue reveals the culmination of the 2011 *JOCO Film Festival*, an evening of celebration at the red carpet awards event.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

As I sit at my desk in my home office, my eyes often scroll the multitude of books that wallpaper the shelves of my favorite room. On this particular afternoon, wedged in between the latest APA manual and William Pinar's, *What is Curriculum Theory?*, my eyes rest on the spine of Martin Heidegger's work, *Being and Time*. While I must confess that I have begun to read *Being and Time* on numerous occasions, it always seems to get placed back on the shelf with the thought that it would be a great book study for another day. Yet, today only the title resonates with me... *Being and Time*, when suddenly I am reminded of a recent misunderstanding that occurred with a fellow educator and life-long friend, Stacey.

One evening I received a text on my cell from Stacey which said, "I need some face time!" With cell in hand, I bring up the face time app and proceed to connect to my friend. Oddly, she does not answer and I move on with my evening. The next day I receive a text from Stacey that asks, "Did you get my text about face time?" I respond with affirmation and requested a time so we both would be available. Stacey responds, "7:00 tonight, Mellow Mushroom". As I read and then reread the text message, I realized Stacey wanted *real* face time, not *virtual* face time. After I stopped laughing, I began to ponder the significance of my misunderstanding. Why did I think Stacey wanted to chat virtually? Was it her choice of words, face time? Why didn't Stacey simply say she wanted to meet for dinner? Since this incident, I continually question the roles digitalization has in my life and in twenty-first century culture.

In order to understand the multifaceted roles digitalization plays in our lives, we first must understand that we cannot discuss digitalization without referencing and attempting to understand certain aspects of our past and present culture. Culture is comprised of many

components which include power, politics, as well as social norms and values. How these components are accepted or rejected tend to influence, persuade, and mold our personal and societal values and beliefs. Sturken and Cartwright (2001) define culture as “a fluid and interactive process—a process grounded in social practices, not solely in images, texts or interpretations” (p. 4). Hence, our culture is constantly in flux, self-tuning itself with every new artifact and invention and with every wave of media that infiltrates our thoughts, our actions, and decisions.

A Complicated Stance

As a curriculum scholar, it is freeing to know that my words and views have worth. As an educator, it is freeing to know that I have agency to move students beyond mandated objectives and standardized tests if I so dare. However, being a public school practitioner in the U.S., I, along with my students, am bound by the political realities that stifle our individual, subjective thoughts. Our struggle to share our points of view, to imagine and creatively reflect on such points of view, are rare for they are not deemed valuable or condoned since they are not measurable on a standardized test. I live and breathe such conflicting realities regularly. I would like to share one of these scenarios.

Today was the day. As I entered the conference room, all of the academic coaches were sitting around the conference table. As I slid in among my peers, I looked around the room to examine the faces of my district’s associate superintendents and grant coordinators, my school’s administrators, and the State of Georgia’s Race to the Top (RT3) and School Improvement Grants (SIG) directors. The time had come to report on the progress of the students who fell under the umbrella of these two federal grants this school year.

I had dreaded this day for weeks. Why? Personally, I don't like sitting around a table of people that I don't know, to talk about students that they don't know, or seemily care to meet. Actually, we don't talk about students, we talk about numbers. The proper term is *data*. "What does the data say?" is probably the most commonly overused question in public education today. Students are reduced to data and are labeled according to the latest ranking formula that is determined by the U.S. and States' Departments of Education (DOE). And, at the end of the day, it is only the data which measures a student's "success." Seemingly, it is only the data that truly matter, to the political arena at least.

On this particular day, I was being held accountable for explaining the mathematics data yielded from the latest administration for the End of Course Test (EOCT). I had anticipated most of the questions correctly. Why didn't more students "meet" i.e. pass the EOCT? Of those that passed, why didn't more "exceed"? Overall, why is the performance in the Data and Probability domain so much lower than the Algebra and Geometry domains? As the academic math coach, I offered anecdotal answers to these questions based on my classroom observations and co-teaching/modeling which I do regularly with the math educators and the students. As I finished with my response, I felt like I had passed *my* test. Unfortunately, I was not prepared for round two of the questioning.

As the state grant officials continued to ponder the reports, one of my school district's grant directors asked me, "Are your teachers teaching the Georgia Performance Standards (GPS)?" "Yes", I assured him. "What about the curriculum? What curriculum is being taught?" I stifled a politically correct response – one does not teach a *curriculum* in Georgia, one teaches *standards*. As I began to formulate my response in my mind, I wondered if my face had any color remaining. My response – "The math faculty pull from a variety of resources. Textbooks,

online simulations, and technology, such as graphing calculators, are all utilized. Also, real-world tasks are used in small, collaborative groups along with hands-on manipulatives”. Oddly, there was this *long* pause. Slowly, I sensed the air being sucked out of the room. I cleared my throat and braced myself. “Ms. Radcliff, you did not mention Georgia’s State Frameworks which include the pacing guides, unit lessons, and culminating tasks, all which are correlated to the GPS. Why not?” My honest answer, “Yes, the state frameworks are used along with the other resources I previously mentioned”. A dreadful dialogue which included words such as rigor, non-negotiables, priority school, and testing quickly ensued. It went something like this, “Ms. Radcliff, teaching the State Frameworks are a non-negotiable for the frameworks include the rigor necessary for the students to pass the EOCT. Since this high school is a priority school, teachers must adhere to all non-negotiables. Corrective action will be taken with anyone not in compliance. With that said, Ms. Radcliff, what percentage of the State Frameworks would you say have been taught as part of the curriculum by your teachers this year?” I knew my face was no longer colorless for I was highly agitated and disturbed by the insinuation that the only thing important in a child’s education is the passing of standardized tests and that to ensure passing, teachers’ had no flexibility in what to teach their students. My reply, “Across the math department, I would say that there is, on average, a 30% use of the lessons and culminating tasks from the frameworks. The pacing guides are followed by every teacher”. “That is a very low percentage, Ms. Radcliff. It would suffice to say that there is a high probability your math students’ testing scores are low because the frameworks were not used accurately by your teachers.” As I straightened my back in the chair, I felt as if I was poisoning my physical self to create a separation between *them* and *me*. I knew there was nothing more that I could say, for “the data had already spoken.” At the risk of seeming abrupt, yet wanting this meeting to end

immediately, I did ask for clarity regarding what denotes a “priority school.” “Ms. Radcliff, low achieving schools that receive SIG and RT3 federal grant funds are automatically labeled “priority schools.” This means you have the most non-negotiables and the least amount of autonomy as compared to non-priority schools. A five percent gain in your test scores will move you off the priority school list.” As I pushed myself away from the table, I honestly could not believe what I had just heard. I had just been told that if you receive federal funding, you are told not only *what* to teach, but *how* to teach as well. Neither the teachers nor the students have any autonomy regarding teaching and learning. Sadly, I already knew this, but being confronted with this reality was devastating and demoralizing at minimum. As I excused myself from the meeting and headed down the halls of the high school, I looked into the faces and eyes of students enjoying their day. With each step, I was unfortunately reminded of Michel Foucault’s (1994) use of Jeremy Bentham’s panoptical design of the prison to explain surveillance—one guard in the tower standing watch over the prisoners below, all the while never visible. Is this not what we have in the U.S. public education system? Yes. “The Panopticon is a marvelous machine, whatever use one may wish to put it to, produces homogeneous effects of power” (Foucault, 1994 , p. 202). The adoption of the common core standards across the nation places every participating state under the same surveillance. We shall be taught the same, assessed the same and surveilled by the same, unseen guard in the tower. Am *I* that unseen guard in my school? No, I am not for I refuse to believe otherwise.

What I experienced at the political roundtable was just one of many incidents that constitute what William Pinar (2004) references in a fight to keep intellectualism and subjectivity alive. I share this experience as to situate myself as well as my study within the context of twenty-first century education and the field of Curriculum Studies.

The nightmare that is the present—in which educators have little control over the curriculum, the very organizational and intellectual center of schooling—has several markers, prominent among them “accountability”, an apparently commonsensical idea that makes teachers, rather than students and their parents, responsible for students’ educational accomplishment. (Pinar, 2004, p. 5)

In order to combat the saturation of a corporate, anti-intellectual model of schooling, Pinar (2012) defines curriculum theory through a lens that he created, the method of *currere*, which “provides a strategy for students of curriculum to study the relations between academic knowledge and life history in the interests of self-understanding and social reconstruction” (p. 44). *Currere* is Latin and means to run the course.

To take a complicated stance requires educators to look past the shroud of a politically mandated accountability system for education. The twenty-first century offers modes of learning via digitalization which I feel have the capability to emancipate students from the mandated learning models which tend to stifle creativity and imagination. Educators who dare to allow students to use digitalization, whether it be by the use of the Internet or the use of digital hardware, I feel are advocating the social and intellectual pieces of the “complicated conversation.” In Pinar’s (2012) second edition of *What is Curriculum Theory?* computerization and the rapid use of technology is not highly supported. Pinar (2012) brings to light that plagiarism is aided by the Internet and that more times than not, scholarly research is displaced under the heading of “information”. These are undeniable points with which I agree. By no means should information be considered scholarly knowledge. Furthermore, Pinar (2012) cites research that states “dangers of heavy technology use, including the deterioration of the personality, evidenced by increased impatience, impulsivity, and narcissism, all signaling an

inability to distinguish between self and other” (p. 151). I feel this research may be more accurate than not. Yet, the development of the printing press and the infiltration of radio and television in the home created some of the same concerns that exist today, concerns in the research that Pinar (2012) is citing. The evolution of technology continues to bring forth the same primary concern – *a diminishing humanity*. It is a concern of mine as well, and I acknowledge it. Technology is not a magic bullet. Common curriculums, standardized testing, and immersion in the pure sciences are not magic bullets either. My stand, however complicated, is to allow technology, video technology, to rejuvenate the intellectual and social crises that our students face everyday, both in and outside of school. My stand—let our students have a chance to have “complicated conversations” via the use of digital technologies. Simple stated, let them have a chance to tell their own stories.

The Myths of Our Humanness

I ask myself the question—What does it mean to be human? Sounds silly at first, but the question has validity. As I ponder my career choice and what I do on a daily basis as an educator who chooses to embrace technology, I also ponder the impact I have on my students’ *humanness*. The impetus of the question stems from insight brought to light by Marshall McLuhan, Martin Heidegger, Henry Jenkins, and Bernard Stiegler. In McLuhan’s (1964) statement, “the medium is the message,” the medium is considered the change agent for it is the subtle, *unobvious* action/reaction that occurs as a result of the newly introduced artifact, process, or electronic invention. It is the extension of our *humanness* and the relational encounter that the message has upon us that is of great significance.

Marshall McLuhan was a prophetic scholar who saw the world as it was changing. He felt it necessary to share his observations and beliefs about what he saw and what he felt was

soon to come. Being a literature professor and scholar, it seems that McLuhan was very cognizant of the human condition and the impact that change agents, *media* as he called it, have within a culture and with human relations. McLuhan noticed how his students did not perform the same after World War II, a time when families spent most of their free time gathering around the television instead of writing and reading to each other as they had done during the war. As he shared his observations, he did so with poetic ease, for his intention was never to condemn. In the 1960's, it was primarily the television (TV) that was the medium which fueled his reasoning for the TV was the medium that was altering the everyday environment and the lifestyle of those that embraced it. In 2012, I believe the primary medium to be a global, mobile, and ubiquitous connectivity—the Internet.

McLuhan believed that with every new addition of media, humans and our actions are altered. McLuhan introduced us to new terminologies and new modes of thinking about how we as humans interact with media within our own lives. McLuhan (1964) used the term “extension” to describe how man extends himself when adopting a new tool. These technological tools were also coined, “medium” and “media,” by McLuhan (1964). In this work, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, McLuhan (1964) elaborates on the effects that a new medium brings to mankind and society. As mentioned earlier, the television was the medium that stirred his awareness on how humans changed their habits and behavior as the television was willfully and blindly welcomed into the homes of American families. An “extension” is the term used to define how humans extend themselves, mind and/or body, by using the newly adopted medium. For instance, a microscope or telescope extends the eye. A shovel extends the hand for digging and silverware extends the fingers for picking up food. Yet, are these extensions not good for us? Are there consequences for their adoption?

To behold, use, or perceive any extension of ourselves in technological form is necessarily to embrace it. To listen to the radio or to read the printed page is to accept these extensions of ourselves into our personal system and to undergo the “closure” or displacement of perception that follows automatically. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 68)

According to McLuhan (1964) there are consequences. Asking if they are good for us may not seem like an appropriate question. Yet, realizing such alterations, we must be conscious of what we embrace as well as how we embrace the mediums.

It is this continuous embrace of our own technology in daily use that puts us in the Narcissus role of subliminal awareness and numbness in relation to these images of ourselves. By continuously embracing technologies, we relate ourselves to them as servomechanisms. (McLuhan, 1964, p. 68)

By using the Greek myth of Narcissus as an analogy of how we are affected by technological gadgets and their uses, the numbness brought on by looking at his reflection is referenced as a “self-amputation”. Amputations are considered modifications to an extension. According to McLuhan, if I decide to ride a bike or drive a car versus walking to work, I am “amputating” the use of my legs. If a large portion of society did this, it would make a significant shift in the culture. Another example was the introduction of the telephone and its popularity to become a household item which amputated writing and written correspondence.

In Bernard Stiegler’s (1998) *Technics and Time, 1: The Fault of Epimetheus*, another myth is used to portray the effects that technology has on mankind. In this myth, Prometheus, along with his brother, Epimetheus, were given a directive by Zeus to grant powers to all mortal creatures. Epimetheus, the forgetful brother, wanted to have primary responsibility in doing so, a task that was risky due to his forgetfulness. Prometheus agreed to allow Epimetheus to do so but

only if Prometheus was allowed to double-check his actions. Hence, Epimetheus began spreading the powers. Prometheus, the brother of forethought, was alarmed when he realized that Epimetheus distributed all powers to the beastly creatures first, running out of powers before reaching the mortal humans. How could Epimetheus have forgotten the humans?

In such despair over Epimetheus's thoughtlessness, Prometheus went against Zeus and stole the art of teaching and fire to give the mortals. Teaching the use of fire would better their lives and assist in their advancement by creating tools to plow their fields and for building shelter to protect them. Yet, by helping the mortals and defying Zeus, consequences ensued. By command of Zeus, Prometheus had his liver eaten daily while chained to a peak in the Caucasus Mountains. Zeus also sent the beautifully seductive and curious Pandora to unleash the evils of torment and worry on mankind. Thus, the foresight and teachings of Prometheus yield "the deceptive character of the Promethean gifts, whose ambiguous benefits turn finally against their beneficiaries" (Stiegler, 1998, p.189). Are the lessons of this myth relevant today? "Humans only occur through their being forgotten; they only appear in disappearing" (Stiegler, 1998, p.188). McLuhan would definitely agree that we alter ourselves whether it is by extension, amputation, afterthought, or disappearance. Hence, the gift of *technic* proves to be subtly harmful for the disappearing mortal man.

When I think of the technologies that I use in my life on a daily basis, I realize the extensions and amputations that I have allowed in my lifestyle. While I have always been characterized as shy and reserved in nature, I have realized how I have extended as well as amputated myself by use of my cell phone. While my cell phone is actually a mobile device, I have extended my *socialness* by using the Internet to stay in touch with friends, colleagues, and distant relatives across the globe. Yet, 99% of my communication occurs via text and *not* by

speaking. Theoretically, I believe that I have extended my hands and at the same time amputated my voice. However, I feel that I am more social and communicate more freely than I ever have in my life. The same concept is true for my work. “With the arrival of electric technology, man extended, or set outside himself, a live model of the central nervous system itself” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 65). Without email access, I feel paralyzed and have actually voiced this feeling. If I don’t have email access, how am I to communicate with my fellow colleagues? It would require a face to face conversation or a telephone call. Some of my colleagues are not local and work virtually from other campuses. Therefore, face to face communication is not feasible and telephone time is restricted to accessibility. At the time I made my comment, I did not realize that I was theoretically correct according to McLuhan.

Another principle that McLuhan cited was the different characteristics between hot and cold/cool media. According to McLuhan (1964), “hot media are low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience” (p.39). As with most of his thoughts, he focused on the *effects* of the media. “Therefore a hot medium like radio has very different effects on the user from a cool medium like the telephone” (McLuhan, 1964, p. 39). As I read more of McLuhan’s (1964) examples and analogies, I found it interesting that the TV was considered a cool medium. Radio was hot, and TV was cool. My initial thought was—you listen to radio and you watch TV. Why is TV more participatory than radio? Obviously, this speaks to the power of the image and the participatory nature that TV has on the processing ability of human perception. Had I not been researching image theories, I would not have understood TV being classified as a cool medium. How is TV that different from radio? Many in society view TV as a passive versus participatory medium. I suppose it depends on whether the viewer is participating in the content which the medium, in this case is the TV, reveals as to whether it is a

really a cool medium. John Weaver (2009) writes about the landscape of technologies in his primer, "Popular Culture". Imagery plays a vital role in postmodernity for we live in a predominantly visual culture. Weaver's (2009) point that "people who revel in the joy of popular culture without constructing their own meanings of the images are destined to be manipulated by those who construct meaning for them" (p.19). Do I really want someone else constructing my reality? I think not. Yet, how am I altering my students' realities when using various technologies in the classroom? I have to think that McLuhan had this same concern with the onset of television. How does *perception* aid in constructing reality? How does *participation* aid in constructing reality? What IS reality? I believe that mainstream media makes meaning for us in order to eradicate original thought. Hence, I have great concern for the media as well as the messages being conveyed. Hence, our reality is being formulated for us to a certain degree. Depending on the extent of our participation and acceptance of "the message" determines the degree in which we are locked in.

In Jaron Lanier's (2010) *You are not a Gadget*, I find that he and I share some of the same concerns. We the people, the active users, are what make technology what it is.

The central mistake of recent digital culture is to chop up a network of individuals so finely that you end up with a mush. You then start to care about the abstraction of the network more than the real people who are networked, even though the network by itself is meaningless. Only the people were ever meaningful. (Lanier, 2010, p. 17)

While I agree with what Lanier (2010) is saying regarding humans make the network work, I have a problem with his past tense of "were" in the last statement. Does he believe that humans, the active users, are already a lost cause? No, but Lanier does state that humans are definitely changed due to technology infusion. It appears that Lanier's (2010) arguments have a

very strong humanistic side which outweighs his technical expertise. In the chapter, *What is a Person?*, Lanier makes the following point. “Emphasizing the crowd means deemphasizing individual humans in the design of society” (Lanier, 2010, p. 19). With this statement I began to finally understand his negative statements about the open source features of Web 2.0 such as blogs, social networking, and the like. Once I pondered his statement I realized his discontent about the masses being “locked in” to these online philosophical ideas that drown out their voices, their original thoughts and individual voices. He fears we have become a “culture of reaction without action” (Lanier, 2010, p.20). I share the same fear. I can see his point; yet, I feel that critical media literacy has more to offer the individual that has a voice, which has a desire to give and to take, just like the visual culture we live in. Those of us that have always had something to say, we own it. It really does not matter where we share it for we will share it somewhere. While much of the Web 2.0 tools are open for all, Lanier’s primary point in this chapter is to remind us that we are human, first. We have a brain. Use it before we decide to share something meaningful or meaningless online. Believing that digital imagery and visual culture permeate as well as add meaning to our existence, I look further to Hansen (2004) to assist in understanding the digital image and the notion of what he calls “new media”.

In *New Philosophy for New Media*, Mark Hansen (2004) defines new media by means of the digital image which embodies more than simply the visual. He places the human “body” as privileged because it is the body which perceives and filters the world in order to create and recreate the meaning of the image. The digital image “can no longer be restricted to the level of surface appearance, but must be extended to encompass the entire process by which information is made perceivable through embodied experience” (Hansen, 2004, p. 10). We already know that McLuhan felt that our physical body including our *neuro* body was being affected by media. Yet,

how exactly is Hansen re/thinking *embodiment*? Hansen's philosophy is grounded in Henri Bergson's theory regarding perception and the literal body. According to Hansen (2004) "Bergson correlates perception with the concrete life of the body" (p. 4). I understand that the body is an image always already acting and reacting to the vast array of digital media and other stimuli that bombard it. According to Hansen, without the body, there would be no image, for humans are what yield meaning and purpose to the image. "The account of how the body enframes information and creates images comprises the theoretical project at stake in the corpus of new media" (Hansen, 2004, p. 11). Hence, he argues against Lev Manovich's theory which links the image to the material frame. "The digital image *explodes* the frame" (Hansen, 2004, p. 35). No longer can image theory be based on traditional cinematic conventions, conventions that generally immobilize the viewer and primarily focus on the visual. Also, no longer is the binary and technical aspect of the digital image of dominant concern, for the body is superior, reigning over the image. Hansen's (2004) theory of new media embraces experiences by the body and the brain of the "viewer-participant" (p. 11). Hence, new media extends the notions of "data processing" as simply binary code and perception as being limited to only to the "visual". Hansen (2004) uses the term, *affectivity*, to reference how the human body affectionately embodies new media art. "I shall call this "affectivity": the capacity of the body to experience itself as "more than itself" and thus to deploy its sensorimotor power to create the unpredictable, the experimental, the new" (Hansen, 2004, p. 7). Hence, unlike Walter Benjamin (1955), Hansen (2004) not only believes there is a newness and rebirth beyond the original space and time viewing of the artwork, but that the body extends beyond its own self-consciousness to experience an awareness that is multi-sensory. Hence, living in the digital age places demands on our multi-sensory humanness.

Formulating Aesthetic Theory

In John Berger's (1972) work, *Ways of Seeing*, he states "an image is a sight which has been recreated or reproduced. It is an appearance, or a set of appearances, which has been detached from the place and time in which it first made its appearance and preserved" (p.10). The invention of the camera as a medium definitely makes this statement true. And while "every image embodies a way of seeing" (Berger, 1972, p.10), we can never forget that "the relation between what we see and what we know is never settled" (Berger, 1972, p.7). The viewer, the beholder, is a seeing vessel, yet, different from the camera. However, the eye sees only one reflection from infinite possibilities. According to Berger (1972) it is the individual's perception which determines their "way of seeing". According to Berger (1972), "images were first made to conjure up the appearance of something that was absent" (p.10). Over time, it was noted that images revealed how something or someone used to be or to look, respectively. Thus, images served as a means to preserve history. Berger also points out that the "image-maker started being realized as part the record" (p.10) which led to "an increasing consciousness of individuality" (p. 10). While it would be rash to say when this started, Berger (1972) believes "certainly in Europe such consciousness has existed since the beginning of the Renaissance" (p.10).

Traditionally, the visual image and the aesthetic value of art were held in high regard and could only be appreciated by the privileged intellectuals who were educated in the arts. With the dawn of the mechanical age and the birth of cinema, the aesthetic and the appreciation for what is considered art has evolved drastically. However, it has taken many decades. When we look at Walter Benjamin's (1935) views regarding authenticity and the aura of art in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* and compare his philosophy to those of Jacques Ranciere and W. J. T. Mitchell, we can see the extent of the journey in which the image has traveled.

Before I delve into the theories of digital imagery, I want to be sure and share the work of a scholar, J. Bronowski, because his work enlightened me regarding what constitutes “the aesthetic”.

It was in Bronowski’s (1969), *The Visionary Eye: Essays in the Arts, Literature, and Science*, his first essay, *The Power of Artifacts*, that I was able to understand the connection between the technical, scientific side of the filming project as well as my aesthetic “encounter” with knowledge. “Why is it that we as human beings naturally express ourselves in creative discovery—creative discovery in the sense of science: creative enlightenment in the sense of art” (Bronowski, 1969, p. 63)? It is from this essay Bronowski (1969) seeks to unravel the components of “*human specificity*” (p. 62). While embracing evolutionary ideology, Bronowski (1969) convincingly explains that specific *human* components such as, “language, reasoning, imagination, and their expressions in science and in art are cardinal” (p. 62) to our existence and evolution in human culture. It is through our knowledge that we create artifacts and it is the creativity and power that we possess and release through these artifacts that make us human, that make us intelligible. John Berger also supports Bronowski’s “human specificity” ideology with “Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak” (Berger, 1972, p.7). Bronowski (1969) goes on to say that “there must be something deeply embedded in the human mind—specifically in the human imagination—which expresses itself naturally in any social culture both in science and in art” (p. 63). While embracing the “expressions” of the human mind, it is clear to me that Bronowski (1969) is stating that the artifacts which emerge from us as humans have underlying value. Their values, their worth, which we place on these artifacts and which they extract from us formulate a value system by which we live. However, Bronowski (1969) is not saying that areas of science or art yield artifacts with an either/or, write

or wrong, black or white value system. What he is conveying is that with each artifact invented there implies a purpose as well as a story. Both elements are interwoven, the science to make the artifact and the beauty of the artifact itself, each yielding value. Hence, our value systems potentially shift with every new artifact.

Throughout most of his essays, Bronowski (1969) uses poetry to convey his artistic visions and for Bronowski (1969), visions allow “you to choose what you want out of your life, the particular set of values by which you are going to live” (p. 147). Hence, creative discovery, artifacts, and artistic visions seem to conceptualize Bronowski’s (1969) definition for “aesthetic theory”. Yet, in his essays he rarely uses the phrase “aesthetic theory”. To Bronowski (1969) aesthetic theory is a push and pull of conflicting values which fluctuate throughout our culture over time and which mold our lives. In his essay, *The Play on Values in the Work of Art*, Bronowski (1969) states that “a work of art is an experiment in living” (p. 159), an experiment that allows humans to experience values that we might not have been able to feel otherwise. “If you want to make history, you must be like Stalin and Hitler. But if you want to be something more, then you really must be a person...It is really a matter of a profound sense of reflecting in yourself those aspects of humanity” (Bronowski, 1969, p. 165). There must be a “balance of values” (Bronowski, 1969, p. 165) such that humans must make decisions based on values; not based on propaganda, sensationalized media or simply, the choice to remain uninformed. We should form individual points of view and through “the balance of values” (Bronowski, 1969, p. 165) experience bountiful living. I believe such values should entail risks, mistakes, successes, emotions, and questions. “You must always feel that you are exploring the values by which you live and forming them with every step that you take. On that I think the beautiful is founded. That, I think is what the work of art says”(Bronowski, 1969, p. 170). It is through these value

systems that we create bountiful meaning and bountiful living. Living in such a manner allows you to experience these values, not just hope for them. It is my belief that digitalization allows science and the aesthetic to merge, allowing us to experience the essence of *living* based on our own values which we choose.

“Image and Text”: A Theoretical De/Construction

In W. J. T. Mitchell’s (1986), *Iconology: Image, Text and Ideology*, the image is deconstructed and analyzed in an effort to uncover an art of imagery which permeates culture. He desires to link imagery “as a kind of relay connecting theories of art, language and the mind with concepts of social, cultural and political value” (p.2). In exploring the differences and relationships between image and text Mitchell (1986) openly admits that there is no concrete definition for imagery and that text is simply its “rival mode of representation” (p.3). Ideology is a term that Mitchell (1986) uses to oscillate between “a false consciousness, a system of symbolic representation that reflects an historical situation of domination by a particular class” and “the structure of values and interests that informs any representation of reality” (p.4). Mitchell (1986) cites Ludwig Wittgenstein’s “language games” as an example of how images and image forms can be used to simplify the language, and most importantly, the meaning, which they represent. Yet, Mitchell (1986) unravels several thoughts that I had not thought about regarding imagery. First, must an image be a tangible, visible entity? Mitchell (1986) implies that for the majority of his writings, “the word “image” is a graphic, pictorial representation, a concrete, material object” (p.31). Yet, it doesn’t have to be. Mitchell (1986) ponders the notions of *mental imagery* and *verbal text* as being just as sound and viable as the tangible image. Secondly, what about the belief found in some religions where *man has*

been created in a likeness? Is such a phrase to be taken literally from a visual aspect, a mental aspect, or a spiritual, soulful aspect? No matter the context I choose, does it make the image less valuable? I think not. Jacques Ranciere (2007) wrote in his work, *The Future of the Image*, “the commonest regime of the image is one that presents a relationship between the sayable and the visible” (p. 7). Yet, how the image is presented may affect my perspective. For example, my mental image may not *match* your verbal description and vice versa. Mitchell (1986) proposes that there is a distinct “struggle that carries the fundamental contradictions of our culture into the heart of the theoretical discourse itself” (p. 44). Hence, his desire to delve into these struggles between image and text deepens.

While reading Jacques Derrida’s thoughts on deconstruction, my mind automatically situates on the current “structure” of how students are educated. In my corner of public education, teaching standards to pass the test is the primary learning focus with everything else secondary. Fortunately, I have gained insight while studying deconstruction for it has enhanced my understanding of new media and digital imagery. I wish to explore some of its components, primarily absence, presence, and differance, in order to share how I feel these components relate to digital media. I shall begin by sharing my understanding of deconstruction.

Deconstruction was born out of an opposition to structuralism which is heavily grounded in the premise of “centering”. As an example, traditional Puritan beliefs are focused on “centers” such as God, the Truth, and the Other. When a center is in existence, everything else revolves around the center. This perpetuates a binary, either/or mode of thought. Deconstruction reads the world, not just the text, from a dynamic angle, working to decentralize and demarginalize so that there is never just one center which everything else revolves around. Instead of an either/or,

centralized existence, there exist this ever-shifting, *both/and* flow that is constantly in flux, dynamically reading and rereading the word, and the world. Derrida uses the term “free play” as a means to describe analysis and interpretation of text. For instance, nouns become verbs and this free play becomes a possible shift in meaning, in perspective to its interpreter. As I typed a moment ago I stated a “both/and flow which is constantly in flux”, yet, I initially typed “influx”. While Freud would stake claim to this mistype, I pause to question myself. Was this a natural occurrence of free play by Derrida’s standards? Is there always already an *influx* (the noun) of values and thought working to create a dynamic decentering? Whether either tense “in flux” or “influx” is appropriate or to say one is correct over the other would be creating a binary structure of either/or. More importantly to me is the realization of how valuable deconstruction is in postmodern society. The power in the ability to unravel the “centers” of thought fed by the media, the government, and the universities (to name only a few) is overwhelmingly exciting as well as challenging. Where should one begin? My answer—in a twenty-first century classroom.

One of Derrida’s principles which resonate with my interest in visual culture and digital imagery is the power struggle between speech and text. Originating with Socratic teachings, speech was the ultimate delivery of philosophical Truth, simply because one must be present to hear the Truth conveyed. Hence, a state of being *present* was necessary. Writing, a symbolic form of language, therefore, must be secondary to speech since presence is not necessary. The term, *logocentrism*, supports the privilege of speech over the written text. Yet, Derrida believes and asserts “there is nothing outside of the text” (Derrida, 1974, p. 158) since speech and text are both mediated. Each is delivered by a medium. With this statement, is it important to understand Derrida’s position on presence and absence—meaning there is *representational presence* in absence. Traditionally, Western philosophy has always damned absence; for speech, the spoken

word, was superior due to its presence. Derrida (1974) uses metaphysics to aid in understanding presence for “metaphysics” is “very simply shorthand for any science of presence” (p. xxi).

Derrida uses the writings of Saussure to decentralize Saussure’s belief that speech comes from within and that the interiority of being from within supports logocentrism. Speech is primary and writing is always already secondary and seemingly artificial according to the linguistic beliefs of Saussure. Writing has an artificial distance, per se, between its author and reader that speech does not have. Yet, in order to understand how Derrida views deconstruction, you have to realize he starts from within the concept or idea. Deconstruction is not applied as a method.

Deconstruction is what it is because of what is and what is not. In order to understand what is present and before you, you have to understand what is not part of the present, therefore what is not-present and not-before you. This is where you begin and end deconstructing.

In *Echographies of Television*, Bernard Stiegler interviews Jacques Derrida where each probe the complications of distance entwined with twenty-first century technologies. Where does distance fit in the concept of presence and absence when viewing images? Is it different to read words versus a picture? a film? a television program? According to Derrida it is complicated and the specificity is forever decentered.

These machines have always been there...even when we wrote by hand, even during live conversation...the most vivid of possible affinities seems to be asserting itself, *today*, between what appears to be most alive, most *live*, and the difference or delay, the time it takes to exploit, broadcast, or distribute it. (Derrida & Stiegler, 2002, p. 38)

Derrida’s point is that there is distance and *differance* in every moment. *Tele* actually means distance and *differance*, coined by Derrida, is a term used to describe deferring and differing in the context being addressed. Taping the interview between Derrida and Stiegler

(2002) served as example of how replaying a recording is different from the “living present” (p. 39) and that deferment of meaning is natural when the interview is broadcast and/or replayed by the viewer. Derrida states that the recording is a “simulacrum of life” (Derrida & Stiegler, 2002, p.39) and it continues to live as if it were live. Yet, the issue at hand for Derrida is not the teletechnology being used but the distortion of meaning that differance yields to others, unknowingly.

As soon as we know, “believe we know”, or quite simply believe that the alleged “life” or “direct” is possible, and that voices and images can be transmitted from one side of the globe to the other, the field of perception and of experience in general is profoundly transformed. (Derrida & Stiegler, 2002, p. 40).

Before the interview began, Derrida requested from Stiegler a “right of inspection” to the interview in its entirety. The prior statement tells us why. Alterations via negotiation and mediation occur immediately whether spoken or written. Hence, “absolute specificity” (Derrida & Stiegler, 2002, p. 39) does not exist with the digital nor with writing. Absolute specificity is negotiated according to the principles of deconstruction.

There are several struggles that Mitchell (1986) addresses regarding “iconology”. Iconology has unveiled itself as more than the “science of icons but the political psychology of icons, the study of iconophobia, iconophilia, and the struggle between iconoclasm and idolatry” (p.3). Mitchell (1986) focuses on the struggles he sees between the word (used interchangeably with *text*) and the image to the point that he references them as a “war of signs” (p. 47). This war is defined by Mitchell (1986) to only be an allowable distinction that current culture places on defining differences which “in effect is a culture which allows it to sort out distinctive qualities of its ensemble of signs and symbols” (p. 49). Why would Mitchell or anyone actually care of

such distinction? According to Mitchell (1986), the only items at risk are “nature, truth, reality and the human spirit” (p. 47) Hence, I dare say that iconology ranks high on the risky scale. Iconology in the twenty-first century is embedded in advertising and political messages that exude power; therefore, the struggles of influence and perspective ensue. Yet, iconology is billed to “inform” in a pervasive and persuasive manner. And it works. Mitchell’s (1986) analysis of the image and text is further broken down by dissecting the discourses of Goodman, Gombrich, Lessing, and Burke. He uses the theories and writings of these scholars to form his theory about images, iconology and the influences they have upon us, the viewers.

Mitchell (1986) looks at Nelson Goodman’s theory of symbols as presented in his work, *Languages of Art: An Approach to a Theory of Symbols*. Goodman’s theory of symbols argues that the sciences as well as the arts have their own frameworks for using symbols. All have distinctive meaning and usefulness. Mitchell (1986) states that Goodman’s theory of symbols is founded “in a matter of habit, convention, and authorial stipulation—thus, a matter of choice, need and interest” (p.70). According to Mitchell (1986) Goodman’s theory does not boast a political ideology of any means. Gombrich’s theory is grounded in history according to Mitchell (1986) and represents “an ideology associated with the rise of modern science and the emergence of capitalist economies in Western Europe in the last four hundred years” (p.90). Therefore, Gombrich’s theory is said to stem from a battle between nature and culture. What is considered as a “natural sign” in Western culture is presumed idolatrous. Yet, these “natural signs” are subject to “correction, verification, and empirical testing against the “facts” about “what we see”, “how things appear”, or “what they naturally are”” (p. 91). Mitchell (1986) references such thoughts as “a ritual iconoclasm” which implies “our images, unlike “theirs” are constituted by a critical principle of skepticism and self-correction” (p. 90). By making such statements and

comparisons, Mitchell (1986) is driving the point that each of us must take a stronger, “critical view of imagery, to see it in its cultural and historical relations, not just as part of nature, but as part of us” (p. 91). I agree with Mitchell and I also believe that many humans, especially our students, are glossed over by the info-hype that surrounds the visual imagery of their worlds.

Mitchell (1986) closes this chapter by referencing Plato. Plato believed that we are mistaken if we dwell on the world of customs and conventions instead of “a dialogue within the world of convention that leads us to its limits” (p. 94). Hence, looking too closely without questioning and without making some type of meaning can prove futile. I agree with Plato. My greatest concern is that so many live their lives looking without actually seeing. Perhaps they only see shadows instead of the true image.

As Mitchell (1986) moves on to discuss the relationship that time and space have with image and text, he turns to G. E. Lessing and his work, “Laocoon: An Essay upon the Limits of Poetry and Painting” which focuses on the binary of poetry and paintings. Mitchell (1986) continually points out through his interpretation of Lessing’s work that the relationship of space and time are transient in meaning due to different points in history; hence, the need for genres in the arts. “Genres are not technical definitions but acts of exclusion and appropriation which tend to reify some “significant other”” (Mitchell, 1986, p.112). Genres, I believe, are neither good nor bad but allow for the overlap in the space and time struggle. Mitchell (1986) claims that works of art are not spatial or temporal. “Works of art, like all other objects of human experience, are structures in space-time, and that the interesting problem is to comprehend a spatial-temporal construction, not to label it as temporal or spatial” (Mitchell, 1986, p.103). As Mitchell (1986) ends his analysis of time and space, he openly admits to the difficulty that he experiences as he analyzes and constructively criticizes each scholar’s work. Mitchell (1986) claims that Lessing’s

writings display “a cunning exploitation of the iconophobic and iconoclastic rhetoric that pervades the discourse we call “criticism” in Western culture” (p.112). Mitchell (1986) also states that there are many other scholars, “from Bacon to Kant to Wittgenstein” (p. 113) that have “feared imagery”, not wanting to fall trap to “iconoclastic rhetoric” which distorts and “mystifies both perception and representation” (p. 113). My perception is that icons may become idols and idols have potential power to control us. Such power is aided by the gaze. While Foucault and Lacan are known for using “ the gaze” to describe an awareness of being viewed in varying context; I perceive the gaze to convey messages which are sometimes irrational, distorted, and even empty to the gazer, the viewer. Hence, the gaze, in my opinion aids in a lasting impression and interpretation of my experience, no matter the medium by which my experience occurs. Therefore, to thoroughly understand and dismiss iconoclastic and iconophobic views, it is necessary to educate myself in the critical analysis of media and become literate of what is placed before me.

Mitchell (1986) moves on to look at “Enquiry”, the work of Edmund Burke. Burke looks to the human senses which involve the visual and the auditory, primarily. Burke’s theory as well as Jacques Ranciere’s (2007) reminds us that the image is comprised of more than the visual. “The visible can be arranged in meaningful tropes; words deploy a visibility that can be blinding” (Ranciere, 2007, p.7). Yet, unlike Ranciere’s, Burke’s writing establishes boundaries for the image, an iconophobic view, according to Mitchell (1986), where images are less powerful than the word and there is fear that the image may stir passion with/in the imagination which may lead to speculation and revolt. Therefore, those that question power may possibly desire power themselves. Imagery stirs the imagination and Burke did agree that stirring the

imagination invokes emotion. Intense emotion then triggers passion and passion is a primary component to invoke analysis and investigation.

Whether verbal or visual, the image/text as icon in postmodernity carries a “political unconscious” that Mitchell (1986) believes “informs our understanding of imagery and its difference from language, and suggesting that behind every theory of imagery is some form of the fear of imagery” (p. 159). There are people in today’s society who do not understand the power of the image. Popular culture is dominated by an influx of information and hyper-reality. Hence, I am quite certain that students in the classroom should be creating as well as reading images for meaning, whether apparent or transparent. How do they learn to question what is happening in the world, their world, when they are force fed a static curriculum in the classroom? Students in the twenty-first century need to know what is being decided for them because it is their future that shall be affected. Every student needs to learn to utilize their voice and invoke their agency for I believe the student’s voice could be much stronger and just as important. Their minds are stifled by grades and test scores. Where is their righteous indignation? I believe we should always be in conversation and consultation with our students regarding their world and the ways they see it, and unfortunately, don’t see it.

In Mitchell’s (2005), *What do Pictures Want?*, “pictures want to make a claim upon us, and how we are to respond” (p. xv). Mitchell (2005) shares Aristotle’s views that “pictures are themselves products of poetry, and a poetics of pictures addresses itself to them, as Aristotle proposed, as if they were living beings, a second nature that human beings have created around themselves” (p. xv). Pictures have an essence that stirs the imagination as well as other sensory receptors. I am of the opinion that visual imagery gives and it takes. As Mitchell (2005) states, “we must ask the question, what do pictures want from us and stay for the answers” (p.26). One

of the most intriguing questions that Mitchell (2005) poses about human views of pictures is “why do they behave as if pictures were alive, as if works of art had minds of their own, as if images had a power to influence human beings, demanding things from us, persuading, seducing and leading us astray?” (p.7). I believe it is because there is something in, of, and about the picture, the visual, which resonates with our identity, with our purpose for living. A collision of ideas or a reflective moment can change a human’s perspective instantly. Mitchell (2005) goes so far as to cite a Freudian perspective to explain such an occurrence. “These commonplaces take on a new resonance, a classic instance of what Freud called the Uncanny, the moment when the most ordinary forms of disavowed superstition (monsters in the closet, toys coming alive) come back as undeniable truths” (Mitchell, 2005, p. 13). This resonance is a thought, an image, a memory revisited. What does that do to us? It alters our perception, our character and our decisions. I believe pictures can nurture a certain part of our identity if we allow them. One does not have to be an art historian to understand visual culture in the postmodern era. According to Mitchell (2005), the following is true about visual culture.

The Hollywood cinema constructs women as objects of the “male gaze”; that the unlettered masses are manipulated by the images of visual media and popular culture; that people of color are subject to graphic stereotypes and racist visual discrimination; the art museums are a kind of hybrid form of religious temple and bank in which the commodity fetishes are displayed for rituals of public veneration that are designed to produce surplus aesthetic and economic value. (Mitchell, 2005, p.33)

These statements depict the impetus of our current cultural influences. Such visual cultural allures us to desire it, admire it, and yield to its control. Ironically, we do yield to it and allow for

it to control us. Mitchell (2005) cites art historian and critic Michael Fried with the following summary.

A painting...had first to attract the beholder, then to arrest and finally enthrall the beholder, that is a painting had to call to someone, bring him in to a halt in front of itself and hold him there as if spellbound and unable to move. (Mitchell, 2005, p. 36)

This form of captivation leads you to speculate and analyze the power in the gaze of the spectator. Mitchell (1994) writes of a “pictorial turn” in his work, *Picture Theory*.

According to Mitchell (1994) the pictorial turn is “a postlinguistic, postsemiotic rediscovery of the picture as a complex interplay between visibility, apparatus, institutions, discourse, bodies, and figurality” (p.16). Mitchell is saying that due to a pictorial turn in postmodernity, picture theory comprises its own principles creating an ideology of its own. Finally pictures and images carry as much clout, if not more, than text in contemporary society.

Interpreting the “Theory of the Present”

In Lev Manovich’s (2001) text, *The Language of New Media*, Manovich focuses on bridging the similarities of 1920’s cinema with the twentieth century’s use of cinema which he has titled ‘new media’. “We are witnessing the emergence of a new medium—the meta-medium of the digital computer” (Manovich, 2001, p. 6). Within the constructs of this meta-medium of digitized data, Manovich rests his “theory of the present” and graciously acknowledges his theory as a moving target. Manovich is associating an era of cinema with the present day film “language” that falls under the umbrella of digitized data, both textual and visual, as it relates to an organized understanding by the end user. Manovich’s accurate understanding of cinema and

film allow for a logical explanation and revealing of how he views the end users' interpretations of new media, which he declares consists of three fundamental elements-- language, objects, and representation.

Early on Manovich speaks to how carefully he chose the word *language* when developing his book title. Language is a viable part of any culture for it constitutes a pattern of fluidity from which communication and understanding flow. "The concept of "information culture" which is my term, can be thought of as a parallel to another, already familiar concept – *visual culture*" (Manovich, 2001, p.13). Personally, I feel that *language* was an excellent choice for I see it as the cohesion of new media. From my perspective, language is the cohesive thread which courses through new media.

When looking at "visual culture" the other two components, representation and object come into play. These two elements have multiple presentations in new media. Yet, their importance lies with how they are individually defined and utilized. Manovich uses the term *object* throughout his book to encompass many forms of new media. For instance, object could reference a product outcome, an embedded image, or a section of programming code. In Manovich's view, an object references a visual entity used in our "information culture". The type of the object and how the object is utilized or "opposed" determines its representation.

Representation is the most complex of the elements for its purpose comprises various formats. According to Manovich (2001), "representation of new media changes depending on its opposition to other terms"(p.16). I find it important to point out that representation involves more than a static "image-interface." Representation of new media implies a dynamic mode of interfacing, one which transforms the user from a *static viewer* into an *active user*. Your *perception* and *interpretation* of information may differ from mine depending on the opposition

used to engage us, the active users. Is this not true when analyzing art? Watching television? Playing a video game? I wonder if *active view-user* would be a more descriptive term. I can honestly say that for the first 20 years of my career, I never thought of digitized data beyond the binary for it was not until the pervasive use of the Internet, the birth of social media, and the vast availability of mobile devices that I became an active, participatory user. I suppose one could say this is where my reality of binary meets Manovich's "theory of the present". I see these three foundational components intertwined such that multiple objects may share varying representations when bound together by a common language, unique but very abundant in our information and visual culture.

According to Manovich, "by 1995 the Internet was the most material and visible sign of globalization. And by the end of the decade it will also become clear that the gradual computerization of culture will eventually transform all of it" (Manovich, 2001, p.6). Proving to be true, the Internet is the largest, most abundant medium of the varying forms of new media. Virtual bots and agents allow for interactivity that serve our everyday needs as well as allow for scientific research and discovery. Scientific and technological advancements have benefited humankind beyond expectation due to global networking. Yet, I feel that as modern technology continues to progress and evolve the relationship that we have with it and the objects involved in the participatory process have changed and continue to change. Having a foundational understanding of new media, we can now take an even closer look at the five principles that bridge the old and the new concepts of new media. These underlying principles are numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability, and transcoding (Manovich, 2001, p. 14-15). Exploration of these principles in conjunction with a closer look at Heidegger's (1977) essay,

The Question Concerning Technology, shall provide deeper insight into my thoughts on aesthetic education and digitized media.

Heidegger's views of technology are centered on the *essence* of technology. *How* one thinks about technology and what is *unveiled* or *revealed* in the relationship with the technology is central to his questioning. It is important to establish that Heidegger believes in the benefits of technology and that technology is a form of "knowing in the widest sense" (Heidegger, 1977, p.13). According to Heidegger, technology in its early stage was a product designed for consumption by man. Heidegger uses many analogies throughout his essay to illustrate this technological relationship. The natural sciences and nature's elements are pertinent in Heidegger's essay. His analogy of humankind using the raw resources of nature to provide energy is an example of technology serving an *active* purpose. Heidegger explains the *instrumentality* that many of us only see as the concreteness of technology. The evolution of technology which began as "a means to an end" has transformed in to more as it has evolved in to a different technology, a modern technology, a plethora of digitized media. Modern technology is a primary focus in Heidegger's essay. Thus, if technology is "knowing in the widest sense" (Heidegger, 1977, p.13), and technology continues to evolve and advance due to the drive of humanity, then I see modern technology, including new media, as a purposeful pursuit of knowing. If digitized media affords us the ability to have art forms via digitized technologies, then could it be possible that digitized media could be the latest medium in the pursuit of knowing? I think it is possible.

The layers of data infused via a myriad of visual displays leads me to see how Manovich chose to focus on the "visual" aspect of new media. "A hundred years after cinema's birth, cinematic ways of seeing the world, of structuring time, of narrating a story, of linking one

experience to the next, have become the basic means by which computer users access and interact with all cultural data” (Manovich, 2001, p. 78). These aspects and traits of old cinema now define the language of new media. Looking at the first of five principles of new media, numerical representation is how new media embraces cinema. The work of virtual software designers parallel that of cinematographers creating film. How have these parallels occurred? Was it intentional? I think not. However, it does bring to light that through the mastery and pursuit of technology, traditional art and cinema may be formulated, manipulated, and altered using numerical representation. “We are now in a position to formulate the problem posed by the cinematographic representation of the hypocrite: can a shot show something other than what it shows?” (Ranciere, 2006, p. 34). If so, does it have an aura also? Walter Benjamin might argue that it does not but through iteration and reinventing *from within*, Jackson Pollock might argue that its aura does exist and is possibly re-authenticating itself with every new perspective. Modularity of objects allows for the building of an infrastructure that contains meaning and purpose. Objects are formed from subsets of other objects with intent and purpose. The principle of automation takes the principle of modularity one step further since automation dictates the speed of transmission, retrieval, and replication.

Experience has taught us to break down large bodies of source code into separate modules in order to save compilation time. An error in one routine forces only the recompilation of its module and the relatively quick reloading of the entire program. Similarly, small errors in coloration or design in one object should not force “recompilation” of the entire image. (Manovich, 2001, p.137)

However, the final formation of an object, once compiled, will not represent its original source objects. Are the source objects of any worth as standalone objects? Have they lost their

authenticity? Are they only of worth because of their modularity? In certain scenarios, I would think so. Heidegger (1977) describes a dam that is built on the Rhine River. Does the river without the dam have worth? Yes, it does. However, the river with a dam yields power and energy that is more purposeful and more useful to man. With or without the dam the river is of use. “The Rhine is still a river in its landscape, is it not?” (Heidegger, 1977, p.16). Yes, however, it is the change in the river’s orientation with its surroundings that is of concern as well as how the river is perceived once dammed. Changes such as this lay at the root of reproduction concerns especially those regarding loss of authenticity and aura. I believe that with every alteration, a new meaning is created. I believe McLuhan and Derrida would agree.

The last two principles of new media, *variability* and *transcoding*, are of importance for they reference alterations of cinema via customization and transformation. Manovich explains that the conventions of computerization in modern society allow for the transformation of visual media into the “established conventions of the computer’s organizational structure” (Manovich, 2001, p.45). Simply stated, once the data has been converted and stored into a compatible format, manipulation and translation of the data may occur. The storage and retrieval operations will follow a linear process which Manovich parallels to the industrial age’s assembly line. “My hypothesis is that they follow the dominant semiological order of the twentieth century—that of cinema. Cinema replaced all other modes of narration with a sequential narrative, an assembly line of shots that appear on the screen one at time” (Manovich, 2001, p. 232). One bit at a time, an artistic masterpiece may be altered and reoriented. “New media may look like media, but this is only the surface” (Manovich, 2001, p.48). I claim such media is as valuable as its original form, different but just as valuable. Has modern technology transformed human creativity? Is computer generated design considered art? If so, where exactly does the creativity flow from?

“But what happens to cinema’s indexical identity if it is now possible to generate photorealistic scenes entirely on a computer using 3-D computer animation?”(Manovich, 2001, p.295) To answer Manovich’s question, the identity is altered. I believe that technological enhancements extend the creativity of a human’s artistic vision, a vision that originates from within. For instance, the enhanced technological capabilities available to graphic artists, cinematographers, and others involved in film production allow computer generated imagery (CGI) to create realistic films such as *Titanic* and animated, science fiction films such as *Avatar*. James Cameron, a well-known film director in the twenty-first century, has stated that he waited almost a decade before taking his vision of *Avatar* to the screen. Why? He said was waiting for the advancements in CGI to evolve so that his vision could accurately be portrayed on the screen.

Returning to Heidegger, what insights could he possibly have had in the late 1970’s that could be meaningful regarding modern technologies of the twenty-first century? His concern regarding technological use was well warranted. Heidegger immediately begins to examine our cultural relationship with technology. It is a “*free relationship*” (Heidegger, 1977, p.3) with technology that will allow us to explore its *essence*. “What has the essence of technology to do with revealing? The answer-everything” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 12). Essence is important for the “essence of technology” is the course it follows in its passage through time. How we interact with technology during this movement is essential and how technology “reveals” itself to us during this process is just as crucial.

If we look beyond the manufacturing of technology, we shall see that “technology comes to presence in the realm where revealing and unconcealment take place, where truth happens” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 13). We must look beyond what technology can do for us now so that we do not lose sight of the truth. Heidegger’s explanation leads to a notion that he titled, “standing-

reserve” (Heidegger, 2001, p.17). If we stockpile and have set aside the reserve necessary to live or to survive, what use is that reserve until it is needed? If it is ever needed? I feel that Heidegger’s greatest concern was that we, humankind, would one day be part of a “standing-reserve”. While Heidegger was enthralled with the notion of preserving humanity in his writings, he was ironically associated with the Nazi party, one of the most dehumanizing political organizations in history. Unfortunately, I see so many U.S. citizens, young college graduates of today, moving closely to the brink of human reserves. With the U.S. economy experiencing radical fluctuations, we have become so “specialized” in order to get a job and now there are very few jobs for our specialties. Hence, we are standing reserve. The term *human resources* could actually become a literal term if we do not renew our relationship with technology, if we do not renew ourselves *from within*. We have already seen alterations, or by-products, which resulted from scientific and technological mastery. Einstein never intended for his work to be used to harm anyone. But what if he had not taken the risk? To live is to take a risk. We must take risks in order to further better our individual lives and mankind as a whole. Yet, we cannot live solely in the moment and ignore the future due to implications of what evolves from the actions of the present. That is not what I consider taking a risk. That is simply ignorance.

Enframing is the term that Heidegger uses to describe the relationship that humanity has formed with technology. “Enframing means the way of revealing which holds sway in the essence of modern technology and which is itself nothing technological”(Heidegger, 1977, p.22). The digital age has afforded us many scientific advances. Yet, has humanity become so disoriented that we view everything scientifically? Almost. Is humanity so controllably defined that humans are to be specialized and stored for later use? Why does it seem that everything of importance has to be measured? I want to believe we are not at this point, but we are.

Finally, Heidegger (1977) speaks of danger and returns to the free relationship with which the essay began. It is our responsibility to keep our perspective regarding the power and control that we have as humans over technology. Technology is not a curse. Technology is a purposeful resource. “Enframing challenges forth into the frenziedness of ordering, that blocks every view into the coming-to-pass of revealing and so radically endangers the relation to the essence of truth” (Heidegger, 1977, p. 33). I agree with Heidegger in that if we keep our presence anew with technology and remain true to our powers of existence, we will not endanger ourselves further.

The Politics With/in the Image

French philosopher Jacques Ranciere is known for his forward thinking that pertains to the power of the aesthetic. Ranciere has a way of uncovering the *hidden* that is intellectually freeing as well as enlightening. I want to briefly mention Ranciere’s (1991) work, *The Ignorant SchoolMaster*, because of its untraditional nature. In this book, a French school teacher, Joseph Jacotot, teaches a group of non-French speaking students their studies while speaking French all the while French was NOT the focus. Simply stated, the students excelled. The outcome of Jacotot’s pedagogical experiment was coined an “intellectual emancipation”. My point is that intellectual emancipation does occur and has the potential to happen much more often.

Unfortunately, pacing guides and curriculum maps stifle the flexibility of our students and teachers who so desperately desire exploration and inquiry to attain “intellectual emancipation”. I believe it can be attained via the power that lives with/in the aesthetic and twenty-first century technologies.

I suppose what I find most interesting and admirable about Ranciere’s works is that he removes the boundaries that have traditionally defined and bound aesthetics as well as politics.

Ranciere does not believe that the two operate autonomously. Ranciere (2009a) explains the relationships and struggles that the ‘political’ and the ‘aesthetic’ have with regard to space and time in his work, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*.

Politics, indeed, is not the exercise of, or struggle for power, it is the configuration of a specific space, the framing of a particular sphere or experience, of objects posited as common and pertaining to a common decision, of subjects recognized as capable of designating these objects and putting forward arguments about them. (Ranciere, 2009a, p.24)

Thus, politics is the appropriation of time and space such that those that formally spoke now have a *voice*. Those that once did not take the time to be visible are no longer invisible. Ranciere (2009a) coins this phenomenon as the “distribution of the sensible”. Ranciere (2009b) elaborates on his “distribution of the sensible” in his work, *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Ranciere (2006) references Plato by sharing the example in which artists did not have the *time* for anything other than *their work*. “They cannot be somewhere else because work will not wait” (Ranciere, 2006, p. 12). Ranciere (2006) explains this form of “aesthetic” as being at the core of a politic which encompasses the role of “doing and making” and questions its legitimacy within the community. Other examples taken from Platonic thought surround poets and their writing as well as actors in theatre. The political constraints in holding such positions affected the ebb and flow of the time and space continuum within a community system that is visible and invisible, and one based on inclusion and exclusion. Hence, these examples yield insight to a social order that is defined by what can be “said, thought, made or done” (Ranciere, 2006, p.85). The sensible does not reference sense or judgment but instead references “what is capable of being reprimanded by the senses” (Ranciere, 2006, p.85). Therefore, Ranciere (2009a) is making a

point that “art and politics do not constitute two permanent, separate realities whereby the issue is to know whether or not they ought to be set in relation” (p. 25). John Weaver (2010) references Ranciere in his book, *Educating the Posthuman*, where by the “equality of indifference” (p.79) prevails in the advertising images of today. Advertising is an art form that creates an indifference of power in varying degrees. Weaver (2010) refers mostly to the pharmaceutical ads because of the triad relationship created between the “ill posthuman body, the pill (product), and the “well-educated” physician” (p. 79). While Ranciere’s Platonic examples of time and space as found in *Politics of the Aesthetics* were clear, Weaver (2010) surpasses them with the following posthuman example of politics and the aesthetic.

In the posthuman age and through the posthuman body C.P. Snow’s Cold War problem of two cultures withers away forming one culture bonded by the molecular structure of the body and the pill as it unites the sciences and the arts. What took generations to cause a rift between the sciences and the arts, thirty second commercials and carefully placed advertisements in periodicals have erased. (Weaver, 2010, p. 79)

I ask—how can the power of a “spectacle”, the advertisement in this case, be that satisfying and seducing to the viewer? I believe that such power lives, breathes, and breeds in ignorance, ignorance as it relates to the power of the image. I want to return to Jacques Ranciere (2009b) and his thoughts found in *The Emancipated Spectator*.

Jacques Ranciere (2009b) thoughts in *The Emancipated Spectator* are very timely for they take the notions of the spectator as it relates to the theatre and leads the reader to see what transformations are necessary to understand the image; especially in postmodernity.

Ranciere (2009b) is quick to remind us that there is no theatre without the spectator and that the term, theatre, is used loosely to include the fine arts, i.e. drama, mime, dance and more. Traditionally, spectators have been considered passive and enamored by the gaze. Therefore, “viewing is the opposite of knowing” (Ranciere, 2009b, p. 2) and “the spectator remains immobile” (Ranciere, 2009b, p. 2). Hence, under such conditions the spectator is stifled from *learning* and *mobility*. Unfortunately, this setting depicts some of the classrooms I have visited of late. Nevertheless, Ranciere (2009b) brings to light a disconnect or a division between those of knowledge (the actors) and those of ignorance (the spectators) or as I think of them, the *Others*. Throughout all of my readings by Jacques Ranciere, he always refers back to Joseph Jacotot, the ignorant schoolmaster. There is a metaphorical theme, if I may call it that, which parallels the *ignorant* and the *non-ignorant* in his work. While it seems to be an either/or instance of knowing versus not knowing, it actually is not. Ranciere’s work is an effort to acknowledge boundaries, powerful boundaries that tend to hypnotize those caught in the gaze. Joseph Jacotot chose to cross boundaries and ultimately led his students in a transformational mode of learning. “What is required is a theatre without spectators, where those in attendance learn from as opposed to being seduced by images; where they become active participants as opposed to passive voyeurs” (Ranciere, 2009b, p. 4). Is this not what we need today? I believe we do, now more than ever. What will it take? Is it occurring unbeknownst to me?

According to Ranciere (2007) it has and will take tremendous acknowledgement of our in/capacities all the while keeping in mind that “the image is never a simple reality” (p. 6). As with Jacotot, Ranciere challenges each of us to realize our capabilities

and our weaknesses so that images are not just that, images. We are to break away from the traditional activity and passivity of our daily lives and challenge ourselves to grow, build, and belong to a community of “emancipated spectators” (Ranciere, 2009b). To be part of this active emancipatory community, we must look at intelligences and capacity along with their binary, differently. Hansen’s (2004) *Philosophy of New Media* also realized the necessity of the “viewer-participant” (p. 11). Emancipation begins by looking at equality via interpretation and allowing others to form a learning community based on inquiry and collaborative principles. It is no longer about transmission of knowledge in a master/student, actor/spectator relationship. It is about an interruption in perspective and participatory discovery among blurred lines of exchange.

Maxine Greene (1995) is an educator, scholar, and humanitarian who understands the necessity of the aesthetic and states her reasoning in *Releasing the Imagination*. “Of all our cognitive abilities, imagination is the one that permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions” (Greene, 1995, p. 3). Imagination allows the mind, the creative mind to flourish. Maxine Greene, like, John Dewey, believes the lived experience can serve as a flame to ignite the spark to question the unquestionable and to undertake the changes needed, whether social, political or both. Much of Greene’s work has been written with the teacher/educator as audience. However, Greene never forgets the purpose behind the educator—the student. As educators, Greene posits that how “we see” our students, positions them to endless, creative possibilities. “The role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected” (Greene, 1995, p. 28). I agree

with Maxine Greene when she charges educators to be cultivators of questioning, and instigators of agency. Greene (1995) educates with emotion and she feels “empathy” is the one emotion that allows great educators to defy the norms and promote social and intellectual agency among their students. By embracing such consciousness, Greene (1995) feels the release of the imagination in our students is inevitable.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The impetus of my study is fueled with personal intrigue by the number of hours students use technology outside of the school day in conjunction with a professional desire for teachers to have a greater independence with teaching curriculum as well as students having more flexibility in *what* they learn as well as *how* they learn.

The theoretical perspective which frames my study is grounded in the evolution of the image, computer technology, multimedia, and what is now called, digitalization. Hence, *digital infusion theory*, as formulated by the research in chapter two, serves to frame the participatory, visual nature in which digitalization permeates contemporary culture.

The methodology chosen for my study is critical media literacy qualitative case study. My study shall include three different cases, each bound by three unique teams of students that use digital video to construct and tell a story which culminates by producing a three-minute film. The *true* reality of how well a student is learning cannot be measured by disaggregating data or by the tracking of numbers. Learning is about making sense of the world around you and the lived experience or “*currere*” (Pinar, 1994, 2004, 2012). The running of the course of a child’s education should be bountiful with experiences that stir and question, ideally yielding to a life that is genuine and self-fulfilling. Therefore, I wish to understand the running of the course by each team of students as they *participate in context*; by this I mean I wish to discover what the participatory learning *process* entails and what, if any, general themes emerge from participating with a team to create a film following the *JOCO Film Festival* theme, “and now you know the rest of the story.”

Robert Stake (1995) defines a case study as being a “bounded integrated system with working parts” (p. 2). Case studies in education are usually designed “to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in process rather than outcomes, in context rather than a specific variable, and in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1998, p.19). But why the word *case*? What is *case* supposed to mean in the context of a case study? Miles and Huberman (1994 as cited in Merriam, 1998) think of a case as a “phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context” (p.25). So, if my imaginary picture frame is my framework, within it I am now going to place a small suitcase. Within the suitcase, my research questions may lead me to store something inside of my suitcase. It is important to note the word, phenomenon, for it has multiple meanings which range from a person to a program to a method of instructional design. What I find most appropriate with case study and qualitative research is Robert Yin’s observation that “case study is a design particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context” (Yin, 1994 as cited in Merriam, 1998, p.29). With respect to the field of education, I find it unrealistic to separate any type of research study from its context.

I am viewing each digitally infused case study with a critical media literacy lens. According to Alvermann, Moon, & Hagood (1999) critical media literacy is about “providing individuals access to understanding how the print and non-print texts that are part of everyday life help construct their knowledge of the world” (p.1). Popular culture is permeated with visual media. Do our students understand the visual media that are placed before them? Personally, I do not believe they perceive or understand the power that is encoded in the visuals, whether it is a cartoon, video game, or news broadcast. According to Weaver (2009) “critical media literacy recognizes that images do not

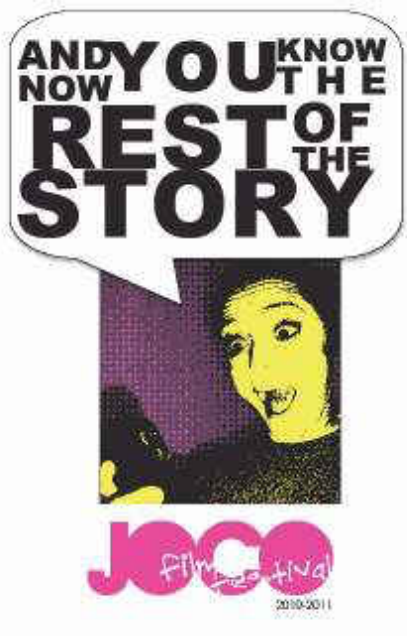
represent reality but shape and define reality” (p. 115). Hence, my concern rests with the lack of critical pedagogy which stimulates a child’s imagination and leads them to question what happens in the classroom and more importantly, question the world outside of the classroom. Simply stated, it is about the critique. Students need to feel less like the ones being critiqued (powerless) and learn how to critique everything around them for themselves (powerful). It requires a shift in *how* we view educating our youth. If “the medium is the message” (McLuhan, 1964), then the *usefulness* of the medium needs to be explored. Questions surrounding *usefulness* should yield answers that are connected to shaping and defining reality (Weaver, 2009), each individual’s own reality. Alvermann (1999) et al., adds that critical media literacy is also about “creating communities of active readers and writers who can be expected to exercise some degree of agency” (p. 2). Agency, as defined for this study, is the ability to make purposeful, informed choices and have the tenacity to pursue a desired outcome. I feel that agency and critical media literacy are interrelated in that each is influential in an individual’s views and perspectives. According to Semali and Palliotet (1999) “critical media literacy is the bridge among ideas, disciplines, people, texts, processes, and contexts, educational purposes and outcomes, theory and praxis” (p.4). The key word in this definition is “bridge” for critical media literacy has social and power implications which affect the critical views of the individual. Living in a highly visual culture where icons such as *Lady Gaga* and video games like *Halo* inform our youth’s value systems, critical media literacy should be at the forefront of our youth’s education. John Weaver’s (2009) work in popular culture speaks to the need for critical media literacy to play a more dominant role in our youth’s education. “Schools should either offer classes that specifically

address the many ways in which images influence and construct reality or schools should integrate media literacy into their current curricula” (Weaver, 2009, p.116). I believe schools should do both. However, my greatest concerns are the lack of understanding about what *media literacy* really is and how one integrates media literacy into the current curricula. The last thing our students need is to create a 50 page slide-show of their field trip to the museum and call it media literacy! Many educators do not understand what critical media literacy is and if they did, the question is—how am I supposed to make it fit into a standards-based environment? The key to both of John Weaver’s (2009) recommendations is in knowing what it means to be literate in the twenty-first century.

Kellner and Share (2007) state that “critical media literacy expands the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication and popular culture as well as deepens the potential of education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information and power” (p.4). By using a critical media literacy lens I feel that it allows me to inquire and observe the work of the students as they interact in a postmodern form of literacy, all the while using a digitally infused framework to extend their creative expression. I strongly believe as Kellner and Share (2007) do regarding critical media literacy in that “the goal should be to move toward critical media literacy with the understanding of literacy as a social process that involves multiple dimensions and interactions with multiple technologies and that is connected with the transformation of education” (p.9). Engaging students in a social process of learning while informing their own identities seems most appropriate to twenty-first century learning.

The Setting of the Study

While I have spent most of my career teaching educators how to embed technologies into their instruction, I have also had the pleasure of teaching students how to use digital technologies as well. This is where my digital literacy journey with students began, specifically with film creation. Observing students write scripts, storyboard ideas, film footage, edit, and create their digital films was intellectually freeing to behold. I observed learning as I had never witnessed. Learning appeared to be infinite and fluid, for the students seemed to create so freely and openly. I also observed learning that was participatory, multimodal, and inquiry-driven. I have had the pleasure of seeing such learning occur with students who participated in Jones County School's *JOCO Film Festival*. I share this to say that there are very distinct qualities that comprise *learning* with technology as opposed to *teaching* with technology. The students' uses of digital media and their participatory learning process is the focal point of my study.



JOCO Film Festival Logo

The fourth annual *JOCO Film Festival* began in August of 2010. The theme for festival that year was “and now you know the rest of the story”. The *JOCO Film Festival* is an annual K-12 initiative in the Jones County School district and the setting for my study. One of my many job responsibilities while working in the district was Film Festival Coordinator. It was a perfect fit for I was also the Instructional Technology Specialist for the district.

The vision of the *JOCO Film Festival* came from Dr. Vicki Rogers. Dr. Rogers was the Assistant Superin-

tendent for 6-12 Curriculum and Technology and my direct supervisor during my tenure in Jones County. While brainstorming the components necessary for students to embrace technology to enhance their own learning, I shared my video experience with Dr. Rogers. She could sense the excitement and awe behind my digital video project experience (students who had been to Savannah) for she had recently judged a media festival at a nearby middle school where the primary medium used was digital video. Needless to say, the product of our conversation was the birth of *The JOCO Film Festival*.

The Process

As the coordinator, it was my responsibility to coordinate a steering committee of educators to assist with making the *JOCO Film Festival* competition a celebration of learning for the participating students and teachers in the district. At the school level, I was responsible for helping the students with technical concerns along with their school's media specialists. Other than being a technical assistant for students, my job as coordinator was to facilitate the timeline of events that kept the festival on track throughout the school year.

At the first faculty meeting of the year, each school's principal, media specialist or I was asked to announce the theme for the year and to pass out flyers and applications to all of the teachers. Requirements for participation in the film festival had evolved since its inception in FY07-08. The published requirements for the FY10-11 school year were that

- every team of students must have a coach and the coach must be a certified teacher employed in the Jones County School District;
- a student can serve on no more than two teams; and

- all published procedures and deadlines must be met.

The understood, *unpublished* requirements for the FY10-11 school year were that

- student-created films did *not* have to adhere to standards (GPS);
- student-created films were to be worked on outside of the school day; and
- the *JOCO Film Festival* would remain 100% self-supporting with no funding received from the school district.

The Role of a Coach

Teachers may willfully apply to coach a team of students or students may ask a teacher to coach their teams. The teacher is a coach in every sense of the word, providing guidance for the students without interfering in the creative process. Coaches are strongly encouraged, although *not* required, to attend a three hour training that outlines the process of “facilitating” a team. First year coaches are normally overwhelmed at the idea since it requires time outside of the normal school day. Attending the coaching course assists with understanding duties and responsibilities of everyone on the team. Coaches take the following information back to their students.

Team Formation

It is at this point the Coach should assist the students with looking at each members’ strengths and weaknesses. The question – who is going to do what? must be answered. Guiding the students through this process can jumpstart the project as well as keep the project on its projected timeline.

Composition

Composing is an iterative, participatory process that involves the following stages. Smagorinsky’s (2002) stages of composing are what coaches are to share with

students. These stages of composing yield the flow of the project's design. The stages are as follows.

- Planning: What is our topic? How will we select a topic? Once selected, how will we research or support the topic? It needs to have a purpose. Organization and project timeline/deadlines should be determined.
- Drafting: Storyboarding and scripting are the two main components of this stage.
- Feedback: This is where constructive criticism plays a role in shaping the content.
- Reflection: What is working? Past, present and future plans are revisited and projected.
- Revising: This is one of the most time consuming, yet exciting parts of the project, especially when the ideas and research make it to the editing stage of the film.

Film Entry Guidelines (2010-2011)

The Jones County School District consists of four elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school. While students normally worked on teams with other students from their own school, participation is based on grade divisions: kindergarten through second grade, third grade through fifth grade, sixth grade through eighth grade, and ninth grade through twelfth grade.

- Teams should base the content of their film on the 2010-2011 *JOCO Film Festival* theme, “and now you know the rest of the story.”
- Films shall be 3 minutes or less in length.

- All references, resources, and credits necessary for citing resources shall be listed at the end of each film.

Note: References and credits are NOT considered part of the three minute film.

- Films must be one file. File formats for films are not prescribed but all files must play in either QuickTime or Windows Media Player.

Educational Merit

All content in each film must be appropriate and suitable for publication on the Jones County School District's intranet. The films may not contain inappropriate, defamatory materials or materials of a sexual or violent nature.

All intellectual property that is not the original work of the team members must be properly cited and credited to the author by including credits at the conclusion of the film and/or include letters granting permission to use. All entries must adhere to copyright guidelines.

Disqualification of films, participants, or entire teams may occur due to the following, but are not limited to a) the film lacking educational merit as judged against *JOCO Film Festival* criteria b) copyright infringement and/or plagiarism occurred within the film c) the film contains material of an inappropriate, sexual, defamatory, or violent nature.

Judging

While the guidelines state that the competition spans the school year, the reality is that all films must be completed and submitted by early March. Every film is judged twice by two educators from outside the district. In mid to late March all judges meet in a

computer lab in the district where they use a rubric to judge each film. The following award categories are listed in the rubric.

Achievement Categories

Every film is judged for its educational significance and its compliance with copyright. Awards are given in the following five achievement categories within each of the four grade level divisions:

- **Achievement in Story Line** – An analysis of the narrative components which yield the creators’ points of view.
- **Achievement in Cinematography** - Analysis of the overall visual impact of the film: lighting, photography, and framing technique.
- **Achievement in Editing** - The process of reviewing and then condensing, correcting or arranging written material, images, sound, video, or film with the objective of preparing it for final presentation.
- **Achievement in Art Direction** - The overall visual appearance; how the film communicates visually, stimulates moods, contrasts features, and psychologically appeals to the audience.
- **Film of the Year** - All elements have been seamlessly blended together to create a critically-acclaimed “great film.”

The Festival

The festival is a celebration for everyone that participated in creating a film. One Friday evening during the month of April, after standardized testing is completed, everyone is invited to tailgate in the gym of Dogwood Middle School to view every film that was submitted for the K-12 competition. Popcorn, corndogs, pizza, lawn chairs, and

blankets clutter the gymnasium as everyone settles in to watch all films with their families and friends. There is no admission fee, so community and family friends are encouraged to come and see what students have been working on. Brothers and sisters are anxious to see what their siblings have created while grandparents and neighbors brag about “the abilities of the students” this day and age. On more than one occasion, I have had parents say to me, “I might have learned more in school if I could have had the technology that our students have these days.” In all honesty, after I had heard this comment for the fourth consecutive year, I had to finally ask a parent, “And why do you feel that technology would have helped you?” The parent responded with “Because I would have been involved in what I was learning! I was so bored in school. All we had was pencil and paper.” While this is a personal perspective on the parent’s response, I feel that his comment speaks to the participatory component that technology lends to learning in the twenty-first century.

Awards Night

The awards ceremony is held in the Performing Arts Center (PAC) located on the campus of Jones County School District’s one high school. This is the night when the red carpet is rolled out and the students wear their finest threads. Within each grade division, one team will win the coveted Jacey Award in each of the identified achievement categories. Students arrive in stretch limousines, and many arrive early to walk the red carpet in hopes of an interview. Paparazzi are everywhere and everyone is speculating about who is going to win! While the Performing Arts Center seats over 200, it is not uncommon for relatives to arrive early and to stand in line to get the best seats. I recall

asking one parent why she was standing in line 45 minutes early. Her response, “This is the hottest show in town!”

Data Collection

Throughout the school year, I followed three teams of middle grade students. Team Fright consisted of four students, three girls, and one boy. Team Bully consisted of six students, four girls and two boys. Team Civil consisted of five students, two girls, and three boys. The data collected throughout the year consist of observation field notes with documented conversations between the students, a whole group interview of the teams, and surveys completed by each team member at the end of the year. Because the time I spent with each team was before school or after school, they shared their schedules with me when they planned to meet. It should be noted that not all team members were present at every meeting and that I was not present every time they met.

As previously stated, the questions which guide my study are:

1. What role, if any, does critical media literacy play in twenty-first century education?
2. How does the creation of digital media projects differ from non-digital media projects?
3. How do students create and convey meaning using digital media?

Based on the field notes from observations, interviews, and survey results, the data shall be coded such that emergent themes would be evident. For instance, how students went about deciding what topic to pursue for their film would be one indicator of freedom and autonomy on their part. What were the collaboration process and the team dynamics like? What criterion was used to make the decisions regarding the materials (images, audio, etc.) to be included in the film? Who made these decisions? Did working in a project-based environment without standards to guide the process help or hinder your creativity? What roles did your teacher as coach play in

the project? Too much input, too less? These types of questions formulated the survey questions found in Appendix A. From these questions, I considered emergent themes that might arise from the answers— levels of creativity, team dynamics working in a participatory environment, critical literacy awareness based on topic selection, and self-efficacy, autonomy and agency levels as a result of participating in the project. From these themes I created a coding grid that appears at the bottom of Appendix A, the student survey. Each code represents an area that correlates with my research questions. For analysis, I have loosely placed the codes beside the question numbers thinking that the answers to the questions would yield insight in that particular area. However, it is highly possible and probable that the answers to one question could overlap into more than one code. For instance, question 4, “How did making this film impact your personal values? Alter or change any of your feelings?” has two codes beside it. Depending on the survey data agency (AG) and/or critical media literacy (CML) awareness could have been impacted positively, negatively, or not at all. Hypothetically, a student could make a comment about the creative element (CR) having an impact on their values. That would then require different coding from what I have added beside each question. Thus, that is why I previously stated I loosely placed the codes beside each question as I begin the coding process. Furthermore, I have found that in researching exemplary studies that are similar to my study, I have gained greater insight into what constitutes participatory, project-based learning.

Exemplary Studies

The focus of Steve Goodman’s (2003) case study, *Dreams and Nightmares*, centers on taking an after-school, community-based documentary model developed by Steven Goodman (2003) and putting it in the classroom. Goodman (2003) wanted to repeat the documentary workshop model that had grown out of his community-based Educational Video Center (EVC)

and place in a classroom setting in hopes of engaging students at risk with a critical awareness of their identities and self-expression. Goodman (2003) taped and entered field notes during his weekly visits at East City High School in order to collect qualitative data as he followed one class of students for a semester. The study's outcomes yielded an emergent, critical awareness of the student participants' identities and struggles as they pushed through personal walls and barriers to uncover the unknown about themselves and others in their community.

Goodman's (2003) study is similar to my study in that critical literacy is a central thread. Another likeness is that a group of students must come together to form consensus on a topic that has shared value and worth. Thirdly, there is the likeness that my study also allows for "in-depth explorations of subjects that drew upon a range of disciplines" (Goodman, 2003, p. 62). Using multiple media resources, primarily digital video, students would also conduct their own inquiries and present their work to a larger audience. "The students' repertoire of critical literacy skills would be that much more deepened and refined with each new project experience (Goodman, 2003, p. 62). One primary difference that I see between the two studies is that Goodman's (2003) model focused on creating documentaries. The model also strongly suggested the students look at cultural issues that were prevalent in their communities.

David Bruce's (2008) study, *Visualizing Literacy: Building Bridges with Media*, uses a mixed-method methodology with an unstated theoretical framework which I believed to be a combination of critical literacy, media literacy and a stated framework of Smagorinsky's (2002), as cited in Bruce (2008), definition of composing. The underlying purpose of this qualitative case study portion was to follow four students as they explored the use of video in order to compose a music video instead of using traditional print to compose. I feel it is important to point out that the research and definition of "composition" which Bruce (2008) followed was based on the

definition as defined by Smagorinsky (2002) which appears to be a multiple step, multimodal process. Bruce (2008) served as the teacher leader and researcher of the four students in the study which spanned one semester. The video project requirements involved the students selecting a song with the intent to design a music video. The students reviewed other music videos in order to critically read their themes, cultural characteristics as well as the composition techniques. Data collection consisted of videotaping class periods “at times when they were making critical decisions about their video compositions” (Bruce, 2008, p. 269). Audio-tapes were used to capture the dialogue of the students as they made decisions about footage that had been taken. Narrative summaries were written about these sessions of captured dialog in order to look for patterns. After the music videos were completed, the students were interviewed and asked eight questions which spanned the composition process, group interactivity, and reflection on their learning. Outcomes of the study yielded evidence that students who do not necessarily perform well and engage with traditional modes of literacy i.e. paper and pencil to compose can excel using varying forms of media to compose.

After the first read of this study, I was not impressed by the fact that students would not be composing their own audio track to assist with their storytelling. However, after careful reflection, I have changed my position. I believe this study held the students at a higher level of critical analysis because they had to deconstruct the lyrics, reflect upon its meaning as it related to their own beliefs and perceptions, and only then could they decide on what types of footage would be relevant to tell their stories in the music video. I believe this task was extremely pertinent to their self-awareness.

Likenesses between my study and Bruce’s (2008) would be that a team of students must work to form a consensus on a topic (theirs was a song) as well as the

creation of a film/video. The teams of the students will have a teacher/coach but he/she will not be using class time as with Bruce's (2008) study. The case study portion of the study is relevant to my study as it is qualitative and grounded in a critical theory.

Rina Benmayor's work does not describe a formal research study per se. However, it does hold several characteristics surrounding qualitative data which are pertinent and relative to my study. The study centers on the case of one student participant in a college course, *Latina Life Stories*, at California State University Monterey Bay. The course requirements state that the students utilize digital storytelling to produce and then theorize their personal stories using narrative voices to explore their identities. "That is, to use their situated knowledge"—through speaking about, reflecting on, and analyzing their lived experience—to produce new social/cultural/historical understandings" (Benmayor, 2008, p. 189). The author chose to focus on one student, Lilly, as she shares her story. "By writing, producing and theorizing her story, Lilly bears witness to her past and constructs on a new space of belonging" (Benmayor, 2008, p. 193). Benmayor (2008) also elaborates on some of the technical aspects of the film that promoted aesthetic qualities chosen by Lilly. Black and white images in conjunction with sepia tones allowed Lilly to share the lack of clarity and dualities of her identity. As the story progresses, Lilly gradually adds color which Benmayor (2008) states "metaphorically renders and celebrates a new consciousness" (p.195) in Lilly's identity awareness.

The primary similarities to my study include the use of digital video and storytelling to strengthen critical media literacy awareness. Each study yields that imagery and audio suit the tone and narrative story for the three minute film. The digital project in Benmayor's (2008) course is used to encourage "theorizing from the flesh" for

the instructor wants the students to reflect on their identities and show they are situated with/in their cultures and real life experiences.

Challenges of the Study

Being so entrenched in a standards-based model of education, I am concerned that the middle school students will rely too heavily on their coaches to assist them with their topics, primarily the topic and purpose for their films. This is the first stage of the project, planning. I think my concern has merit for the students see their teachers follow a framework everyday that consists of quoting the standards verbatim, teaching scripted curriculum, and then working to regurgitate what is expected for a high grade. We all have a story. Each is unique. My hope is that students will embrace a thought, a story, or an experience that allows each of them the freedom to develop what interests them.

Another challenge that is more personal is one of bias. While I embrace technology personally and professionally, I, in no way, want to bias the students regarding their choices, for example, topic selection or media types. I would not want to recommend software or hardware that would limit their creative explorations and final films. I also must remain mindful that when working as a technician among the students, I cannot yield feedback on the projects for that might affect a project's final outcome. For instance, when a student asks why a transition between frames is conflicting with a frame effect, this is a technical question which I can answer. However, when a student asks if they should remove a frame transition because it is affecting another frame's effect, this is not really a technical problem. The students must decide which feature best serves the purpose of what they are trying to say and convey to their audience.

CHAPTER 4

WHAT PARTICIPATORY LEARNING WITH DIGITAL MEDIA YIELDS

As I sit among the data which fill my office, I close my eyes for a moment to reminisce of my work with the students in my study. I remember how rewarding it was to work with teams of students as they embarked on their journeys to tell their stories. My feelings run deep for I miss the work, and I miss the students. After a moment of reflection, I realize how I miss hearing debates about whether a piece of footage should be included or not. I miss seeing looks of angst when equipment malfunctioned or an effect was not quite right. I miss hearing giggles and wise-cracks about footage that inevitably became treasured bloopers. I miss hearing, “Ms. Radcliff, Ms. Radcliff, come look at this. We think we finally got it!” Selfishly, what I miss the most is the creative synergy which emanates from students when their imaginations are simply theirs to run freely. Watching these students’ stories unfold truly fed my soul.

As the coordinator of the 2011 *JOCO Film Festival*, it was my responsibility to ensure the integrity of the program. In doing so, completion of surveys were mandatory from the participants every year. It was also my responsibility to be onsite to assist students with technical needs and to observe the learning processes as much as possible. I asked these three teams of students to let me know when they met, before and after school, so that I could attend as many meetings as possible. From these meetings, I obtained field notes, primarily observed conversations and interactions between the students. It was made very clear to the students that my only reason for visiting would be to provide technical support and to take notes that would yield valuable feedback about the value of the film festival.

After the films were turned in for judging in early March 2011, I sat down with each team to discuss their journeys through the film-making process. I met with many teams of students

throughout the school district to discuss their experiences. However, data for my study will only come from data collections of three teams which I shall reference as Team Fright, Team Bully, and Team Civil. I asked each team the same questions found in the individual, student survey (Appendix A) in an informal, interview setting. My purpose in doing so was that some students may be more willing to talk about their experiences openly with their peers present, while other students might be more willing to elaborate on their experiences without the audience of their peers. I was cognizant of my body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions for I did not want to influence any response. Therefore, by use of data collected and coded from individual student surveys, the three teams' interview answers, and observational field notes, I looked to answer the following questions:

1. What role, if any, did critical media literacy play in twenty-first century education?
2. How does the creation of digital media projects differ from non-digital media projects?
3. How do students create and convey meaning using digital media?

As I begin the exploration through the collection of data, it is my intent to reveal what the data yields but to also share the digital stories. As Robert Yin (1994) emphasizes, the beauty of case study involves the meshing of context and variables. The two cannot be isolated. Therefore, sharing the content of the films is essential, for each case study is viewed via a digitally-infused frame of reference with critical media literacy as a central thread.

Explanation of the Data Coding

As stated, I have placed the codes beside the question numbers in the survey (see Appendix A). Yet, I feel it necessary to state that it is highly possible and probable that the answers to one question could overlap and flow into more than one coded topic, i.e. critical

media literacy (CML) and agency (AG), creativity (CR), digital media (DM), participatory learning (PR), and standards/non-standards (ST).

Critical media literacy (CML) and agency (AG) are intertwined in this study. Kellner and Share (2007) emphasize the need for literacy to be viewed differently in the twenty-first century. “Literacy involves gaining the skills and knowledge to read, interpret, produce texts and artifacts, and to gain the intellectual tools and capacities to fully participate in one’s culture and society” (Kellner & Share, 2007, p.5). I believe to *fully participate* means to have a voice and to make that voice heard. The coding scheme that I devised supports characteristics and qualities found in critical media literacy. Agency (AG) is a quality that necessitates a stance based on one’s beliefs and value system. Questions 2, 3, and 4 correlate to the critical media literacy as well as agency. Jenkins (2006) promotes agency by mapping a view that emphasizes the consumer as a highly engaged and involved producer in a culture of media convergence. Long gone are the days of the passive consumer. Media convergence has empowered the consumer to shift from markets that were once isolating, rigid, and controlling. For example, with the dominance of the Internet, I can watch television programs, view films, and video chat with individuals on the other side of the globe without leaving my computer. I can make my own videos, and I have been empowered to blog about my personal interests and passions. As a participant, I can become a force in the a paradigm shift that allows the consumer to be more responsive and active in how we renegotiate media relations. (Jenkins, 2006). Hence, within agency, evidences of self-expression, personal choice, and intrinsic motivation may surface. Therefore, question 4 is coded with (AG) and (CML) respectively. Other questions that directly correlate with agency are questions 8, 10, 15, with 21, 22, and 24 having a possible connection based on the response.

Since all three cases include digital media, I probe to see if the use of digital media (DM) makes a difference in the telling of the stories. Question 5, 6, and 17 explicitly address this. The selection and incorporation of images, video footage, and auditory pieces are significant. *Why* these selections were made will yield evidence regarding the role critical media literacy plays in telling the story. Selections of questions 16 through 19 also address the role of digital media in telling the stories. One area of digital media (DM) that is not coded separately is relevant to the level of *preparedness* the students had when they began, as well as, when they finished their films. Questions 7 and 9 address the initial and final preceptions regarding preparedness.

Regarding creativity (CR), this study is attempting to determine if creativity is enhanced by the use of digital media technologies. Is the imagination of the student enhanced by using digital media to create? Questions 5, and 16 through 19 address creativity as it overlaps with the use of digital media. However, question 6, explicitly addresses creativity on a personal level; it addresses a *feeling* of creativeness by the authors. I want to be very clear that this study is not evaluating creativity outside of the aforementioned.

Participatory collaborative learning (PR) has a strong emphasis on relationships and the dynamic of team participation in this study. Questions 10-13, and questions 20 and 24 address participatory collaborative learning. Jenkins et al. (2009) states, “Inter-activity is a property of technology, while participation is a property of culture” (p.8). By this, Jenkins et al. (2009) posits that our relationships with technologies require participation; yet, how we choose to use technology and what we do with its features continuously mold our participatory culture. Culture is modified by humans contributing and participating with joint dialogue and decisions; perceptions are shaped and reshaped; and cultural competencies are enhanced, especially when

the content is meaningful to the participants (Jenkins et al., 2009). This leads me to the final code, standards/non-standards (ST).

This was the first of four film festivals that did *not* require the students to base their film projects on Georgia Performance Standards (GPS). Coaches were made aware of this change and were to communicate this information to each student team. To guide their creations, the students were to focus on the film festival theme, “*and now you know the rest of the story,*” and to pick a topic of *their* choosing. Coaches were given the directive to be sure that each film was appropriate according to the “Educational Merit” section of the Protocols and Procedures of *The JOCO Film Festival*. Questions 2 and 3 explicitly address the use or non-use of standards (ST) in the study. Critical media literacy and participatory cultures involve students having the freedom to express their thoughts and feelings as it relates to their own interests and personal perceptions. Hence, telling a story that correlated with a Georgia Performance Standard was optional.

When I interviewed each team of students, I asked the same questions that each individual student was required to complete as part of the film festival participation (see Appendix A). One might speculate there would be redundancy between the oral interview responses and the individual written responses. As a researcher, that is presumptuous but a possibility; therefore, I felt it needed an explanation. For clarity, my purpose in using this process was threefold: a) to possibly gain further insight about the areas defined in the study, b) to possibly uncover insight about areas that need growth, and; c) to give each student a comfortable venue to share their experiences. Each interview was coded using the same coding scheme as found in Appendix A. Any response that fell outside of the predetermined coding scheme were documented, word for word, and coded as (UNK) for unknown.

Purpose for Observational Field Notes

Observational field notes were taken each time I visited the teams at work. The notebooks I used for my field note collections were 6” x 9” steno notebooks. I chose to use this type of notebook because it is divided into two columns. The first column served as my observation column where I recorded the data. The second column served as my reflection column. With each visit it was my intent to make my notes as descriptive as possible, trying to specifically depict the participatory interactions of the team members. While I was there to assist with any technical needs, should they arise, I was cognizant and made notes in the following areas: a) the physical setting, b) formal and informal interactions taking place, c) overheard conversations, d) nonverbal communications, e) decision-making processes, and; f) any other patterns or themes that emerged. By taking observational field notes, it is my belief that I could add depth to the survey and interview data by sharing students’ experiences which occurred in their familiar settings.

Explanation for the Data Layout in each Case Study

In an effort to tell the stories created by each team, and to share the data from each case study, I have chosen to share the individual student’s survey responses in a linear table format, categorized with the headings Critical Media Literacy (CML)/Agency (AG), Digital Media (DM), Creativity (CR), and Participatory Learning (PR). While the interview data collected was sparse, I shall report any additional comments which correlate with the questions from the survey, for the questions used were identical. Interview data is shared in a narrative format, sharing conversations that were held during the whole team interview process. Also, it is necessary to share that the survey was created by several educators in the Jones County School District. The survey was designed to collect data for the betterment of the program as a whole.

Therefore, some of the questions that are found in the survey will not be applicable to the areas of my study. However, I have included the data from each survey submitted in its entirety.

Since I have chosen to share each case study in a narrative format, I will reference the tables of survey data which appear at the beginning of each section. Following the tables of data, I shall also interject observations as well as conversations from my field notes. While the findings from my study rely on the the data, I felt I should narrate each case study to maintain a cohesive flow as well as data integrity throughout my reporting.

Case Study One: *Bloody Woolfolk*

The first case study centers on a middle grades team of eighth grade students, three girls and one boy. The demographic of the team is comprised of three white females and one black male who attend the same school, Dogwood Middle. Using pseudonyms for all individuals, I shall refer to the students as Fran, Felicia, Phoebe, and Frederick. The coach for the team is the school's media specialist, Ms. Fanning. I shall refer to this four member team as Team Fright.

The title of their film, *Bloody Woolfolk*, is based on a true story that transpired near Macon, Georgia in August of 1887. The Woolfolk family, excluding Thomas (Tom) Woolfolk, was murdered by an intruder in their home during the early morning hours on August 6, 1887.

Tom Woolfolk, the eldest son of Richard Woolfolk, was the only family member to escape the dreadful event. Using an axe, the intruder murdered eight members of the Woolfolk family in addition to a close friend of the family. Tom Woolfolk claimed to have heard the intruder and jumped out of a window to run for help.

After being unsuccessful at recruiting nearby sharecroppers to return to the house to help him save his family, he returned alone to find everyone in the



Woolfolk Family Marker, Rose Hill Cemetery

house slain. Tom then went to town to notify the authorities of the horrid event. The Bibb County Sheriff along with Tom returned to the Woolfolk home to conduct an investigation. There was an onsite coroner's inquest conducted. Due to the blood on Tom's pants, blood splatter on his ear, and a bloody shoe print found in the home, Tom was charged with the murders. Due to no sign of forced entry to the home, Tom's well-known "mean" disposition, and the bloody evidence, his attorney could not convince the jury of his innocence. Thomas Woolfolk was found guilty in December of 1887 for the nine axe murders. At the public hanging, he still professed his innocence.

In 1966, Carolyn DeLoach published a book about the Woolfolk family murders titled, *The Woolfolk Tragedy*. In her book, she discloses that a sharecropper by the name of Simon Cooper had been put to death for a very similar axe murder which occurred in Summerville, South Carolina in 1898. In Simon Cooper's diary, there was a passage that confessed to his murdering the Woolfolk family. Cooper stated that he would have murdered Thomas Woolfolk as well, if only he had been at home that evening. It was also stated in the book that Simon Cooper had been a sharecropper that had worked near the Woolfolk plantation during the time of the Woolfolk family murders.

According to the data and observational field notes, Team Fright chose the topic for their film by brainstorming topics and forming a consensus to research a scary topic. From the interview, according to Fran, "we thought it would be fun to research the paranormal because we all were intrigued with ghosts, you know, ghost stories." Felicia expounded on the topic choice by stating, "Macon has some famous homes with lots of history. I suggested the *Hay House* because I saw somewhere that it was haunted...ah, probably when I Googled it." As the students pursued the Hay House research, Fran discovered that the Hay House would not condone nor

comment on anything paranormal in nature. Fran said it was then when they redirected their focus to Rose Hill Cemetery located in Macon, Georgia. Fran, Felicia, Phoebe, and Frederick all decided to research Rose Hill Cemetery in pursuit of finding evidence about ghosts.

Field notes documented the following conversations between the four students at my second meeting with them. Fran began, “Who wants to talk first about what they found out?” Phoebe spoke first, “I found out that there are famous people buried there. Duane Allman and Berry Oakley of the famous band, The Allman Brothers, are there. If you say Eric Clapton’s name then the ghost of Duane Allman is supposed to touch you.” Giggles from the other team members instantly occurred; then Frederick immediately interjected, “Edgar Allan Poe’s family is buried there.” After a brief silence, Fran sighed, and then said, “So do we want to research the famous people buried in Rose Hill Cemetery?” Ms. Fanning, the coach for Team Fright, had been listening patiently as the group expounded upon their thoughts. Ms. Fanning asked, “Will researching famous people buried in Rose Hill Cemetery correspond with the Film Festival theme, *“and now you know the rest of the story”*?” The members of Team Fright sat in silence as they looked at each other. I could tell their minds were working, probing her question, and possibly configuring an angle to pursue. It was a while before anyone spoke, and the silence seemed awkward. Ms. Fanning offered up the next question by asking, “I wonder if there is something mysterious about the cemetery other than ghosts? Maybe there is something mysterious about the famous people buried there? Or about the not-so-famous people buried there?” Frederick immediately replied, “I can see if there is anything mysterious about Edgar Allan Poe? I think he wrote weird poems.” It seemed as if the students were sitting and pondering the next step. Fran closed the meeting with “Let’s keep on researching Rose Hill Cemetery, the people that are buried in it...and look for something weird or scary about

them...don't just look for ghost stuff. We have got to get a topic so we can go to the cemetery to video." The meeting ended, and everyone exited the media center of Dogwood Middle.

The next meeting convened a week later in the media center of Dogwood Middle. I sensed an excitement among Team Fright as I entered and sat in the corner chair. As conversations ensued, it was obvious some decisions had already been made by the team. While researching further about who was buried in Rose Hill Cemetery, Team Fright member, Felicia, had come across the murder of the Woolfolk family. All members of the family are buried in Rose Hill Cemetery. Fran shared with the team that Ms. Fanning had requested Carolyn DeLoach's book, *The Woolfolk Tragedy*, from Macon's public library. The book was to arrive that afternoon at the local community library, and Fran was going to read it, and while doing so, would create a timeline of events. Phoebe asked, "What is the tragedy about?" Felicia gave everyone a brief overview of what she had read on the Internet about the family tragedy and how Thomas Woolfolk had been hanged for the murders. Phoebe asked, "so the bad part is that a family member murdered his own family, right?" Fran interrupted with, "That is the good part. He could have been innocent. There was this farm helper who could have done it!" Phoebe's eyes got big. It was apparent to me that Phoebe did not know about the Woolfolk family. Frederick injected with, "this will be great, ya' know, with the theme. We can have great video, cause I bet we can find their tombstones at the cemetery." The team finally had a topic, and by all appearances, they seemed pleased. A date was set to visit the cemetery, and Ms. Fanning made arrangements for everyone to meet at Dogwood Middle on Saturday morning and leave at 9:00 a.m.

Several weeks passed before I returned to Dogwood Middle to visit with Team Fright. The deadline for submitting the final films was approaching within the next two weeks, so I was

curious to see where they were in their process. Upon my entry to the media center, Team Fright was anxiously awaiting my arrival for Fran greeted me with a big “Good Morning, Ms. Radcliff,” while holding an old, rusty axe in her hands. This prompted curiosity on my part, but before I could inquire about the status of their project, they wanted to share the “WoolFolk Chant” they had written. As I stood silently, my excitement began to swell for their excitement about their creation was infectious. The four members of Team Fright stood side-by-side before me and recited the following in unison.

Fran, Felicia, Phoebe, and Frederick: “Woolfolk, Woolfolk, look what you’ve done! Killed your whole family, and never used a gun. Woolfolk, Woolfolk, look what you’ve done! Killed your whole family, and never used a gun.”

As I stood before them, Fran, still holding the axe, was smiling so widely I could tell she might explode if I didn’t yield a response quickly.

Ms. Radcliff: “Interesting. Where did you guys get this idea?”

Fran, Felicia, and Frederick all wanted to speak at once but Fran and Frederick seemed to overpower the others.

Fran: “Well, we found the story about Lizzie Borden when we were doing research. And, well I’ve been the one working on the music on my organ at night and...”

Frederick: (*Interrupting*) “It just seemed perfect to use the Woolfolk murders, well, like the Lizzie Borden murders. She was supposed to have killed her mother and father with... a hatchet...kind of like an axe, well, sort of.”

Ms. Radcliff: “Unfortunately, I’ve never researched axe murders so I am not familiar with Lizzie Borden.”

Phoebe: “I can say the Lizzie Borden one for you.”

Immediately, Fran, Felicia, Phoebe, and Frederick spoke amongst themselves, trying to remember the lyrics of the Lizzie Borden rhyme. It seemed no one wanted to fill me in on the specifics of the Lizzie Borden case. Each of the students appeared too enthralled with remembering the rhyme. Once again, the four members of Team Fright stood side-by-side before me and recited the following in unison.

Fran, Felicia, Phoebe, and Frederick: “Lizzie Borden took an axe, and gave her mother forty whacks. When she saw what she had done, she gave her father forty-one.”

Ms. Radcliff: “Now I can see where your idea for your Woolfolk Chant came from.”

Fran: “But, we don’t know exactly where we are going to use it at in the film.”

Frederick: “I think it would be a great opening for our film. Um, just, we got to get the visuals and audios synchronized...so it will make some sense.”

At this point, I proceeded to be sure to ask the questions regarding technical assistance to Team Fright. Once again, they did not have any “how-to” technical questions for me. They verbally shared their excitement about their film thus far and that they were very worried about getting their editing done on time.

Frederick: “Oh, our trip to Rose Hill Cemetery was good. We got lots of video. Putting it all together to say, well, to retell the story with the scariness just takes time.”

Frederick’s comments prompted me to inquire about how each of the students were sharing their media contributions. Fran had already shared she was creating audio pieces at home on her organ for the film, and there was obviously footage from Rose Hill Cemetery that was going to be used.

Ms. Radcliff: “How are you all finding time to edit the work and put the pieces of work together?”

Fran: “Thumbdrives and sometimes, emails. We all have one, and we give our electronic stuff to Frederick when we meet. He works on it at home and emails us to let us know when he wants to show us what he has worked on.”

Frederick: “I always have the latest project, the film, on my laptop. I have Sony Vegas installed.”

Ms. Radcliff: “Where is Ms. Fanning, today? Does she know when you meet and attend your meetings with you before school?”

Team Fright members shook their heads as in she did not meet with them and Fran replied.

Fran: “No, Ms. Fanning just talks to us now when she sees us at school. We need her to get things done, um, well, like bringing the axe to school, we had to have permission. Stuff like that. She reminds us of deadlines and stuff, too.”

Frederick: “She trusts our judgement, she says. But, we are concerned about using the axe in the film. We don’t want to have a violent film, and our film be disqualified by the judges.”

Ms. Radcliff: “I’m not sure I understand your concern.”

Fran: “Well, see Mrs. Fanning gave us the rules for the Film Festival, and we know that our work has to be educational, so...If we put the axe in the film, we were thinking it might disqualify us from judging and going to awards night.”

As I sat in silence for a moment, I nodded, for I understood their plight. Yet, I needed to be very careful about how I was perceived in answering the question and about how I answered their question. Fortunately, this was not the first time a question about what to include or exclude from a film had been posed to me. I considered myself prepared.

Ms. Radcliff: “It is good to hear that while you want to tell an accurate story, you want to be sure you do so within the constraints of the participation guidelines. What you must ask and

come to consensus on is—Does adding this to the film enhance the point attempting to be made? If so, does adding the axe to the film diminish the educational worth of the film? I heard you say that “you did not want a violent film”. So, as a team, you have to decide the level of impact adding the axe has in the film and if that coincides with your film’s purpose and outcome. What you decide to create should be about the message you want to convey, not about what the judges think.”

Team Fright sat in silence, and I sat in silence as well. I wanted to be sure that they each understood what I had just said. I could tell Fran wanted to speak. I continued to sit silently.

Fran: “We understand. We just don’t want to bomb.”

Ms. Radcliff: “Bomb?”

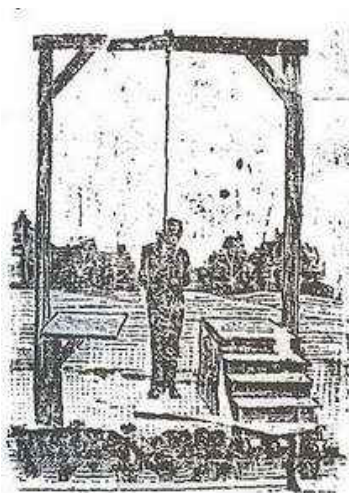
Frederick: “We want to win, Ms. Radcliff! We want to win big!”

As an observational researcher, a new element had surfaced that had not been present before. Competiveness, outside the scope of the team, had surfaced. While there had always been a sense of competitiveness among the members of Team Fright, they were now ready to be judged against their peers. As I smiled and asked Team Fright if there was anything else I could answer for them before I left the building, I told them I probably would not be back to visit with them until after the film submission deadline. They were all very complimentary of my help and said that they would email me if they had any problems finalizing their film. This visit was my last visit with Team Fright until I returned for the follow-up interview.

Bloody Woolfolk, The Film

The film’s opening scene shows the Woolfolk family cemetery marker and axe in a faded sepia tone. Team Fright is reciting their chant in the background as the grave marker fades into the next frame. Red words, *Bloody Woolfolk*, dissolve like blood drops in water as an

instrumental of “*Amazing Grace*” is played. Two Team Fright members appear on screen stating, “You probably have heard of Lizzie Borden and her axe,” when they fade out, the other two team members fade in asking, “ But have you heard the gruesome story of Georgia’s Tom Woolfolk and his axe?” The story begins with team members narrating the facts about the Woolfolk family murders, with it being the largest mass murder in Georgia’s history. Next, fading in and out on the screen are portraits of the Woolfolk family members, alternating with their individual grave markers, revealing their names. Team Fright members each take turns



Tom Woolfolk’s Hanging

narrating the gruesome story of how Tom Woolfolk allegedly murdered each of his family members before running out of the house to seek help. A door slams, while a pencil drawing of the Woolfolk home’s floorplan fades out. Facts about the trials that Tom Woolfolk endured appear across the screen with a black and white picture of Macon, Georgia’s courthouse as the backdrop. Tom’s third and final trial and death looms on the screen as a pencil drawing of Tom Woolfolk’s hanging fades in. The narrator continues to share that over 10,000 spectators came to witness his hanging while enjoying opossum sandwiches sold by vendors. Abruptly, “but wait...” appears. A black and white picture of the city of Macon stutters on the screen as if being played on an old reel to reel projector. Facts about Simon Cooper unfold. A spiritual hymn, sung a capella, can be heard as the screen discloses a picture of Simon Cooper’s diary, a sharecropper who was tried and hung for a similar axe murder in South Carolina. The narrator speaks of “this bone chilling statement” from Simon Cooper’s diary as it fades to the screen. “Tom Woolfolk was mighty slick but I fixed him. I would have killed him with the rest of the d*** family, but he was not at home! – Simon

Cooper.” As this statement slowly fades into black, the narrator says, “and now you know the rest of the story.”

Critical Media Literacy and Agency in *Bloody Woolfolk*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students’ surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 1

Critical Media Literacy and Agency Data Results for “Bloody Woolfolk”

Question 3	What message were you trying to give your audience by making this film?
Fran	Basically to tell how unfair things were in the late 1800s.
Felicia	To tell the rest of the real story.
Phoebe	That things are not always fair.
Frederick	There were times when bad mistakes were made, like some still today.
Question 4	How did making the film impact your personal values? Alter or change any of your feelings?
Fran	It made me feel more creative.
Felicia	I had fun using technology to learn about a real fact in Georgia.
Phoebe	It didn’t really.
Frederick	It made me sad for the family then sad for Tom.
Question 8	On a scale of 1-4, how successful do you feel about what you created?
Fran	4 - Very successful
Felicia	4 - Very successful
Phoebe	4 - Very successful
Frederick	4 - Very successful
Question 10	How was your team formed?
Fran	We had classes together last year. We asked Mrs. Fanning to be our coach.
Felicia	We knew each other and ask each other.
Phoebe	I was asked to be on the team.
Frederick	Fran asked me to join the team.
Question 14	How helpful was your coach?
Fran	4- Very helpful
Felicia	4- Very helpful
Phoebe	4- Very helpful
Frederick	4- Very helpful
Question 15	Do you think you could do a digital film project without a coach? Why or

	Why not?
Fran	No. She helped keep us on focus with asking us questions.
Felicia	No.
Phoebe	No.
Frederick	Yes.
Question 21	Please complete the following sentence. Share as much as you would like. When creating a digital project in the future, I need more of _____.
Fran	Nothing.
Felicia	I had everything I needed.
Phoebe	Not sure but maybe time and maybe better way to communicate ideas.
Frederick	More time to edit.
Question 22	Please complete the following sentence. Share as much as you would like. When creating a digital project in the future, I need less of _____.
Fran	Nothing.
Felicia	I had everything I needed.
Phoebe	A less involved coach.
Frederick	<i>(No response)</i>

Elements of critical media literacy were not evident in the data gathered from the student surveys, interview, or field note observations and conversations of Team Fright. However, components of agency as cited in this study are supported primarily by documented conversations in my field notes. Based on the conversations, Team Fright was very confident about making decisions regarding their research and the making of their film. While their intended pursuit was to create something scary, they just so happened to stumble across a genuine murder mystery that occurred in their backyard. As a result of the story being factual, it stirred emotion within the group. When interviewed, Fran stated, “What you think is true sometimes is not.” I also noted emotion coming from Team Fright for the Woolfolk family *and* for Thomas Woolfolk. Frederick’s response had a tone of compassion for he stated, “I realize how lucky we are to have technologies that don’t make errors like what happened to Tom.” While DNA technologies have been perfected since the late 1800’s, mistakes still happen.

Team Fright made independent decisions about where to pursue filming, i.e. on location at Rose Hill Cemetery. They found the Woolfolk family plot and made decisions about how they

wanted the video to be used. They utilized their resources and made sure to state the facts of the murders accurately. These decisions denoted action and therefore, agency. They had trouble determining whether the axe should be used for they did not want to be disqualified from the film. This was a troubling fact for it tells me that they were willing to make modifications to their film and the storyline had they been told it might disqualify the film. The notion of winning was more important than telling an accurate story. This is quite the opposite of what creativity and freedom of expression is about. It was also evident that Team Fright did not question the truth behind the diary confession of Simon Cooper. Because it was found and printed in a book constituted acceptance of truth on their part. This, too, shows a lack of critical analysis by the team.

Digital Media Technology in *Bloody Woolfolk*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students’ surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 2

Digital Media Technology Data Results for “Bloody Woolfolk”

Question 5	How did working with digital technologies (video, cameras and/or microphones, etc.) affect your delivery versus if you told the story traditionally with pen and paper?
Fran	It added more effects and emotion to the story.
Felicia	It helped us get our message across better, and it made the story more interesting.
Phoebe	Pen and paper just tells a story so your imagination is left to fill in the blanks. When you are working with video everything is so much more real and makes a bigger impact.
Frederick	I love working with technology and creating. You have more choices in how you want to say something.
Question 7	On a scale of 1-4, how prepared did you feel at the beginning of the year to create a digital film?
Fran	3-Prepared
Felicia	2-Somewhat prepared
Phoebe	2-Somewhat prepared

Frederick	2-Somewhat prepared
Question 9	After creating a film, on a scale of 1-4, how prepared do you feel at this point about creating a digital film?
Fran	4- Very prepared
Felicia	4- Very prepared
Phoebe	3- Prepared
Frederick	4- Very prepared
Question 16	How important was the visual portion of the film to telling your story?
Fran	Very important-it was 50% of our movie.
Felicia	It compensated for 50%.
Phoebe	It makes a bigger impact because you can see different pictures and stuff.
Frederick	Very important cause it tells some of the story.
Question 17	How important was the sound/audio portion of the film to telling your story? Explain why it was needed or not needed.
Fran	It was 50% also, and it was needed a lot because without our voices and the sound effects we used, our film wouldn't have been very good.
Felicia	It compensated for 50% also...but it added more emotion to our film.
Phoebe	It is definitely needed because you can play a certain song and set the mood for the video.
Frederick	Very important cause it tells the story to.
Question 19	What method(s) or features did you use when selecting images, film footage (video), audio, special effects?
Fran	We all thought of things that we needed, may need in our film, and wrote them down and then we went from there.
Felicia	We created a master list.
Phoebe	We started out with a list of ideas.
Frederick	We had ideas at the beginning, then we changed them once we put in S. Vegas.
Question 23	If given the chance to create a digital film in a class like social studies, would you? Why or Why not?
Fran	Yes! It is fun to put pictures and words together. Creating music was fun.
Felicia	Probably. I would want to be in a good group.
Phoebe	No, but I wouldn't cause of the time involved.
Frederick	Absolutely. Creating and filming is cool.

During the interview process, Team Fright made it clear that the majority of their images and footage came from their trip to Rose Hill Cemetery where they found the graves of each member of the Woolfolk family. As an observer, it was apparent to me that the twist in the

storyline had to be a dramatic point in the film according to Team Fright's ongoing conversations. From my observational field notes, the following conversation was documented.

Fran: How are we going to make the point in the story about Tom not being the killer after all?



Woolfolk Family Graves, Rose Hill Cemetery

Felicia: We have to tell the truth about Simon Cooper.

Fran: I know. We can record our voices in the story, but we have to have background music to help with the scary part. I can record certain music I play on my organ.

Frederick: That is a good idea, but I want to show y'all some special effects. I can make the pictures and footage from the cemetery black and white with a shaky effect...like an older movie looks.

Fran: A lot of scary movies were black and white I think.

Felicia: I guess we need to figure out what research to do next so we can get it to Frederick to begin making the film.

Phoebe: I don't know what to do next.

Fran: (*turning to face Phoebe*) Why don't we all look for background music that does not have words. Slow, creepy music. I found some web sites I can email you.

Phoebe: Okay.

Fran: Felicia, why don't you look for images on the web about somebody that is hanging from a rope. We need to show that he was killed by hanging.

Felicia: Okay.

Fran: When can we get our music and pictures to Frederick?

Felicia: Can't we just give it to Frederick by Friday and then meet next Monday?

Fran: That okay with everybody?

Felicia and Phoebe: *Silently nodded.*

Frederick: Okay.

The team dismissed, agreeing to meet on the following Monday to finalize and review the revisions Frederick would have ready.

The data yield that Team Fright embraced the use of digital media in every aspect known i.e. audio and video production to create their film, *Bloody Woolfolk*. Having Frederick on the team may have enhanced their digital media capabilities. Frederick had participated in the Film Festival before and was very familiar with editing. He loved editing so much that his father purchased the software, Sony Vegas, for him to have for use on his personal laptop. Special effects for audio and video were important to the team. Use of black and white as well as sepia tones made the telling of the story have an older look and feel. "Creepy" music had to be used according to the team. Fran recorded some of the music herself.

Creativity in *Bloody Woolfolk*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students' surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 3

Creativity Data Results for "Bloody Woolfolk"

Question 5 (also included in Table 2)	How did working with digital technologies (video, cameras and/or microphones, etc.) affect your delivery versus if you told the story traditionally with pen and paper?
Fran	It added more effects and emotion to the story.

Felicia	It helped us get our message across better, and it made the story more interesting.
Phoebe	Pen and paper just tells a story so your imagination is left to fill in the blanks. When you are working with video everything is so much more real and makes a bigger impact.
Frederick	I love working with technology and creating. You have more choices in how you want to say something.
Question 6	In the making of the film, what made you feel more or less creative? Explain how.
Fran	I feel very creative because I didn't think I could have produced what we did.
Felicia	I feel more creative because I got to make a good movie that normally I wouldn't think about doing.
Phoebe	When we first started Bloody Woolfolk I felt very creative. As time passed it became harder to work on the video due to time constraints. My group members and I started doing less and less with the video. The tasks were divided to get it completed.
Frederick	I worked more like the editor. It made me feel very creative.
Question 16 (also included in Table 2)	How important was the visual portion of the film to telling your story?
Fran	Very important-it was 50% of our movie.
Felicia	It compensated for 50%.
Phoebe	It makes a bigger impact because you can see different pictures and stuff.
Frederick	Very important cause it tells some of the story.
Question 17 (also included in Table 2)	How important was the sound/audio portion of the film to telling your story? Explain why it was needed or not needed.
Fran	It was 50% also, and it was needed a lot because without our voices and the sound effects we used, our film wouldn't have been very good.
Felicia	It compensated for 50%...but it added more emotion to our film.
Phoebe	It is definitely needed because you can play a certain song and set the mood for the video.
Frederick	Very important cause it tells the story to.
Question 18	What editing application (software) did you use and why? Explain how it did or did not make a difference in telling your story.
Fran	Sony Vegas-it made our film very good because we used it to edit our film.
Felicia	Sony Vegas- it helped my team to create a good movie.
Phoebe	I think we used Sony Vegas.
Frederick	We used Sony Vegas.
Question 19	What method(s) or features did you use when selecting images, film footage (video), audio, special effects?
Fran	We all thought of things that we needed, may need in our film and wrote them down and then we went from there.

Felicia	We created a master list.
Phoebe	We started out with a list of ideas.
Frederick	We had ideas at beginning, then we changed them once we put in S. Vegas.

As noted in the prior tables, questions 5, 16, and 17 are duplicates from the survey responses documented in the category, Digital Media. I included them in this section, Creativity, because I felt the responses were relevant to Creativity, as well. I found it interesting that Team Fright was very specific about the audio and video comprising half of the storytelling process. When I interviewed Team Fright, they were very vocal about both the visual and the auditory pieces being equally important. In the interview, they conveyed that they felt their trip to Rose Hill Cemetery gave them much of the necessary footage to make the film. During the interview process, Frederick made it clear that he felt that the software application, Sony Vegas, allowed the versatility necessary to pick special effects to enhance the telling of the story. The following is a conversation that resulted after asking question 19, “What method(s) or features did you use when selecting images, film footage (video), audio, special effects?”

Ms. Radcliff: Why did you choose Sony Vegas to make the film?

Frederick: It is one of the software applications available in the lab for us to use.

Ms. Radcliff: You also had access to Microsoft’s Movie Maker which is a free application. Did you consider using it?

Frederick: Yes, I looked at it but it did not have all the special effects that Sony Vegas has...and, well, you can layer more audio tracks, and use septia tones....and, and my Dad knew how much I love to edit so he bought me a copy of Sony Vegas for my laptop. We just used my laptop for the film editing.

Ms. Radcliff: How has having your own copy of Sony Vegas affected the creating and editing process?

Fran: I don't know if we would have gotten finished on time. Meeting before and after school is hard and sometimes the lab is already booked after school. We had to do a lot of research on our own, but we always brought it back, ah...to the team for making...final, you know, the final decisions.

Frederick: Everybody on the team would send me music or images in email, jump drives, and I would put it in where I thought it should go until...until we met here at school to see what it looked like...ah, and then decided on whether to keep it or change it. We normally changed it...at least a little anyway.

Team Fright stated that they felt more creative by making the film. Felicia's and Fran's comments from the surveys stated they felt creative because they created what they normally would not have been able to create. Phoebe's survey response was most interesting for creativity. "Pen and paper just tells a story, so your imagination is left to fill in the blanks. When you are working with video everything is so much more real and makes a bigger impact." These statements can be taken several ways. Does film have a greater impact on the viewer, or the creator, versus reading and writing with pen and paper? Does film enhance the viewer's experience and the impact of the story being told? Personally, I believe that Phoebe would answer yes, to both. Jacques Ranciere promotes the release of the "emancipated spectator," and this may be what Phoebe was advocating. However, Maxine Greene (1995) believes that releasing the imagination can very well be accomplished via many methods and inquiry-based learning via paper and pencil is one of those methods. Frederick, on the other hand, felt very creative using the technology. "I love working with technology and creating. You have more

choices in how you want to say something” which is true regarding choices. Frederick is speaking to the abundance of special effects available to customize audio as well as the image.

Participatory Learning and Collaboration in *Bloody Woolfolk*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students’ surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 4

Participatory Learning and Collaboration Data Results for “Bloody Woolfolk”

Question 10	How was your team formed?
Fran	We had classes together last year. I asked Mrs. Fanning to be our coach.
Felicia	We knew each other and ask each other.
Phoebe	I was asked to be on the team.
Frederick	Fran asked me to join the team.
Question 11	How would you describe your relationship with your team members at the beginning of the film-making process?
Fran	We were all close.
Felicia	We were friends.
Phoebe	We all knew each other from school and classes together
Frederick	We were friends in classes.
Question 12	How did your relationship with your team members change during the film-making process?
Fran	Out of 4 of us, three of us got closer.
Felicia	With the four of us on our team, only three got closer.
Phoebe	I didn’t feel like I was included towards the end of the film.
Frederick	We are all friends.
Question 13	What was the mood like working with your team members?
Fran	We sort of became experts in what needed to be done.
Felicia	We all just worked together to get everything done.
Phoebe	I felt like I was left out a lot.
Frederick	I feel like I know how to produce a film. That is what I did best.
Question 20	Complete the following sentence. By creating the film, I am _____ . Elaborate on your response
Fran	More experienced in how to put together a good story.
Felicia	More experienced in the film making process.
Phoebe	More better about the filming process.
Frederick	Glad to have my own version of Sony Vegas. I can make more films.
Question 24	If given the chance to participate in the film festival again, would you? Why or why not?

Fran	Yes.
Felicia	Yes
Phoebe	Maybe.
Frederick	Yes.

The first time I met with Team Fright, I observed a dominant leader among the team members. I noted in my observational reflections that Fran seemed to be the team leader, organizer, and task master. At the end of the process, this initial observation held true. Felicia and Phoebe were the workers, and Frederick was the technical editor. Not once did Frederick, or any other member of Team Fright, ask me for technical assistance.

When meeting with Team Fright to observe their process, there were some indications that as time went by, Phoebe was feeling more and more distant from the team. From the second observational meeting which I shared from my field notes, Phoebe was not aware that a decision had been made to pursue researching the Woolfolk family tragedy. Also, you can see from her responses to questions 12, 13, and 24, Phoebe felt less and less of a team member, especially as it became closer and closer to film completion.

Creating a participatory culture would seem challenging when the only time you had to do so would be before or after school. No time during the day could be devoted for the students to work on their projects. While Team Fright only consisted of four members it appears from the data that three of the four collaborated very well together. Based on my observations, there was no outward dissension between the members. Yet, the survey data, primarily Phoebe's responses, show that not all members were engaged as they could have been. The data reveal that time constraints was a barrier for group participatory efforts.

Case Study Two: *Bullying*

The topic of school violence is at the forefront of many U.S. schools' safety concerns in the twenty-first century. The term, bullying, takes on many definitions and points of view. My personal definition is when an individual harasses another individual. This definition is formed based on my personal views, perceptions and experiences. I have been bullied as a child and as an adult. I see it as a form of harassment which can potentially perpetuate a violent act. My personal belief is that the youth of this nation should not have to live nor learn in fear. Two students of Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado opened fire in the school on April 20, 1999 where 15 faculty and students were killed and 24 more were injured. Unfortunately, this was not the first or the last massacre of its kind. Two scholars that write about such struggles are Julie Webber and Henry Giroux. Julie Webber (2003) writes about the politics in the hidden curriculum in her book, *Failure to Hold*. Within the hidden curriculum, Webber speaks to the restrictions by surveillance and the isolating containment we place on our youth during the school day while in the school building. The limitations of socialization and the increase in marginalization is at its peak in public education in the U.S. Henry Giroux (2003) speaks to the same concerns of our youth in his work, *The Abandoned Generation*. Giroux writes of the challenges our youth face, focusing on the lack of democracy that our abandoned youth are missing. Giroux, like Webber, argue for the future of our youth; they see the fear which permeates their public sphere, especially after the terroristic attack on the World Trade Center, September 11, 2001. Where do we start to make a change? Political entities believe we should continue to increase security in schools and "lock down" the students' public sphere further. I disagree. Such "lock downs" and containment stifle the citizenry, autonomy, and freedom of expression in our students which is needed in order to grow healthy, critical minds and identities. The more stifling and confining the environment, the less likely the student can cultivate a

healthy identity. Instead, I believe in building relationships with and among our youth. As a district, Jones County Schools took the relationship approach and began an ambassador program starting in the sixth grade. The focus of the ambassador program is for students to look at qualities of good character and responsible leadership in order to make educated decisions about themselves and their peers. I presented Webber and Giroux at this juncture for I feel their thoughts about youth violence and fear are pertinent to the second case study's topic, bullying.

The second case study centers on a middle grades team of seventh grade students, four females and two males. The team is comprised of two white females, two multiracial females, and two white males who attend the same school, Dragonfly Middle. Using pseudonyms for all individuals, I shall refer to the students as Bernice, Basha, Bev, Bentley, Bernard, and Barack. The coach for the team is a seventh grade English teacher, Ms. Pierce. I shall refer to this six member team as Team Bully.

The film, *Bullying*, is based on real life perceptions and experiences of the student writers and creators. While there are more than six students that act in the film, the six students that represent Team Bully are the creators and producers of the film.

Getting to Know Team Bully

I met with Team Bully four times over the course of their film project. Unlike with Team Fright, the student participants were harder for me to get to know for much of their conversations were very argumentative. Team Bully students, while serious about their project, were very indecisive at times. The majority of time spent on my visits with Team Bully related to technology questions, concerns, and problems.

Each time I meet with Team Bully, we always met in a small classroom at Dragonfly Middle School. At least one of the girls on the team always had a laptop when we met. The two boys had laptops as well; however, there was never a guarantee the laptops were working.

The first time I met with the Team Bully, Ms. Pierce, their coach was present. When I entered the classroom, Ms. Pierce introduced me to the team.

Ms. Pierce: Ladies and gentlemen, I would like to welcome Ms. Radcliff to our group. She is going to be helping you with your film festival....(long pause) ah, film needs.

Researcher: Good morning, everyone. I am very happy to be with you today. I will be visiting with you from time to time. My job is to assist you with any technical needs that you might have while working on your film project.

Basha: But we don't know what we want to do. Who helps with that?

Researcher: Well, it is up to you and your team to choose a topic for the project.

Basha: But how do we know?

Researcher: I would suggest that you speak to Ms. Pierce, your coach. She can take you through a process that will help you brainstorm possibilities. But really, the topic and focus of the film project is up to you and your team. The theme for this year is, “and *now you know the rest of the story.*”

Barack: What have other films been like in the past?

Ms. Pierce: Well, I have never coached a film festival team before. I do know that you are supposed to pick a topic that you are interested in and... tell, tell how you feel about it. For instance, when you write a paper in English class and tell your opinion and your point of view.

Before Ms. Pierce could get the last syllable out, the light bulb had turned on. The students obviously understood what it meant to write an opinionated or persuasive paper. I sat

down and began watching and listening as the students tossed around ideas. After about five minutes, Ms. Pierce brought the group back into focus. Ideas that were discussed ranged from global warming to Native Americans. I must admit it was extremely painful for me to sit quietly, for I fought to keep my bland, non-influential composure.

Ms. Pierce: Now, you have tossed around some ideas. Take a quiet moment and in your mind, pick a topic.

Bernice: (*instantly and with an assertive tone*) I don't like none of 'em.

Basha: I know. Why I want to make a film on something I can write a paper about, or Google? This is just stupid.

Ms. Pierce: Basha and Bernice. (*a long pause*) I can tell from your comments that these ideas are not interesting *enough* to you. So, what is interesting *enough* to you...interesting *enough* to make a film about?

It was obvious to me, Bernice and Basha wanted a topic that was different, something that was possibly relevant to their world and lifestyle. I did think Ms. Pierce was handling this discussion very well, no matter how debatable it had become. She stressed "enough" for she knew these students and their lives much better than I did.

Bernard: You mean a current event? Like 9/11, when it happened?

Ms. Pierce: Possibly. I don't know if that is interesting *enough*.

Basha: We all have to do the same thing?

Ms. Pierce: Yes, The team has to decide on, focus on, one topic. You will research your topic, and then you get to decide how you want to tell the story.

Basha: Bernard, I don't want to retell 9/11!

Ms. Pierce: Since time is running out today, we need to set our schedule and agenda items for our next meeting. Bring your ideas for topics to our next meeting. Once you decide on your topic, you can focus on your research.

As soon as Ms. Pierce finished speaking, the students started talking among themselves. Topics about natural disasters and reality television shows were among the few that I overheard. As I left the meeting with the students, Ms. Pierce and I stopped in the hall for a brief moment.

Ms. Pierce: Ms. Radcliff, I hope they can pick a topic, a decent topic to work on.

Ms. Radcliff: I'm sure they will. You guided the discussion today without placing too much emphasis on any one area. You also made sure to let them know that the choice is ultimately theirs. I liked the way you made the comparison to the opinionated and persuasive writing papers. They understood much better after that.

Ms. Pierce: Thank you. The only difference is that they are normally *given* topics to choose from or a writing prompt when they are assigned a paper to write.

I bade Ms. Pierce farewell and I left Dragonfly Middle. Yet, I was haunted by Ms. Pierce's final comment regarding students being directed by writing prompts and research topics. As a researcher, this discussion had made a worthy point pertinent to my study. I feel it noteworthy to point out that seventh graders, such as Team Bully, range in age from 11 to 13. The fact that a student in this age range needs a writing prompt or a preselected topic in order to creatively write is unacceptable in my opinion. This is where the curriculum, and the hidden curriculum, leads our students away from democratic forms of expression and freedom. A student needs to know they have a voice and that their voice matters. Too much leading, as many curriculums do, can stifle the imagination. However, we cannot blame the students for it is subtle to those unknowing. Teachers must teach to standards and curriculum is created, bought, and

sold based on standards at the time. We cannot blame the teachers either. Political and capitalistic forces are always at work, creating a cycle that dictates what the students shall learn. However, I do feel that there are ways that creativity and the imagination can still be stirred and cultivated in a twenty-first century classroom. The use of digital technologies in the hands of our students is at the heart of critical media literacy advocates, such as myself.

Visit Two

Each time I met with the team members, we were continually focusing on putting their project pieces together, literally together. While the entire team was not present at every meeting, it was apparent to me that each member was working on a portion or piece of their project for the media they were collecting was on many devices and was causing a management and organizational problem. The following conversation occurred on my second visit.

Researcher: Hello everyone. How is your project coming along?

Basha: This ain't easy Ms. Radcliff.

Ms. Radcliff: What is the problem, Basha?

Basha: How we supposed to get all these pieces to fit together on this timeline?

As I approached Basha and her laptop, it was obvious she was trying to synchronize audio with an image in Movie Maker. I was surprised she was editing so early in the process. As the conversation will reveal, she was learning Movie Maker by practicing.

Ms. Radcliff: Wow! Your team already has footage to import into Movie Maker, I see.

Basha: No. I am supposed to try and figure out Movie Maker, so we will be ahead.

Ms. Pierce enters the classroom.

Ms. Pierce: Hi there everyone. Hello, Ms. Radcliff. Have the students shared what their final topic is about?

Ms. Radcliff: No, I just arrived and was speaking with Basha about Movie Maker.

Bernice: *(shouting in my direction)* Bullying!

Ms. Radcliff: Really. How did you make your decision?

Barack, Bernard, Basha, and Bernice were all sitting and facing towards me. Each student seemed rather tired for their body language suggested it. Bernard was resting his head in his hand which was propped on the desktop.

Basha: It wasn't an easy decision since not everybody wanted to do it.

Barack: We see it all the time, ya know.

Ms. Pierce: I don't remember which one of the students brought up bullying, but they voted and only one person wasn't crazy about it. They said they could work with it though. I know that Barack is a middle school ambassador. Did you suggest bullying, Barack?

Barack: *(No answer or body movement).*

Ms. Radcliff: Well, good for you guys! What stage of the project are you working on now? There were a lot of blank stares as I waited for an answer which never came.

Ms. Pierce: Well, some of the team decided to do research and get some statistics about bullying in their age group. Others are working on mapping out some scenes and finding some audio, some songs, I believe.

Ms. Radcliff: I see. *(I turned to speak to all of the team)* I am going to help Basha get her items lined-up on the timeline. If anyone else wants to watch me do this, gather around her laptop.

Ms. Pierce: I want to watch, but I am just not one to use advanced technology.

As I heard Ms. Pierce's statement, I wished I had not. It was as if Ms. Pierce had given her disclaimer regarding technology use. As I showed Basha how to expand the timeline so that she could see audio and video tracks at the same time, I overheard other team members in the

background saying they understood. I focused Basha's attention to the time markers above the timeline and showed her how to zoom in and zoom out, explaining there might be times when looking at a frame of footage down to the second would be important.

Ms. Radcliff: I want everyone know that when you start collecting your media, it will be very, very important to keep all of your files in one location. For instance, you will need a folder, I will call it *the* master folder. Before you start inserting files into your project in Movie Maker, be sure to copy your files to *the* master folder. You only want to insert media files from one location. Otherwise, Movie Maker will give you what I call "the big red X" when it cannot locate a missing file. This can result in a catastrophe if you aren't careful.

I sounded overly serious and painted a worse-case scenario due to prior experiences working with students and their films. In the past, file management had been a nightmare for some teams of students. While they each seemed rather lethargic, each team member said they understood my technical directions. Basha stated she would share with the missing team members about the file management folder. Before I left the team, I asked Ms. Pierce if there was anything I could do to assist her or her team.

Ms. Pierce: Ms. Radcliff, I feel like I can guide the students with their research and give them feedback on what they produce, but I just don't feel comfortable with the technology.

Ms. Radcliff: I understand, Ms. Pierce. I will help them with any technology needs that they might have. You can learn from them! I have a question. Did they really propose the topic, *bullying*?

Ms. Pierce: Yes! I thought that would be a relevant and interesting topic for them to work on.

Ms. Radcliff: But the students, not you, chose the topic all by themselves?

Ms. Pierce: Yes. I wish I knew exactly who brought the topic up but I cannot remember. I am pretty sure it was Barack.

Ms. Radcliff: Okay. I hope they enjoy the research process. Will you email me when I need to see them again? I can return anytime there is a technical need. Otherwise, I will return when they have some video and audio to work with in Movie Maker.

Ms. Pierce was most appreciative of my technical savvy and said she would email when the students needed me.

Visit Three

My third visit with Team Bully was one of great necessity. I had gotten an email from Ms. Pierce that the students were having a hard time getting their work inserted into Movie Maker. I was hopeful we could find all of their work for I feared the “big red X” had entered the picture. I met with them before school on a Wednesday morning. As I entered the classroom, Basha and Barack were intensely focused on individual laptops that sat in front of them.

Ms. Radcliff: Good morning, everybody.

Barack: Hey, Ms. Radcliff. We are glad you’re here. We can’t find some of our pictures.

Ms. Radcliff: Okay. I am going to ask you both a lot of questions, so please be patient. It is the only way I can figure out where your images are located.

Basha: Yes, Ma’am. I have all of the images and video so far, from the others, on this thumbdrive.

Barack: Me, too.

Ms. Radcliff: So, you have files on two thumbdrives. Where is *the* master folder that contains your Movie Maker project located?

Basha: On our desktops. Barack has one, and I got one.

Ms. Radcliff: I believe I already know the problem. There can be only one folder, *the* master, that houses the project and all of the media files that will be included and used in the one project file. (*Looking at Basha, I could see her expression begin to sour.*) I believe we can make this work, but it will take some time. The good news is, it sounds like you have all of your files. They just aren't located where they need to be.

As I rounded the corner of the desks to look over both Basha and Barack's shoulders, each laptop screen had large rectangles with big red X's in them. The X's denote a broken link or pointer to a once inserted file.

Barack: (*very serious*) We lost it all, right?

Ms. Radcliff: Seriously, I think it is all going to be fine. We just have to make some decisions before we proceed with correcting the problem. (*I immediately moved to a white board in the classroom and began to draw a picture to illustrate what looks like a family tree.*)

Ms. Radcliff: Once the decision is made where, on which laptop, the master folder will be housed, all files are loaded to the one master file on the one laptop. This one master file will contain the latest, greatest Movie Maker project file. Any other team members that want to contribute work should **copy to** the master folder. This is the only way you will be able to keep track of your work.

Barack: So, I can't work on the project on my laptop then?

Ms. Radcliff: Barack, you can. You just have to be very aware of where the latest, newest version of your work is located. You can copy the master folder to a thumbdrive, transfer to your laptop, work in the project file, and then copy the folder in its entirety back to the master laptop. When you do that, you have to also be aware that any files with the same name will be overwritten. Does this make sense?

Barack: Yep, we got it.

Basha: Yes, I understand now. Thanks, Ms. Radcliff.

Ms. Radcliff: This way you two and the others may work collaboratively and purposefully together so you can stay organized. Here is a serious question for you—Are you having fun?

Basha: Yes. It is fun working on it and creating but,...people in the group make it hard.

Ms. Radcliff: What do you mean?

Basha: Nobody wants to agree. Then you got to make a decision, and then nobody likes it.

Barack: *(Not speaking but shaking his head, denoting a negative feeling).*

The bell rang and the students said they had to go to homeroom. I asked them if I needed to check back to make sure they got their files straightened out, and they said they would stay after school and work. If they needed me, they would email me. I agreed and gave them a few words of encouragement. I did not hear from them. However, I did receive an email from Ms. Pierce that they were working more productively now that the file management issue was better understood.

Visit Four—The Last Visit

My last visit with Team Bully was the day before the deadline to submit their finished film. I met with them in the usual classroom, and all members were present except Bernice.

Ms. Radcliff: Good afternoon, everyone.

Basha: Hello Ms. Radcliff. I can't wait to show you what we have done.

Ms. Pierce entered the room as Basha was finishing her statement.

Ms. Pierce: I am so proud of them Ms. Radcliff! They have done an outstanding job with this project, and they have done it ALL on their own. I have only guided them.

Ms. Radcliff: I love to hear good news! First things first. Everyone knows tomorrow is the submission deadline, so I need to answer any technical questions you have at this time.

Barack: We got an audio file that won't start on time. Can you look at the timeline with me?

Ms. Radcliff: Certainly, Barack.

As I moved over to assist Barack, I spoke to Bernard and Birdie for I had not seen them in awhile. They smiled and resumed looking over some paperwork. Barack had their project opened in Movie Maker and proceeded to point on the timeline where the problem persisted. I pointed out that problem probably had to do with a page transition overlapping with a special effect that was causing the one second delay in the audio. He looked at me strangely.

Ms. Radcliff: Is there something unclear about what I said?

Barack: Guess, I don't get how a video problem causes an audio problem? (*pause and stare*) They different, right?

Ms. Radcliff: Yes, they are different. But remember both are related because of the *timeline*. The timeline combines all media; stills, video, audio. The problem you said, was about timing?

Barack: Yeah.

Ms. Radcliff: Try removing one of the them—the page transition or the specials effect and see if the audio is still delayed.

Hesitantly, he removes one of the items while the other team members look on. He plays the footage in the preview window and the previous audio delay is no longer there.

Barack: (*Grinning*) Thanks, Ms. Radcliff.

Researcher: You are welcome. I am going to stay for awhile as you all work to fine tune your project.

Barack: (*Looking at researcher*) Can we show you our film?

Researcher: (*Addressing the team*) I would love to see your film; however, you know I cannot comment at all on the film, even though I am not a judge. I am here only to assist with your technology needs. Why don't I stay for awhile as you all work to fine tune your project? The deadline is tomorrow, you know.

Birdie: (*Looking at Barack*) So you going to put the transition back in, right?

Basha: (*Looking at Birdie*) No, it messes up the sound. Just, just, be quiet.

There was definitely tension between Birdie and Basha.

Barack: We got to decide which one to keep 'cause one is affecting the song playing.

The girls continue bantering back and forth.

Basha: It don't matter which one.

Birdie: Girl, it does matter which one. It has got to look right, so let's look at it with one and then other. Barack, show us with each one.

Basha: Whatever. (*exasperated*)

I look over at Bernard. He has not said a word. He has sat in silence the entire time, but he seems to be engaged in listening to the conversation. As the girls hover over Barack, Bernard leans in closer to the laptop to watch as Barack methodically removes an effect and previews the clip. He then removes the second effect and previews the clip. Once the two versions of the clip are shown, the girls immediately begin to share their opinions. They do not agree on which feature effect to use.

Barack: Bernard, which you like, bro?

Bernard: The first one. You?

Barack: Me, too.

Birdie: So, it don't matter which one I want, huh?

There is a split moment of intense silence.

Bernard: I just want this to be over, Birdie. Go on and let us make this decision, okay?

Birdie: Whatever! I am so sick of y'all. (*still exasperated*)

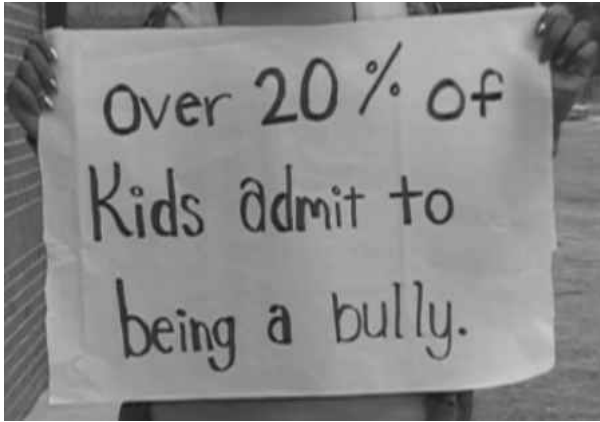
Birdie immediately turns and gathers her books and heads out the door. Basha, Bernard, and Barack lean back into the laptop and immediately begin working. The three remaining begin to finalize the project as if Birdie's tantum had never happened. I continue to make notes as the students finish their credits and finalize their film. The remainder of the time that I am there, there are no further conflicts.

Thirty minutes passed before the students begin gathering their belongings to head home. They reminded each other that the entire team would meet in the media center first thing in the morning to view, render, and burn their final film to DVD. Everyone seems to be jovial as we leave the classroom. I tell the students that I will return once again before the awards night to speak with them about their film festival experience. I also remind them to be sure and take the survey as soon as possible. Ms. Pierce has the directions for them to answer the survey online or on paper. I never viewed their film.

Bullying, The Film

The story begins with a black and white screen where the word, *Bullying*, is shown and fades out to black. The next screen fades in with black and white footage of a student's hand holding a pencil while writing a note on paper which reads, "Here's the story..." As the student is writing these words, a song with a somber tone fades in with the lyrics, "all around me are familiar faces, worn out places of worn out faces. Bright and early for the daily races, going nowhere, going nowhere." The picture suddenly flips to a black and white sign, held by an unknown, headless figure, which states statistical information about being a bully. The same

song continues with the lyrics “the tears are filling up their faces”. The music and screen fade out. The next scene begins with a headless person holding another sign stating more statistics. This person is standing in a room in front of large windows showing an outside playarea in the background. The person moves out of view, showing the windows and a country music song



Statistics about bullying

begins to play. Lyrics begin with, “ I’m a little boy with glasses, the one they call the geek.”

The picture zooms out as three young males walk in front of the window and two begin to shove the smallest male. The smallest male is tossed back and forth between the other two

males. The window appears to serve as the lens

to view the life of bullying. The scene fades out as the song continues. Two more black and white screens appear with statistical information. One sign reads, “11% of middle school students took a weapon to school last year,” with the following sign stating, “A child commits suicide every half-hour because of bullying.” As the last

signage fades out, a new song fades in along with black and white footage of a classroom of students. “ Words, they’ll try and shake you, don’t let them break you, or stop your world from turning,” are lyrics heard as the screen depicts a young male,



Support for classmate

head being slapped, bombarded with paper balls as students exit a classroom. The scene widens to show a female sitting in the back of the room, tossing a paper airplane to the bullied male. As the lyrics, “When words keep you from feeling good, use them as firewood and let them burn,”

continue, he opens the paper airplane and reads the following, “Ignore them, they’re jerks.” The next scene is in color and shows the male nodding in affirmation to the female who sent the kind



Females bullying a classmate

note. The music fades as the voice of a young female artist begins to sing. As the next scene reverts to black and white, four girls are hooked arm-in-arm, strutting down the hallway of Dragonfly Middle. They seem to lose their footing and ram a female into her open locker, almost knocking her

down. The four females giggle as they realize their shameless blunder and walk away as the bullied female

gathers herself, as well as her personal belongings that are scattered across the floor. Song lyrics, “you don’t know me, you don’t know anything about me,” fade out with the hallway scene.

The next scene and all scenes thereafter appear in color. A female student is sitting behind a desk states, “Bullying hurts.” The next scene fades in with a female student at a computer. She states, “Tell someone...teachers, parents, counselors, or coaches.” Another female appears on the screen and says, “Be a hero.” The screen then changes to a group of students sitting and standing in the foyer of Dragonfly Middle School. In unison the group says, “Together we can stop this.” The picture of the group fades while black and white footage of a student’s hands reappear. The hands of the student are holding a pencil while writing on notebook paper a message which reads, “Now you know the rest of the story.”

Critical Media Literacy and Agency in *Bullying*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students' surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 5

Critical Media Literacy and Agency Data Results for "Bullying"

Question 3	What message were you trying to give your audience by making this film?
Bernice	to stand up against it and to try and prevent it
Basha	to make a difference, tell someone
Bev	that bullying is not good at all
Birdie	that no child should have to endure bullying no matter what race, gender, or religion they are.
Bernard	bullying is serious and has damaging effects
Barack	just to make people think more about bullying and what it does to people
Question 4	How did making the film impact your personal values? Alter or change any of your feelings?
Bernice	it made me more creative
Basha	how important (the topic) is
Bev	I realized how bad bullying was and im going to try to help stop it
Birdie	it definitely made me more aware of all the issues bullying causes
Bernard	yes
Barack	it didn't really
Question 8	On a scale of 1-4, how successful do you feel about what you created?
Bernice	3-Successful
Basha	4-Very successful
Bev	3-Successful
Birdie	3-Successful
Bernard	3-Successful
Barack	2-Somewhat successful
Question 10	How was your team formed?
Bernice	I did it last year
Basha	teacher announced it
Bev	last year was fun
Birdie	wanted to try it again
Bernard	other students said it was fun to do
Barack	I want to just try it
Question 14	How helpful was your coach?
Bernice	4 - Very helpful
Basha	4 - Very helpful

Bev	4 - Very helpful
Birdie	<i>UNK-no response</i>
Bernard	<i>UNK-no response</i>
Barack	4 - Very helpful
Question 15	Do you think you could do a digital film project without a coach? Why or Why not?
Bernice	No
Basha	No
Bev	Yes
Birdie	No
Bernard	No
Barack	No
Question 21	Please complete the following sentence. Share as much as you would like. When creating a digital project in the future, I need more of _____ .
Bernice	time
Basha	time
Bev	time, not enough time
Birdie	time
Bernard	time
Barack	audio effects
Question 22	Please complete the following sentence. Share as much as you would like. When creating a digital project in the future, I need less of _____ .
Bernice	people
Basha	people
Bev	Too many people, and conflicting ideas
Birdie	people
Bernard	people
Barack	people

Based on the data from surveys and observational notes, critical media literacy and agency were definitely evident among Team Bully and the making of *Bullying*. Team Bully created a film that shared a story which comprised a topic that dealt with a social injustice which affected their lives. Also, the topic was chosen by the team members. Barack stated, “We see it all the time, ya know.” It is important to note that the conversations recorded stated that not everyone agreed on the topic, but a consensus was formed. Other conversations recorded some strife between the group members. There were times that I thought some of the conversations between members of Team Bully had a bullying tone.

Agency, while not consistently evident, was obvious at times with Team Bully. Making good choices took time for the team members, and when they came to a consensus, they definitely acted on it.

The interview responses were very limited. No one seemed to want to talk, except when discussing bullying. When asked about how their topic was selected, Barack chimed in as if he were the resident expert. His tone was confident, clear and direct.

Barack: We chose bullying because it needed to be said. We see it and live it every day. It is important that all of us know it happens and that we can get help...if we need to.

Basha: Bullying is not limited to us, in our school. This film can tell more people, so help is there.

With the comment by Basha, I was pleased to hear that Team Bully felt that the film could reach broader audiences beyond the scope of their school, Dragonfly Middle. While disappointed in the lack of participation in the interview setting, the feedback from Barack and Basha did affirm that critical media literacy and agency were evidenced by the data collected.

Digital Media Technology in *Bullying*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students' surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 6

Digital Media Technology Data Results for "Bullying"

Question 5	How did working with digital technologies (video, cameras and/or microphones, etc.) affect your delivery versus if you told the story traditionally with pen and paper?
Bernice	well it would impact more viewers than just a white sheet of paper and pencil
Basha	it would be much harder to explain
Bev	it helped us get our point across better
Birdie	it helped get the tone of the video across

Bernard	I think it was easier overall
Barack	it was just easier to explain with visuals and music
Question 7	On a scale of 1-4, how prepared did you feel at the beginning of the year to create a digital film?
Bernice	2-Somewhat
Basha	1- Not prepared
Bev	2-Somewhat
Birdie	2-Somewhat
Bernard	1- Not prepared
Barack	1- Not prepared
Question 9	After creating a film, on a scale of 1-4, how prepared do you feel at this point about creating a digital film?
Bernice	3-Prepared
Basha	4-very prepared
Bev	3-Prepared
Birdie	3-Prepared
Bernard	3-Prepared
Barack	1-Not prepared
Question 16	How important was the visual portion of the film to telling your story?
Bernice	important cause it set the mood
Basha	you could see what we were trying to say
Bev	very important
Birdie	Very important the black and white really helped set the tone, so did not having faces on the parts when we showed the signs
Bernard	very, because it was easier to explain with visuals
Barack	very
Question 17	How important was the sound/audio portion of the film to telling your story? Explain why it was needed or not needed.
Bernice	because the sound set the mood too. Some facts were a big deal.
Basha	it was needed. it set the mood
Bev	it was needed because it helped set the mood
Birdie	it was important the music was sad and it explained the effects of bullying.
Bernard	it was needed because it helped set the mood or tone
Barack	very
Question 19	What method(s) or features did you use when selecting images, film footage (video), audio, special effects?
Bernice	just looking up songs and images
Basha	we discussed it
Bev	black and white, transitioning clips, sad music
Birdie	UNK- no response
Bernard	sad music, black and white, etc.
Barack	not sure, did not work on that part of the film

Question 23	If given the chance to create a digital film in a class like social studies, would you? Why or Why not?
Bernice	Yes
Basha	I would definitely want to try it.
Bev	<i>UNK-no response</i>
Birdie	Yes. Time would be better cause maybe some class time could be used
Bernard	No
Barack	I guess. Don't know how it would work out

The use of digital media to tell this story was extremely evident by looking at the survey data. The data state that the story would have been harder to convey without the audio, video, and special effects found in the software. The audio was necessary to set the mood for the black and white headless figures. The black and white headless figures also sent the message to the viewer that the individual's "identity" is diminished or stripped when bullied. The lyrics of the selected songs told a story in and of itself. Words burning, faces and worn out places—lyrics strongly suggested a somber and abusive tone.

The whole-group interview did not yield any data in the category of digital media technologies.

Creativity in *Bullying*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students' surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 7

Creativity Data Results for "Bullying"

Question 5 (also included in Table 6)	How did working with digital technologies (video, cameras and/or microphones, etc.) affect your delivery versus if you told the story traditionally with pen and paper?
Bernice	well it would impact more viewers than just a white sheet of paper and pencil
Basha	it would be much harder to explain
Bev	it helped us get our point across better

Birdie	it helped get the tone of the video across
Bernard	I think it was easier overall
Barack	it was just easier to explain with visuals and music
Question 6	In the making of the film, what made you feel more or less creative? Explain how.
Bernice	the way it was organized
Basha	I felt more creative because so many good ideas were used
Bev	more creative, we had more options to use
Birdie	The black and white and color. I felt like it was creative because in the beginning it was sad so we used black & white and in the end it was happy so we used color.
Bernard	I got to use the programs and extend my options
Barack	less, because I feel like it could have been much better
Question 16 (also included in Table 6)	How important was the visual portion of the film to telling your story?
Bernice	important cause it set the mood
Basha	you could see what we were trying to say
Bev	very important
Birdie	Very important the black and white really helped set the tone, so did not having faces on the parts when we showed the signs
Bernard	very, because it was easier to explain with visuals
Barack	very
Question 17 (also included in Table 6)	How important was the sound/audio portion of the film to telling your story? Explain why it was needed or not needed.
Bernice	because the sound set the mood too. Some facts were a big deal.
Basha	it was needed. it set the mood
Bev	it was needed because it helped set the mood
Birdie	it was important the music was sad and it explained the effects of bullying.
Bernard	it was needed because it helped set the mood or tone
Barack	very
Question 18	What editing application (software) did you use and why? Explain how it did or did not make a difference in telling your story.
Bernice	film maker on PC
Basha	movie maker it was very helpful
Bev	Microsoft Movie Maker helped us edit clips to get the timing
Birdie	(UNK software) color (black and white, color) fade in fade out it helped the movie go smoother
Bernard	Microsoft Movie Maker 2010
Barack	Microsoft Movie Maker
Question 19	What method(s) or features did you use when selecting images, film footage (video), audio, special effects?
Bernice	just looking up songs and images
Basha	we discussed it

Bev	black and white, transitioning clips, sad music
Birdie	UNK- no response
Bernard	sad music, black and white, etc.
Barack	not sure, did not work on that part of the film

From the given survey data, it is apparent that Team Bully felt creative by the features available to them by the software. Bernice stated, “Well it would impact more viewers than just a white sheet of paper and pencil.” This speaks to the power of the image (Manovich, 2001, Ranciere, 2006, Heidegger, 1977), and the politics with/in the image (Ranciere, 1991, 2006, 2009a, 2009b, Weaver, 2010). If I elaborate on Bernice’s statement, using black and white, headless figures spoke to the power of the image and the dominating control that bullying has over someone. I, too, found it creative that holding the signs with the statistics showed tremendous power in the image. Their voices were being heard, that of being stifled by abuse in their own public space, but through a textualized context. Basha said it beautifully when she stated, “You can see what we are trying to say.”

The audio segments selected also aided in conveying the message of being abused and beaten down when bullied. All members of Team Bully agreed on the importance of the audio telling the story as well. Birdie’s statement, “It was important the music was sad, and it explained the effects of bullying”, affirmed that audio was just as important as the image in the telling of their story.

Participatory Learning and Collaboration in *Bullying*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students’ surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 8

Participatory Learning and Collaboration Data Results for “Bullying”

Question 10	How was your team formed?
Bernice	I did it last year
Basha	teacher announced it
Bev	last year was fun
Birdie	wanted to try it again
Bernard	other students said it was fun to do
Barack	I want to just try it
Question 11	How would you describe your relationship with your team members at the beginning of the film-making process?
Bernice	I was not very knowledgeable about it
Basha	we were not that close
Bev	somewhat ok
Birdie	not well, I knew who most people in there were but I didn't really know them
Bernard	we were all a lot different (cliques)
Barack	not together on anything
Question 12	How did your relationship with your team members change during the film-making process?
Bernice	we all became great friends
Basha	we became closer ;it lead to us being friends
Bev	good
Birdie	We grew closer together and learned each others strengths and weaknesses even if we sometimes didn't get along
Bernard	all of the people became friends overtime
Barack	it didn't change for me
Question 13	What was the mood like working with your team members?
Bernice	fun but serious
Basha	fun
Bev	time made us very serious and kinda uptight sometimes
Birdie	ok, fun
Bernard	we are ok
<i>Barack</i>	<i>UNK- No response</i>
Question 20	Complete the following sentence. By creating the film, I am _____ . Elaborate on your response
Bernice	more focused
Basha	smarter
Bev	I am more aware of the bullying problem.
Birdie	more experienced with people
Bernard	creative, I had to really think about everything
Barack	proud I'm proud because WE did it, WE made the film.
Question 24	If given the chance to participate in the film festival again, would you? Why or why not?
Bernice	Yes
Basha	Yes

Bev	Yes
Birdie	Yes
Bernard	Yes
Barack	Yes

On my first visit with Team Bully, I knew that the team was comprised of some very strong personalities. Yet, they did not let their personality differences impede their progress. As time went by, it became obvious that the members of Team Bully had some problems collaborating and forming consensus. On my last visit, Birdie stormed out of the meeting because she did not get her way. Yet, the survey data yield that all students felt like they grew closer, even though they did not always get along. The data also yield that moods among the members were serious but fun.

I observed Barack as being a leader among the team along with Basha and Birdie. I also observed Barack as being the most serious of the three, wanting to focus on the work and letting all other personality concerns fall by the wayside. Barack appeared to be on a mission.

According to Jenkins et al. (2009), cultivating a productive participatory environment takes time. While the Internet provides a social learning space for all that want to participate, there are “skills and cultural competencies” (p.103) that have to be promoted and nurtured whether face-to-face or on online. I sense there are more growing pains to be had by our students and educators for I do not see much “cultivating” occurring in K-12 public education.

Case Study Three: *A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War*

The third case study centers on a middle grades team of eighth grade students, two girls and three boys. The demographic of the team is comprised of two white females and three white males which attend the same school, Dragonfly Middle. Using pseudonyms for all individuals, I shall refer to the students as Carmalita, Carol, Chad, Covasia, and Corey. The coach for the team

is an eighth grade Social Studies teacher, Mr. Sherman. I shall refer to this five member team as Team Civil.

The film, *A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War*, is based on student research conducted about the life and times of Americans as they persevered through the U.S. Civil War. It is also based on Georgia's performance standards that are taught by teachers in Georgia. The five students that represent Team Civil are the creators and producers of the film.

Getting to Know Team Civil

I meet with Team Civil four times over the course of their film project. The team dynamics of Team Civil were similar to Team Bully in that the student participants were very indecisive when making decisions, and there were participation issues. Team Civil students were serious about wanting to make a film; yet, they lacked organization and direction. After my initial visit, the majority of time spent with Team Civil related to technology questions, of course. I did my best to answer their questions with guiding questions in order not to lead them to a decision that was not their own.

Each time I meet with Team Civil, we always met after school in Mr. Sherman's classroom at Dragonfly Middle School. One student always had a laptop, normally Carol, for working on the project, and Mr. Sherman had a classroom computer that was utilized as well. The first time I met with the Team Civil, Mr. Sherman, their coach was present. He met me in the hallway which lead to his classroom.

Mr. Sherman: Hello! I am so glad to see you, Ms. Radcliff. My students need your help.

Ms. Radcliff: I certainly hope that I can help them. What are the problems?

Mr. Sherman: (*appearing rushed*) Well, we got off to a very slow start. The kids couldn't decide on a topic, and I know I am not supposed to help them, but... they had to choose something, so I steered them towards the Civil War.

Ms. Radcliff: How do you think they feel about that topic?

Mr. Sherman: I think they are fine with the topic. We have been studying the Civil War, so I thought it would be good for them to really think about what it was like to live during those times. You know, use their imaginations based on the history.

Ms. Radcliff: How has that idea been working?

Mr. Sherman: So, so. I don't have time to help them after school. I can answer some questions, but they have got to do it themselves. They begged me to be their sponsor, coach, and I didn't want them not to have the opportunity to participate in the film festival. So, I said okay.

Ms. Radcliff: What seems to be their greatest needs?

Mr. Sherman: Just putting it all together. They have ideas about what they want to put in their story, but I don't think they know how to write the story.

My mind immediately went back to the statement Ms. Pierce had made about students being given writing prompts and topics the majority of the time. I tried to keep my thoughts focused on the current conversation.

Ms. Radcliff: Have you told them or showed them how to create a storyboard? Perhaps that would organize their thoughts which could then transfer to scenes when it is time to film.

Mr. Sherman: Not really...they don't know what they want the story to be. You know, what to say.

Ms. Radcliff: I see. I will go in, meet the students, and try to assist them. Don't hesitate to contact me if I need to visit more often.

Mr. Sherman: Okay. Thanks again. I have to head up to the office. I have a parent conference to attend.

Other than one brief conversation in the hallway mid-year, this was the only time I would see Mr. Sherman when visiting Team Civil. As I entered the classroom, I interrupted the conversations that were taking place between the members of Team Civil.

Ms. Radcliff: Hello, everyone. I'm Ms. Radcliff. My job is to work with you and your coach, Mr. Sherman, on any technical issues that you have regarding making your film. Tell me who you are and what you guys have been working on.

Over the course of the next few minutes, I met each student. Carmalita, Carol, Chad, Covasia, and Corey were all very polite and seemed to be rather reserved at this point. Carol had a laptop that was turned on and open in front of her. Carmalita and Covasia were the most vocal on this visit. It also turned out that Carmalita and Covasia were the primary speakers and self-appointed leaders for Team Civil.

Carmalita: Our topic is about the Civil War and what it was like to live back then. Slavery, trying to stay alive...

Covasia: (*interrupting*) But we want to tell what was going on, ya know, President Lincoln was the President.

Carmalita: We don't know how to get it started and that is what we were trying to figure out. Can you help?

As I looked at each of the students, Carol was staring at her laptop while Chad and Corey were sitting two rows away from everyone else having a private conversation. When my eyes returned back to the other three students, Carmalita, Carol, and Covasia, Carol looked up from her laptop and rolled her eyes in the direction of Corey and Chad as if frustrated.

Ms. Radcliff: *(looking at Corey and Chad)* Gentlemen, would you like to come join the rest of us?

The two boys did not budge and giggled a little after I asked my question.

Carmalita: They don't want to help us. They are here cause they want to act. They don't care about this part.

Ms. Radcliff: Well, I think you have some good ideas about where you want to go with your film, but the first thing that I would recommend would be to write a statement about the purpose of your film. First, answer the question, what is the message I want to convey to my audience? Next, you must answer, how am I going to communicate this message to my audience?

Carmalita, you stated you wanted to tell what it was like to stay alive back during the Civil War when slavery was in question. Covasia, you brought up President Lincoln. If you answer these two questions I have given you, you could then create a story line, mixing in facts with fiction.

Covasia: Yeah...but, but how do we say it? What words do we use? Who says what? That is what we keep on arguing about.

Corey and Chad snickered.

Ms. Radcliff: Once you get these questions answered, you can create a script which should have a dialog and a timeline. Each of these will show who says what and when. There is a storyboard template that will help keep your thoughts and scenes organized also. Also, keep in mind, sometimes music and pictures can say more than words.

Carmalita: I can talk to Mr. Sherman tomorrow before and...or after I have class. He had told me there were some forms that would help us.

Carol: I can keep copies of the forms on this laptop and paper ones.

I had not heard from Carol until now.

Ms. Radcliff: I would recommend that each of you assign yourself and others specific responsibilities. That way, **all** (*emphasized*) team members can work together. It takes a team to create a film from start to finish. And, editing takes up the most amount of your time.

Carol: I can do that. I can keep us organized. I can't make some people work!

Corey and Chad seemed to delight in the fact that they irritate their fellow team members.

Ms. Radcliff: Mr. Sherman is your coach. He needs to guide your work. If he cannot be here with you after school, everyone needs to find a way to communicate with him and with each other. I recommend email, especially if you don't have any classes together. My role is to assist you with technical concerns. But if you hit a point and cannot get any help, email me, and I will help as much as I can. Is everyone meeting after school, before school or both to work on your project?

Carol: We three are meeting after school. I guess those two will be here.

Carol rolls her eyes, her face showing disgust towards Corey and Chad.

Ms. Radcliff: I will be back to visit. I am working with other teams from Dragonfly Middle. Be sure to email me when you meet so I can visit. What questions can I answer for you?

Covasia, Carmalita, and Carol look at me with their full attention.

Carmalita: Thank you, Ms. Radcliff. I will email you...or maybe Carol. We have got to get busy.

Ms. Radcliff: That sounds great. Remember to do what I have told you and then pace yourself. You don't want to waste any time.

I said farewell, and I made a point to say goodbye to Corey and to Chad, individually. As I left Team Civil, I felt uneasy for many reasons. Mr. Sherman had been candid about not having time to facilitate the students. Had I not been there today, they would have been working in his

room alone. I was not sure if Team Civil really knew what needed to be done and if they did know, could they meet the deadlines of the film festival? Would Corey and Chad become actively engaged in the creation process? I was hopeful that Carmalita, Carol, and Covasia would keep their momentum going.

Visit Two

A few weeks had passed and I had not heard from Team Civil. I knew I would be visiting Dragonfly Middle that afternoon so I made a point to go to the school early so I could speak to either Mr. Sherman or one of the team members. Based on the first meeting, I was not feeling very hopeful for the team. I ran into Mr. Sherman as he was leaving his room. He was on his way to plan with other teachers.

Mr. Sherman: Hi, Ms. Radcliff. I didn't realize you were meeting with the team today. Are they meeting today?

Ms. Radcliff: Hello, Mr. Sherman. I haven't heard from the team, so I wanted to check in since I was going to be meeting with other teams this afternoon.

Mr. Sherman: Well, I don't get to meet with them either. But, Carol and Carmalita see me before and after class. I help them with questions about the storyline and make sure their facts are right about the Civil War. I am supposed to get some props for them. They want to do a battle scene.

Ms. Radcliff: This is good news. The first time I met with them they were not sure about the storyline, and there were two team members that were not engaged. I cannot remember their names.

Mr. Sherman: Based on what the two girls have been asking me, they are working and pursuing the film project. I need to go to my planning. Maybe you can catch one of them after school.

Nice to see you.

As Mr. Sherman turned and scurried away, I stood for a moment, contemplating how I wanted to pursue seeing all the teams I needed to see that afternoon. I decided to wait at the front of the 8th grade hall in hopes of seeing a member of Team Civil. As the dismissal bell rang, I scooted to the side of the hall, waiting and hoping to see a familiar face. From down the hall, I heard a call, “Ms. Radcliff!” As I turned toward my name, I saw Carol trudging up the hall. Her backpack weighed more than she did.

Carol: (*serious and winded*) Hi. We are working. (*breathing deeply*) We are working, Ms. Radcliff.

Ms. Radcliff: That is great news! Where is the team in the process?

Carol: We have everything outlined...storyboarded I mean. We are going to get some props and film in the field near my house. Chad is going to be in a shootout and Carmalita will help him off the field. Corey, is looking for some images. I think it is Corey...yeah, Corey.

Ms. Radcliff: I am excited to hear this. Have you edited anything yet? What software are you using?

Carol: Movie Maker on my laptop. I have played some with inserting an image. Ah, I gotta go. I can't miss my ride.

Ms. Radcliff: Okay. Please tell the team I said hello and to email me when you start editing. I am very excited for you and your progress!

Carol: (*trudging by me*) Yeah. Bye.

It was refreshing to know that Team Civil was pursuing their filming project. I was very pleased to get an update from Carol for it sounded like they had overcome some of their initial obstacles. Now, it was time for me to meet with a few other film festival teams at Dragonfly Middle.

Visit Three

Almost five weeks had passed before I met again with Team Civil. I had not heard from anyone so I emailed Mr. Sherman to check on their schedule. He informed me that they met every Wednesday afternoon for at least an hour in his room. I asked him to let the team know I was coming.

When I entered the classroom, I obviously had interrupted a heated discussion between Covasia and Corey. From what I could tell, both were arguing over Corey's lack of commitment to the team. Chad was not present but Carol, Covasia, Corey and Carmalita were there.

Covasia: Hi Ms. Radcliff.

Ms. Radcliff: Hello, everyone. How is everyone doing?

There was not much enthusiasm in their collective responses of okay.

Ms. Radcliff: Are you sure? It sounds like some of you are frustrated, or tired, or experiencing some project pains...maybe? Maybe not? Please talk to me.

Carol and Covasia immediately piped up.

Carol: I am tired of working on this project and, and, other people are not working like they say they are going to!

Covasia: Me, too. This is stupid to waste our time and argue.

Carol: *(raising her voice)* It happens EVERY TIME WE MEET!

Carmalita: Ms. Radcliff, we want to finish this, but we don't have much time left. We got to edit and all. We are just tired of arguing about stuff.

Ms. Radcliff: I understand. Working as a team on a group project is never easy. You have to determine what everyone's strengths and talents are and go from there.

Carmalita: I know but that ain't our problem. We can't get along. Our group can't make a decision.

The conversation went on for about five more minutes. I listened and let all the team members vent. The primary problem stemmed from Corey not doing his assignments in a timely manner. Carol wanted Corey to find some images that were specific to the time of Lincoln's death, and he had not done so. Carol explained that getting the work done on time was key since she would be the primary editor and needed as much time to get the editing done. Carol had emerged as the Team Civil's primary leader. After I had heard everyone's concerns, I refocused their attention back on the project.

Ms. Radcliff: It seems that each of you are serious about getting this film project completed. Therefore, from this moment forward, each of you must make a solemn promise to yourself and to each team member to get your work done on time. No excuses. If this is not doable, you need to step-up and let your team know that you cannot do your part.

There was dead silence. For a moment I thought I had dissolved Team Civil for good. I felt anxious.

Covasia: I'm in. I don't want to quit now.

Carol: I ain't quitting. I ain't gonna do it all either.

Carmalita: I'm good.

All heads turned to face Corey who had a face of stone. We all sat in silence until he decided to speak.

Corey: I don't want to quit. I just was late on two things, Carol. I said I was sorry and you ...

Ms. Radcliff: I'm sorry to interrupt you Corey, but what has happened is over. The team wants to move forward. Are you ready to move forward and meet all deadlines assigned to you? Your other teammates are ready to move forward. Are you?

Corey: Yes.

Ms. Radcliff: That is great, Corey. I am very proud of each of you. Your honesty is appreciated, also. Working through differences and learning to compromise are great life skills. Now, I am going to stay for awhile and let you guys work on your project. I am going to take some notes on what we have talked about today and stay out of your way.

Everyone present nodded and immediately began working. I was pleased to have been able to assist with getting the team back on track. I was very hopeful that the team, despite their growing pains, would endure and get their project completed.

Visit Four—The Last Visit

I met with Team Civil one week before the submission deadline. They seemed to be in good spirits, and I was excited to see that Carol had edited much of their film and Chad was verifying facts on the corner computer in Mr. Sherman's room. Everyone was present and appeared engaged in the project.

Ms. Radcliff: Hi everyone. It is great to see you. Are you excited about finalizing your films?

Covasia: Yes, this has been tough, Ms. Radcliff.

Ms. Radcliff: Really, how so?

Carol and Covasia: (*simultaneously*) TIME!

Ms. Radcliff: What is it about time that makes it tough, Covasia?

Covasia: After school stuff and we don't all have the same classes this semester so harder to talk, ya know.

Carmalita: Yeah, it was easier to talk about things when we had the same classes or same lunch.

Carol: We could talk about how we thought things should flow or look. I could make the changes on my laptop and everyone could look at it when we met or sooner, if we saw each other at lunch.

Ms. Radcliff: What would help regarding time? I want your feedback.

Covasia: The film festival should be a class!

I had never heard anyone make that suggestion. In the four years I had been working with the film festival, not one time had a teacher or student suggested that it be a class. I wanted to hear more.

Ms. Radcliff: Covasia, why would making it a class help with time?

Covasia: Think about how much time we would have to work on the film, ya know, during class. We wouldn't feel rushed, like now. We could be in lab, and we all could be editors in Movie Maker.

Carmalita: We could take field trips to do our videoing.

Chad: *(looking away from the computer screen)* It would be nice not to feel so pressured to get it all done.

Ms. Radcliff: So, would your class teacher be your coach?

No one said anything for a moment. They looked at each other. Then Covasia spoke.

Covasia: We wouldn't need a teacher.

Corey: Every class has a teacher, dude.

Covasia: We don't have a teacher now.

Carol: (*very serious*) This isn't a class, and we have a coach.

Covasia: Mr. Sherman? He ain't ever able to help us. He is way too busy. All we need is somebody to answer questions.

We all sat in silence for the next minute or so.

Ms. Radcliff: You have raised some good points that need to be explored. I wish you never felt like you had to rush but, unfortunately, there is no time during the school day that we can devote to the film festival.

Covasia: How come? We are learning so we should be able to make it a class.

Covasia was making excellent points. I just had never heard them verbalized by a student before. The data yield that our students need training on how to work in a participatory environment. They also need to be taught how to critically analyze and negotiate meaning from the messages placed before them by the mass media. At this point, Covasia was right. He was learning, and he was not just learning how to use the bells and whistles of a software application to regurgitate facts. He was immersed in a multi-facted, participatory environment that relied on the minds and creative endeavors of his teammates.

Ms. Radcliff: I wish it were that easy, Covasia. There are laws at the state and federal levels that mandate what can be taught and how much time must be spent in certain classes. It can get complicated. Perhaps an elective class could be offered in the future that would give you a similar experience. I appreciate everyone's feedback. I will be here for awhile making some notes. If you have any technical questions, just let me know.

I stayed for the next hour, taking notes and watching the students work. They had improved with their ability to interact and work through disagreements. While there was still

some tension between a few team members, they were learning how to accept each other's differences. I answered two questions Carol had about the timing of their project in Movie Maker. Otherwise, there were no technical concerns. Working on the one laptop seemed to simplify organizing varying types of media that the team had collected. I left the team feeling confident that they would meet the film submission deadline.

A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War, The Film

The film begins with a colorful screen showing the Union and Confederate strife between the North and the South, respectively. The title of the film, in text, slides in on top of the image, *A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War*. This screen fades into another scene showing a canon used during the time of the Civil War. Facts about this timeframe fly onto the screen. The war



Opening scene depicting the Civil War

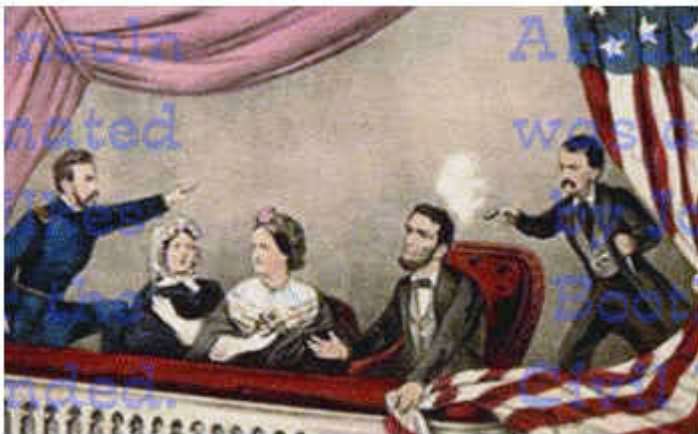
began at Fort Sumter in 1861 while Abraham Lincoln was the President of the U.S. This screen fades out while black and white video footage begins showing a male in an open field with a rifle. He is acting as a soldier although his dress does not reflect the time period. He yells, "Charge!" and begins to run

across the field towards the camera. He stops a few yards from the camera and kneels to fire his rifle several times. A gunshot is heard. He takes a bullet and lays in the field, moaning in pain. A frame of text fades in stating that many soldiers, both Confederate and Union, were killed during the Civil War. As this screen fades, footage of the soldier in the field returns to the screen. A solemn male voice begins to sing the following, "But I can't



Female helping wounded soldier

fight this mornin' I must be southward bound. My Jenny's in Atlanta and Atlanta's burnin' down.” A female dressed in a bonnet and long dress from the 1800’s runs to the wounded soldier’s aid. She quickly rolls him over, throws his arm over her shoulders and walks him off the field and out of harms way where he rests his back against a hay bale. As the song continues, she brings rags to help stop the bleeding from the wound. She speaks to him, but the viewer does not hear the words. The song is still playing. The soldiers eyes are closed, and his posture is slumped. She leans forward and kisses him on the forehead and turning, runs out of the scene. The footage of the soldier fades while the next screen shares facts about slavery during the 1840s. President Abraham Lincoln abolishes slavery with the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. The next scene appears in black and white with a male, dressed like Abraham Lincoln, and a female



Assassination of Lincoln

dressed in a long dress. Each are sitting at a formal dining room table. Abraham Lincoln reads aloud the following, “The Emancipation Proclamation bans slavery forever. I agree!” President Lincoln then picks up a pen and signs the document while the female onlooker claps with

affirmation. President Lincoln smiles as the scene fades out. The next screen appears stating the following, “The Civil War ended in 1865 when General Lee surrendered to General Grant.” As this screen fades, a final scene appears of Lincoln in the theatre the evening he was assassinated by John Wilkes Booth. This is the final scene before the credits roll.

Critical Media Literacy and Agency in *A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students' surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 9

Critical Media Literacy and Agency Data Results for "A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War"

Question 3	What message were you trying to give your audience by making this film?
Carmalita	How Lincoln died
Carol	trying to show how the people lived
Chad	the civil war was not only a battle about slavery
Covasia	facts about how things seem and how they were
Corey	the civil war just wasn't about battles
Question 4	How did making the film impact your personal values? Alter or change any of your feelings?
Carmalita	none
Carol	it helped me with teamwork
Chad	it really didn't
Covasia	<i>UNK-no response</i>
Corey	it didn't
Question 8	On a scale of 1-4, how successful do you feel about what you created?
Carmalita	2-somewhat successful
Carol	4-very successful
Chad	3-successful
Covasia	3-successful
Corey	3-successful
Question 10	How was your team formed?
Carmalita	we knew each other cause in the same grade
Carol	we are in the 8th grade
Chad	we had some classes with each other
Covasia	not all friends
Corey	knew each other from around the school
Question 14	How helpful was your coach?
Carmalita	3-helpful
Carol	4-very helpful
Chad	2-somewhat helpful
Covasia	2-somewhat helpful
Corey	2-somewhat helpful

Question 15	Do you think you could do a digital film project without a coach? Why or Why not?
Carmalita	Yes
Carol	No
Chad	No
Covasia	Yes
Corey	Yes
Question 21	Please complete the following sentence. Share as much as you would like. When creating a digital project in the future, I need more of _____.
Carmalita	a story
Carol	time. And details on what all is going to be on it (regulations)
Chad	time
Covasia	ideas
Corey	dialogue
Question 22	Please complete the following sentence. Share as much as you would like. When creating a digital project in the future, I need less of _____.
Carmalita	team members
Carol	standards that you have to put on there
Chad	people in the team that plays around & doesn't get the work done.
Covasia	procrastination
Corey	unhelpful teammates

Elements of critical media literacy were not evident in the data gathered from the student surveys, interview, or field note observations and conversations of Team Civil. Mr. Sherman, the coach for Team Civil, suggested and allowed the students to pursue a topic that was part of the 8th grade standards in Georgia. He said that the students could not make a decision about a topic so he, in all honesty, made it for them. Based on the conversations, once Team Civil had help getting their purpose and audience defined, they were somewhat confident about making decisions regarding their research and the making of their film. Hence, components of agency as cited in this study are supported primarily by documented conversations from my field notes. Students had to make decisions because there was no one available to make decisions for them. Therefore, it was observed that over time, the more decisions that were made and acted upon, the more confident Team Civil became about their project.

Digital Media Technology in *A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students' surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 10

Digital Media Technology Data Results for "A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War"

Question 5	How did working with digital technologies (video, cameras and/or microphones, etc.) affect your delivery versus if you told the story traditionally with pen and paper?
Carmalita	It shows it and it us better
Carol	it was easier to document and more entertaining
Chad	it didn't
Covasia	we were able to give more vivid details
Corey	the battle made me feel great and more creative
Question 7	On a scale of 1-4, how prepared did you feel at the beginning of the year to create a digital film?
Carmalita	2-somewhat prepared
Carol	4-very prepared
Chad	2-somewhat prepared
Covasia	2-somewhat prepared
Corey	2-somewhat prepared
Question 9	After creating a film, on a scale of 1-4, how prepared do you feel at this point about creating a digital film?
Carmalita	3-prepared
Carol	4-prepared
Chad	3-prepared
Covasia	3-prepared
Corey	3-prepared
Question 16	How important was the visual portion of the film to telling your story?
Carmalita	very important
Carol	it helped people realize the ways of living
Chad	very because our script was not that good
Covasia	very because it is hard to tell vivid details that we probably couldn't wright
Corey	it helped the audience visualize the film
Question 17	How important was the sound/audio portion of the film to telling your story? Explain why it was needed or not needed.
Carmalita	needed for sound effects
Carol	so they could hear what was said and hear when they were established
Chad	very because you had to hear what we were saying to get the play
Covasia	very because you couldn't tell our emotions well without it
Corey	so we could tell part of the story
Question 19	What method(s) or features did you use when selecting images, film

	footage (video), audio, special effects?
Carmalita	Internet
Carol	sound had to be good and the way we acted
Chad	I didn't do much with this, others did editing.
Covasia	black and white
Corey	the team did that
Question 23	If given the chance to create a digital film in a class like social studies, would you? Why or Why not?
Carmalita	I don't know
Carol	Yes. It would make some things less boring to learn.
Chad	No
Covasia	Yes. It would be nice to see the details and select music for the details
Corey	Yes, I would try it.

The use of digital media to tell this story was supported and evident by looking at the survey data. The data state that the details of the story would have been harder to convey without the audio, video, and black and white effect used in the battle scene. The data support that the use of digital media allowed the creators to convey emotion more readily. The audio was necessary to set the mood, for the lyrics chosen told of Atlanta burning and a soldier having to sacrifice the battlefield because he wanted to save his beloved. The data also yield that while the team felt more prepared after creating the film, only two of the five member team would like to use digital video in a class.

The whole-group interview did not yield any data in the category of digital media technologies.

Creativity in A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War

The following table of data is taken from the individual students' surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 11

Creativity Data Results for "A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War"

Question 5 (also included in Table 9)	How did working with digital technologies (video, cameras and/or microphones, etc.) affect your delivery versus if you told the story traditionally with pen and paper?
Carmalita	It shows it and it is better
Carol	it was easier to document and more entertaining
Chad	it didn't
Covasia	we were able to give more vivid details
Corey	the battle made me feel great and more creative
Question 6	In the making of the film, what made you feel more or less creative? Explain how.
Carmalita	less material
Carol	when I came up with an idea and everyone is like yeah, that's good.
Chad	when we did the battle, it made me feel good and creative about myself.
Covasia	<i>UNK-not legible</i>
Corey	the battle it made me feel great and more creative
Question 16 (also included in Table 9)	How important was the visual portion of the film to telling your story?
Carmalita	very important
Carol	it helped people realize the ways of living
Chad	very because our script was not that good
Covasia	very because it is hard to tell vivid details that we probably couldn't wright
Corey	it helped the audience visualize the film
Question 17 (also included in Table 9)	How important was the sound/audio portion of the film to telling your story? Explain why it was needed or not needed.
Carmalita	needed for sound effects
Carol	so they could hear what was said and hear when they were established
Chad	very because you had to hear what we were saying to get the play
Covasia	very because you couldn't tell our emotions well without it
Corey	so we could tell part of the story
Question 18	What editing application (software) did you use and why? Explain how it did or did not make a difference in telling your story.
Carmalita	movie maker - only one we had
Carol	movie maker it helped put slide in and weird sounds when needed. I don't we could have done with out it
Chad	we used Microsoft Movie Maker, it allowed us to make it black and white
Covasia	Movie Maker allowed us to edit
Corey	microsoft, it was great
Question 19	What method(s) or features did you use when selecting images, film footage (video), audio, special effects?
Carmalita	Internet
Carol	sound had to be good and the way we acted
Chad	I didn't do much with this, other members did the editing.

Covasia	black and white
Corey	the team did that

Team Civil struggled with creativity from the beginning of the project. Not being able to decide on a topic for their film showed lack of imagination. At the first visit, the fact that Team Civil was anxious about how to begin telling their story and Chad admitting in the survey results that the dialogue was not good, shows weakness in creativity. However, it was evident that acting out the details of the skit boosted creativity for the actors, Chad and Corey. A feeling of enhanced creativity was present based on the responses of how important visualizing the images was to telling their story.

Of the three case studies, Team Civil was the only team that used Georgia Performance Standards to guide their work. The team’s inability to choose a topic lead their coach, Mr. Sherman, to assign a topic that was familiar to *him* and the team members because they had been taught the material. It is possible, that Mr. Sherman’s lack of desire and time to coach the team, stifled creativity for everyone.

The whole-group interview did not yield any data in the category of creativity.

Participatory Learning and Collaboration in *A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War*

The following table of data is taken from the individual students’ surveys. Corresponding interview data and field notes are interjected into the narrative following the table.

TABLE 12

Participatory Learning and Collaboration Data Results for “A Behind the Scenes Look at the Civil War”

Question 10	How was your team formed?
Carmalita	we knew each other cause in the same grade
Carol	we are in the 8th grade
Chad	we had some classes with each other

Covasia	not all friends
Corey	knew each other from around the school
Question 11	How would you describe your relationship with your team members at the beginning of the film-making process?
Carmalita	nervous and unknowing
Carol	great!
Chad	great friends
Covasia	didn't really know one another
Corey	great friends
Question 12	How did your relationship with your team members change during the film-making process?
Carmalita	we became better friends
Carol	we lost some and new ones came in but not by everyones choice!
Chad	we learned a lot about each other while making the film
Covasia	began to know them better
Corey	We've become amazing people
Question 13	What was the mood like working with your team members?
Carmalita	hectic
Carol	not serious enough
Chad	too many not wanting to work
Covasia	not good
Corey	not workers
Question 20	Complete the following sentence. By creating the film, I am _____. Elaborate on your response.
Carmalita	ok with the film
Carol	happy
Chad	feeling better about myself
Covasia	aware more of the filming process
Corey	great
Question 24	If given the chance to participate in the film festival again, would you? Why or why not?
Carmalita	Yes, depends though.
Carol	don't know
Chad	Yes
Covasia	<i>UNK- no response</i>
Corey	Yes

Based on documented conversations between the members of Team Civil, the participation and collaborative efforts were lacking at times. Initially, two team members, Corey and Chad, were totally disengaged from the project. There was difficulty getting assignments

completed in a timely fashion. Once the new semester started, students were having more difficulty meeting and making decisions due to the lack of time.

Based on the survey data, the students stated that while the mood of the team was “not good” and “serious”, four of the five members felt closer as a result of working on the project. Three of the five reported that as a result of working on the project, they felt “happy”, “great” and Corey elaborated with, “ We have become amazing people.” Let me remind you that Corey was the team member that at one point was habitually late with his project assignments.

As I bring this chapter to a close, I find it difficult to express in words the determination the majority of the students on all three teams exhibited in getting their projects completed. While there were growing pains along the way regarding technology glitches and collaboration difficulties, I know that many of these students also had extra curricular activities before and after school which were time consuming. Yet, each team rose to the challenge and were determined to complete their projects. For there perseverance and dedication, they are commended.

CHAPTER 5

REFLECTIONS OF THE STUDY

As I stand at my morning post for breakfast duty at City High School, I marvel at the students as they file in from the outside corridors leading to the breakfast line. As a Southern White female, I acknowledge there are limitations to my understanding of these students at risk, my students, due to White privilege. Yet, they fascinate me with their embraces of popular culture—slang, hand jives, music choices, iconic drawings, and sense of fashion. While I am here to assist their teachers and them with the teaching and learning of mathematics, I only consider myself their lead learner. I feel my passion for learning to be one of my greatest gifts and contributions to the field of education. Learning from the students fuels my passion.

On this particular morning, I was standing with my coffee, greeting the students as they funneled into a crooked breakfast line, impatiently waiting for something to eat. Approximately ninety percent of the student population at City High is considered “free and reduced”. In my mind, this equates to what they eat at school is the only food they may receive in a day. This morning was the same as any other morning except Devon decided he had to go to the front of the line, leaving many of his peers incensed. Of course, being on “duty” means I must police the line for anyone “breaking”. Devon was in direct violation according to his peers for the name calling and riot-like outbursts ensued. The following is a vivid recollection of the conversation that occurred as a result of Devon’s action.

Ms. Radcliff: Good Morning, Devon. Thank you for wearing your id.

Devon: Get out my face, ya white bit.

Ms. Radcliff: Devon, I need you to step to the back of the line. It is not fair to everyone for you to break to the front while they have been waiting patiently.

Devon: (*looking into my eyes, his voice escalated*) I said, get out my face, BITCH!

I stopped the progression of breakfast being served by the kitchen servers. At the time, I had no idea I had such clout. Immediately, what seemed like hundreds of students waiting and ranting in the line, I proceeded to look Devon in the eye, and I calmly, slowly, and with assertiveness said the following.

Ms. Radcliff: (*swallowing hard*) Devon, trust me when I say this—follow me to a table so others can get their breakfast. I promise to personally get your breakfast for you. All you have to do is follow me and talk to me after you eat. Deal?

Acting disgusted and walking with an attitude, Devon followed me to a table while mumbling and cursing me under his breath. Once he had a seat, I went behind the line servers and picked up a meal and a milk for Devon. The students who had been angrily waiting, were now much calmer for they, too, were getting their breakfast.

As I sat in silence with Devon, he ate his breakfast with poise and manners. The silence allowed me to reflect on what had just transpired as well as map out my next steps. Occasionally, one of his dreads would fall across his face as he took a bite of his breakfast. Trying not to stare, I noticed several tattoos on Devon's forearms and hands. Tattoos are pervasive for the males and females of City High. Earlier, my intuition had told me Devon was acting out for reasons other than starvation. Was he living on the street? Experiencing gang related issues, violence, abuse? My mind was running wild with horrid possibilities. In the moment, I chose to negotiate a deal with Devon, although it probably appeared that I was overlooking his disrespectful words and actions. However, I do not tolerate disrespect. At that moment and retrospectively, I felt as if Devon was simply reacting to being called out by an authority figure. As Devon was down to his last few bites, I felt it time for me to begin the discussion.

Ms. Radcliff: You were really hungry, Devon. Is this enough breakfast for you?

Devon: *(with a short nod)* Yeah.

Ms. Radcliff: Why were you so eager to break to the front of the line this morning? Were you *that* hungry?

Devon: *(with a short nod)* Yeah.

With persistence being one of my stronger qualities, I continued with my questions. Some students kid me about interrogating them. My response to them is always the same—you can't learn if you don't question.

Ms. Radcliff: Devon, why were you so hungry? When is the last time you ate?

Oddly, Devon straightened his back and smiled, yielding a gorgeous glow.

Devon: *(gloatingly)* I been up for two days straight and I ain't ate nothing.

Ms. Radcliff: *(surprised and curious)* Two days? Why so long?

Devon: *(proudly)* I'm a gamer, Ms. Radcliff! I was winning!

I was bewildered and shocked for that was the last thing I expected to hear from Devon. A gamer? Okay, I can accept that. Winning is important to many individuals, so I accept that as well. However, a growing teenage male not eating for 48 hours? Wait, I am not buying that. I had to dig deeper on this one.

Ms. Radcliff: Two days is a long time without food and sleep, Devon. So, you had food to eat and chose not to stop playing to eat? Is that what I'm hearing?

Devon: *(still beaming)* I told you, I...WAS...WINNING! You don't stop when you be WINNING! *(still beaming)*

Devon was winning the unnamed video game, so he chose not to stop playing the game to eat. At first, there was this fleeting thought that Devon was really trying to fool me. As the bell

rang for the first block classes to begin, Devon stood up and gathered his trash. I still was not finished with my interrogation.

Ms. Radcliff: Devon, stop and ask yourself—Is it healthy to deprive your body of food and sleep for such long periods of time? Look how ill you were this morning? And how much trouble...

Devon: (*interrupting me, shrugging, and still smiling while walking away*) I don't know. It just be a game, Ms. Radcliff, and I be a gamer...(*chuckling*) and a winner!

As I watched Devon walk away, I sat and pondered the last fifteen minutes. Devon's demeanor was polar opposite after eating versus when he arrived at City High. So my intuition had been correct. As I reflected on the conversation that had transpired, I honestly was in awe. Wait, why was I in awe? Had I not learned anything from the research I have been doing for the past three years? What about the research that led me to my theoretical framework, *digital infusion theory*? I couldn't help but think what McLuhan (1964) would say if he had observed my conversation with Devon? "Told you so", was the first thing that crossed my mind for Devon's gaming was not only an extension of his nervous system; it was an extension of his identity in a "public sphere" (Gee, 1997) where he feels very confident. James Paul Gee (1997) definitely would have followed Devon to class wanting to know more about his gaming experience for "public spheres are where people come into contact with a now global public" (p. 182) and where "people of all ages, countries, and value systems meet within these worlds" (p.182). As for me, I was grateful for such an invaluable experience because it was affirmation that digital infusion does exist among children of the iGeneration.

Devon and I see each other from time to time at City High. Since our initial conversation, I have learned that Devon plays *Call of Duty*, *Black Ops* on a networked Sony Playstation® 3. His "posse", as he calls them, consists of gamers located in his local neighborhood and spanning the

globe to Afghanistan. He shares photos of himself gaming, how many zombies he has recently killed, and how much time he has spent gaming during the course of the past week or weekend. I find it amazing how intense he becomes when he shares tactical strategies verbally with me. According to Gee (1997), “players feel a real sense of agency, ownership, and control. It’s *their* game” (p. 217). While I must admit I don’t understand much of what Devon is explaining regarding his tactical moves, I do believe there is a deep level of critical and strategic thinking that occurs while Devon and his posse are engaged in the gaming process. I agree with Gee (1997), for I truly believe Devon owns his gaming experiences.

The Findings

The findings of my study suggest that students want to use digital media to enhance their learning process. I used the following research questions to guide my study.

1. What role, if any, does critical media literacy play in twenty-first century education?
2. How does the creation of digital media projects differ from non-digital media projects?
3. How do students create and convey meaning using digital media?

Data gathered from student surveys, observational field note conversations, and whole-group interviews, my study allowed me to conclude the following findings. Critical media literacy was not a common thread throughout the three case studies (**Finding 1**). However, it was evidenced in case study two, *Bullying*. The fact that all teams had to meet outside the hours of a normal school day was a noted barrier in getting their work completed in a timely fashion (**Finding 2**). The feeling of creativity was enhanced by the use of digital media resources. Being able to create and/or select the features, both audio and video, necessary to communicate their desired stories roused their imaginations (**Finding 3**). The majority of students believed they could not produce a film without the assistance of a coach. According to the data, coaches aided in helping students

select and/or narrow their topic choices as well as keep their deadlines in check (**Finding 4**). The majority of students on each team demonstrated agency when selecting and/or creating vital elements in their film (**Finding 5**). Each team encountered collaboration issues as they participated to create their films (**Finding 6**). Team Fright was willing to sacrifice their storyline if there was a chance that their film would be disqualified. This yields that competitiveness hindered creativity (**Finding 7**).

Each case study was viewed through a critical media literacy lens. Of the three case studies, Team Bully's work was the only case that yielded the use of critical media literacy as cited in my research (**Finding 1**). Alvermann, Moon, and Hagood (1999) state that critical media literacy is about "providing individuals access to understanding how the print and non-print texts that are part of everyday life help construct their knowledge of the world" (p.1). Team Fright did exhibit some criticality when they noted the injustice behind the killing of Tom Woolfolk, if he was really innocent. Yet, they never questioned the truth behind the diary of a sharecropper. According to the observed conversations and data reported in the student surveys, the students of Team Bully wanted to take a stand against bullying as well as share on a larger scale that bullying should not be tolerated. According to Barack, "We see it all the time." Bullying was situated in their daily lives, their cultural contexts. Simply retelling what they live and see was not enough. In support of their stand against bullying, Team Bully's message to their audience was to rise above the injustice. To do so, their audiences would not be passive viewers but "emancipated spectators" (Ranciere, 2009b). "Emancipated spectators" of Team Bully would resonate with the images that distort the identity of the individuals bullied. Ranciere (2009b) encourages the spectator to no longer be passive and seduced by the image. The headless, black and white images would need to stir the "emancipated spectator's" intellect, rousing emotion and

action to form Hansen's (2004) "viewer-participant". The lyrics of the songs chosen by Team Bully resonate with the "viewer-participant" (Hansen, 2004) as well. Lyrics such as "Worn out places, worn out faces" speak to the destructive role bullying plays in cultivating identity formation (Gee, 1997). Hansen's (2004) "viewer-participant" references the active viewer; active due to the intelligent mind and physical body that allows perceptions to form. The "viewer-participant" embodies the experience, thus yielding new meaning and giving purpose to the new meaning that has been negotiated by the image. Both the audio and video layouts of *Bullying* where critical components for they allowed the embodiment, by the body, of the messages conveyed. Based on the findings in my study, it is my feeling that members of Team Bully were critical producers of an artifact (Bronowski, 1969), in this case a film, which moved them beyond simply what was familiar. I believe that making this film enabled them to be more aware of their own voices and feelings.

Based on student surveys and documented conversations, time constraints impeded each team's progress (**Finding 2**). The fact that all teams had to meet outside the hours of a normal school day was a noted barrier in getting their work completed in a timely manner. Based on Jenkins et al. (2009), working in a participatory culture takes more time to collaborate as well as create. Because participatory learning is an informal mode of learning, risks have to be taken. To take risks means to work through trials and failure at times. Hence, informal learning takes more time than traditional formal learning.

When negotiating time allotments, I think of Devon and the research that Gee (1997) has conducted with video gaming. The four cycle process that Gee (1997) writes about has very similar patterns to what I see the students do while creating and inventing their films. For instance, step one is the *probing* step. I see the same step being utilized by the filming students

because of one commonality, choices. Students have to make decisions and pursue the choices they make. For Team Fright, one choice was to pursue Rose Hill Cemetery to find the Woolfolk family plot. Footage from this trip ended up needing reflection as they moved forward to step two. Regarding Team Bully, once they knew their topic and began their statistical research, they had to make choices about how to best portray the affects of bullying. They formed opinions about using special effects such as black and white techniques, the absence of voices in the first two minutes of their film, headless figures and audio selections painting abusive feelings. With certain choices and selections made, the team moves to step three where reprobng and reflection occurs. Vital questions they must ask are – What is working? What is not working? How do we, as a team, renegotiate these choices based on the current outcomes? Effects? Step four involves rethinking what step three yielded. For Team Fright, questions they would ponder might be – is it scary enough? Is the twist in the storyline what we want it to be? Depending on the outcome of step four, the original hypothesis might need to be modified. Hence, an iteration of the four-step cycle would be necessary. This a timely process, but one that I see to be very beneficial. I believe it to be beneficial due to critical thinking and negotiation that must occur to be successful. I believe that time was one of the most costly factors, along with the lack of a clear storyline, for Team Civil.

Based on student survey data and documented conversations, students felt more creative after going through the film creation process. Students felt that the use of digital media enhanced their creative abilities (**Finding 3**). Many of the students stated that using digital technologies allowed them to be more creative and it was easier to be creative. Features and built-in tools of the digital technologies allow for greater flexibility while creating and producing. Derrida and Stiegler (2002), advocate the goodness of technology by promoting and embracing its use.

Hence, a greater *feeling* of creativity with the students resulted. Creativity is not easy. Bronowski (1969) tells us that it is through our knowledge that we create artifacts, and it is the creativity and power that we possess and release through these artifacts that make us human, that make us intelligible. I agree. Maxine Greene (1995) tells us “to set aside familiar” (p.3) and to embrace the possibilities that are hidden before us. Using digital technologies to embrace the image allows us to embrace the unfamiliar.

When creating their films, the power behind the image appeared to be each team’s driving force. The digital image “can no longer be restricted to the level of surface appearance, but must be extended to encompass the entire process by which information is made perceivable through embodied experience” (Hansen, 2004, p. 10). Team Fright’s images from Rose Hill Cemetery at the Woolfolk family plots, each one of them, along with the axe, were just two images that the team knew would “explode the frame” (Hansen, 2004) and be affectionately embraced, via *affectivity*, (Hansen, 2004) by the embodied “viewer-participant” (Hansen, 2004). The body is superior according to Hanson (2004) and the ability of the body to see beyond the image and formulate “what-ifs” is the *affectivity* that I felt was present with *Bloody Woolfolk*.

On my last visit with Team Fright, there was some discussion about the inclusion of the axe in the film. While seeming proud of their production, Team Fright did not want to be disqualified for submitting a violent film. They wanted to win and because of this competitiveness, they were willing to sacrifice creativity versus following their own creative energies (**Finding 7**). According to Maxine Greene (2001), this is counter to how our students should perceive their work and the world around them. As educators, we should move students “from attending to the work” (Greene, 2001, p.11) to allowing “imagination to play on what we

have perceived, when we incarnate it and make it ours” (Greene, 2001, p.11). Maxine Greene is correct for only when one truly owns their work will they defend it.

Students relied on the assistance of their team coach (educator) to guide their work (**Finding 4**). Based on the student survey data and the observed conversations, the majority of the students said that they could not create a film without the aid of a coach. Ms. Fanning, the coach for Team Fright, guided the students search for finding a topic that the students wanted to research. Ms. Pierce, the coach for Team Bully, also guided the students into finding a topic that was interesting *enough* for the students to want to pursue. In both scenarios, the two teams chose their topics and from that point forward, both teams exhibited agency while working on their films (**Finding 5**). The data showed the students of Team Fright and Team Bully exhibited agency in the selection process of media in order to tell their stories (Finding 5). Their coaches facilitated deadline reminders. However, Team Civil was different.

Before completing this study, I stated that one of my concerns was that the middle school students would rely on their coaches to assist them too much with their topic selection. This was evident with Team Civil. Because the students lacked the ability to select a topic of their choosing, (**Finding 5**) their coach, Mr. Sherman, recommended and selected their topic for them. Immediately there were problems. However, excluding Team Civil, the data showed students exhibited agency in the selection process of media in order to tell their stories (**Finding 5**).

While students in this study may be digitally infused in a participatory culture, one cannot assume that they know how to collaborate or participate productively. Students experienced difficulties while working in a participatory environment (**Finding 6**). Feelings and emotions in conjunction with time and space were variables that played into the problems of each team. Team Fright did not show any outward problems of participation or conflicts, yet, the

survey data yield Phoebe felt left out from the other members decisions as time to finish the project drew closer. Team Bully had several dynamic personalities on their team, such that the decision-making process was hindered at times. Basha became so agitated that she walked out of the last meeting that I visited with Team Bully. Lack of compromise was also evident with Team Bully. Team Civil had similar problems, with members not completing their assignments in a timely fashion, thus, putting the entire project behind schedule (**Finding 2**). According to Jenkins et al. (2009), there is need for creating “opportunities for participation and the development of cultural competencies and social skills needed for full involvement” (p. xiii). I agree. Creating a participatory culture has to move away from the mindset of individuality to one of community. Social learning requires social skills. These are not the same citizenship skills used in classrooms per se. The social learning skills I am promoting are skills that allow students to negotiate meaning from multiple perspectives, all the while appreciating and acknowledging the unique diversities present within the boundaries of the group.

Implications for the Future

After completing this study, there is no doubt that students want to use digital technologies to help them learn. I advocate for digital technology use in and outside of school. It is time for change, a transformational, systemic change to the public, K-12 classrooms in the U.S. I feel as if our students’ minds are slowly dying at times. Outside of their eight hour day in the school building, their worlds are rich with visual and auditory stimuli. Why can’t it be just as rich and stimulating while in school? I know barriers exist, and Jenkins, et al. (2009) brings to light three of the most pertinent.

First, Jenkins, et al. (2009), identifies challenges that impede a highly productive participatory culture for our students as well as our teachers. While our students may be digitally

infused, there will always be holes and gaps that must be addressed. Jenkins, et al. speaks to the *Participation Gap* (p. 16) that states not all students have access to digital technology and/or the Internet. Next, there is the *Transparency Gap* (p. 21). Not everyone, especially our students, can discern what is true and authentic. The third concern is the *Ethics Challenge* (p.24). More and more often, children are being faced with making decisions online that developmentally, they are not ready to make. Social spaces such as *Facebook* and *My Space* allow students to join as young as 13 years old. Honestly, I don't have the answers, but I have some recommendations. I advocate that a strong look be taken at the following ideas.

- 1) Students want to bring and use their own technologies to school.

Examples are cell phones for immediate feedback and iPads for researching.

- 2) Students want to interact while learning.

Examples are participating in a Socratic seminar or blogging for discussions.

- 3) Students want to utilize different means and methods to show that they understand.

Examples are digital videos and artistic portfolios.

While I can advocate for the three ideas I just mentioned, bureaucracy gets in the way of being able to implement these. There isn't a standardized test for artistic portfolios, and cell phone usage is banned in most high schools in middle Georgia. Also, how do you have a socratic seminar in AP Calculus? Easily! There is more. Many teachers in our schools today do not understand twenty-first century technologies. They do not know how students should effectively participate online nor do they show an interest in learning. Culture permeates the classroom. It is time for a change.

In order to change, K-12 educators must be willing to embrace and believe that they are *lead learners*. The greatest part of being an educator is that I get to learn from my students and

colleagues everyday. Since technology changes so rapidly, it is impossible to be an expert on all devices. Therefore, all educators need to be immersed in the technologies of the day. Students want to bring what is familiar to them to class; that being their own technologies. Why shouldn't they be able to do so? Learning sessions and trainings could be taught by students who are the "residence experts" of digital technologies. Of course, there is the equity issue that Jenkins, et al. brings to light. Why not let the students share devices, partner to learn? It worked for me in Ms. Baker's Geometry class with cell phone sharing. If given a try, technology immersion in the twenty-first century classroom is plausible.

Critical media literacy is lacking in K-12 public education. The meshing of media and the classes that allow students to use and learn media do exist, and they exist to teach the students media *skills*. Kellner and Share (2007) state that "critical media literacy expands the notion of literacy to include different forms of mass communication and popular culture as well as deepens the potential of education to critically analyze relationships between media and audiences, information and power" (p.4). Where do our students learn to question? Do they even know that they have a voice and that their opinions matter? I personally believe critical media literacy could be presented and brought to the forefront in *every* classroom. I say that because it involves teaching our children to question—to question everything. Once again, I believe that our educators need to be educated about critical media literacy. The power of the image shapes and molds our reality and to so many, unknowingly. It sounds so simple; yet, it could be a daunting task if our children are not taught to question consistently at an early age. It also could be a daunting task for the educator who has been trained to teach standards and state frameworks in their content area. To question involves taking a risk. Hence, is it worth the risk to critically question and analyze the power within the image? I wholeheartedly believe it is worth the risk.

My charge to all educators that have to teach to state standards or to a standardized test is to allow your students the flexibility to share their thoughts, emotions, and understanding as creatively as possible and to use whatever technologies are at their disposal. John Dewey (1966) once wrote, “the self is not something readymade, but something in continuous formation through choice of action” (p. 351). Our students want choices. We as educators want choices, too. Through choices, I believe we will see actions and imaginations blossom. I learned about gaming from Devon and his posse by chance. I am now enthralled with the idea of learning a different strand of digital technology, gaming, that I had zero interest in three months ago. I chose to be receptive to what interested Devon, and we both have grown from our initial experience. Digital media can enhance twenty-first century learning. I am convinced. Accept the challenge. Advocate for change.

EPILOGUE

CELEBRATING AT AWARDS NIGHT

As I drove into the parking lot of the high school's Performance Arts Center (PAC), I could already see a crowd forming. It was Friday evening, May 13, 2011 and the fourth annual *JOCO Film Festival* was about to begin. Dr. Vicki Rogers and I had been working all year to make sure that tonight was a celebratory event. The red carpet was rolled out and the stanchions were in place. It was almost showtime!

This year, the stage was decorated with artwork that was modeled after a pop artist of the 60's, Roy Lichtenstein. The art teacher at Dogwood Middle had contacted me earlier in the



Stage Props based on work of Roy Lichtenstein

school year to ask if students could create props for the stage. Based on the film festival's theme, *and now you know the rest of the story*, she said she wanted to base the work after Lichtenstein. Needless to say, I was thrilled because I felt it would blend nicely with digital storytelling. She was thrilled because she wanted to make a connection to the pop artist of the sixties and early seventies. Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein were two artists I knew something about.

As I parked and headed up the red carpet into the lobby of the PAC, students, and parents were gathering, waiting for the doors to the seating in the auditorium to open. Every year there was always a crowd with standing room only. Admission was free, and the community was always welcome. I anticipated the same or a better turnout this year. There were always two high school



A Red Carpet Interview

students chosen to work the red carpet, asking participants what their films were about, what roles they played, and every once in awhile, a comment was even made about their fashion!



Local newspaper article

There was always local media coverage as well. The Jones County News would be onsite to take pictures and to cover the event. As I entered the lobby, I looked over my shoulder. The first limousine of the evening was pulling up to the red carpet.

This year, students spanning grades kindergarten through 12th grade would be receiving awards. Students participating in 21 films would be receiving awards out of the

45 films that had been submitted for judging. Winners received their very own *Jacey* award which was a smaller rendition of the Academy Awards' *Oscar*. Each of the winning films would be shown tonight. For some students, this was their fourth consecutive year participating in the *JOCO Film Festival*.

Judging was always held in late March so that the trophies could be ordered and arrangements for the showing of every film submitted could occur. Until this year, films had always been shown at each team's respective school. However, this year a true film festival was held at Dogwood Middle School. All participants and their families along with the local community were invited to tailgate in the gym of Dogwood Middle on the evening of April 15th. Every film that had been submitted for judging was shown while everyone sat on their blankets or in their lawn chairs and ate their favorite foods. It was a great way to celebrate the creations of every student that chose to participate. Participants were also encouraged to vote once for their

favorite film in the newly added category, *Hometown Choice*. All winners would be announced on awards night.

While I had worked closely with so many of the teams, I was extremely anxious to see how Team Fright, Team Bully, and Team Civil would place tonight. Each of these teams was competing in the 6th-8th grade division. Awards would be given for a) Achievement in Storyline, b) Achievement in Cinematography, c) Achievement in Art Direction, d) Achievement in Editing, e) Hometown Choice; and, f) Film of the Year.

The awards program began with a welcome from the district's superintendent. After the welcome, the Master of Ceremonies immediately entered the stage, and the program began. As I peeked through the curtains, I could see that it was standing room only once again. For me, I had the best seat in the house—back stage! Every time a



winning team was announced, the film was shown,

Winners in the 9-12 grade division

and then the students entered back stage to receive their *Jacey* award. They then proceeded on to the stage for a photo opportunity. It was grand!

Tonight would be bittersweet for some because not every team won an award. Team Fright's film, *Bloody Woolfolk*, won in their division for Achievement in Storyline, Hometown Choice, and Film of the Year. Team Bully's film, *Bullying*, won for Achievement in Art Direction. Unfortunately, Team Civil's film did not win an award.

Two hours passed and the program was about to end. All awards had been given, and Dr.

Vicki Rogers was giving closing remarks. As she thanked everyone for attending and bade them a safe farewell, she picked up an envelope from the lectern. She proceeded with the following.

Dr. Rogers: While I know everyone is ready to go, I have one thing left to share with you. In this envelope is the theme for next year's film festival.

As I peeked around the curtain, I could see the excitement of the crowd and hear them buzzing with anticipation.

Dr. Rogers: Ladies and gentlemen, faculty, and friends, the theme for the *2012 JOCO Film Festival* is, "*To be continued.*"

As I finish this study with excitement and glee, I plan for my adventure in Curriculum Studies *to be continued.*

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APPENDIX A - STUDENT SURVEY

1. This is my first year participating in the Film Festival. Yes or No.
2. (CML/AG/ST) How did you choose the topic for your film?
3. (CML/AG/ST) What message were you trying to give your audience by making this film?
4. (CML/AG) How did making this film impact your personal values? Alter or change any of your feelings?
5. (CR, DM) How did working with digital technologies (video, cameras and/or microphones, etc.) affect your delivery versus if you told the story traditionally with pen and paper?
6. (CR, DM) In the making of the film what made you feel more or less creative? **Explain how.**
7. (DM) On a scale of 1-4 how prepared did you feel at the **beginning** of the year to create a digital film?
 - 1 – Not prepared
 - 2 – Somewhat prepared
 - 3 - Prepared
 - 4 – Very Prepared
8. (CML/AG) On a scale of 1-4 how successful do you feel about what you created?
 - 1 – Not successful
 - 2 – Somewhat successful
 - 3 - Successful
 - 4 – Very Successful
9. (DM) **After** creating a film, on a scale of 1-4 how prepared do you feel at this point about creating a digital film?
 - 1 – Not prepared
 - 2 – Somewhat prepared
 - 3 - Prepared
 - 4 – Very Prepared
10. (CML/AG, PR) How was your team formed?
11. (PR) How would you describe your relationship with your team members at the **beginning** of the film-making process?
12. (PR) How did your relationship with your team members change **during** the film-making process?
13. (PR) What was the mood like working with your team members?

14. (CML/AG) On a scale of 1-4 how helpful was your coach?
 - 1 – Not helpful
 - 2 – Somewhat helpful
 - 3 - Helpful
 - 4 – Very Helpful
15. (CML/AG) Do you think you could do a digital film project without a coach? Why or Why not?
16. (CML/AG,CR,DM) How important was the visual portion of the film to telling your story?
17. (CML/AG,CR,DM) How important was the sound/audio to telling your story? Explain why it was needed or not needed.
18. (CML/AG,CR,DM) What editing application (software) did you use and why. Explain how it did or did not make a difference in telling your story?
19. (CML/AG,CR,DM) What method(s) or features did you use when selecting images, film footage (video), audio, special effects?
20. (CML/AG,PR) Complete the following sentence:
By creating this film, I am _____. Elaborate on your response.
21. (CML/AG) Please complete the following. Share as much as you would like.
When creating a digital project in the future, I need **more** of _____.
22. (CML/AG) Please complete the following. Share as much as you would like.
When creating a digital project in the future, I need **less** of _____.
23. (DM) If given the chance to create a digital film in a class like social studies, would you? Why or Why not?
24. (CML/AG) If given the chance to participate in the film festival again, would you? Why or Why not?
25. Please feel free to share any other information that might be of interest to the JOCO Film Festival Committee.

Coding Grid

CML/AG: Critical Media Literacy/Agency

CR: Creativity

DM: Digital Media Technology

PR: Participatory collaboration/learning

ST: Standards/Non-standards

UNK: No Response