

MOVEMENT, SENSIBILITIES AND DESIRE:  
COMING TO KNOW AFFECTIVE DIMENSIONS OF ADOLESCENTS' EXPERIENCES  
WITH LITERACY AND NEW MEDIA IN SCHOOL, ON THEIR OWN, AND IN THE  
HOSPITAL

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Dissertation

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate School of Vanderbilt University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

Learning, Teaching and Diversity

May, 2015

Nashville, Tennessee

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To Lea Ehret

And to my parents Pamela and Wayne Ehret,

for their continued and humbling support of their children's opportunities to learn.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Human bodies resist representation. Bodies in pain and physical labor (Scarry, 1994); hands molding wet sand (Ingold, 2011). The feel of those whole, moving bodies—those hands and body parts moving and feeling—is not accessible in words alone. So too do pain, labor and the feeling of wet sand resist the academic impulse toward codification: Each footstep in saltwater-drenched earth feels different, produces a new sensation, affects now a shiver and then a memory. Although in a traditional Western sense the academic knowability of the world “depends on its susceptibility to representation” (Scarry, 1994, p. 3), (academic) language is limited in its ability to (re)present the singular experiences of moving, feeling bodies. These singular experiences involve both the materiality of pain and sand for which language can seem “quick and cavalier,” and the metaphysical abstractions of truth and cognition for which language can disappoint, laden with “the weight of the world” (Scarry, 1994, p. 3). For both the everyday feel of things and the everyday that feels transcendent, language pares feeling from the picture.

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This dissertation evokes, in three research papers, my work toward coming to know affective dimensions of how human bodies experience their literacies. Questions about the feeling of literacy learning have never been more present to literacy studies, and, across the three papers, I illuminate this problem through a sustained critique of linguistic and representational theories that elide how bodies, *as they are lived*, experience learning and literacy. Representational theories such as multimodality (Kress, 2010) and discourse theory (Gee, 2008) pervade literacy research. Rooted in linguistics and semiotic approaches (Halliday, 1978), these

theories have been problematically applied in readings of living bodies as if they were texts (Leander & Boldt, 2013) (Pink, 2011) (McDonald, 2012). Whereas such theories were meant to understand language and material representation in social context, they have come to be used to understand social life *through* language and *in* language (a particular kind of [academic] language), as if language alone were enough to know what language itself pares from the picture. In large part, literacy researchers employing multimodal and discourse-based approaches have eschewed or skewed the enlivening felt-experiences of literacy and learning that resist representation.

As technologies for engaging in digital literacies become more mobile, the problem of representation intensifies for literacy studies. Driven by representational theories, most literacy research attending to new media and learning has focused on technologies, social media platforms, or on the media texts produced, rather than on the moving human bodies producing with these technologies: they focus on the means of representing—the mediums and mediators—or on the representations themselves, rather than on the feeling of actually making those representations. And yet, technologies move with bodies now more than ever (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013; Merchant, 2012), and moving bodies—their movements, their feelings, the atmospheres their moving, feeling bodies generate—have never been more distorted, more elided in studies of literacies in use. In summary, the problem of representation in literacy studies has never been more present (1) because never before have bodies been so strongly read as texts and (2) technologies for engaging in literacies on the move have never been more pervasive (Ehret & Hollett, 2013).

Having identified this evolving tension in the field, the papers in this dissertation contribute to emerging conversations about what learning and literacy feel like as experiences of

lived bodies (e.g., Lemke, 2013a, 2013b; Ingold, 2011, 2013; Nemirovsky, 2011; Woodcock, 2010; Hickey-Moody, 2013; Hollett & Ehret, in press). They evoke my feeble-feeling attempt not to pare feeling from my portraits of literacies in use across three distinct studies in seemingly disparate contexts: (1) a digital media enrichment class; (2) an adolescent’s digital video productions outside of school; and (3) a children’s hospital. The disparity of contexts highlights both the contextual and singular nature of feeling, and the ubiquity of affect and new technologies in everyday life: feeling and i-Devices are ever-present in adolescents’ lives in school, on their own, and in the hospital. Deeply emplaced in each of these contexts, each paper develops social theory toward understanding both the feeling of literacy as embodied human experiences, and the feeling of literacies in motion: physically, figuratively, and temporally. In the process, the papers also problematize the academic “coming to know” of these feelings. Struggling toward some kind, some feeling, of knowledge related to three affective dimensions of literacy—movement, sensibilities, and desire—the papers feel feeble; yet, this feeble feeling is important to their strength for at least two reasons.

First, the opening paper, employs multimodal interaction analysis [MIA] (Norris, 2011) to understand how two fifth grade students feel the process of composing augmented reality narratives using iPod touches as their primary composing tools. A progression from mediated discourse analysis (Scollon, 2001), MIA decentralizes the role of speech, by positioning it as diffuse amongst other communicative modes, and acknowledging the interrelationship between this fuller ensemble of modes and the material environment. In the opening paper, MIA as microanalytic approach helped the authors<sup>1</sup> to understand, for instance, how the direct perception of the material environment as semiotic resource—e.g., tugging on a phone cord—influenced

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<sup>1</sup> This article was co-authored with Ty Hollett, currently a doctoral candidate in the Department of Teaching and Learning, Peabody College, Vanderbilt University.

both immediate meaning-making and the trajectory of students' augmented reality narratives. Ultimately, insights such as these yielded larger conclusions that understood through the affective dimension of movement (Massumi, 2002)—bodies potential to move and be moved, to affect and be affected. The authors drew implications around motility—or the potential for students to move about classrooms, schools, and other settings—and their development as agentic new media composers with *mobile* devices.

Although MIA aided the authors' insights, it also provoked theoretic and representational tensions around what it meant to know participants' embodied experiences. For example, the multimodal transcription the authors produced—and the excerpt they published—ostensibly *represents* the experience of one study participant, Yvette, in second-by-second frames [See Chapter 2, Figure 3]. Moreover, each frame breaks down embodied experience into discrete, culturally constructed categories that potentially misrepresent what already resists representation: Yvette's singular embodied experiences that may not map onto the authors' *a priori* categories. The authors stand firmly behind their claims in the article, but are concerned that literacy researchers might conflate the process of transcribing with the transcription, continuing to break bodies down rather than letting them live in fuller, messier, more complex portraits of embodied experiences of literacy and learning in social worlds. Indeed, the transcription does not represent the authors' findings; rather, the *process* of transcription; of (re)watching, (re)feeling the video data; of talking with each other in collaborative coding; of talking with Yvette, returning to fieldnotes are, together, the analysis that enabled their claims. It was the process—the feeling through the data—and the theory that helped us to know, in a way, our participants' felt-experiences of composition: It was not the representation of the process.

The authors' lingering concerns around representation led to the interpretative phenomenological analysis in paper 2 [Chapter 3]. Paper 2 develops social theories of affective semiosis and emplacement (Fors, Bäckström, & Pink, 2013)—or the feeling of being in place—to understand how the lived body makes meaning as it moves and feels in material environments. Further, Paper 2 builds on insights from Paper 1 that illuminated affective meaning-making as, in part, influenced by direct perception of the material world. In Paper 2, I use the term sensibilities to describe the historical, cultural and developmental nature of an adolescent's emplaced, affective meaning-making in the process of learning to compose digital videos outside of school. Whereas Paper 1 addressed relationships between new media composition, feeling, and meaning-making through a micro-analysis of one class period, Paper 2 explores how these relationships develop over time in sensibilities. I develop my argument by analyzing data from an eighteen-month case-study of one adolescent's digital video productions over the course of four years, from early YouTube videos and to a later documentary film about homelessness in his community.

As in Paper 1, tensions arose in my attempts “to know” my participants' feelings, how feeling influenced his meaning-making experiences. Because I was not present when he filmed his YouTube videos, I relied on *post hoc* accounts of his filming process, formal interviews, and on the videos themselves. I relied on language and representation (although, that language and those representations made me *feel*). I was present for much of the documentary filming, however, and felt, with my own body, moments of affective intensity during which social relations were altered, where social textures were (re)shaped, during filming. In the paper, I describe how my coming to know meant attending to my own feelings, how my body moved alongside my participant, *in addition to* my participant's description of his feelings of being in



place. Coming to know the development of sensibilities, to make claims about them, intimately involved my own moving, feeling, body.

And yet, I “coded” these feelings. I developed “strong” theories of affective semiosis and emplacement in order to make sense of sensibilities that did not always make “sense,” that felt at times irrational. Papers 1 and 2 feel like feeble attempts to know feeling because human bodies feeling out their literacies, their learning, resist academic representation and codification. The strength in Papers 1 and 2 come from how intensely writing them and attempting to analyze the data they present made me feel that feeling is non-representable, that language and coding pares feeling from the picture.

Following from struggles with representation in Papers 1 and 2, Paper 3 [Chapter 4] feels far weaker, but in a very different sense. It is intentionally weak. It is an intentionally weak attempt to theorize the feelings of *being* with an adolescent in the hospital. It weakly theorizes literacy moments as the feeling of being in *something* with Cole, something that felt like more than it was while our bodies were engaged in literacy together. Paper 3 develops non-representational weak theories in critique of strong theories that work to know bodies and feeling through words, representation, codification and *a* truth. In addition to literacy moments, Paper 3 contributes theorizations of desire and affective pedagogies as emergent phenomena of literacy experiences. Desiring lines are theorized as generative forces weakly linking the literacy moments described in narrative “findings,” which are presented in creative nonfiction. Resisting the impulse toward strong theories that might link these moments—moments that together only feel like something—analysis itself is a process of weakly recreating those moments, linked by desiring lines, through writing in a genre that plays with the limits of (academic) truth-telling.

The narrative evinces Cole and the author's jointly produced desires for literacies that make moments, and move their bodies physically and imaginatively.

Too strong a portrait—fictional or nonfictional—of any experience pares feeling from the picture. Thus, it is important that these papers, even together, are weak. It is important generally because social science, education and literacy research need weaker theories—e.g., post-structural, non-representational—to work in generative duplicity with strong theories—e.g., constructivist, representational—in order to know the complexities of affect, feeling and emotion as they texture social life. These papers, as a set, evince such duplicity. But it is also important to me, as a beginning academic, that they are weak: These papers are the beginnings of an emerging research program that will work with carefully calibrated degrees of theoretic and (non) representational strength toward the humbling goal of feeling out experiences of literacy and learning. Propelled by these papers, this research program will emerge in the service both of human knowledge production and of the human beings—research participants and partners—intimately involved in my coming to know the natures of affective relations.

As a set, these papers contribute knowledge about movement, sensibilities and desire to lines of inquiry around the feeling of literacy and learning. Additionally, in their attempts at coming to know affective dimensions of social life, these papers also develop a tension in this conversation around what it means to “know” and make claims about moving, feeling bodies other than our own. As this conversation—and my research program—moves forward, I feel that coming to know affective dimensions of literacies requires feeling out weaker theories that trouble what it means to know and communicate in academic relations. I hope this continued troubling generates new forms of knowing and feeling, and that it influences how social scientists attune to the socio-affective worlds into which they inquire. As an education researcher

concerned especially with literacy, I wonder: How can literacy researchers come to know how desires shape the textures of emergent literacy experiences without over representing them, without codifying them for academic knowing? How can researchers know the desires of bodies not their own, especially when desire itself is slippery—at once abstraction for which language seems inadequate, and an affective intensity of felt engagement with the material world for which language can seem cavalier? How to know, attune to, and share desires that resist representation in the service of more affective, emergence pedagogies?

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Human bodies resist representation. Keeping feeling in the academic picture requires resisting impulses toward a “truth”, toward a limited brand of academic “knowing”, toward capturing, stilling, or representing data in order to know what the data *is*, what it *says*. Social science data is, of course, more than “data,” and it says (feels) more than words can express. Data (lived bodies) *express*. This dissertation started a desiring toward *something* I cannot name, but, feebly, will try to: Literacy researchers must move toward expressivity in methods for coming to know social life, and they must move toward expressivity in (not) representing the affective experiences of lived bodies engaged in literacy. Otherwise, the moving, feeling experiences of desiring bodies producing, imagining and generating passion with their literacies will remain unknown, if only in academic relations. Feeling the pulsing affects of literacies in the boredom, joy, grief and wonder of everyday life requires academic unknowing.

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## CHAPTER 2

### EMBODIED COMPOSITION IN REAL VIRTUALITIES: ADOLESCENTS LITERACY PRACTICES AND FELT EXPERIENCES MOVING WITH DIGITAL, MOBILE DEVICES IN SCHOOL<sup>2</sup>

#### **Introduction**

Youth practice digital literacies “anytime, anywhere” with the mobile devices now firmly entrenched in their lives (Watkins, 2009). Now 78% of adolescents own cell phones, compared with the 45% who did in 2004, and one in four adolescents is a “cell-mostly” Internet user, using a phone as his or her main conduit to the Internet rather than a laptop or desktop computer (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013). Youth also employ mobile devices for engaging in everyday learning and literacies, using them to study topics of personal interest, to access mentors and teachers, and to produce texts for feedback and consumption (Squire & Dikkers, 2012).

In response to the near-ubiquity of mobile computing in adolescents’ lives, schools are beginning to ask students to bring their own mobile devices into classrooms and are asking teachers to integrate these devices into classroom practice. For example, one high school in a mid-South district implemented a Bring Your Own Technology (BYOT) program, encouraging students to bring personal laptops, tablets, and other mobile devices with them to school. Other schools are purchasing class sets of mobile devices. For example, a high school in the district in which this study was conducted invested in iPad carts for each teacher in its English department, asking them to use the iPads to advance students’ literacy learning, generally. Teachers, in collaboration with a literacy coach, technology coordinator, and other stakeholders, are

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<sup>2</sup> This chapter was co-authored with Ty Hollett and published as:  
Ehret, C. & Hollett, T. (2014). Embodied composition in real virtualities: Adolescents' literacy practices and felt experiences moving with digital, mobile devices in school. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 48(4), 428-452.

responsible for thinking about how best to use these mobile devices in English Language Arts (ELA) instruction.

Despite the prevalence of mobile devices in youths' literate lives, and despite their immanent integration into educational practice, little is known about the literacy practices associated with mobile devices, and still less is known about the nexus of these practices and learning. As evidenced in the above illustrations, schools and teachers are currently confronting questions such as: How do classroom interactions change when technology is no longer tethered to a specific space? What do students do with digital technologies that allow them to compose on the move?

### **Overview**

In an early investigation of composition with mobile devices, Vasudevan (2010) described how one adolescent, Joey, used a Playstation Portable (PSP) both as a tool to transfer files between devices and as a place to compose a digital autobiography. The PSP was Joey's mobile production studio, enabling him to "produce, archive, import, export, edit, and distribute texts" at multiple sites (p. 71). Vasudevan traced the ways in which "education is being remixed—or re-imagined—through the reconfiguration of texts, technologies, and resources" across geographies (p. 64). In this article, we pay particular attention to adolescents' embodied experiences of composing with digital, mobile devices similar to Joey's, and to how the nature of composition is in need of reimagining as bodies traverse texts and technologies, timescales and spaces.

First, we review critiques of social semiotic theories of multimodality, which dominate research on adolescents' composing processes with new media. These critiques center on what some scholars identify as a lack of attention to embodiment, recognizing specific dimensions of



embodied experience (e.g., feeling and physical movement) that may influence meaning-making and textual production. Working from these suggestions, we contribute a beginning theorization of embodiment for new media composition that emerges from our effort to understand our participants' experiences composing with mobile devices in school and that highlights particular dimensions of literacy as felt experience: feeling-histories, direct perception, affective atmospheres, and the felt experience of time.

We apply this conceptualization in our analysis, initially identifying the literacy practices in which five adolescents engaged over a 12-week digital media enrichment course led and designed by the authors. We focus on how two students with contrasting histories of digital culture, Adela and Yvette<sup>1</sup>, experienced composition with iPods. This analysis illuminates our students' embodied experiences of their literacy practices and illustrates their relationship to students' development as composers with mobile devices. Overall, we work to recover bodies moving, feeling, and interacting in real virtualities as they compose with mobile, digital devices. We acknowledge that this represents a starting point for understanding new media composition as embodied experience and that we use this approach to analyze themes arising from our specific dataset. Therefore, we offer our analysis alongside a call for the continued expansion of theory to engage the embodied nature of meaning-making and new media composing.

### **Related Literature: Toward an Embodied Approach to New Media Composition**

When composing with digital devices, adolescents manipulate manifold, materially diverse semiotic resources that include alphabetic language among a variety of other communicative modes (Jewitt, 2008). Thus far, researchers have foregrounded this very variety, the semiotic power of modal ensembles for communication and identity construction (see Gilje, 2010; Hull & Katz, 2006) over the bodies that compose, orchestrate, and make meaning with

them. This foregrounding of textuality stems in part from the linguistic heritage undergirding investigations of adolescents' multimodal literacies (Leander & Boldt, 2013).

Recognizing both the importance and limitations of these contributions, some researchers have argued for more expansive, embodied approaches—both theoretically and methodologically—for understanding adolescents' new media composing processes. From a theoretical perspective, scholars have questioned the way in which multiliteracies frameworks have led investigators to *position* adolescents as *rational* designers of texts (Leander & Boldt, 2013), potentially missing how their *moving, feeling* bodies influence meaning-making in unpredictable ways. Moreover, Lemke (2013b) argues that a better understanding of how *feelings* co-constitute meaning-making in semiotic practice may lead to more nuanced understandings of literacies across multiple media. Foregrounding mobility, Lemke illuminates how felt meaning-making processes involve literal and figurative traversals of the body through “space and time, real or virtual or both, that crosses boundaries of place, setting, activity, genre, and the like” (p. 65).

Others raise methodological concerns about multimodal approaches to discourse (e.g., Norris, 2004) and textual analysis (e.g., Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006), arguing that although such approaches have expanded analysis to include multiple text-image-sound relations, none approaches human interaction with enough attention to embodied meaning-making in material worlds (Streeck, Goodwin, & LeBaron, 2011). In fact, multimodal theories parse modes into stable, discrete sensory categories that privilege the Western five-sense sensorium and that are at odds with cross-cultural ethnographic investigations, which illuminate embodied sensory experiences as social constructions (Pink, 2011).

In the current milieu, in which mobile technologies are proliferating in adolescents' lives, it is especially important to theorize embodiment for composition. Yet, researchers within literacy studies have approached adolescents' composing experiences with new media as divided between screen and body—focusing intently on the screen. Given the commitment to textuality within literacy studies, it may be understandable that representationalism has pervaded questions about adolescents' literacies with new media: How are adolescents representing identities *in* texts? How are they representing meaning *on* the screen?

Outside of literacy studies, where commitments to textuality are looser, researchers have avoided conceptualizing the Internet, the digital, as separate and disembodied (e.g., Hine, 2000). Castells (1996), for example, eschews the binary of separate digital and physical spaces through his emphasis on *real virtualities*: the total imbrication, or layering, of the digital and physical upon one another. Rather than traversing back and forth between “physical” space and an imagined “cyberspace,” bodily activities in digital and physical spaces are connected. Thus, the digital does not exist simply “on the screen” but rather spills outward into reality and “become[s] the experience” (Castells, 1996, p. 328). In this article, we illustrate the potential for thinking of adolescents' composing as not simply located on screens but as fluid through real virtualities, as a felt experience of moving bodies. As technology becomes more mobile, a focus on the body moving with technology becomes essential to avoid the technocentrism that, to date, has trained investigations of adolescents' new media composing on the screen.

To introduce our focus on moving, feeling bodies, we return to Vasudevan's (2009) description of Joey's PSP as a mobile production studio. We wonder how moving through the spaces of everyday life affected not only how he used the device, but also what he produced. How did the feeling, the atmosphere, the sensory experience of a particular place affect what

Joey blogged about, or what he might Instagram, Tweet, or remix today? How did this emergent production process affect where Joey moved next, what he produced next? How did his sense of time, of being bored or in a hurry, affect how and what he produced? Indeed, how did his histories of feeling in a particular place, of feeling rushed or bored, affect his production in the present moment? In these questions, the body's felt experience is foregrounded and fluid between screen and world, digital and physical.

### **An Embodied Approach to New Media Composition with Mobile Devices**

We understand composition as propelled by affective intensities between bodies, where our conception of bodies includes material things (Bennett, 2011). These affective intensities emerge from direct perceptions in which felt, perceptual judgments involve “higher” functions in the immediacy of experience (Massumi, 2011). We consider embodied actions during composition as potentially emerging from feeling-histories (Lemke, 2013b).

Because we also understand that bodies are always in motion—physically, figuratively, and temporally—we consider composition as traversals within real virtualities in which affective atmospheres are generated, for example when feeling-histories emerge and evolve in present moments. During these traversals, bodies compose in tandem with environments, and they experience temporalities on multiple scales, including the retention of past, embodied experience (Hansen, 2004). From these perspectives, we analyze what moves our participants' bodies as they engage in the process of composition, and how what moves our participants' bodies is more than social semiotic theories of multimodality are able to explain alone.

### **Affect Theory, Literacy, and Embodiment**

Leander and Boldt's (2013) concern with literacy researchers “reading youth through text as designers” (p. 24) emerged from the New London Group's (NLG) (1996) position that

textuality could be understood through universal “design grammars.” Leander and Boldt (2013) argued that the extension of design grammars from pedagogy to readings of youth as purposeful designers led to a “disciplined rationalization of youth engagement in literacies” (p. 23). Concerned with the limited, smoothed-over understanding of embodied experience promoted by the NLG, Leander and Boldt suggested that investigations of youths’ literacies should be expanded to account for “movement, indeterminacy, and emergent potential” (p. 24), and they illustrated affect theory’s potential in this expansion.

We focus our use of affect theory on two aspects of the embodied experience of composition: direct perception and feeling-histories. First, the immediacy of experience might be thought of in terms of direct perception in which perceptual judgments are “without the actual judgment: direct perceptions of the world’s acquired complexity, incoming, flush with the bare-active firstness of experience” (Massumi, 2011, p. 11). The bare-active firstness of experience is the immediacy of felt experience through which “higher” cognitive functions (e.g., causal relations, categorizations, symbolic figuring) must pass. Thus, higher cognitive functions must “come back through the middle,” must pass through moving bodies’ felt relations in material words; “they come back through, bare-actively, in all immediacy, as recreative factors of experience rearising” (Massumi, 2011, p. 11). Higher cognitive functions move out of the head and into body and world. Affect, then, is the potential for bodies—including material things—to move, to compel, before and after direct perception, where direct perception includes “higher” functions. Affect is observed in the intensities, which arise—or do not—in the process of bodies’ movement through lived experience. Such unpredictable activity emerges in the process of composing with mobile devices as the body feels and directly perceives the material environments through which it moves.

Secondly, histories of feeling affect how the body moves and feels in moments of direct perception. Lemke (2013a, 2013b) described how such affects accrue across timescales. Drawing on Bourdieu (1990), Lemke (2013b) argued that “meaning-and-feeling continuities” may become habits (p. 65), or a *habitus*. Focusing specifically on how a habitus develops in tandem with the material environment, Lemke (2013a) posited that these meaning-and-feeling continuities develop as human bodies feel and interact in material environments, where meaning-making is understood as distributed “between organisms and environments, subjects and objects, cooperating persons and mediating artifacts” (p. 75).

Yet, feelings are both in people and in the world: things in the world can spur people into action and *affect* human activity, and therefore “must be understood as involved in multiple overlapping negotiations with human beings and not just as sets of passive and inanimate properties” (Thrift, 2010, p. 292). A theoretical conception of embodiment, therefore, must include *things* as agentic. For example, we confront “the thingness of objects” when they stop working for us: when the drill breaks, when windows get filthy (Brown, 2001, p. 4). In summary, we leverage affect theory to understand how adolescents’ direct perception of *things* in material environments affects their composing processes, and how their feeling-histories may contribute in the moment to these felt perceptions.

**Feeling Space(s).** Embodied theories of new media composition also require understandings of space as relational. Notions of relational space eschew “fixed and essential notions of ‘physical’, ‘human’, ‘culture’, or ‘economy’ and their associated binary framing” (e.g., physical space vs. digital space) and focus on the production of space as distributed and interdependent among emergent relations between bodies (Anderson, 2012, p. 573). Particularly, we draw from research on relational spaces that explores the production of affective atmospheres

produced between bodies. Atmospheres are relational and affective when they permeate space as “singular affective qualities that emanate from but exceed the assembling of bodies” (Anderson, 2009, p. 80), for example, in sports stadiums. Elation, for instance, permeates the stadium as a goal is scored and is felt by spectators and athletes alike, who are both producing and reproducing the feeling.

Research on affective atmospheres has described the capacities for collective *human* bodies to shape and be shaped by affect in material environments. Working from our conceptualization of bodies to include nonhuman things that have the capacity to affect, we analyze how sociotechnical assemblages—here, bodies producing texts with Internet-connected mobile devices—generate feelings in relational school spaces. New spatialities are emerging from the sociotechnical assemblages of bodies moving with new technologies such as mobile devices. For example, Habuchi (2005) illustrated ways in which mobile phone users shut themselves out from (and simultaneously opened up new) communal settings through body movement and eye gaze. Doing so, they engaged with others in “zones of intimacy.” Yet this research ended at the generation of zones of intimacy and did not continue to analyses of bodies’ felt experiences of these intimate spaces, or to how these spaces are generated by the affective sociomaterial assemblage of body-technology. If affective atmospheres are generated in real virtualities, then an account of affective atmospheres must attend to the body as sociotechnical assemblage, as body moving *with* screen and not as bifurcated body|screen.

**Feeling Time.** Lastly, embodied approaches to new media composition require an understanding of time as embodied, felt experience. Compton-Lilly (2011) described time as a contextual factor affecting the ways in which people make sense of their lives. In her longitudinal study of one student, Alicia, and members of her family, Compton-Lilly

documented the convergence of literacy and schooling discourses across multiple temporalities. She found that Alicia and her siblings consistently recollected past experiences to understand present events. Tracking discourses across time evinced how meaning-making unfurled and spread across social histories, stories, and artifacts. At the classroom level, Bloome, Beierle, Grigorenko, and Goldman (2009) described how teachers and students constructed and used time to create learning opportunities in a ninth-grade ELA classroom, teasing out moments in which time thickened for students, moments when time rose to the forefront of classroom experiences. Time is also an embodied experience that is felt on multiple scales as “moments add up” (Lemke, 2000). For example, Hansen (2004) described how moments “add up,” how time thickens in the lived experience of new media, similar to Lemke’s (2013b) observations on the accrual of affects. Hansen distinguished between “*recollection* that re-presents a moment of the past and *retention* via which . . . the lived past continues to adhere in the lived present” (emphasis added, p. 604). Thus, with the notion of retention rather than recollection, we conceptualize time as a lived experience in which the body *feels* the past in the present moment.

## **Methods**

### **Research Site, Curriculum, and Role of Teacher-Researchers**

This study took place at a charter school primarily serving Hispanic and African American youth in an urban setting. We chose this site because of the researchers and school administration’s mutual interest in incorporating digital media into existing literacy curricula. Administrators selected students to participate during a literacy enrichment block, wanting to provide students with opportunities to access, use, and create with digital technologies. Two boys and three girls, each 12 years old, participated in the 12-session, weekly digital media enrichment course led and designed by the authors.



Daily lessons complemented learning in students' Language Arts course (e.g., mood in multimodal texts). However, sessions were directed toward facilitating novel composing opportunities with digital technologies, as we provided students experience with an increasingly app-based computing paradigm. Students used the iPod Touch 4G to compose digital stories and other media. They had not previously used any of the apps adopted in the course. As a guiding theme, daily activities revolved around the ways our students envisioned—and re-envisioned—the people, places, and things surrounding them. Designing these activities, we anticipated that students would often need to move, leaving their desks to compose. Our interest in students' learning with mobile devices and the autonomy the administration afforded us thus contributed to the classroom context in which mobility emerged as a norm.

This autonomy also helped us to understand our participants' ways of being with digital devices and their histories with digital culture. The classroom culture we constructed alongside our participants allowed us to share in their cultural ways of being with digital technologies and literacies. For example, we played video games of their choosing with them, sometimes on devices they brought from home. We encouraged them to bring their digital culture into our shared space, thereby enhancing the credibility of our data and bolstering our positionality as knowers in the study context and as tellers of our participants' ways of being, specifically while engaged with digital technologies.

### **Focal Participants**

At the time of the study, Adela and Yvette were friends in school and lived in the surrounding urban area. Adela came from a Thai family, living with an older sister, two parents, and her grandfather. She was particularly enthusiastic about anime and her Lalaloopsy and Squinkies toys, almost always carrying her Lalaloopsy dolls with her and placing them around

her workspace on her desk as part of her unpacking routine before class. Yvette's favorite class was English, and just as often as Adela carried Lalaloopsy dolls to class, Yvette brought books. Her favorite books were *The Hunger Games* trilogy. Yvette lived with her Hispanic family and often talked about their visits to the nearby zoo. Both successful students, they were also active in school clubs, especially the community service club. They were proud of their school and their involvement in the surrounding community, showing us the community bulletin board in the school's foyer when we walked with them and asked them to show us important things around the school. Although community service was an integral part of the school culture created by the administration and faculty, Adela and Yvette lived in the community they served and showed sincere pride and enthusiasm in telling us stories about their projects.

### **Data Sources**

Data used in our overarching analysis include all instances of mobile composition from the course: videotaped class sessions, recorded with two cameras; head-mounted camera footage used to observe participants' interactions with their mobile devices and peers; field notes; artifacts produced by participants, both digital (e.g., Flat Stanley images) and physical (e.g., paper and pencil outlines); and informal interviews. Students also participated in three individual, stimulated-recall interviews in which we guided them in viewing video footage from composing activities, asking them about their experiences and compositional choices, and member-checking emerging interpretations of the data. These interviews were conducted after the third, seventh, and final class sessions.

Microanalysis focused on a 50-minute learning segment during our fourth meeting, in which students used the Flat Stanley app on their iPod Touch to compose a digital narrative. As an augmented reality application, Flat Stanley operates in conjunction with the iPod's digital

camera to overlay a cartoon character on an image the user captures, thus augmenting a material mise-en-scène with a digital image (Figure 1). Before this meeting, students gained facility with the iPods, learning to shoot and edit images and video; layer text and audio over images; and sequence edited images into stories. The goal for learners on this day was to begin a digital story describing their Flat Stanley's interactions with meaningful objects they had brought from home. We chose the app because it exemplifies composition in real virtualities: it bridges the digital (the Flat Stanley avatar) with the physical (the learners' objects as well as the surrounding material environment), thus addressing our research questions' foci and pedagogical aims.



*Figure 1:* Student image produced using the Flat Stanley app. Manuel layered his digital avatar over the physical environment.

In this activity, we gave minimal guidance to students with respect to genre and content; the only specification we gave was to “tell the story of your objects using the Flat Stanley app.” We did offer possibilities: students could tell the true story of an object, detailing personal

memories or experiences connected to it, or they could fabricate a story about an object. One participant, taking the latter option, created a travel narrative for his Flat Stanley avatar, detailing, in one scene, its ascent up a blue Crayola marker “mountain” he called “Mount Bluejay.”

### **Research Questions**

In our analysis, we leverage our enhanced theoretical perspectives to analyze participants’ literacy experiences, focusing specifically on how mobile devices mediate literacy as an embodied, affective experience. We pose the following questions:

- In what literacy practices did participants engage during mobile device–mediated composition events across a digital media course? Specifically, how did participants’ feeling-histories inform their interactions with an iPod when they used it as a compositional tool during a typical literacy event? How did these feeling-histories combine with body-technology assemblages to produce affective atmospheres?
- How did participants navigate real virtualities in the process of composing during this typical literacy event? How were their bodies engaged affectively and temporally in these navigations?

### **Analysis of Literacy Practices, and Microanalytic Data Selection**

We conducted two strands of analysis across our full corpus of data. First, we employed Spradley’s (1979) domain analysis procedures, which assume that cultural activities are connected to larger cultural domains of knowledge in semantic relationships. Rowe (2008) used a means-end domain analysis (i.e., X is a way to Y) to describe the ways in which preschool students participated in activities at their classroom writing table. Similarly, and to address our first research question, we used means-end analysis to identify and understand how our

participants used mobile devices over the entirety of the 12-week course. Results from the domain analysis are reported in Table 1, and an illustrative example of the results is presented in Figure 2.

*Table 1: Participants Literacy Practices with Mobile Devices*

<b>Producing</b>	<b>Exploring</b>	<b>Sharing</b>	<b>Moving</b>	<b>Navigating iOS</b>
Capture digital images, video, and audio	Messing around with new apps	Help classmates with technical problems	Locate semiotic resources	Learn iOS (mobile operating system)
Design avatars	Take pictures and videos of peers and teachers	Send digital creations to one another	Determine appropriate spaces and postures for composing	Navigate multiple apps and in-app windows
Edit images and/or video; apply appropriate filters	Read / look at examples from mentor media	Show digital creations to one another	Tap, swipe, pinch, etc.	Interpret sign systems (e.g., icons, maps, etc.)
Layer and position avatars and icons		Perform newly discovered capabilities		Manage affective response to pop-ups and notifications
Write captions and narratives				Acknowledge upload and download period
Establish frame for image and video capture				Maintain flow when device does not respond
Construct mise-en-scène with physical resources				
Direct actors				

Second, we used findings from the domain analysis to identify a typical literacy event for microanalysis. The literacy event microanalyzed in our findings was typical of the literacy practices with mobile devices that we identified across the 12 learning segments. We understand literacy events as occurring across and within multiple timescales—for example, the event of participants’ engagement in an organizing composition activity (producing a Flat Stanley

narrative) and the composition events embedded within that activity (capturing an image, typing captions, etc.).



*Figure 2:* Manuel records a summary using the AudioBoo app, photographs the page, and then combines image, audio-recording, and caption in a graphic novel summary of the page using the ComicBook! app.

Next, we chose participants with contrasting histories with digital technology and culture for comparative analysis (Yin, 2009). This comparative analysis illuminates how varied cultural histories, technical histories, and feeling-histories influenced Adela's and Yvette's composing with mobile devices. We identified Adela and Yvette based on data from individual interviews and digital surveys regarding their histories and experiences with mobile devices.

### **Microanalysis**

Through microanalysis, we sought a better understanding of our participants' embodied experiences of the literacy practices identified using domain analysis procedures. As our unit of analysis, we used *mediated action*, or "volitional, goal-directed, tool-mediated action in social context" (Smagorinsky, 2008, p. 399). Thus, working to expand from a product-oriented,

“grammatical” focus in studies of new media composition, we focused on mediated action *in situ* over this typical 50-minute class period, understanding mediated action as, for example, Adela and Yvette capturing, revising, and publishing multiple images while moving with their iPods. Microanalysis included two distinct strands, both informing elements of each research question. First, we coded data using qualitative procedures informed by grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008), reaching agreement on codes in collaborative discussion of the data rather than independent corroboration (Smagorinsky, 2008). Through open coding, we developed general categories for what informed Adela’s and Yvette’s interactions with their iPods and how they navigated real virtualities during those interactions. For example, we coded for how Adela’s response to things in the material environment affected the trajectory of her narrative at various points. During the axial coding stage, we refined categories, noting salient differences within categories. For example, we coded for Yvette’s felt experiences of time, which illuminated the ways in which motility across real virtualities affected the pace at which she could compose. In our second strand of analysis, we identified illustrative segments of video from coded data for multimodal interaction analysis and transcription (Norris, 2011). Described by Norris (2011) as “multimodal (inter)action analysis” (MIA), this method originates from Scollon’s (2001) approach to mediated discourse analysis (MDA). MIA departs from MDA in that the mode of speech is not primary but diffuse among other modes—such as gesture, gaze, and proxemics—as a recognition of the multiple modes of activity in which social actors engage, “encompassing each and every action an individual produces with tools, the environment, and individuals” (Norris, 2011, p. 1). We use MIA not only because it dovetails with our theoretical approach in its expansive view of human activity that includes the physical environment, but also because of its potential to illuminate our questions about Adela’s and Yvette’s embodied experiences.

Recognizing embodied activity both as connected to the environment and as essential to any communicative event aided us in understanding how Adela and Yvette composed on the move within real virtualities. For example, the transcribed segment of mediated action we provide in Figure 3 evinces Yvette's bodily experience of time through her talk, posture, full-bodied movement, and fingers touching and swiping the iPod screen. This transcription adds to our account of Yvette's embodied experience of composing, in triangulation with multiple other data points described above.

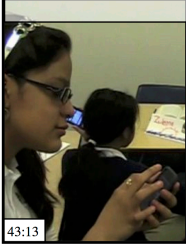
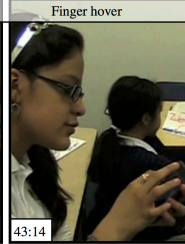

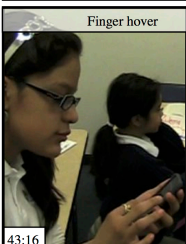
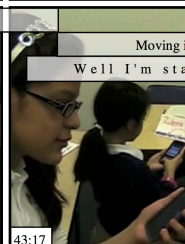
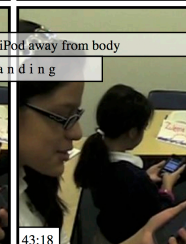
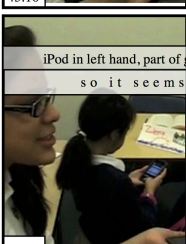


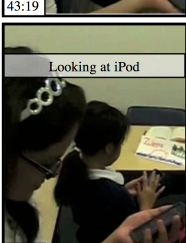
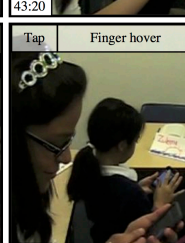

 43:13	 43:14	 43:15	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Finger hover</td></tr> <tr><td>Tap</td></tr> <tr><td>Finger Gestures</td></tr> <tr><td>Body Movement</td></tr> <tr><td>Speech</td></tr> </table>	Finger hover	Tap	Finger Gestures	Body Movement	Speech		
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 43:16	 43:17	 43:18	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Finger hover</td></tr> <tr><td>Moving iPod away from body</td></tr> <tr><td>We'll I'm standing</td></tr> <tr><td>Finger Gestures</td></tr> <tr><td>Body Movement</td></tr> <tr><td>Speech</td></tr> </table>	Finger hover	Moving iPod away from body	We'll I'm standing	Finger Gestures	Body Movement	Speech	
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 43:19	 43:20	 43:21	<table border="1"> <tr><td>iPod in left hand, part of gesticulation</td></tr> <tr><td>Moving iPod back to original position</td></tr> <tr><td>so it seems long</td></tr> <tr><td>Finger Gestures</td></tr> <tr><td>Body Movement</td></tr> <tr><td>Speech</td></tr> </table>	iPod in left hand, part of gesticulation	Moving iPod back to original position	so it seems long	Finger Gestures	Body Movement	Speech	
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Moving iPod back to original position										
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Finger Gestures										
Body Movement										
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 43:22	 43:23	 43:24	<table border="1"> <tr><td>Looking at iPod</td></tr> <tr><td>Tap</td></tr> <tr><td>Finger hover</td></tr> <tr><td>iPod and head lowered</td></tr> <tr><td>Finger Gestures</td></tr> <tr><td>Body Movement</td></tr> <tr><td>Speech</td></tr> </table>	Looking at iPod	Tap	Finger hover	iPod and head lowered	Finger Gestures	Body Movement	Speech
Looking at iPod										
Tap										
Finger hover										
iPod and head lowered										
Finger Gestures										
Body Movement										
Speech										

Figure 3: Excerpt from the multimodal interaction analysis transcript of Yvette's embodied composing process.



## Findings

The demands of composing with mobile devices and the literacy practices students employed and developed in response necessitated traversals of real virtualities not required with other mediational means. For instance, students explored apps to find those best suited for their compositional goals, or to find examples (mentor media) of the texts they were asked to produce on app-based social networking sites. Rather than being off-task, students' navigation within and between apps and their connected social networks was an integral part of their composing processes. While messing around with apps, though, students often moved through the classroom and hallways, and moved to make their small screens available to each other. They often moved, thus, through layers of space, through real virtualities. Even seated composition required such traversals to achieve compositional goals. Looking back to Figure 2, for example, Manuel moved his iPod, trying out multiple positions and taking numerous photographs to find angles he felt best captured his reading of the page, which he recorded in audio. At the same time, Manuel engaged in a temporally textured navigation, in which he could listen to his peers' previously recorded readings by scanning a QR code pasted on the page. All of this required touching and swiping the screen, moving between device-based apps and Internet sites, and talking to teachers and peers.

This complex navigation of real virtualities is a necessary perspective on new media composition as embodied process. In the following paragraphs we describe how Adela's and Yvette's histories informed their interactions with their iPods in sometimes unpredictable ways. Indeed, their histories with digital, mobile devices alone did not reliably predict how they used the iPods: the affective, cultural complexity of their embodied interactions with the device extended to their ways of being while engaged with literacy, generally, while moving through the

spaces of their everyday lives. This section addresses our first research question: How did participants' feeling-histories inform their interactions with an iPod when they used it as a compositional tool during a typical literacy event? Specifically, how did these feeling-histories combine with body-technology assemblages to produce affective atmospheres?

### **Mobile Feeling-Histories: “It’s Kinda Like When You Read a Book”**

Adela’s and Yvette’s histories with digital, mobile devices differed substantially, both in their experience using them and in how they conceived of them. For example, on our introductory survey, Yvette was the only student who did not list an Internet-connected mobile device as a familiar technology. Although Yvette’s history with digital, mobile devices was limited, her history of being mobile while engaged in literacy was not. When we asked participants to take their iPods home and capture screenshots to display how they were using them, Yvette’s screenshots mimicked her uses of standalone digital cameras. Her screenshots were all photos: friends on the bus, red lemurs at the zoo. Other students displayed screenshots from apps, such as cover art from their Pandora radio stations.

Conversely, Adela painted an expansive portrait of her history with mobile technologies. When asked what mobile devices she used, she drew distinctions between types—phones, TVs, and games—and types within types—for example, iPhones versus flip-phones. When asked what mobile devices she used most, she took care to delineate how she used multiple, portable Nintendo devices for different purposes: the Gameboy for “adventure games,” the “regular” Nintendo DS for Pictochat, and the Nintendo 3DS for *Animal Crossing*. Adela described both a familiarity with multifunctional mobile devices similar to the iPod and an understanding of the subtle distinctions between affordances of different hardware for operating varied software.

Despite these differences in their histories with digital technologies and concomitant cultures, a distinct commonality emerged in what influenced Yvette's and Adela's ways of being with mobile devices in the classroom: their histories of being mobile while engaged in literacy. To aid our understanding of this nexus, we draw on Lemke's (2013a) expansion of Bourdieu's (1990) notion of *habitus* to include feeling-histories. These adolescents' development as composers with mobile devices involved their affective and social histories as inextricably linked to their evolving *habitus*, their developing ways of being, feeling, and moving while engaged in literacy. In short, their experiences of being mobile while engaged in literacy were influential in their development as mobile composers in our classroom. We advance this argument in the following microanalysis of Yvette's and Adela's embodied experiences of composing with iPods during the typical class period we identified.

**Yvette's Flat Stanley Production as Embodied, Historical Activity.** Yvette's historical trajectory of technology use on the move is even more pronounced when viewed specifically as an embodied history. Commenting on video of herself composing her Flat Stanley narrative, Yvette connected the way she held the iPod—and moved with it—to the ways she holds—and moves with—books. Her burgeoning embodied way of being with the iPod within our classroom was less about her history of tool use, of using digital, mobile devices, than it was about her history of *being mobile with tools* while engaged in literacy (e.g., her history of walking while reading books). Yvette made this connection for us during an interview in which we asked her to comment on a video of herself moving and composing throughout the classroom. She quickly linked her actions to reading books at home: “When I read and like I'm interested in a book and I want to go get a snack downstairs in my house, I just take the book with me and I get the snack,” Yvette said as she mimed reaching for a snack while reading a book. Yvette noted that even the

way she brought the iPod closer to her face was an unconscious practice. It's just "impulse," she said. "It's like a book, so I just pick it up."

Yvette followed this thread when describing the ways she entered text on the iPod with both thumbs. She said, "It's kinda like when you read a book, because you hold it like that." Yvette even equated turning the pages of a book with her thumb and forefinger with entering text into her iPod: "So it's kinda like if you're holding a book, you're like turning the pages, because there's like the thumbs in there." She concluded, "I think of the phone as a book because you hold it like that."

Yvette's movements with the iPod were a "product of history" (Bourdieu, 1990)—her history of being mobile while doing literacy. She had an impulse that made her want to treat the device like a book, to hold and move with it in the same way. Yvette developed an embodied way of being and moving with books when she read—the way she held the book with arms outstretched and brought it closer for further inspection, the way she walked with a book when going to get a snack, the way she turned its pages. The way of being that Yvette developed when reading reproduced itself within her movements with the iPod. It was a "durable disposition" that did not break down as a result of her employment of another, seemingly disparate, technology.

**Adela's Flat Stanley Production as Felt, Historical Activity.** In contrast, Adela's case is more strongly informed by histories of *feeling* while using mobile devices. Her interactions with the iPod as she began her Flat Stanley narrative belied her experienced history with similar technologies. Beginning her composition process, Adela placed the iPod down on the table in front of her, tentatively touching the screen and pulling her finger back quickly as if receiving a shock. She then pushed her body forward to the edge of her seat rather than bringing the device closer to her body. Moments later, Adela took her first photo for the assignment, still kneeling in

her chair and stretching forward across the table to position her props. Commenting on a video of herself during this process, Adela described her tentativeness in touching the device and picking it up as being “afraid to drop it.” Indeed, Adela, more than other students, attended to the device’s materiality, remarking that her iPod “is not as shiny as [her desk partner’s],” and immediately trying to buff the screen with her sweatshirt sleeve.

Viewing this interaction not as a subject-object relation between Adela and the iPod, but as a sensing human-thing relation enables our description of how the iPod asserted its presence and power into Adela’s composition, initially keeping her tethered to a desk. The iPod Touch—in its position to her and as a body itself—asserted itself and constrained Adela’s composition, determining how she designed her scene (as she felt limited to where she could stretch her body over the desk and take her picture from an angle constrained by the iPod resting on the desk). It made her shy, hesitant, and less confident than would befit her history with similar tools. The iPod asserted its presence and power through its “vital materiality” (Bennett, 2011, p. 62)—its shine, its texture, its fragility reigning in her composition.

The affective intensities emerging in these relations between bodies sprung from Adela’s feeling-history, in which she shared her multiple mobile devices with family members. Adela described having to be careful with her grandfather’s phone when she used it to talk to friends, and sitting beside her bed to play *Animal Crossing* on her sister’s Nintendo 3DS so that her sister could not see her from the doorway. The feeling-history evinced in these examples of device sharing extended to Adela’s cautious composing process as she began her narrative, and it illuminates how embodied interactions with mobile devices do not envelop users in an exclusively digital world. The affective atmosphere Adela generated beside her bed—including an awareness of both *Animal Crossing* and of her sister peeking through the door—was not

unlike her awareness of the device in the classroom. She was aware that the device belonged to the teachers who supplied it, like she was aware that the 3DS belonged to her sister. The sociomaterial assemblage of body-technology at her desk became an affectively, historically charged zone of intimacy. It was the affective atmosphere of past experiences simultaneously adhering and evolving in the present.

For both Adela and Yvette, composition was less about their histories with mobile devices than it was about histories of feeling and being mobile—or not—while engaged in literacy. Their mobile feeling-histories (specifically, their histories of movement and feeling while engaged in literacies with mobile technologies, including books, 3DSs, etc.) were socially and affectively charged. Focusing pedagogical and theoretical attention on students' composing process on screens only—bifurcating the “real” and “virtual”—obscures opportunities to guide them toward agentive mobile composing. For instance, forcing or constraining movement through the classroom would involve Adela's and Yvette's historical, affective, cultural ways of being while engaged in literacy, and, therefore, would involve potential tensions between these students' embodied histories and institutional expectations in school settings. Thus, attending to feeling and mobility as components of culture is as essential to understanding Adela's and Yvette's composing processes as it is to their continued development as composers.

### **Composing with Mobile Devices: Feeling Things, Space, and Time**

Next, we address our second research question: How did Adela and Yvette navigate real virtualities in the process of composing during this typical literacy event? How were their bodies engaged affectively and temporally in these navigations? We describe the ways in which Adela and Yvette each became more mobile throughout their composing process and the connection

between these mobilities and their agency in composing, as well as Adela’s improvisations with material things and Yvette’s heightened awareness of time.

**Adela: Feeling Semiotic Resources in an Emergent Composing Process.** Adela’s interactions with the iPod were less comfortable, and more tentative, than Yvette’s. The iPod’s materiality moved her and limited the possibilities for her first image. As Adela moved away from her desk to capture her remaining images, however, her compositional space—scaling up—became more materially diverse. Watching herself on video, she described moving out of her chair to take her second image because her “Hello Kitty would not stand up right. . . . The chain-thing is too big so when I put her down it makes her fall, so I tried to find a thing to make her stand up” (Figure 4.1). Hello Kitty became the focus of Adela’s narrative. When the figure would not pose as she wanted it, the Hello Kitty-as-thing-with-chain compelled her to find yet another thing—a phone cord across the room—from which to hang it, thus allowing Adela to realize her vision (Figure 4.2).



*Figure 4:* Adela’s bodily positions at each composing site.

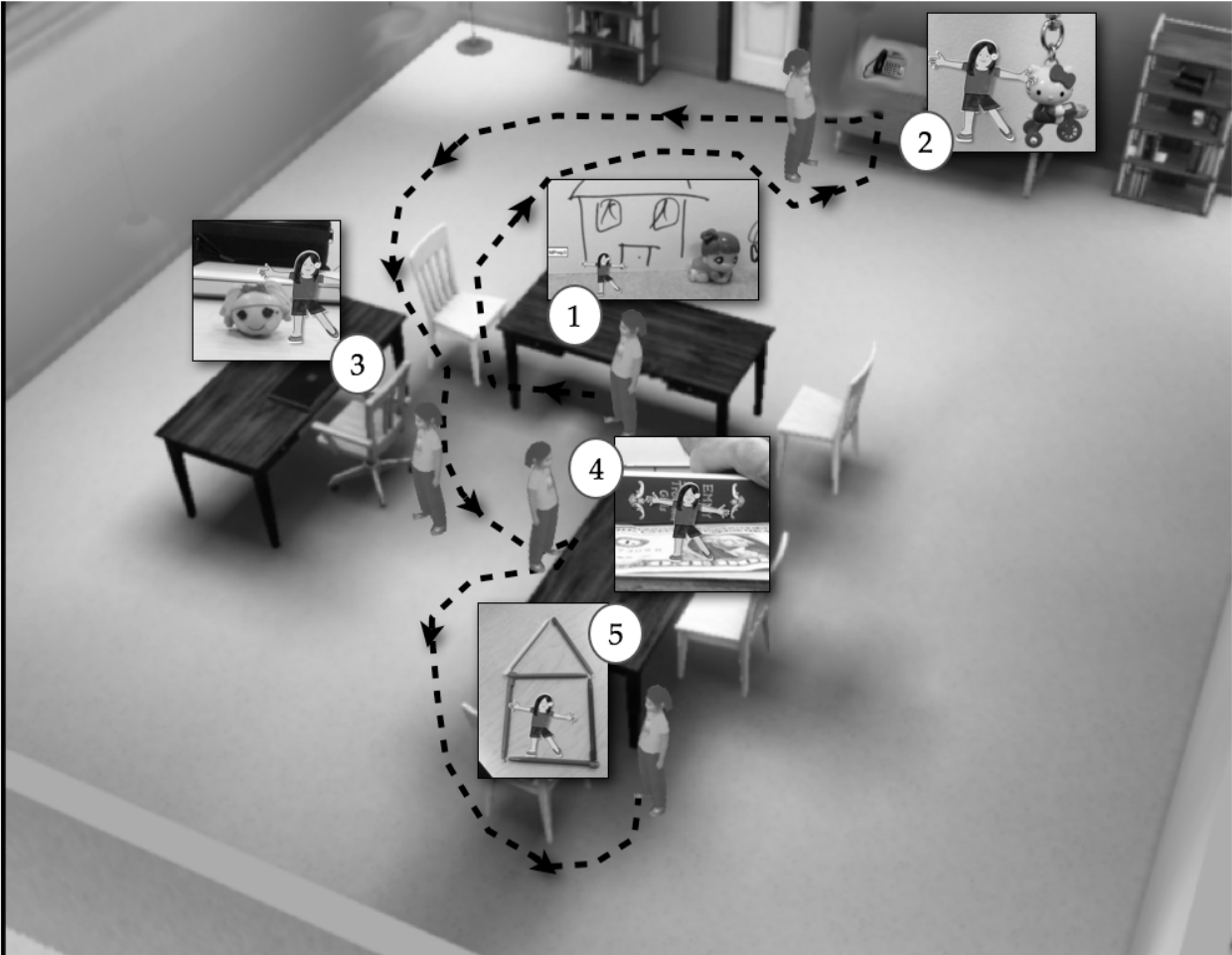
Similarly to how she was moved by the iPod's shininess, Adela changed the course of her narrative in response to her prop's material prompting—its thingness made apparent when it would not stand upright. Adela improvised in the moment as Hello Kitty dangled from the phone cord, adding drama to her narrative. As she pulled the phone cord downward, stretching it to attach Hello Kitty, she described Hello Kitty as “in danger” of falling rather than standing in front of her house back on the desk. Her affective, sensual perception of Hello Kitty as she affixed the figure to the flexible phone cord, pulling downward, steered her narrative; *it was* her composing process as she felt Hello Kitty's potential, imaginative “danger.”

For her next image, Adela moved back in front of the chair on which her backpack hung. She created another dangling image, connecting Hello Kitty to her backpack's zipper, moving forward with the emergent, material, and affective potential of her improvisation with the phone cord. For her final image, Adela asked a classmate for her colorful Nintendo DS pens, which she knew were in a backpack. She sought the pens because she “wanted to make another house, not draw it.” Now recognizing an expanded repertoire of available resources in her compositional space, Adela revised her first image, constructing a colorful house out of Nintendo DS pens (Figure 4.5).

This sequence of actions depicts Adela improvising with and feeling material things as resources for her story (Figure 5). She moved from using visible objects—a phone cord, a backpack strap—to occluded objects in her friend's backpack, signaling a now-intentional process of searching for material resources. Moreover, not only did she move things into her composition, but things also moved her: things propelled, affected, and steered her narrative choices, as agentic bodies. Such an understanding of things allows researchers to follow the signals emanating from material things, emitted in ways “we may only partially perceive . . . that



stimulate perceptions . . . that ripple out as surges of affect” (Thrift, 2010, p. 293). For Adela, these surges of affect propelled both her body and her narrative, training her perception of a mobilized class space as compositional space teeming with resources for narrative meaning-making and improvising.



*Figure 5:* Adela’s physical mobility, beginning with her first image (1) and ending with her final image (5).

For both Adela and Yvette, the construction of classroom space as compositional space worked reciprocally with their physical mobility and felt experience to enhance their narratives.

Initially, their bodies, habituated through traditional school composing practices in which students are seated at desks, resisted movement. But as they began to move, they realized more resources for achieving their narrative goals. Perception demands movement (Gibson, 1979). Their goals for their narratives emerged as they interacted with the environment, as they experienced and felt, directly, things whose materiality presented potential for meaning—things, also bodies with affective potentials. In summary, their processes were intricately tied to movement, to feedback from materially diverse things in their physical environment, and to their emergent perceptions of the environment’s meaning potential for their narrative goals. Were their movements inhibited institutionally and/or pedagogically, their composition would be less complex, and their perception of and creativity with available semiotic resources would be constrained.

**Yvette’s Felt Experience of Time.** Yvette’s increased mobility made her acutely aware of time. For example, it brought the felt experience of time to the forefront of her composition, as she stated, leaning against a table, “This process is very long.” In the following paragraphs, we summarize a 3-minute-and-31-second span from our MIA transcript (Figure 3), which underscores Yvette’s composition within real virtuality. These interactions contribute to our understanding of how Yvette felt time as she composed with her iPod, and they span two distinct timescales.

***Timescale 1: Navigating within the Flat Stanley app and taking a picture.*** In the first timescale, Yvette’s felt experience of time resulted from the navigation of real virtuality. Over 3 minutes and 31 seconds, Yvette created an avatar, tapping and swiping to select attributes; she named her avatar, found the object with which she wanted it to interact, and set up her shot accordingly; and she took the picture and wrote a caption describing it before sending it to her

email so she could access it within another app. This process, for Yvette, felt “very long”: time thickened. The digital bits and bytes that she navigated and manipulated with each tap, swipe, and pinch began to register upon her body, a body that moved and stood throughout her process.

***Timescale 2: Technological impediments and maintaining compositional flow.***

Timescale 2 represents the span of time in which Yvette took her picture and sent it to her email. Whereas Timescale 1 depicted the way time accrued for Yvette, Timescale 2 depicted a culmination of this accrual: the moment she felt time as an inherence of the past in her present, as a retention of embodied composing processes. This awareness of time became evident through her body: she lifted her head up, eyes away from the screen, unsure of what to do while she waited [43:54]. In this moment, where time thickened further, Yvette’s image floated within the digital space between one app and another, invisible to her, as it was sent from Flat Stanley to her email.

Her composition halted as a result of this digital blind spot. The overarching timescale of Yvette’s composition, including a constant stream of movement—pointing, tapping, shooting pictures, and sharing with classmates—encountered a new timescale, one dictated by a confluence of invisible factors: the (lack of) available bandwidth on the school’s wireless infrastructure, the number of users on the Flat Stanley server. Yvette’s experience of time included an amalgamation of movement, navigation, and technological infrastructure. Time emerged in Yvette’s lived experience of a real-virtual-ecology, one in which time was less a constructed object of knowledge for Yvette and more a dimension of her being in the world.

**Felt Ecologies of Time in Real Virtualities.** The amount of time this process took impacted Yvette. Leaning against a table while downloading and saving her image, she declared, “I don’t even know why I am standing.” The overarching timescale of Yvette’s composition

collided with the embedded timescale created by the digital delivery of her image to her inbox. With that extra time, Yvette considered her previous declaration: “Well I’m standing, so it seems long.” She was tired—not just physically, from standing and moving throughout an entire class period, but simultaneously digitally, from navigating from one app to the next within the small interface of the iPod and waiting for her image to arrive. She was digitally fatigued. This process, which was “long”—and which required her to traverse real virtualities—became evident in the retention of time in Yvette’s body: she leaned against the table; she lunged her upper body forward and then back, trying to stretch it out after being upright for so long.

Two points from this analysis strike us most in regard to Yvette’s composing process. First, Yvette spent much time navigating within and between apps, disrupting compositional flow and heightening awareness of time and body, without any result to show for it. Yvette fluctuated between being an active and passive agent in her composition: active, for example, when finding the right angle for her picture; passive when feeling the effects of time on her body while swiping, typing, sending, and waiting. Second, the iPod inserted itself into her process, hindering Yvette’s ability to move forward. As students bring their own devices into the classroom, or use those purchased by the school, the existing wireless infrastructure factors into the composition process, complicating conceptions of time, space, and the body. These developing sociotechnical contexts demand an ecological view of time that extends beyond the body as sociotechnical assemblage and that accounts for the total imbrication of digital, physical, and institutional materiality to understand how time is felt in lived experience.

### **Discussion and Implications**

This article moves forward from previous accounts of adolescents’ composing with new media that focused on the screen, providing portraits of participants’ embodied experiences of

composing, of their bodies moving and feeling through real virtualities. Our expanded theoretical approach responds to critiques of the limits of multimodal, social semiotic theories, which foreground textuality and artificially bifurcate body and screen. In the following paragraphs, we describe how this analysis informs theorizations of, and pedagogies for fostering, youths' mobile, digital composing processes.

Commenting on a history of practice accounts of literacy, Barton (2012) suggested that literacy studies is undergoing a transition in which an alternative perspective is emerging: “we can turn all this upside down and see the movement, the mobilities, as the default” (p. 244). As teachers, students, and school districts continue to move new, mobile technologies into ELA classrooms, researchers and practitioners should consider movement as the default. This consideration involves not just the movement forward with ever-evolving technologies and their concomitant sociotechnical practices, but also the movement of cultures and bodies moving with mobile technologies between the affectively charged spaces of everyday life. We highlight three themes from our analysis that hold implications for moving forward with mobile composition in ELA research and pedagogy.

First, mobile devices reorganized students' embodied experiences of and movements through classroom space. Of course, iPads and iPods are not the first mobile devices to enter the classroom—as Yvette taught us, we might think of books as mobile devices. Books, too, can be carried, shared, and read aloud to a class of students. Their presence mediates the construction of classroom space (e.g., a teacher gathering students to read aloud in the corner) as well as embodied practices that articulate and instantiate bodily discipline. While our overarching analysis depicted students' histories with mobile devices moving fluidly across in- and out-of-school contexts, our microanalysis evinced tensions between students' bodily ways of being with

mobile devices in their everyday literacies and their movements with mobile devices in school. To foster students' mobile device-mediated literacies, we suggest considering motility in classrooms: When Internet-enabled mobile devices enter the classroom, how is classroom space reconstructed as compared with classrooms that privilege print-based texts? What are the bodily co-ordinations that are expected, privileged, or even denied? Continued research should confront these questions, investigating the tensions between institutionalized, formal learning environments and adolescents' affective, cultural histories of being mobile while engaged in literacy.

The motility we enabled as visiting teachers generated possibilities for improvisation and meaning-making that Adela's embodied practice initially resisted, disciplined by local, school culture: Adela's initial tentative touch compelled a tethered composing process, limiting potential semiotic resources. Yet, as Adela's process became more mobile, so too did it become more sensual and improvisational as she felt material things distributed throughout the classroom. We wonder how overstructuring such activities and overlaying them with metalanguage might enforce rational control of meaning that, in fact, limits students' possibilities for felt encounters. How might educators involve the body in improvisational and sensual encounters during digital composing activities, especially as it moves through real virtualities? Such questions dovetail with theories of learning that call for "pedagogies for sensation," which understand learners "not only as having bodies but *as* bodies whose movements and sensations are crucial to [their] understandings" (Fors, Bäckström, & Pink, 2012, p. 174; emphasis in the original). Pedagogies of sensation should attend to the body's role in meaning-making and open possibilities for movement and sensation in composition activities. How might literacy learning

activities and environments be designed with attention to the body's role in meaning-making, to motility in the service of complex composing with mobile devices?

Such pedagogical attention to the body in digital, mobile composing activities should also attend to the felt experience of time. Time was implicated in Yvette's composing process not only when her school's digital infrastructure struggled with limited bandwidth, but also in her time-consuming movements within real virtualities. Acknowledging that students' literacy experiences increasingly navigate real virtualities, teachers might attend to multiple timescales in the construction of mobile composing activities, planning for interrelationships among technologies, bodies, and composing processes. Additionally, experiences of composition across timescales accumulate into multiple moments of felt time, when the body registers time as experience. In this sense, time in students' composing processes is less a linear progression of events than a constantly shifting assemblage of materials, persons, technologies, and physiological processes that emerge unpredictably in felt experience. Composing in institutional structures, especially when using Internet-connected devices, may involve the body in felt temporalities that feel foreign, different, or more tiring than those to which it is accustomed.

By foregrounding the feeling and movement in our participants' literacy experiences, we enriched understandings of their literacies as emergent and embodied. In summary, researchers and educators currently contending with the influx of new mobile technologies into ELA classrooms should consider what classroom practices and pedagogies may impede students' emergent and embodied mobile composing. What pedagogies impose fixed compositional spaces, rather than opening them up as a complex of mobilities that include students' ways of being with mobile devices in their everyday, literate lives? What formations of bodies, desks, and material objects constrain those mobilities, and which open up the window to students' funds

of knowledge when they are composing on the move? Indeed, what bodies, desks, and material objects move students in specific contexts, compelling and supporting impassioned mobile composing?

### **Conclusion: The Feeling of Literacy in Real Virtualities**

Our participants' experiences exemplify changing perceptions of materiality and space, where the boundaries between an imagined "cyberspace" and physical space are "more permeable than the smooth glassy finality of the screen" (Grosz, 2001, p. 88). As Adela and Yvette composed their narratives, they *felt* such real virtualities: Yvette felt time in her body as her story traveled through digital networks; Adela layered a digital avatar over material things, seeing meaning potential in her classroom space only available when sensed *through* her iPod screen, only available when composing in real virtualities.

What these changing perceptions mean for literacy, generally, remains an open question. In conclusion, we offer one direction in which to search for answers, and a reflection on how our participants' experiences may guide researchers along the way. With attention to the ubiquitous computing culture concomitant to the proliferation of mobile devices in everyday life, Morrison and Arnall (2011) describe a QR code painted onto a pole in a Tokyo subway:

Graphic mediations such as this one signify means of access to electronic content and semiosis. The "markings" embody the layering of digital services, communications, and media in physical products and urban spaces as part of the changing practices of everyday life. The markings point to situations in which mobile devices and networks are essential in reading, interpreting, and having agency over contemporary meanings and interactions. (p. 225)



Alone, to the naked eye, the QR codes resemble barcodes, devoid of meaning without the technology made to scan them. Yet, Morrison and Arnall's participants knew to scan these codes with smartphones and knew that they were culturally constructed signs for digital mediation—the embodiment of the digital, written on the world.

As we read Morrison and Arnall's work, we reflected on Adela's and Yvette's digital writing on and with their physical environments. We wondered to what extent they were aware of the imbrications of the digital and physical in their worlds, if at all, and what this meant for their literacies. Did they recognize markings on the world as “situations in which mobile devices are essential in reading, interpreting” (Morrison & Arnall, 2011, p. 225)? If so, to what extent would they then have “agency over contemporary meanings and interactions” (Morrison & Arnall, 2011, p. 225)? Would they recognize the sources of these texts, mostly advertisements, and could they interact with them critically? What does it mean to interact with, to consume and produce, texts that are intractably physically and digitally enmeshed, and that are constructed for purposes sometimes antithetical to their interests and development? What if Adela and Yvette are growing into a world where there is no virtual reality, only real virtualities, a world they are constantly reading and writing with multiple, mobile technologies? What would such a world feel like for them?

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## CHAPTER 3

### “THAT’S DOCUMENTARY MATERIAL”:

#### AFFECT, EMOTION AND DEVELOPING SENSIBILITIES IN AN ADOLESCENTS’ DIGITAL COMPOSING WITH(IN) THE MATERIAL WORLD

##### **Introduction**

Recently, scholars have critiqued the ways in which theories rooted in linguistics, semiotics and representation have been used to understand the experiences of lived bodies learning and making meaning (e.g., Ingold, 2011; Johnson, 2007; Leander & Boldt, 2013; Märtsin, 2012; Pink, 2011). These critiques center how theories removed from the feeling of bodies, of bodies as they are lived, elide or skew understandings of what learning, doing and making in the material world *feels* like (Ingold, 2013). Attending to these critiques, learning scientists have developed theories of embodiment to describe how socially and culturally situated bodies feel out learning experiences (Hall & Nemirovsky, 2012), especially with respect to language (Thibault, 2011) and new media (Hollett, & Ehret, in press; Lemke 2013b). For example, arguing for the centrality of the body in language learning, Thibault (2011) described the need to focus investigations on “coacting agents who extend their worlds and their own agency through embodied, embedded processes of languaging behavior rather than uses of an abstract language system” (p. 211), such as the abstract system of modes proposed in social semiotic theories of multimodality (e.g., Kress, 2010).

Yet, linguistically rooted approaches such as social semiotic theories of multimodality are the dominant paradigm for investigating adolescents’ learning and production processes with new media (e.g., Gilje, 2010; 2011; Hull & Katz, 2006; Mills, 2010). The theoretic heritage framing investigations of new media production—based in social semiotics (Hodge & Kress,

1988) and thereby in systemic functional linguistics (Halliday & Kress, 1976)—has influenced understandings of new media production as a disembodied process (Leander & Boldt, 2013; McDonald, 2012). Multimodal theories have operated via a process of “analogising” concepts developed for the study of language to other modalities (McDonald, 2012 p. 3), thus enabling an ironic “linguistic imperialism” in studies of new media production that elides the role of embodiment in communicative practices (p. 4). This linguistic imperialism has led to what others identify as an *a priori* parsing of modes into discrete sensory categories that composers manipulate “in mind,” thereby further distancing understandings of new media production from the experience of lived bodies (Pink, 2011). Indeed, this over-simplified *a priori* abstraction of “modes” as operating in one-to-one correspondence to “the senses” is at odds both with phenomenological (Merleau-Ponty 2011) and post-structural theories of embodiment (Ingold, 2011) that understand lived experience as inextricably multi-sensorial, and with ethnographic investigations that illuminate the senses as cultural constructs emerging as bodies move through, sense, and interact with material environments (Grasseni, 2007; Pink, 2009; Bäckström, 2012).

Bringing the lived body to the fore, in this article I develop the notion of affective semiosis (Salvatore, 2012), or the culturally situated instantiation of concepts for which there exist no material referents—e.g., beauty, love, American—in things within the material world. Specifically, I develop affective semiosis to include how the feeling of being-in-place, or emplacement (Fors, Bäckström, & Pink, 2012), contributes to meaning-making in the process of composing new media texts. I do so in order to better account for the role of the lived body in new media learning, and to understand how meaning-making in the process of new media production is simultaneously mediated and affective.

### **Research Focus**

Although adolescents' experiences producing new media texts are becoming more and more mobile with the proliferation of digital, mobile devices in and out of school settings (Madden, Lenhart, Duggan, Cortesi, & Gasser, 2013), scholars have expressed concern that most studies of adolescents' new media learning focus on sedentary bodies in front of screens (Ehret & Hollett, 2014). Moving forward from the overemphasis on screens as the dominant spaces of production, in this article, I analyze how one adolescent, Will, moves with his screen, sensing and feeling semiotic material *through* it. Rather than approach his composing process as the manipulation of an abstracted system of modes through a linguistically-rooted paradigm, I describe how Will learns to make makes sense of, and to be moved by, the people, places and things he encounters during three digital video production projects as the “stuff” of “multimodal” textuality, or—to use Will’s description during one project about homelessness in his community—as “documentary material”.

In my previous relationship with Will as his high school English teacher, I knew him to be the first student to jump at the possibility of producing a digital video as a unit assessment, especially when presented as an alternative to a written assignment. Still, from my perspective as a university-based researcher following his digital video productions outside of school over the course of this eighteen-month case study, I was surprised by his intense passion for video production and the extent to which his experiences with video and media affected his perception of everyday life. Moreover, as the study progressed I noticed historical resonances between the way in which he perceived material for early fictional videos and how he later perceived material for his documentary video.

These resonances evoked Nemirovsky’s (2011) outline of a research strand in the learning sciences “oriented toward the elucidation of the ways in which one experience becomes



part of another, some of which are able to be characterized as transfer of learning” (p. 310).

Although I do not make claims about transfer of learning in the article, I illuminate, relatedly, how Will’s experiences learning to compose digital videos fed into one another in what could be described as the development of an individual style. Thus, I use the term sensibilities to describe the historical, cultural and developmental nature of Will’s emplaced, affective meaning-making in the process of learning to compose digital videos outside of school. Bodies, as they are lived, develop sensibilities as unmediated feelings are fed into mediated thought—including socially constructed emotions—in phases of duplicity. They are phases of duplicity because feeling and thought, unmediated and mediated experience, are not dichotomous in the experience of living and being in the world. Embodied experience, indeed embodied meaning-making, is a constant flow of duplicitous felt-sense-making.

With this study, I contribute specifically to understandings of how the phase of feeling functions, and how this phase develops over time in sensibilities. Will’s experience provides an ideal case study for this contribution because (1) I was able to analyze videos he produced over a span of four years of high school, a period time during which I knew him first as a teacher and later as a researcher; and, (2) his work as a filmmaker, especially during his documentary work with the homeless, was an intensely affectively charged experience of learning in a natural setting, outside of school. With this case study then, I was able to trace the path of sensibilities as they developed in Will’s affective and emplaced learning experiences with new media.

The following questions guide my analysis:

- I. What are the roles of affect and the lived body in Will’s emplaced experiences during new media production? Specifically, how does Will feel the environment (including people, places, and things) as semiotic material for his digital videos?

- II. To what extent was Will's lived experience of meaning-making historical, and how did this historicity affect his developing sensibilities for identifying semiotic material?

### **Related Literature:**

#### **Conceptualizing Will's Composing Experiences as Affective Place-events**

In the following, I develop theories of affective semiosis and emplacement, providing one possible path toward understanding the feeling of new media learning as the development of sensibilities along affective place-events. In my analysis of Will's new media production processes, I understand his experiences as, in part, affective, irrational and symmetric experiences of feeling the quality of the value of life in semiotic material (Salvatore, 2012; Salvatore & Zittoun, 2011). Further, I describe these meaning-making experiences as emerging in place-events, where they unfold in the sensuous relationship of his mind, body and environment (Fors, Bäckström, & Pink, 2012; Johnson 2007). These affective, emplaced experiences have the potential to develop into sensibilities that move his body, evoke feeling, and become realized as conscious emotion—or not—in the process of new media production.

#### **A Critical Perspective on Understandings of Feeling and the Lived Body in Sociocultural Investigations of Learning and Literacy**

Recent work in the learning sciences has moved beyond an understanding of embodied cognition as occurring only “inside the head,” away from a “brain in vat [of flesh]” view of mind (Noë, 2009). Whereas these theories have established that the embodied mind develops as it manipulates material objects and environments (Glenberg, Gutierrez, Levin, Japuntich, & Kaschak, 2004; Wilson, 2002), and that concepts are grounded in modality-specific traces of experience (Barsalou, 2010), more recent works claims that such concepts, more than modality-specific, may also include interactional, cultural, and historical experience (Hall & Nemirovsky,

2012; Wilson 2008; Gallagher, 2008); that is, the embodied mind develops as the body moves in social and cultural settings, using mediating artifacts in goal-directed interactions. Building on these claims, others have explored feeling as an aspect of embodied thought, taking necessarily rich phenomenological approaches to understanding feeling as a dimension of the lived body that is historical, social, and cultural in nature (Nemirovsky, 2011), and that is complicated as the body feels its way across multiple media and digital environments in the process of learning and textual production (Lemke, 2013b).

Driven by cultural historical perspectives on learning, however, most existing investigations of the role of feeling often lack nuanced theorizations of the nature of feeling itself as an embodied experience, approaching feeling instead as an inextricable component in the dialectical relationship between feeling-thought-activity (see Vygotsky, 1987; 1994). For example, rooted in literatures on social and emotional development (Hoffman, 2009), Vadeboncoeur and Collie (2013) described how feeling is mediated by social relationships, language, and semiotic systems. They argued that feeling develops “in relation to changes in the development of thinking toward verbal thinking as dialectically related verbal feeling” (p. 221). Although such perspectives provide important and nuanced understandings of feeling as unified with rational thought and activity, they lack more specific attention to the felt-experience of lived bodies, subordinating feeling to language and mediated action. From Vadeboncoeur and Collie’s, cultural historical perspective, for instance, feeling and thinking are not just subordinate to mediated action, they are both “verbal”; that is, they are both known through language. This perspective elides the *feeling* of unmediated experience that resists linguistic representation (Scarry, 1994), and that is integral to the moving, feeling experiences of bodies *as they are lived*, not as they are *read* through language-oriented thinking.

Ironically, then, studies in the learning sciences have elided feeling *as an aspect of embodiment*—feeling as a *feeling of lived bodies*—related to learning and human development. Mediated action implies unmediated action, or at least a dialect between the two (Roth, 2007); yet, the direct feeling-of-being-in-the-world is eschewed in studies of learning and production, or, when acknowledged, feeling is subordinated to mediated action in the service of understanding rational thought and activity as primary in learning experiences. It follows logically that if there is a dialect between unmediated feeling and cultural mediation, then the dominant side of the dialectic would vary by environment, by context, by moment. Moreover, it follows logically that each phase of the dialectic would develop over time both individually and in generative duplicity. Yet, the cultural historical development of unmediated feeling, of moving through and sensing within the material world, is either ignored or subordinated to mediation in such a way as to limit learning scientist’s understanding of the potential for feeling to influence action and meaning-making both in singular moments and over time.

Given the commitment to mediation in sociocultural theories of learning (see Wertsch, 1998), it is not surprising that most researchers taking a cultural historical perspective regard feeling as a cultural construction distributed through activity settings, as extra-personal phenomena beyond the lived experience of individual bodies. Indeed, this commitment pervades sociocultural investigations of feeling in literacy studies, which is home to most studies of adolescents’ new media production processes. Smagorinsky and Daigle (2012) argued that literacy researchers working from a cultural-historical perspective have paid scant attention to the interconnectedness of thought, feeling, and the activity of the body, finding that the literature has all but ignored how students feel during the composing process (p. 293). Still, they found commonalities in theorizations of emotion from a sociocultural perspective in literacy studies:

Emotion is understood as mobilized through activity settings. For example, students' previous experiences in genres or with particular writing tasks such as journaling in English class might evoke constructed emotions of anxiety, boredom, or confidence. Similarly, Lewis and Tierney (2011; 2013) described emotion as being "mobilized" or distributed in the discursive and material practices of an urban high school English classroom. They described how the classroom activity system was "conducive to particular forms of mediated action such as emotive discussion" (2011, p. 232) in which adolescents produced critical responses to texts that seemed irrational and disruptive, but which were, in fact, astute, impassioned and rooted in the adolescents' identities. Still, Lewis and Tierney subordinate emotion to language and rational argument. Mediation is presumed to dominate the dialectic.

Together, sociocultural perspectives on the role of affect, feeling, and emotion in learning and literacy have forwarded a meditational approach that understands emotions as cultural constructs distributed through activity settings. Yet, because these studies have approached emotion as cultural construction—as extra-personal, disembodied phenomena—they elide the experiences of lived bodies, and provide limited insight into role of feeling as an experience of meaning-making. Specifically, the current literature in both the learning sciences and literacy studies does little to further either field's understanding of how and why learners make meaning in their experiences of textual production with new media technologies in ways that are not always dominated by mediated, rational thought. Accepting that feeling, rationality, and embodied activity are dialectically interwoven, it does not necessarily follow that rationality dominates the dialectic; yet, this seems the assumption underlying sociocultural studies of literacy and learning.

Further, focusing on emotion as cultural constructions in activity settings has led investigators away from participants' lived experiences in material environments during which emotions are generated—or not—through direct, affective intensities and thereby, eventually, mobilized. In summary, with this focus on emotion as meditational and extra-personal, literacy and learning researchers have conflated affect, feeling and emotion—the relationship between which I describe in the following section—missing potential nuance in adolescents' embodied experiences of learning and making, especially with the new media tools through which they view semiotic material; and, while not overlooking feeling and emotion, they have problematically assumed that rationality and mediation dominates in learning experiences.

### **Affect Theory, The Lived Body, and Meaning-Making**

Contributing a more richly textured portrait of the interconnectedness of feeling, thought and emergent embodied experiences to literacy studies and the learning sciences, I draw on recent work in affect theory to delineate affect, feeling, and emotion. Many have argued that an affective turn across disciplines, particularly in the humanities and social sciences (Clough & Halley, 2007), stems partly from the now well-established interdisciplinary interest in emotion and embodiment (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010). In philosophy, Massumi (2002) draws from Deleuze (1987) in his ontology of affect, distinguishing between affect, feeling, and emotion. From this perspective, affect does not denote a personal feeling; rather, affective intensities arise “in the midst of in-between-ness: in the capacities to act and be acted upon” (Gregg & Seigworth, 2010, p. 2). Affect, then, refers to a pre-personal intensity, in the “augmentation or diminution of the body's capacity to act” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. xvi). Affect exists as a force or capacity between bodies: its force moves bodies, and analysts might think to measure it—describe its intensity—in its capacity to do so. This force has the potential to be “inscribed in

the body” or “lodged in the flesh as traces of experience,” though, in this sense, affect is thought of as an accumulation of affects, or affections (Watkins, 2006, p. 273). Bodies may register individual affects—or accumulated affects—as sensations or feelings—goose-pimples, sinking stomachs—or they may not. Bodies may also socialize these sensations as emotions situated in cultures across which they may have different values—I have goose-pimples because I’m happy about this acceptance letter; my stomach is sinking with disappointment from this rejection letter. From this it follows, that affect, sensation and emotion have an ontological correspondence, but that they may be understood as working separately, along a continuum in human experience, and embodied, human activity may be analyzed thusly.

Following from this ontology of affect, I explore the lived body as, in part, phenomenological and ecological (Johnson, 2007): How it experiences moving and being moved in material environments. A phenomenological approach to the body examines the sense of being-in-the-world, e.g., through proprioception, feeling and movement. The phenomenological body is the human “felt-sense of ourselves” (Johnson, 2007, p. 276). An ecological understanding of the body complements and deepens this phenomenological approach, especially with respect to feeling. Feelings emerge as the body interacts in material systems, that is, as the body interacts with the environment, which includes “other humans, and human-made, symbolically interpretable artifacts, and through them larger-scale...systems of cultural conventions” (Lemke, 2013b, p. 84). In short, bodies are only bodies as they move and feel with(in) ecologies of people, places and things—when they affect and are affected while being-in-the-world.

**Affective semiosis and the phenomenological body.** To deepen understandings of the affective nature of meaning-making as an experience of lived bodies that is sometimes irrational,

I draw specifically on work in cultural psychology that has attended to the pre-personal—the affective—in addition to the mediated and reflective states during which meaning emerges and is constructed (Märtsin, 2012). Specifically, I expand theories of affective semiosis that describe the role of unconscious thought in meaning-making (Salvatore, 2012; Salvatore & Zittoun, 2011) to include how such unconscious thought develops as lived bodies interact in social and cultural environments.

Until recently, accounts of affective semiosis have remained inside the head, positing that irrational thought works according to a symmetry principle that is pre-symbolic and in which mind and world have not yet been differentiated (Salvatore and Zittoun, 2011). Updated accounts of have deepened this distinction between affective and rational semiosis, focusing on common signs that have no material referent—e.g., European, love, the market, the Holy Ghost (Salvatore, 2012). In affective meaning-making, such signs are paradoxically imbued with material existence, or the “value of life”: “she’s European,” “the market fell today,” “looks like love to me!”. These “Value-of-Existence-Producing Signs” [VEPS] because they have a meaning that is felt, thought and used as if real. *The feeling* of these signs as having existence in the world is a “Sense of quality-of-reality” [SQR]. Thus, VEPS always have SQR (Salvatore, 2012).

The flow of interpretations grounded in the SQR of VEPS occurs often in everyday life—e.g., money and the everyday, ever-changing interpretations of its value—and these everyday interpretations have the potential to affect bodies, whether in how soldiers fight for “the United States,” or in how readers weep for fictional characters (Eco, 2009), for example. They inform our feeling of experience, of our bodies-being-in-the-world, and they have the potential to move bodies.



**Affect and the emplaced, ecological body.** Pushing affective meaning-making outside of the head, I use emplacement to understand how affective semiosis is an emergent process of embodied, lived experience in material environments. Advancing emplacement as a theoretic perspective on learning, Fors, Bäckström and Pink (2012) argued for a move forward from “situatedness” toward the “emergent paradigm of emplacement,” which “suggests the sensuous interrelationship of mind-body-environment” (p. 7). For example, Pink (2011) used emplacement to understand the experience of bullfighting. She analyzed a Spanish bullfighter’s body as a body-in-place that it moved in rhythm with a rippling crowd and heaving bull. She argued that the experience was a singular *place-event* formed through the “convergence of an intensity of things in process, emotions, sensations, persons and narratives” (p. 350). In Pink’s analysis, the activity of the body during bullfighting was a constant emergence of the feeling, sensing body: the body and-weather, the body and-bull, the body and-

Building from this paradigm, I argue that affective meaning-making emerges in place-events, at the intersection between mind, body and environment. Further, this perspective includes the understanding that “the environment is not an ‘other’ to us” (Whitehead, 2004, p. 7) and that our movements are not necessarily informed from conscious decision, that at times, “the world itself can initiate action” (2004, pp. 7-8): the world and bodies in it—inclusive of environmental elements and objects—have the potential to affect the other bodies.

Approaching affective semiosis as an emplaced experience of lived bodies opens new questions about the relationship between thought, feeling and embodied activity within material environments—environments and the things therein equally agentive, equally bodies. How does the felt experience of place—the mood or atmosphere—evoke meanings of beauty, suspense, or disgust? How does a history of being in a particular place inform its present feeling, and what

forms of expression work best to communicate the experience of being-in-that-place? How do these feelings manifest in embodied action, in stillness, agitation, movement toward or away from things in the environment. How do these feelings accrue over time such that they may develop into sensibilities that inform learning and meaning-making in phases of duplicity with cultural mediation?

## **Methods**

### **Participant and Research Context**

Will, a white, middle-class teenager, described himself as “the child who was always behind the camera growing up,” and I often heard about what we called “fun” videos he made with friends for his YouTube channel or to show during after-school “screenings” he would organize in the media center. In interviews and observations, Will related how he learned to “make movies” from these experiences. Proud of never having attended a “film school for kids,” Will also described learning to make his videos from watching the special features on his favorite DVDs, especially interviews with directors. These special features influenced Will’s “serious, suspense films,” “Blacklight” and “Thud,” which emerged as touchstones for Will as he talked about how he shot his documentary video about homelessness.

The summer before his senior year of high school in a small Southeastern city, Will began a philanthropic group to raise awareness for a homeless children’s shelter whose construction had halted during an economic downturn. The main vehicle for raising awareness was to be a documentary video Will would produce with his friends, all members of the group. Apart from the philanthropic goals related to the homeless shelter, Will’s foremost aim for documentary was to change his audiences’ perception of the homeless, their lives, and their experiences.

Will, almost always accompanied by friends, spent many hours taking food and clothing to the homeless people in his community, often visiting them in the small, shanty communities underneath “the bridge”, a dilapidated railway that runs over the local greenway where many of the local homeless set up tents together. Eventually, he filmed a couple’s wedding, which represents the aggregate of time Will spent getting to know the homeless and their community in his city, more time, in fact, than he spent filming them. Still, he managed to film over twenty hours of footage both with the homeless and with community members holding a stake in addressing his city’s homeless problem such as members of law enforcement, homeless shelter volunteers, and even the mayor.

Before the study began, I was Will’s high school English teacher. I knew his “fun” YouTube videos and even sat in on a few of his media center screenings. I was not, however, present for the productions of “Blacklight” and “Thud.” I was in touch with Will after I moved to university-based research, and I began a relationship with him as a researcher at the start of his documentary filming process. I was present for most of the documentary filming.

## **Methodology**

I present an interpretative phenomenological case study of Will’s experiences producing the digital videos “Blacklight” and “Thud” early in his high school career, and later filming the documentary over the course of eighteen-months at the end of high school. Used most extensively in research on psychological and social issues in health research (Smith, 2010), investigators employ interpretative phenomenological analysis [IPA] to understand how a single participant—or a small group of participants—make sense of a significant life event, or lived experience (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Through IPA, researchers interpret participants’ experiences in their own terms rather than through *a priori* categories. They therefore ground

their analyses on the assumption that human “experience can be understood via an examination of the meanings which people impress upon it” and that those “meanings may, in turn, illuminate the embodied, cognitive-affective and existential domains of psychology” (Smith, et al., 2009, p. 34).

This methodological approach to context as lived experience aligns with the theorization of learning as “embedded both in specific environments and in the embodied activities of learners” (Fors, Bäckström and Pink, 2012, p. 182) and as emergent from the ongoing place-events of human experience. This significant point of alignment between the methodology, conceptual framework, and research questions that guide this study thus inform both the role of the researcher in data collection and analysis with the overarching assumption that learning is, in part, emplaced, affective and “not necessarily structured primarily by the means of language” (Fors, Bäckström and Pink, 2012, p. 174).

### **Movement: The Role of the Researcher**

Such a focus on particular instances of emplaced experience necessarily involves the researcher in a double hermeneutic: the analyst interprets participants’ experience, while participants work to interpret their own. Navigating this double hermeneutic, I understood my research during documentary filming to require walking with Will through his production spaces, following the unpredictable lines of his production process (Ingold, 2011). I did this recognizing not only that adolescents’ production processes are becoming more and more physically mobile but that understanding them means moving, feeling and sensing their emergence in *in situ* embodied activity *through my own body* in *correspondence* with Will’s (Ingold, 2013). Thus, in addition to reflective analysis of video data, I actively reflected by journaling about my own feelings after walking with Will through *our* production experiences, using my body—how I

moved and was moved— as an essential data source. Thus, rather than lament the double hermeneutic in which bodies were involved, I worked to leverage the multiplicities of feeling involved in each emplaced experience in order to understand the phenomena under scrutiny.

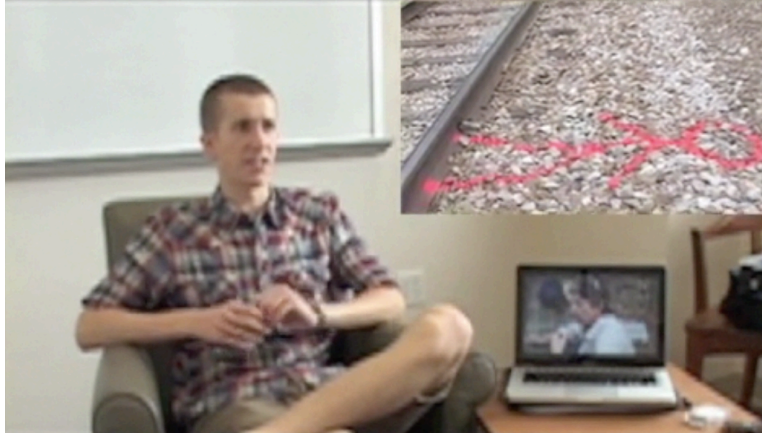
Table 2: *Data Sources, Uses and Means of Analysis*

<b>Data source and collection</b>	<b>Use in study</b>	<b>Means of analysis</b>
<b>6 semi-structured, depth interviews, including director’s cut interview. Additional informal interviews during filming.</b>	Guided coding and interpretation of observational data and Will’s raw and edited video footage.	Line-by-line analysis of experiential claims, guided by IPA.
<b>Field notes and digital photography.</b>	Iterative corroboration of Will’s experiential claims and my interpretations.	Axial coding, guided by IPA and interpretations of experiential claims.
<b>Raw and edited video footage from Will’s digital video projects [~13 hours].</b>	Iterative corroboration of Will’s experiential claims and my interpretations.	Axial coding, guided by IPA and interpretations of experiential claims.
<b>Video recorded observations [~30 hours].</b>	Iterative corroboration of Will’s experiential claims and my interpretations.	Axial coding, guided by IPA and interpretations of experiential claims.
<b>E-mail correspondence and 1 in-person meeting.</b>	Member check.	Member check.

## Data Collection and Sources

**Phase one.** Data were collected in four phases over the course of Will's documentary production processes. All data sources and their uses in the study are included in Table 1. During phase one, I developed an emergent design protocol in which I conducted a semi-structured interview and three observations of filming followed by interim data analysis. This initial interview was semi-structured in order to maintain focus on the documentary project as a whole, while open-ended questions allowed for reliable representations of the filming process to arise from Will's talk (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I followed the interview with three, four-hour observations of Will's documentary filming of the homeless.

**Phases two and three, and a special features interview.** Data collection in phase two began three months after phase one and included a semi-structured, depth interview and an additional four-hour observation of his documentary project. Data from this observation and interview were recorded in field notes and video. Data collection in phase three consisted of two interviews spaced one month apart and one month after phase two. One interview was semi-structured to focus on Will's "fun" videos and his history making videos. The other interview was a discourse-based interview (Odell, Goswami, & Herrington, 1983) in which I asked the Will to choose five pieces of footage that were important to him. The interview was recorded in the style of a DVD "special feature" director's commentary—like those Will cited as essential to his learning to make videos—allowing him to make direct references to footage, dissect scene elements in real time, and to give him control over the presentation of his work. To add to his control, and thereby add to the credibility of the data, Will also positioned the camera for the interview and arranged the setting for the commentary session [Figure 6].



*Figure 6.* Will describes shooting a body outline (upper right) after the death of a documentary subject during the special features interview.

**Phase four.** In phase four, I conducted a final observation of filming and semi-structured depth interview to focus on how Will represented meaning in his films through specific people, places, and things (themes then emerging from interim analyses). Phase four occurred at the end of the eighteen-month study period. Throughout the study, I also recorded in-person and e-mail conversations between myself and Will, and in-person conversations with Will’s documentary subjects.

#### **Felt Focal Moments: Data Reduction and Analysis**

Data were reduced to Will’s experiences of significant moments, people, places and things during his filming processes. Guided by phenomenology and by my own body, I reduced embodied experience as a research topic to a unit of analysis that involved particular meanings Will, or I, felt about specific phenomena in context, e.g., Will’s feeling of affective intensity filming the bruised eyes of a homeless man the day after a physical altercation, and my feeling *in situ* as he filmed the man. Therefore, “unit of analysis” in this study may better be termed felt focal moments, or moments in which Will, or I, felt the experience of video production most intensely. In addition to identifying these moments *in situ* through my own body and in my felt

relationships and observations of others' bodies, I identified felt focal moments from Will's *post hoc* descriptions of production experiences, for example when he described documentary or filmic material as intensely "beautiful," "eerie," "dark," or "symbolic". Functionally, then, these felt focal moments took the form of observational data such as fieldnotes, video recordings, and transcribed video interviews. In both reduction and interpretation of data, two senior researchers were consulted to discuss the plausibility and coherence of the interpretive analysis, and to address disconfirming evidence.

Analysis was iterative and inductive both within and between collection phases, but major analysis was conducted concurrently with each phase of data collection. These analyses were grounded in hermeneutics and were directed cyclically from empathy to questioning (Smith, 2009). Appeals to theory were thus inspired first by empathetic, felt engagement with the data. After data reduction, analysis followed this cycle for all focal moments, including line by line analysis of Will's experiential claims in interviews, and triangulation of interpretations with video data, observational fieldnotes, and both Will's raw and edited digital video footage. Analysis revealed themes including symbolic transformation, sensory engagement, aesthetic realization and sensibility. Next I completed axial coding for each theme. During the axial coding process I developed subcategories for the data (e.g., beauty as a subcategory of aesthetic realization) to describe each general category in greater detail (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). I corresponded with Will via e-mail throughout the study to member-check emerging interpretations.

## **Findings**

Findings are organized into two main sections in a nonlinear representation of case study data (Yin, 2009). In the first section, I compare Will's composing experiences across genres:



between his fictional “suspense” videos—“Thud” and “Blacklight”—and his nonfiction documentary about homelessness. This comparison evinces both the continuity and development of sensibilities across genres, and the singular place-events in which these sensibilities emerge in emplaced experiences of new media production. In the second section, I analyze a felt focal moment in the documentary, showing how Will’s developing sensibilities extend from “Thud” and “Blacklight”, affecting his process and his embodied action during production that is felt in my own body in addition to his.

Across both sections, I build an argument for how Will’s experiences with digital video production develop his sensibilities for the people, places and things with which he films as semiotic material. In my analysis, I show how these sensibilities accrue across experiences and are instantiated and develop in moments of affective semiosis during the place-events of Will’s digital video composing. These findings push definitions of new media learning and production beyond the manipulation of abstracted languages and modes, to include the development of sensibilities for the symbolic transformation of people, places and things.

### **Section 1: Developing Sensibilities Across Genres**

Most often, Will compares his fiction films and his documentary based on how each genre trains his perception of “symbolism” differently. At the same time, he also acknowledges how his sensibilities in digital video production developed chronologically from his fictional projects to his documentary project. Doing so, he focuses on how looking for semiotic material in “real life” is similar to the set pieces he designs and shoots in his fictional videos:

The documentary offers the opportunity for on the spot improvising and thinking [...] because when you’re filming real life you don’t get to set up symbolism, you don’t get to choose your symbols or your metaphors or anything like that, but when one pops up you

have to catch it and think of a way to communicate it [...] So seeing the vast ways symbols can be presented by making “Blacklight” (.) With the documentary I had the opportunity to be like, ‘oh, well yeah I’m just filming real life right now,’ but if I can capture this like that with that going on this can translate into that meaning. (Will, interview)

Across genres, his process includes experiencing and capturing the symbolic, but for his documentary Will sought symbols in the unfolding experience of filming the real lives of his homeless subjects. Will offered the comparison above retrospectively, after completing all three videos, and his perspective suggests his felt-development of sensibilities of symbolism from his “fun” fiction videos to his “serious” documentary.

In the remainder of this section, I trace this development, focusing analysis on Will’s unfolding sense-making of the material world as symbolic, sense made as his body moved through culture, interpersonal relations, and the material world—as his body moved through felt-experience. I describe how these felt-experiences of the symbolic reveal new media production as not only emplaced experience, but also as, in part, affective and pre-mediated. Further, I illustrate how Will moves through new media production experiences, accruing affects and developing affective sensibilities in felt-responses to people, places and things.

**“Thud”:** New media production as symbolic transformation of experience.

According to Will, his fifteen-minute short film from the “slasher genre,” “Thud,” “does not have symbolism or anything like that...but that’s where my love for genres and horror films comes in...just a love for the macabre and deviant stuff in cinema.” Will says that he had “always wanted to film” in the mountain house his mother inherited, located in a remote, forested section of the southeastern United States. This summerhouse felt like the perfect location to Will for filming something “macabre,” “deviant,” and “scary,” because:

it's massive, it's like three stories and it has all these storage rooms that have tiny white doors that you have to crawl through in the walls, and I even had a nightmare one night that me and her [Will's mother] were sitting in there by ourselves and we heard footsteps coming from upstairs, and that's where the movie idea came from. (Will, interview)

Will felt the space in which he filmed "Thud" as emanating an atmosphere not "symbolic" of something beyond it that the audience must interpret, but an atmosphere that affects suspense, tension and fear, immanently. In fact, it was similar to the historical suspense, tension, and fear that he felt in his nightmares while sleeping in the "massive" remotely located mountain house that inspired the film.

Likewise, relying on more immediate affective experience for production decisions, Will described placing objects in scenes "just because he liked the way they looked." Yet, he advocated for the everydayness of these objects, and for their potential to affect suspense in the spaces he shoots:

popcorn in kitchen, shattered glass across the living room, the same hallway they [the audience] saw earlier, a distant shot of after the killer breaks in (.). Once you see the common space being infiltrated you feel 'that could go down in my house' that's scary. (Will, interview)

For Will, familiar objects and empty spaces place the viewer's bodies in the production space of his film, for example the space in which he purposefully arranged objects and left his camera to linger on them in an empty living room, or the empty hallways he filmed after his deviant killer had just intruded upon them [Figure 7]. Though Will describes these objects and spaces almost exclusively in terms of their affective potential—both in affecting him and in affecting his audience—they are also indicative of Will's emerging sensibility of the symbolic in every spaces

and objects. Affected by the space himself, Will imagines the space affecting his audience. It is this affective experience and the anticipation of the audiences' affective experience that trains Will's perception of the symbolic: his body composing for bodies. The objects and empty spaces have double meaning vacillating between their everydayness and their eeriness.



*Figure 7.* Wide angle shots from “Thud”.

Thus, in his embodied composing process—e.g., feeling eeriness—everyday objects and spaces become symbolic. These objects give a SQR to VEPS such as eeriness. Importantly, though, such symbolism also emerges from Will's accumulation of affects over time. The potential for symbolic transformation and affection Will senses in specific places, stems from his having felt the *same fear* in the *same space* across time. For example, Will describes the particular feelings that the little doors in his mother's house had evoked during his childhood, and he explained why he felt wide shots that included them were scarier than tight shots where they were left out of the frame:

I'm not going to be scared by something that's going to pop out [something outside of the frame] but I am scared of that little miniature white door that's half-open over there. (Will, interview)

Will's felt-experience of place across time charges spaces and objects as symbolic in the present. This historical chain of experiences marks them as both everyday and potentially affective, and the accrual of affects over time influences his style, his production choices, and his emerging sensibility.

Evocative of his emerging perception of his own sensibility and of his directorial style, Will describes framing scenes in "Thud" differently than most horror films where "people would definitely have that up close." Instead, he says he shoots wide shots that "add to the creepiness of things" where:

you don't feel like you're watching a gotcha scare movie (.) and it's more of like (.) you could imagine being in the room because you can see so much of it (.) It's not like tight shots where you can't see a lot of detail. (Will, interview)

On one level, Will's process evinces the relationship between symbols and experience as a "hermeneutics of symbolic expression" in which, phenomenologically, the symbol has the potential to affect worlds of feeling and significance that would otherwise be kept locked away (Wagoner, 2010, pp. 99-100); that is, the symbol, unlike the sign, has a double meaning: it can "open a portal to a world of feeling and significance not contained in the sign alone" (p. 100). Understood through a hermeneutics of symbolic expression, Will's production processes in making "Thud" is at once mediated by pop cultural expressions of affect in the "slasher genre", mediated by his previous embodied experiences in place, and a pre-reflective-emplaced experience of his *body-being-in* the places of his productions. Here, the mediated and

unmediated comingle in the feeling of meaning making, in Will's symbolic transformation of experience in the place-events of new media production; however, feeling dominates the dialectic and meaning is made in generative duplicity between strong feeling and weak mediation.

Further, this process is a communicative act that presupposes the affective reception of other bodies: Will's experiences of space and objects as suspenseful anticipates that his filming of them may affect his audience similarly, that they may move, jolt, his audiences' bodies, that they may feel goosebumps, that they may whisper to each other a socialized emotion: "that was scary". Will's production process thus involves the transformation of his affective experience in his mother's mountain home—of his felt-fears across time—into texts that affect sensation, emotion and atmosphere. Will's authorship involves feeling how present place-events may surge forward into the place-events of his audience's reception.

**“Blacklight”:** New media production as instantiation of personalized emotion. Will came to the idea for “Blacklight” differently. Rather than feeling foreboding atmospheres—over time and in the moment—in a specific place like his mother's mountain house, Will describes the socialized emotions of a particular place in his life, his tenth-grade year when he describes himself as “angsty” and wanting to make a film that was “like ‘FU’ mom and dad.” He also describes the “dark” and “twisted” films of David Lynch as being a keen influence on how that “angst” would translate into the moving images of a digital video:

When I wrote Blacklight sophomore year that's the first time that I set out to make something that would call for interpretation and would be kinda cryptic and stuff like that. Because like after I watched those movies [David Lynch films] I would have ideas floating around in my head where I thought if I ever made a movie about this, this could be a symbol for this. I

mean like really small separate ideas. So when I sat down to write *Blacklight* I put those ideas into one train of thought, one story, and decided to make a pretty personal story. (Will, interview)

With “*Blacklight*,” Will imagined a film that “was really cryptic” and that “requires interpretation” but that was also symbolic of personalized emotion. Fittingly, he began writing *Blacklight* in what he calls an “idea script” rather than a traditional “script script,” which contains dialogue, setting, stage directions, and conforms to convention.

In his videos that “represent stuff,” such as “*Blacklight*,” material symbols carry the meaning Will works to evoke, and this stuff, these ideas, are something less easy to verbalize than fear or suspense. For example, he describes rose petals, clowns, gravestones, and colors as representing the thoughts and emotions of the video’s two main characters, teenagers played by himself and his best friend Meghan:

Like in *Blacklight* the two biggest symbols in the movie—and what the title comes from—is light and darkness, and darkness being bad stuff...and light being good things (.) I mixed that so much with so many different things (.) Like there are scenes when certain things happen and there are strobe lights that go off, that keep going off for a whole scene, and it’s not addressed, like “oh, there’s a strobe light in the shot” (.) So you have light and darkness mixing right there. (Will, interview)

Will sees himself as creating ambiguity by placing strobe lights in a scene but not explaining why they are there. He understands the mixing of lights to represent the mixture of good and bad emotions that course through the teenagers dealing with what he describes as a difficult, confusing, and “angsty” place in their lives, as affecting an atmosphere for his audience similar to the inner, emotional experiences of his life at the time, the life he gives his characters. With

the symbols in “Blacklight,” Will instantiates his emotional experiences—impossible to verbalize precisely—into material objects that he perceives as communicating felt-experience to an audience without language, and, at the same time, he explores his own emotions through his new media production. Here again, cultural mediation—the influence of David Lynch films—and the irrational feeling of a SQR of his emotions in physical objects operate in generative duplicity in the communicative act of new media production. The *feeling* of strobe lights, rose petals and creepy clowns becoming for Will—and for the audience Will imagines—VEPS of his emotions outweighs the mediating influence of David Lynch. Affect is paramount.

Moreover, Will’s attention to the symbolic and to affecting atmospheres indicates the continued development of his affective sensibilities during digital video production. Will describes the thread along this developmental trajectory—from *Thud* to *Blacklight* to the documentary—as his attention to “atmospheres” and “environments,” which, as I have shown above, he considers in terms of affect: “That’s something I’ve always been interested in since getting serious about films and that’s communicating an environment.” I pressed Will to explain what he meant by environment and he went on saying that, especially in the documentary, it was important to him to recreate what he felt during the moment of filming: “I’m definitely capturing that environment and how it made me feel and how I want it to make them [the audience] feel.”

But these spaces and objects also moved Will as semiotic material when he *wasn’t* filming. For example, Will describes going for a walk with his friend Jena one afternoon into the woods behind her neighborhood:

there’s a tiny graveyard tucked way back in the woods with overgrown bushes, nobody tends to it at all, and all the headstones date back to the 1800s, and it’s really small, there are maybe eight graves in it, and I was like I want to film something right here. (Will, interview)



Will describes many such moments while filming “Blacklight” when, walking through everyday life, everyday environments initiated the composing processes in tandem not only with Will’s emerging sensibilities but also with his need for individual, emotional exploration: “I was like...those headstones are just what they [his characters] feel things about”. The instantiation of personal emotion in the material world, thus, began with the material world’s affecting Will’s body: “I was kinda like pulled to them [the headstones]”. The process of new media production, thus, not only involves Will’s body being affected by the material world, but also the development of his sensibilities for symbolic instantiation of emotion into the material world as his body moves through everyday life. The process of production, then, is not limited to when Will holds a camera in his hand: it extends to his felt-engagement with the material world over time. Indeed, from his perspective two years after writing his “idea script” for “Blacklight,” Will describes the film as “a preservation or a record of my feelings and the way that year of high school made me feel.” More than composed modes, “Blacklight,” for Will, is a production that continues to affect personalized, historical emotions in present nostalgic experience.

**Documentary material: New media production as sensibilities for symbolism in “real life”.** Will does not describe using symbols in the documentary; in fact, he says that the documentary film was not about “symbolism” so much as creating “a mood” or “atmosphere” that communicated an experience he had “in real life” with the homeless. These “atmospheres” emerged in place-events, and this emergent process, coupled with Will’s desire to develop his sensibilities, complicated the social interactions that are essential to documentary filmmaking. Will saw his subjects’ “real lives”, including the places in which they lived and the things adorning those places, as communicating mood; however, in sensing those spaces and objects’ meaning potential he sometimes missed the potential for meaning in his subjects’ stories.

Even in his first encounter with homelessness after deciding to make his documentary, Will described his subject—Mama Rose—her home, and the objects in her home mostly as if through his camera, mostly for her documentary-like appeal. Further, this description of filming the documentary—and my experiences alongside him—is strongly evocative of his sense of atmosphere and symbolism in “Thud” and “Blacklight,” which were, in part, irrationally symmetrical processes of making material into something more than it is.

***Mama Rose: A film character in “real life”.*** Mama Rose, a formerly homeless, middle-aged African-American woman, lived on the same block as tent-city, an area on the city’s greenway where many of the community’s homeless assembled makeshift dwellings year-round. Tent-city was spotted squarely under a dilapidated railroad bridge and surrounded by relatively densely packed foliage that blocked much of it from the view of joggers and amblers using the hiking trail that surrounded it. Low income housing separated the greenway from downtown, and this is where Mama Rose’s magenta house rested: in the space between a bustling university centered downtown, and the shelters erected on public land by homeless community members.

Will’s description of the house noted its story-like quality, calling attention to the details that composed, what he perceived as, an authentic documentary scene: “[it was] totally documentary material cause she had like the coolest little things and pictures and like material set up all round her barber shop.” When he continued to explain Mama Rose and her house, Will began to describe her as an sort of fictional film character, her home as *mise-en-scène*:

It’s documentary material (.) because all over her back wall like her back wall of that trailer where she cuts the hair was covered in pictures and it was all of like just like family and people she loves and (.) she’s listening to like her gospel music that’s coming out of her like old little radio player and then she’s got like her bible with like black Jesus’ picture on the

front of it [...] and a couple of Obama things on the wall and just all that stuff. (Will, interview)

Will described not just the visual authenticity, but, in fact, the multi-sensorial experience of being in the scene, himself. His attention to even the smallest details and their relationship to Mama Rose-as-character (the pictures on walls, some of which he assumes to be of the homeless) underlie his sensibilities for the symbolic with which he moved through her home.

Even Mama Rose—her embodied personality— was rendered a detailed character in his scene:

all those little things that I think make her such a character [...] this hunched over old lady that likes to wear her wigs with like her little flowers that she keeps in it all the time (.) And she's got—like in a non offensive way whatsoever—she's got like a gap in her teeth and like this cute little laugh (.) Like whenever [...] just when she sees you because as soon as you see her she's like “oh hey baby.” (Will, interview)

Will carried his sensibilities for the symbolic to the documentary film, sensing double meanings in the objects and spaces of, for example, Mama Rose's home, objects and spaces that made her the stuff of film, that made her “documentary material”. Whereas in his fictional films Will produced symbols to generate a sense of “cryptic” ambiguity, wanting to force his audience to “interpret,” puzzle, and talk with one another to “figure it out,” in the documentary Will's developed sensibility for symbolic transformation of physical environments affected where he trained his camera, where his body was moved. What Will described as an “atmosphere of authenticity” in Mama Rose's home and embodied personality was a symbolic transformation resonate of being affected by physical environments, exploring personalized emotion, and anticipating environments' potential to affect audiences.

*Jimmy, Greg and a felt focal moment of new media production.* Later in filming, Will and I followed two homeless men below the bridge (described above) where they had set up shelters. Will had been getting to know these men—Jimmy and Greg—for months, and they wanted to show Will where one of their friends, also homeless, had been struck by a train and killed the night before. Will described visiting the scene and seeing the outline of the body police had sprayed with red paint [Figure 8]. He related how it impacted him, and how it impacted his composing process:

I panned up from the body outline to the big bridge that the train went under that was right there, because that was a bridge where my friends and I and Jimmy and Greg (.) we had all gone to that exact same bridge before where Greg sang for us and it turns out that's the exact same place where his friend ended up getting killed a couple weeks later. (Will, interview)



*Figure 8.* Raw footage from the documentary video. From top left: Will pans from flag marking the train's impact to a passing train. He then shoots the outline from multiple angles while I wait with Johnny and Greg on the hill overlooking the scene.

Like his mother's mountain house, *this* space had meaning for Will because of his body being—having been—in it. He felt having been there and having experienced moments of camaraderie, and that very specific past collapsed with the present, as he filmed the body outline. This confrontation trained Will's camera and affected the message, mood, and tone he wanted to capture.

When he returned to where I was standing, watching him from just up the hill by the bridge, I asked him why he filmed the outline from so many angles, why he was down there so long:

I took so many shots because [...] this is one of the more (.) powerful and raw moments (.) Just showing something as raw as a death that has just happened and being there where there was still the fresh body mark still painted on the ground. So I stayed down there and took as many shots as I could. (Will, observational video footage)

It was not the angles: it was the number, the pre-reflective sensibility toward reproducing and capturing a moment fresh for him that could not be fresh in the same way for a viewer. Will's impulse was to capture and recreate his own feeling of being-in-the-place of a recent death, a place with a personal, affective history inaccessible to viewers. Will takes this sense of attempting affective reproduction further when I later asked how he might edit these shots:

It was an overcast, bleak day and I will probably even tone the colors down in those shots even more to convey that because the camera kinda lightens things brighter than they are (.) than they really are (.) I would probably go back and tone that down to like a hazy baby blue (.) something like that (.) just darker, to get that dark feeling again...maybe that would expand throughout the majority of the film to keep people kinda feeling in that darkish cold atmosphere. (Will, interview)

Will's personalized symbolic transformation of the moment—his own felt-experience of the weather, of the color of the sky—into an affective atmosphere *is* his production process. It cannot be understood fully only as a rational control of forms, an internal debate of the affordances and constraints of material resources, a system of grammatical construction of available designs: it is, too, the desire to (re)affect and make felt a personalized, embodied experience. This production event was an ecological and phenomenological experience of his body-being-in and of his body having been in the space he filmed—his body felt together with his sense of the sky, his past—but present—feeling of warmth by the fire with the homeless as they were making friends. Here, Will's production process is revealed as something more than contextual: it is a place-event in which social, affective temporalities collapse in the emergence of textual production.

Yet, it is also a process of, again, capturing images of empty space—the body outline—that affected him because of his history of being in it, his social history with the homeless community, and the affective intensities of being-there-in-the-moment. That moment included the sound of an approaching train, both my and Will's anticipation of the train soon to hit the tracks on which we were standing, and then the train rushing by. It was impossible for me not feel the train's force, the wind in its wake, the ear-crushing sound of grinding metal, the smell of grinding metal. That feeling evoked in both Will and myself a horrific full-bodied imagining of a similar train's impact upon the deceased homeless man. That feeling moved Will's camera toward a close-up of the wheels rushing by, toward capturing what he also called the "force" that he felt a close-up of the wheels would (re)affect in his audience.

My feeling of force was complicated, however, when I looked up to see Jimmy and Greg watching us by the tracks down below. I felt awkward. I felt that perhaps Will's sensibility for

capturing images of empty space, of objects like the train wheels, in order to (re)affect as they affected him was oddly self-centered, centered on his own embodied experience. He worked from *his* feeling of the emerging place-event, capturing the images of the outline but neglecting the emotional experiences of the living homeless—Jimmy and Greg standing around while he filmed. Will did not interview them about their stories of living with the now deceased homeless man, and he missed potential insights into the social and cultural contexts that led up to the accident. Here, Will’s developing sensibility impeded an also reflective portrait that would contribute to the ostensible goals of his video. Unmediated feeling—the force of the train, e.g.—impeded the mediation of emotional experience—empathy for the men waiting above— that might have moved Will and his documentary differently.

## **Section 2: “I think it’s completely subconscious”**

In the previous section, my analysis revealed how Will’s composing processes engaged his body affectively, how he explored socialized emotions that arose from affective intensities, and how he began developing style and voice as a composer, in part, through his sensibilities for people, places, and things in his production space. In this analysis, such affective engagement was evident in what moved Will while filming, and toward whom and what his body moved. In the following section, I analyze another felt focal moment that involves a specific immateriality—beauty—for which Will seeks material referents. While filming in the moment, Will sensed what he later described as “beauty;” yet, he denied that, in the moment, he named these people, places, and things as beautiful:

I think it’s completely subconscious because (.) in retrospect I can look back and say why I think capturing all those things contributed to that environment or that character, whereas at the time all it was to me (.) was something that captured my interest. (Will, interview)

Will's description of his pre-reflective process, of being affected in the moment, is indicative of the role of affect and sensibility *in situ* with making the documentary: his pre-mediated mind-in-body moved toward textual material that *felt* like documentary material. But Will's additional comment concerning his reflective meaning-making also suggests the cyclical dynamics of mediation and pre-mediation in this process.

Still, Will added nuance to the pre-reflective phase of his meaning-making process, specifically, when he describes being pulled toward "beautiful" material: "it's the very specific ability to capture something that is significant and stands out about...human life...about what it is that we humans do (.) What it is that goes on in our lives". As examples of capturing what Will identified as beautiful in the everyday lives of his homeless subjects, Will described small, ordinary details that could not be predicted *a priori* as of things of beauty but for which he showed a sensibility evocative of his earlier sensibilities for feeling suspense and ambiguity in the ordinary objects and spaces of *Thud* and *Blacklight*:

I filmed the way he had his coffee mug set up next to his cigarettes and the way he had his mirror on his tree right here and the clothes right here (.) And with Kurt I filmed his smoke that was coming from every part of his house whether it be the steam coming from the oatmeal or the incense burning or his cigarette he was holding. (Will, interview)

Witnessing each of the instances Will described above, I noticed that there was invariably salient action or conflict Will did not film that was more conventionally documentary-like, e.g., an argument between two homeless women, homeless children playing and running between improvised clotheslines. Yet, Will's pre-conscious impulse to capture images of beauty in his film led him away from the action of his human participants and toward the "poetic" feeling of *things*:



there can be a poetry to them [things] and some people can completely overlook that whereas some people can find that and they figure out the perfect way to communicate it (Will, interview)

The feeling of material things as “poetic,” in part, define Will’s developing sensibility as a filmmaker, but this impulse toward capturing the image of things complicates his embodied action in social contexts. The sense of *something* being an image of a poetry affects the feeling of a place that Will attempts to capture on camera. Will’s movement toward this material *something* is an in-place-affect that makes a material thing feel as though it captures Will’s feeling of being in that place at that time. This in-place-affect gives the SQR to a VEPS. For example, the in-place-affect of oatmeal evoked the SQR of poetry for Will, an in-place-affect indicative of his developing sensibilities:

Like I said when I filmed the oatmeal, that’s when people were walking back to his room, we weren’t supposed to be stopping in the kitchen (.) but I was like ‘oh geez’ and I put my camera right down at the oven (.) and it’s just like whenever I see something that sticks out to me, I try to capture it as soon as possible (.) and like with Blacklight there are so many dream sequences which go on where I have the opportunity to show so much imagery and there was so much of me running around with my camera at different points like when the sun would set a certain way and I would sprint upstairs and grab my camera and sprint back out to go film it. (Will, interview)

In this example, Will described being affected by the oatmeal cooking on the stove of a recently homeless man he was interviewing. His main subject, Jimmy, made the introduction, and was with us in the apartment. Will described his sensibilities across genres, temporalities, and contexts—how he moved to the oatmeal like he moved to the sunset; how the oatmeal and

the sunset moved him both in everyday life and in the process of documentary filmmaking. But Will's affective experience of the sunset was different both in its anticipated dual meaning and its symbolic evocation of a personal and socialized emotion, angst. Filming oatmeal, Will did not describe a personalized emotion; rather, he the in-place-affect of the oatmeal cooking on the stove reified the SQR of beauty allowing for the oatmeal as a VEPS.

In this process of affective semiosis, beauty and oatmeal held a symmetrical relation for Will; the oatmeal *was* beauty; the oatmeal affected him; he moved toward it; he filmed it. The oatmeal produced an in-place-affect, a feeling of being something more than it was—something beautiful—that irrationally affected Will's body. But it was only in emplaced experience, in this place-event, that the hot, steaming and simmering oatmeal stood out to Will, as the environment-Will's body-and his developing sensibility interacted and emerged in a shot of oatmeal steam, which he proudly selected for our director's cut interview.

However, this sensibility irrationally trumped social norms *in situ*, and, without Will feeling it, perhaps undercut, again, the goal of Will's production. As Will moved toward the oatmeal, I felt a pang of social awkwardness in my stomach, standing in limbo between kitchen and hallway as Will's subject kept moving and telling the emotionally intense story he thought Will was following along to film [Figure 9]. I didn't whether to move with Will, continuing to capture data, or to move with Will's subjects, listening to their story along with the group.

The complexity of feeling out sensibilities and social interaction *in situ* was evidenced in both how my body felt awkward, my stomach sinking, and how Will's body was moved to and by the oatmeal. Navigating this complexity of feeling is part of what the new media production process demands: feeling out social relations in addition to sensibilities. Capturing beauty in the image of *things*, Will missed the complicated portrait of homelessness developing around him.

Will's sensibility for capturing images of what he perceived of the beauty and poetical in the homeless' everyday life, moved him toward making flat images—scenes of oatmeal cooking on the stove—more evocative of his style than of the substance of his subjects' lives.



*Figure 9.* From top left: Will turns to shoot oatmeal on stove while the group continues past into the hallway. I wait, filming him, until he moves to rejoin the group.

## **Discussion: Navigating Feeling in the Learning Sciences**

I have argued that the nature of learning and production with new media tools involves more than the orchestration of abstracted modes: it involves the lived body in affective meaning-making with(in) material environments. I have shown that the feeling of meaning-making during new media production involves historically, culturally and affectively developed sensibilities that emerge as bodies move through multiple environments, environments in which they participate in the charging of immaterial experience, generating affective intensities while sensing people, places and things as semiotic material. To make this argument, I have developed theories of affective semiosis and emplacement, understanding that pre-conscious, irrational meaning-making operates in a dialectical relationship with mediated, reflective meaning-making—a dialectic pulsing in the sensuous relationship of mind-body-environment. Further, I developed interpretive phenomenological analysis as method for coming to know the affective experiences of bodies by using my own body, my own feelings, as an additional data point for warranting claims about affective, emplaced meaning-making.

Because the experience of meaning-making with new media is always emplaced, is always an experience of bodies moving and feeling in the world of people, places and things, there is a danger in theories and research methods hovering at too abstract a level. Messier than with words or modes, Will often composed with people—sometimes vulnerable people, in the case of the homeless—as youth will continue to do and learn to do outside of school: on Instagram, YouTube, Vine; and with smartphones, Google Glass, and as yet unimagined technologies. Thus, considering how youth learn to compose with(in) material worlds raises questions for learning scientists not only about the complex dialectics of mediation and pre-mediation and its intractable relationship to lived bodies, but also about how those dialectics develop over time in

relationship to disparate new and evolving technologies. As these technologies become more and more mobile, the feeling of being in and moving through place becomes more essential to understanding how moving bodies experience learning. Now, the technologies of digital production move *with bodies* from place to place, from historically, affectively-charged spaces to encounters in novel, designed or foreign environments. In the following, I: (1) posit theoretic questions around the feeling of learning in need of further development and investigation in the learning sciences; (2) problematize investigating feeling in the learning sciences wherein researchers' bodies are intimately involved in warranting claims, and where language is a weak representation of lived experience.

Concern with the pre-mediated experience of learning and meaning-making has bubbled up in recent interdisciplinary conversations around human learning, doing and making (Author; Ingold, 2011; 2013; Mårtsin, 2012; Fors, Bäckström, & Pink, 2012). Ironically, though, while literacy researchers and learning scientists alike have moved fields forward by expanding notions of new media production and embodiment, such thinking is still limited in its undeveloped understanding of how affect and pre-reflective meaning-making are interrelated with the reflective and mediated in experiences of learning and making. Interpretation of human experience for social knowledge must attend to such dialectics, which have been one-sided in research on new media production and learning as embodied experience.

Indeed, Reed (2011) reminds social scientists of the continued need to understand the cycle of intentionality that includes the conscious and unconscious desires and drives that inform such human behavior as learning and new media production, and he points to under-investigated questions about the embodied experience of literacy, in particular: “conscious and unconscious, rational and irrational, sources of action...it is a more encompassing, inclusive concept of

interiority that is needed for explanation in the interpretive epistemic mode” (pg. 136). Yet, Reed, like Salvatore, remains focus on interiority thereby eliding affect, sensation and emotion as at once in bodies and in the world. Indeed, exceeding even notions of situatedness (c.f., Gee, 2008), Will’s learning and composing experiences were mobile and emplaced. In these experiences he *and* the environment produced action: learning and production were co-productions of Will and the material world.

The affective activity of bodies in the practice of literacy might therefore be understood as something that cannot and should not always be verbalized, as felt, body-environment interrelations that are not based in language. Understanding felt, body-environment interrelations—such as in-place-affect—requires both theory and methods work in future learning science research. Will’s composing experiences with the physical environment compels literacy and learning researchers to situate experience in ways that account for its tacit dimensions that exceed representation. What methodologies and methods will lead researchers toward more nuanced understandings of learning as emplaced experience, and how will they deepen accounts of the affective textures of social and cultural activity?

Further, lived bodies are moving bodies, and as new media tools become more ubiquitous so too do they become more mobile. Historically, theories of learning have accounted for stillness, for learners’ positionalities and possible identities as seen through forcedly rational adult eyes. For example, positioning Will-as-filmmaker perspective suggests the mediating role of his camera as a cultural tool (Wertsch, 1998) and his desire to develop an identity as a filmmaker in order to enter into a professional community of practice and vision (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Goodwin, 2003). Yet, Will’s experiences *also* includes—if not forefronts—his embodied desires,

the development of affective sensibilities and the exploration of personalized emotion, which are qualitatively different—yet concomitant to—such mediated practice and identity building.

Moreover, positioning Will as a filmmaker risks missing how his sensibilities develop unbounded by the practice of filmmaking as such. Will felt emotion in material objects beyond his formal production process: his sensibilities developed in nightmares at mountain houses, while walking through cemeteries with his best friend, and when glancing up to see the sunset while doing homework. Researchers will need to follow participants beyond the formalized, *a priori* and artificially bracketed contexts of “production” and into everyday life to understand how sensibilities develop over time. Investigating only from the predictable points of “production event” to “production event” does not capture the complexity of affective development where sensibilities for new media production do not halt their growth between new media production experiences. Following sensibilities requires following the unpredictable lines of movement along the paths of everyday life.

### **Conclusion**

How might sociocultural theories of learning be expanded to better account for the socio-affective entanglements of mind, body and environment? Affective meaning-making is an (im)material experience of lived bodies. It is immaterial in that phenomenological bodies sometimes feel the sense of quality-of-reality of abstractions such as beauty in material things such as oatmeal. It is material because the singular in-place-affect of oatmeal, the enmeshed experience of its sight-smell-hot-steam move bodies toward the feeling that it is something more than it is. In the process of learning to produce new media, moments such as feeling the (im)materiality of oatmeal are connected to other moments in which sensibilities develop across

and within temporal scales of affective, social and cultural relations that are emplaced within material worlds.

What theories will account for, will move *with*, feel *with* and *correspond to* (Ingold, 2013), learners' mobile bodies as they make sense of their constantly shifting perceptions of experience, mobile bodies wayfaring unpredictable paths as they follow the homeless through emotionally turbulent and tangled campsites, seeing, hearing, smelling, sensing them through portable new media production tools? How can researchers come to know without positioning, stilling, quieting for the sake of traditional academic rationality that too often shies away from the messy complexities of lived human experience? How can learning sciences research that theorizes the dialects of affective and mediated meaning itself be dialectically felt and rationalized?



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## CHAPTER 4

### FEELING THE AFFECTS OF LITERACY MOMENTS:

### DESIRE HERE-NOW IN A CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

#### **Introduction**

In this article I confront a pressing problem in literacy studies: How can literacy researchers come to know and share how moving human bodies experience and feel their literacies? How can literacy researchers come to know and share without stilling or positioning these emergent lives for the sake of a specific—and limited—brand of academic knowing? These problems of representation have never been more present. Up against the limits of language as lines of inquiry in literacy veer toward the affective turn in the social sciences (Clough & Halley, 2007; for a thorough interdisciplinary review see Gregg & Seigworth, 2010), researchers must also address the implications of technologies for producing and consuming, touching and swiping, that are becoming more and more mobile (Ehret & Hollett, 2013). On the move, youth engage in literacies while their bodies feel atmospheres and materialities that instigate Instagrams and inspire tweets. If researchers hope to know the nature of literacy as an embodied, mobile and felt-experience, they cannot enframe such enlivened experiences of literacies in use with the dominant representational paradigms in literacy studies—e.g., social semiotic theories of multimodality—themselves rooted in linguistics (Author, 2014; also see McDonald, 2012 for review of “linguistic imperialism” in social semiotics). Theories rooted in language (Kress, 2010) and D/discourses (Gee, 2008) impose grammars and abstractions onto immanence, onto life as a felt experience of human bodies. Language (theories) alone cannot alone explain what life and literacy *feels* like. Human bodies moving through life, experiencing and feeling out their literacies, resist (linguistic) representation.

I do not attempt to solve this problem, or to engage the long history of recorded scholarship that has addressed the tensions between art, language and representation, which is rooted in, at the latest, classical Greek philosophy. In fact, my attempt to confront the problem feels weak: I am using academic language to share what I have experienced of adolescents' embodied desires for literacy and learning while hospitalized. I am writing into the problem I have posed. With this caveat in mind, I experiment with creative nonfiction—a genre that plays with language and truth-telling (Gutkind, 2012)—as a literary method with which to reimagine, re-enliven, and become with my “data” during the writing process. While writing I maintained attention to how my literary output would evoke feeling and knowing in the scholars who read it, who in turn would become anew with my story by generating difference in their own felt-sense making. My creative nonfiction writing was (and is in your present reading) both an experiment in method and in sharing knowledge around the feeling of literacy.

The story I produced recounts my attempt to attune to affective experiences and moments with adolescents in a children's hospital. I focus the story on Cole, a twelve-year-old boy hospitalized with Leukemia, with whom I talked, wrote and played for eight months during an ethnographic study of youth literacies in a children's hospital. I used affective attunement to define my goal as a mentor and researcher working within the hospital school responsible for Cole's education. With the phrase affective attunement I evoke my felt awareness of Cole's desires to use and develop his literacies. I did not just listen to the desires represented in his words. I also felt the affective intensities that emerged, for instance, in our shared silences or from the tone in our voices. Attuned to our experiences together, I sought not to observe, record, and describe things *as they were*, but instead to be present with him, to *be* with him and imagine how things *could be*. Concurrently, this speculative way of being informed an emergence



pedagogy that followed Cole's desires for literacy and for producing texts while hospitalized. This was pedagogy as an embodied method of attuning to desire, of feeling the affects of literacy moments in the ongoing sensation of literacy as an experience of bodies as they are lived, not linguified or multimodalized.

### **Overview and Research Focus**

With my story of feeling out literacy experiences with Cole, I converse with with researchers who have worked to unbind literacy studies from purely representational portraits of human experience. These scholars are producing multi-layered, affectively textured accounts of literacies as social phenomena experienced by bodies as they *are lived and felt*, not as they might be read *discursively* or *multimodally*. Although most nonrepresentational work in literacy studies remains focused on Deleuzian rhizomatics (e.g., Alvermann, 2000; Eakle, 2007; Hagood, 2009; Leander & Boldt, 2013; Leander & Rowe, 2006), some scholars have sought broader nonrepresentational approaches to understanding the experience of meaning-making as it emerges in embodied experiences. For example, researchers have drawn on phenomenology to understand the feeling of meaning-making with new media (Lemke 2013), and on affect theory to understand how literacies, corporality and feeling are complicated in the inextricable enmeshing of digital-physical realities (Ehret & Hollett, 2014). Unmooring literacy studies from dominant text and design based paradigms has enabled a more fully-human imagining of literacy as (im)material experiences of bodies in motion (Burnett, Merchant, Pahl, & Rowsell, 2012).

Agreeing with many in this line of inquiry, I do not work counter to representational, practice accounts of literacy; rather, I pursue nonrepresentation as a way of feeling something more than representationalism alone allows. Toward duplicity between representational and nonrepresentational portraits of literacies in use, I provide a nonrepresentational epistemology,

which may productively orient literacy researchers and practitioners toward an ontology of affect useful when working—though living bodies—in the field. I then develop theories of moments and desire in the service of better attuning to affect in literacy research and pedagogical practice. This orientation attunes bodies to the feeling of things always going on in immediate here-nows, there-nows, later-nows. I generate these concepts of nownesses to complicate the feelings of multiple temporalities in lived experience. These nownesses may be felt in literacy experiences that have the potential to develop into literacy moments, where bodies engaged in literacy feel as though life is more than it is, worldings in excess of representation. Literacy, in this sense, is the desiring motions of bodies building (from) textual assemblages along the affectively charged lines of everyday life. It is a lived process of moving and making along desiring lines of production. These lines include desiring lines that may connect moments, weakly, or may not, along, for instance, sustained affective pedagogies.

My narrative writing, pedagogy with Cole, and study design were praxes of my developed theories, attuned to these questions:

- I. How did jointly produced desires affect the emergence of literacy moments in my experiences tutoring Cole during his hospitalization for leukemia treatment? How and where did these literacy moments move our bodies?
- II. How did these literacy moments—and the feelings emanating from them—become actualized in pedagogical practice? How were moments of affective pedagogical experience linked across temporalities?

### **Related Literature:**

#### **Attuning to the Feeling of Things, Literacy Moments, and Desiring Lines**

“Representationalism is so deeply entrenched within Western culture that it has taken on a commonsense appeal.” (Barad, 2003, p. 806)

### **Nonrepresentational Epistemologies: The Feeling of Things**

Recently, scholars across disciplines have developed a significant corpus of thinking to reorient academic epistemologies toward the complexity of immediate, lived experience (e.g., Barad, 2007; Ingold, 2011; Law, 2004; Pink, 2011). This work toward epistemological reorientation has been, in large part, a reaction to the dominance of social constructivism and to linguistic, cultural and interpretive turns across the social sciences throughout the late twentieth century (Anderson & Harrison, 2010). These reactions problematize how constructivism turns lived experience “into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation” (Barad, 2003, p. 801), a move that eschews the immediate feelings of actually making those representations. Thus, with attention to the always unfolding experience of meaning production, these critiques hone on constructivism’s weaknesses for understanding, ironically, how meanings emerge from immediate embodied experiences that have potential to develop into culturally situated, tractable representations, e.g., culturally constructed emotions that can mediate literacy practices such as writing in school (Smagorinsky & Daigle, 2012). Representational epistemologies privilege the points along a line toward specific representations, but they miss the lines (Ingold, 2011). Focusing on the points, the ends, the categories, the constructed meanings is the common sense appeal that non-representational theories critique, looking between the ends, the points, the meanings and asking “what’s going on” (Massumi, 2011), no matter where the question may lead.

Attending to feeling of lives as they are lived along lines—not from point to point—non-representational epistemologies also reject the delineation of people, places and things as

ontologically separate; they allow matter to matter (Barad, 2003). From this perspective, bodies—both “human” and “non-human”—are always intra-acting. For example, analyzing “a girl throwing a ball” on a sunny day generates a subject-object binary between girl and ball, respectively, that elides the feeling of girl-ball in motion through a material world: the weight of *this* ball requiring *this* amount of force at *this* point in the throwing motion that is *right now* affected by *that* cloud revealing *this* bright burst of sun in the girl’s eyes. All of this matter—sun, ball, girl—come to matter in a non-representational, always-in-motion portrait. All of this matter intra-acts in a process of the becoming throw. Enlivening the social sciences has thus meant coming to know the jointly produced feelings of such “sociomaterial entanglements” as ball-girl-sun (Barad, 2007, p. 88) where *phenomena* are the primary epistemological units.

### **The Feeling of Things in the Midst of it**

Enlivening literacy research to include the feelings of, for example, adolescent-iPhone-leaf-Instagram, means being in the throes of the throw. It means attending to constantly being in the middle of things (where all “things” matter), because “to begin to think life, we must begin in the middle with an activist sense of life at no remove: in the middling immediacy of what is always ‘going on’” (Massumi, 2011, p. 1). Thus, for literacy researchers coming to know “life at no remove” often means trying to make felt sense not just of how feeling emerges in experience, but of what it feels like for participants—and researchers—to be alive in the midst of moments during which literacy seems to, on the surface, organize activity. The trick in coming to know what is going on in the midst of these moments is not to still them, freeze the video “data” and analyze it by frames, or parse a moment’s constituent elements such that they are delineated discretely and the relationality *between* elements in motion falls away—the forces between intra-acting ball, arms, and gravity: the *affects*. Feeling comes out of moving relationalities, out of the

middle of things, out of the always in-between. Together, the feelings that accrue—constantly (re)shaping experience—constitute part of the excess of experience. To start or stay in a position or on a frame of video would drain experience of its excess, depleting bodies of their singular nows of feeling and affects.

To understand how these moments unfold constantly in lived experience from a micro-perspective, Massumi (2011) described dimensions of experience as “dual immediacies of process” that flow from bare-active firstness, or life at no remove. Unpacking “dual immediacies of process” Massumi drew on Whitehead’s (1978) process philosophy to describe every moment’s becoming as involving a relational-qualitative duplicity. In this duplicity the relational and qualitative dimensions are dual immediacies. Thus, the experience of any moment-in-the-making has as its first dimension the *relational* experience of being affected by and/or affecting other matter (p. 3). For example, a body feels a tingle, goosebumps, or sinking boredom in relation to intra-actional experience unfolding, but has not just qualified the feeling as such, has not named the feeling with language. This unnamed feeling is how relationality between matter in the midst of experience registers, if only in effect, upon bodies.

The second dimension is the qualitative “experience coming out of bare activity into itself just so” as the moment continues to unfold. The second dimension moves from the phrase before it and registers as the immediate recognition—which cannot but be felt—of “its [the moment’s] holding together in just the way it comes to do” (p. 3). This recognition may be an immediate “naming” of experience as exciting (tingle), suspenseful (goosebumps), or boring (sinking), for instance; or, it may just be recognized, consciously, and not named. Just as quickly as recognition occurs, the second dimension, which has qualified the first, feeds back into relationality. These phases of occurrence overlap and continue to not in dichotomy by in

duplicity, always informing each other, always holding together, each phase anticipating the next: “they relay each other following an arc of felt becoming” (p. 3). Each loop of duplicity is a singular drop in experience pulsing and modulating how bodies perceive experience second by second. Attending to this duplicity is starting point for literacy researchers working from an emergence perspective, working to stay in the middle of things.

Relational-qualitative duplicity is also one way to understand the ontological correspondence between affect, relationality, and qualitative experience that organizes the strand of affect theory informing this article. Affect is the pre-personal force between bodies that generates and is generated by relational-qualitative duplicity in unfolding experience (Massumi, 2002; 2011). Unlike the relational phase of feeling, or the recognition of feeling in the qualitative phase, affect is neither felt nor recognized. Affect is a means to feel-think the relational forces that generate feeling in experience, and to think about the emergence of social life as always different, new and singular from moment to moment, because “the coming-together of the differences *as such*—with no equalization or erasure of their differential—constitutes a formative force” (p. 5, emphasis in original). Affective intensities do not combine because they *affect*. They produce difference from each relational-qualitative duplicity to the next across always intra-acting bodies, and they bring intensities of feeling to social life. Experience—from the everyday to the extraordinary—can then be understood through always unfolding events of relational-qualitative duplicity that generate varying degrees of affective intensities between bodies. These affective intensities thusly become not “units of analysis,” but felt focal moments from which to generate new meanings when working with data. This epistemological orientation to the feeling of things in the midst of it is a means to slow life down

in order to know it differently; but, it does not still, position or quiet lived experience for “rational” backward looking analysis or codification.

### **Literacy Moments: Weak Theories at the Limits of Language**

With this orientation toward social life, ethnographer Kathleen Stewart produced accounts of how affective intensities modulate experience and accrue across moments of cultural poesis at varied temporal scales—from hours to years (Stewart, 2007, 2008, 2010). Her felt experience of being in a biker bar during the becoming of a short, singular moment provides both an effective empirical example to concretize the theorization outlined in the previous section, and a helpful contrast to a well-known representational account of biker bar D/discourses (Gee, 2008). In Stewart’s formulation, moments are modes of production—cultural poesis—in which life feels like more than it is. In her words:

What a life adds up to is a *problem* and an open question. “Don’t get me started,” they say. “I could write a book.” It would be a book of singularities that don’t add up but are always *threatening* to. What people mean by a life—as in “get a life”—is always something about getting yourself *into* something or getting yourself *out of* something you’ve gotten yourself into and then on to the next thing (if you’re lucky). It’s a mode of production through which something that feels like something throws itself together.

(Stewart, 2008, pg. 72)

The thrown-togetherness of moments, of life, is a nonrepresentational counterpoint to Gee’s (2008) structured perspective in which “historically and socially defined Discourses speak to each other through individuals” participating in everyday discourse, or talk (p. 162). From this representational stance, bodies are texts whose actions, dress, movements and speech can be understood as, in part, “historically and socially defined” and that participate in predictable

systems of “symbolic expressions, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, acting” (p. 161).

There is nothing thrown together in representational Discourse structures. The pieces fit in Gee’s biker bar: He seems out of place because his speech, dress, manner—his body-as-textual representation—do not fit the pre-defined structure. In this picture, it all adds up, life. Strong socio-linguistic theory connects the dots.

But what if Gee, like Stewart, were now attentive to what doesn’t fit together so neatly, to what is not pre-defined or resists representation? To what only threatens to add up? In Stewart’s ethnographic evocation of being in a bar in West Texas, “the poesis of the ordinary draws attention and becomes habitual because things don’t just add up. Something throws itself together and then floats past or sticks for some reason. Some such things have meaning per se; most have force in some other form.” (Stewart, 2008, pg. 74). A biker couple limp into a bar and most eyes move to watch them find their seats. They tell the story of having just hit a deer and having to ditch their motorcycle. The bar comes “to a dead stop” (p. 74), and, slowly, questions come from tables, drawing out details of the accident as a “*we* of sorts opens, charging the social with lines of potential” (p. 74, emphasis in original). Some lines emanate imminently. The people in the bar are in something, a moment of shared affective intensities that modulate phases of relational-qualitative duplicity: a jerking feeling that moves one women’s eyes toward the limping couple, and then is qualified as surprise-concern. Phases of duplicity shift and modulate as the experience unfolds. Stories, looks, and postures affect: They will right now speculate about new motorcycle helmet laws, and in the next right now they relay their own encounters of speeding, of a narrowly missing a deer on an unlit highway. Their conversations will be abstracted to freedom, mortality, or fate as some meanings stick unpredictably with a force that



affects pontification. Conversations will proliferate across tables, strands will be lost, picked up, come back together. Bodies will slump, chairs will scratch floors, arrangements will shift.

Other lines, Stewart imagines, affect futures in which people will watch for bike parts in the road, for deers more attentively in *this* place tonight, and then later in *that* place with fading intensities. The individual *we's* life trajectories are affected, if at varying degrees, by the moment. They are no longer *of the moment* in the future, but affected by it. This is a moment when “things throw themselves together into something to feels like *something*,” a proprioception of something that moves the body in nowness and futurity, *something* at the limits of language, a feeling (p. 76). The feeling of *something* affecting here-now: unpredictable motions of bodies on stools telling (un)related anecdotes; there-now: in their imaginings of potential futures; and later-now: in future, embodied activity. The feeling of being in this moment is, in part, the excess of Gee's (2008) representation of D/discourse in use. Stewart's feelings being in that singular biker bar moment evince a limit of D/discourse—indeed, a limit of language—where feeling does not fit a pre-defined pattern, and stories—literacies—emerge unpredictably in felt response to being *here-now*, *there-now*, and *later-now*—nownesses whose affective lines emanate outward toward participants' always rightnow-lives in unfinished worlds.

Coming to know literacy moments means to feel-think—to be attuned to—experience in felt response to nownesses—to be attuned to the immediate social, (im)material world in order to feel moments when they emerge, and follow to the lines where they may lead. To know literacy moments requires attending to feeling-thinking duplicity in the unfolding relations between researcher, participants and their jointly produced “data”. Literacy moments are worldings—“lived circuits of action and reaction” coalescing in “an attunement to a singular world's texture and shine”(Stewart, 2010, p. 339-341). Worldlings are the awareness—if only tacit—of

attunement to moments. They are a felt awareness of producing something haptic that is affected by singular coming-togethers of dual immediacies. Because literacy moments are the lived experiences of bodies engaged in literacy, coming to know these moments requires following lines that emanate from engagement with texts, and that are unbounded by the texts themselves. Lines that seem to connect related points, even if the connection is weak: following lines from *here-now* to *later-nows* that only *feel* connected. Following the affects in and from literacy moments requires “weak theory in unfinished worlds” (Stewart, 2008) to know, without pre- or over-knowing, the feeling of being engaged in and affected by literacy experiences.

### **Desiring Lines: Bodies in Motion through Unfinished Worlds**

Desire is one force with which literacy experiences—lived bodies feeling out their literacies—become something more, become literacy moments in which affects intensify here-now, there-now. Where desires pulse the becoming of literacy moments, desiring lines move outward, potentially affecting later-nows: Desiring toward not hitting deer, toward the biker couple’s well-being, toward fate allowing a long life. Desire as force connects the affective intensities of literacy moments like electric sparks dancing across static conductors. Desiring lines weakly move and affect embodied activity in later-nows. As a weak theory, desire helps attune researchers to the becoming of literacy moments, and desiring lines are weak pulses researchers may follow across literacy moments that feel connected.

Within and across these moments, *what* is desired is also constantly in production, modulated, adjusted. Desire is not a want for a lacked object: it is not object-, void-, deficit-oriented: “desire does not lack anything; it does not lack its object. It is, rather, the subject that is missing in desire, or desire that lacks a fixed subject” (Deleuze, 1990, pg. 26). In a nonrepresentational epistemology, desire is not lacking of *something* but a movement toward

singular *somethings*. Thus, desiring literacies are constantly-morphing assemblages of tools, technologies, people, and feelings moving toward the production of multiple, unpredictably singular meanings and products. The affects around making these assemblages feed desire, dampen it or engorge it, and constantly affected desire steers and guides bodies in the process of making here-now. Some lines of conversation die out in the biker bar, although some ideas from within those conversations are later-now here-now in new ones. Laughter bursts and stimulates desire along one line, alters the tone of the next story told; an awkward silence flits the next line softly toward uh-hums, well then, are you ready to go? Desiring is a process of living, not a longing for *something*. Desiring literacies are stories told in a biker bar moving, for instance, unpredictably outward, affecting later-nows.

Leveraging a similar nonrepresentational, difference producing perspective of desire, some scholars have worked to re-orient education research toward disenfranchised communities. For example, Tuck (2008) argued for a crafting of desiring research as an antidote to what she terms damage-centered research, or research that positions disenfranchised communities—especially indigenous communities—as in deficient, or in need of fixing. Tuck’s proposed desiring approach, then, works in addition to the documentation of the sometimes harsh social realities imposed or chanced upon such communities in that it also identifies the wisdom and hope that such communities accumulate, generate and engender. Desiring lines, in this sense, connect moments that accumulate toward the wisdom of having lived rather than toward a *something* needed. According to Tuck, “such an axiology is intent on depathologizing the experiences of dispossessed and disenfranchised communities so that people are seen as more than broken and conquered.” (p. 416). Attuned to desire, researchers might also reorient themselves to hospitalized adolescents not as simply in need of care, desiring health—though this may, in

many cases, be one truth—but as bodies whose desires for literacy, for example, are constantly shifting, yes, but are also an accumulation of life experience through chronic illness and hospitalization. Their desires are wise not wizened.

## **Methods**

### **Participant and Hospital School**

**Hospital school.** This study took place in a children’s hospital in the southeastern United States. I entered the site as a volunteer intern in the hospital school program approximately two years before starting formal research. The hospital school is accredited and provides formal homebound services for patients, delivering formal academic instruction in partnership with students’ school districts and healthcare team. Additionally, the school program provides K-12 academic tutoring and academic enrichment services, which are primarily delivered by interns and volunteers. Working as an intern on at least a weekly basis, I gained insight into the institutional, programmatic, social and health-related structures that affect patients’ learning opportunities. Additionally, working with many patients across diagnoses—e.g., oncology, organ transplant, cystic fibrosis—I have gained intimate knowledge into adolescents’ experiences of schooling and chronic illness, their desire to learn—and not to—and their everyday experiences of literacy and learning while hospitalized.

**Cole.** I began tutoring Cole while he was hospitalized for the initial treatment of leukemia. He was thirteen and about to enter ninth-grade when he was diagnosed and subsequently hospitalized. He has a mild learning disability, and his IEP describes his reading proficiency as below grade level. I spent at least one day a week—often more—tutoring Cole and talking with his family: his mother, father and grandmother. As I got to know Cole and his family better, I began to spend much more time with him. Cole left the hospital after his initial round of

treatment, which lasted for about two months, and he later returned for another sixty-four day stay beginning in the late summer before his ninth-grade year. During this stay, I saw him two to four days a week.

Cole and his family live in a rural area of a Southeastern state, and are vivid, loquacious storytellers of their experiences in the outdoors, especially. Cole and his mother were eager to share stories he had written for school about a few of their fishing and camping trips. It was from my experiences telling stories with them, reading Cole's stories, and listening to his emerging desire to share the experiences both of his treatment that I suggested we begin writing them down. From the middle his first hospitalization, Cole and I worked on writing stories related to his illness, the content of which he always directed. My role involved, for example, helping him structure his narratives and develop descriptive detail.

All interactions with Cole and his family were audio-recorded. Many were video-recorded, though I decided not to video-record sessions in which *I* felt doing so was affectively dissonant<sup>3</sup>. I took photographs of his room, including, e.g., the posters, craft projects, lights, etc. that he made while in the hospital, brought from home, and over which he told stories. I collected the stories he wrote, and I have followed and screen-captured his social media activity, including, e.g., his personal Facebook page and the multiple Facebook pages devoted to documenting and supporting his cancer treatment. I journaled intensely and extensively during our experiences together.

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<sup>3</sup> Cole, his parents, and his grandmother were open to having all of our interactions video-recorded, and they consented to video recording. I was the person uncomfortable with video recording at times feeling that the air was too thick with feeling to move toward setting up a camera; rather, I was moved *to be there* with Cole and the others.

## **Methodology: Affective Pedagogies**

In study design and narrative writing I worked not toward traditional truth-telling but toward immediate feeling: attuning to experiences and moments, and following the lines of jointly becoming desires with participants. Working from the theorization developed in the previous section, in practice I understood desire as a force that is produced relationally, and that works with and through myself, Cole, and the materialities of experience that affected our interactions (e.g., the sounds of crying child being examined in the next room). Emanating out from our experiences together, I understood desire further as moving with me and Cole in our experiences apart from each other, as affecting our social lives with others before (re)entering and affecting our next shared experiences. Desiring machines were thusly in becoming with, through, and between our experiences together as we gathered life, materials and affects toward the production of texts, our own subjectivities, and our interactions with varied institutional structures, the most immediate of which for Cole was the children's hospital.

The primary methodology that drove narrative writing and my work as a literacy tutor, then, was and continues to be my own desire to be attuned to the moments that arise in literacy experiences with adolescents in the service of more affective pedagogies, which respond to and sustain desire for learning. Such attunement is essential for affective pedagogies that strive to respond, in moments, to adolescents' desires for learning. Therefore, working with Cole I attended to desire differently than I would, for example, extrinsically and intrinsically motivated learning. In affective pedagogic practice, I understood that desire:

begins from connection; life strives to preserve and enhance itself and does so by connecting with other desires. These connections and productions eventually form social wholes; when bodies connect with other bodies to enhance their power they eventually

form communities or societies.” (Colebrook, 2002 as cited in Jackson & Mazzei, 2012, p. 106)

Thus in feeling out an affective pedagogy alongside Cole, I worked to attune to his desires, to enhance his desire for literacy learning, and to understand desire *in addition to* motivation. I spent weeks listening to him and his family, sharing stories with them, living in moments with them, before we, jointly, thought to write stories, stories that became pieces of desiring machines moving toward later-now literacy experiences.

### **(Not) Representing (What is in Excess of) Data: Creative Nonfiction as Composing**

#### **Semblances**

Toward a generative subjectivity and evocation of the literacy experiences and moments I felt with Cole, I focused my narrative by identifying not units of analysis, but felt focal moments of intense, affective registers (Hollett & Ehret, in press). I use creative nonfiction as a means to gather this relationality and express semblances of feeling using literary techniques. Rather than represent “the truth,” this literary rendering of moments evokes potential truth(s). Its roots in the new journalism of the nineteen-sixties with authors such as Joan Didion, Tom Wolfe and Norman Mailer, creative nonfiction was and remains as literary genre that, in problematizing the fact/fiction dichotomy, “secure[s] a proximity to the truth” with the label of nonfiction while “simultaneously using literary techniques to encourage readers into imaginary realms of potential” (Barone, 2008, pg. 113). Like both the new journalists of the nineteen-sixties who drew portraits of “true” crime in literary novels (e.g., Truman Capote’s *In Cold Blood*), and the contemporary creative nonfiction writers who charge journalistic accounts of real world events with politics through suspenseful and empathetic literary storytelling (e.g. Dave Egger’s *Zeitoun*), social scientists have used creative nonfiction to invite scholars into their data, asking

academic readers to “construe the textual world not only as an actual one about which to learn the facts, but simultaneously as a hypothetical world that abandons the circumscribed territory of the ‘real’ and move into the vast realm of the possible” (Barone, 2008, pg. 113).

In this vein, creative nonfiction as means of research reporting and analysis has been established in arts-based education research (Barone & Eisner, 2006). However, education researchers have yet to realize the genre’s potential alignment with both non-representational epistemology and data (non) representation. Stewart (2014) experimented with research writing she called “creative non-fictional or, fictocritical” (pg. 2), crafting a series of snapshots “shot through with the road registers of rhythms, tones, and spatio-temporal orientations” in order to evoke the cultural geography of American roads as “a national macadam of living form. A live detritus that magnetizes collective dreams and historical presents ripe with rhythms and speeds” (p. 4). She argued that creative nonfiction as a critical and compositional approach enabled her to enliven the road as a critical object following “lines of the road in a scene,” like lines of desire in a literacy moment, “or on a horizon that seems to matter thought it might not be clear how or why it matters,” like the weakly linked moments of literacy across affective pedagogical encounters.

Building from Stewart’s example, I understood my writing as a composing of semblances—both of feeling in moments and of feeling moments as weakly linked. I use semblances because my linguified story does not “resemble” feeling, nor do moments “resemble” each other; rather, I espouse Massumi’s (2011) appeal to the painter Paul Klee, who thought of painting as a composing of semblances, or “making dimensions of experience that don’t appear appear nevertheless in the dynamic unity of an expressive act” (pg. 24). I wrote about moments with Cole to evoke semblances of relation both using creative nonfiction to



trouble notions of “the real” and to weakly connect moments strung through with desiring lines. This writing process allowed me to (re)realize the feelings of these moments by layering them with meaning in a genre of productive duplicity. Analysis as creative nonfiction writing—more than a composing of semblances—is in fact a thinkening of data in becoming toward a new multidimensionality of experiences and meaning not yet actualized before writing. Creative nonfiction writing in non-representational social science requires layering semblances of felt relations in order to provoke generative duplicities between truths—factual and fictional, e.g.—both in process and presentation. This is emergence as “analysis”.

I engaged in creative nonfiction writing as emergence analysis through the composition of semblances in and across moments. First, I organized the moments I identified as such in my research journal. I then decided to present moments chronologically in order to evoke the becoming of an affective pedagogy and to trouble the faltering of that pedagogy toward the end of my time with Cole. I chose to write about some moments while discarding others that I felt overlapped in (literary) theme, and I then used literary techniques (e.g., metaphor, allusion, first person narration, dialogue) as writing tools both for weakly connecting those moments to each other and for opening possible worlds for both readers and the researcher in truth-fiction duplicity. While writing, I sometimes went “back to the data,” though these “turns to the data” were modes of production not verification.

I finished with the following narrative that still feels to me like a forced languaging of emotional connections between bodies, connections that resonated affectively beyond language and in excess of experience. It felt forced and feeble even while writing, while attempting emergence as analysis through creative nonfiction writing. Remembering the first literacy moment below, for example, I thought that a framing device—my walk back to campus from

visiting Cole and his family—would help to evoke the complex felt temporalities of writing these “data”. After I introduce the framing device, I write from the perspective of being in the moment with Cole and his parents, and I describe my mind traveling there-now in imagining the story Cole and his parents tell; I describe the here-now sounds and senses of the room; I describe my own visage and posture as affecting the rhythms of storytelling. But how that multisensory, immediate, (im)material experience—that moment—bonded our bodies in storytelling is impossible to verbalize and difficult even to evoke. Writing in more of the sounds or the smells, the quick eye contact or the fleeting shivers that recognize the larger context of illness, would detract from the narrative action that works, as method of writing semblance, to evoke feeling.

Writing this moment as embedded within the frame narrative of a walk further evokes my feeling of writing, of remembering the smell of bears and honeybuns there-now in my imaginings of their stories in the moment, and here-now in my (re)feeling the data. It evokes the complicated feelings and multisensory experiences of space and time that world literacy moments. Still, the writing feels weak because for the sake of narrative action, for the sake of language, some of the complexity of embodied experience is tidied up, tightened, and temporalized within a frame.

The messiness of embodied, multisensory experience textures socio-affective relations between bodies engaged in storytelling, and even words written in creative nonfiction feel feeble and too few in evoking that mess. Further, the materialities described in order to evoke feeling are still only materialities. They feel like weak representations of the immaterialities that are, in part, my subject: the relations between bodies, the affects, the forces of desire that exceed representation. This experimental method, then, is a step toward evoking researchers’ *always*

(im)material feeling of data around literacy moments, feelings that exceed research reports, but that must, in some way, be reported. It is a small and stumbling step, but a necessary one.

### **Literacies and Pedagogies in Desiring Motions**

#### **Moment 1. Later-now Here-now: Worldings, Literacies and Laughter During**

##### **Chemotherapy**

Even looking back means desiring forward motion. This thought surfaced during a walk back to campus after visiting Cole, his mother and his father at the children’s hospital across the street. I had gotten to know Cole and his mother over the previous month, talking to them in Cole’s hospital room and in their private treatment room, where Cole received doses of chemotherapy to treat the leukemia diagnosed two months earlier. Despite the frequency of our visits and their gregarious greetings and jests—Cole joking, “Look ma, that bear didn’t get ’em this weekend”<sup>4</sup> when I walked in the Monday after a backpacking trip in the Smokies—I still felt awkward, out of place, when breaking the invisible field dividing the intimate in-here-ness of Cole’s rooms and the paradox of antiseptic cold and hospitable warmth that registers across the senses in always alert hospital hallways. Inside Cole’s rooms, the atmospheric intensity was not dissipated by my previous experiences working with oncology patients. In this instance, the atmosphere registered as a feeling, a feeling like I had less life than Cole and his parents, who I rarely felt at all infirm<sup>5</sup>. Their infectious life sparked a desiring in me toward sharing myself, my own sense of being alive—my liveness—with them, though I can’t figure a name for what that desiring toward liveness may have been. The desiring only moved.

Their stories, often of their experiences as a family in the outdoors, registered *their* liveness in me more often than anything else. While hearing their stories, I was aware of shifty tingles, of

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<sup>4</sup> All dialogue within quotation marks are exact reproductions of the original data.

<sup>5</sup> Hospital school protocol, which, at that point in our relationship, did not suggest my visiting unless they were “up for it”, may have help generate this feeling of life.

tiring laughter, of smiles filling out shared silences after laughter: I was aware of my body and the affective relations between bodies in the room. I was more aware of affects during these storytelling *moments* than in other *experiences* with them. The most common narratives we shared emerged from our shared enjoyment of the outdoors, especially around the Appalachians. When they learned that I had proposed to my wife in the Smokies backcountry during a backpacking trip, my story became both a generative touchstone for new stories and a grounding initial social bond. A desiring line of story production started as this initial social connection between us, a line eventually touching singular moments.

After Cole's initial, emergency hospitalization during which his leukemia was diagnosed, he and his family had two months at home before he was admitted for intensive treatment over the summer. During this time, they started going on more trips, especially to the national park close to where they lived. Cole's mom told me that they wanted to enjoy every moment, moments that she hoped would supply sustaining stories, generally, and for the scrapbook they had started to document Cole's cancer journey. I learned early on during the ethnography that the scrapbook is a common genre and format that child life services uses to engage children in understanding their treatment temporally from diagnosis onward.

Yet, the affective experiences of temporality sustained across storytelling moments with Cole and his family were more complex than the linear experience the journey journal represented. This complexity was informed by how Cole's parents arranged family outings, intentionally moving their bodies toward later-nows of chemo and cream-colored hospital tray dinners in here-nows of illicitly feeding honeybuns to black bears. They moved their bodies to literacy, toward generating experience for the purpose of here-now affective relations between family members and warm wildernesses that would enliven later-nows in here-now nostalgic

storytelling. Their experiences of literacy, of temporalities, was future-oriented in their desiring motions toward affective productions between family members in traveling, storytelling, being together. Caring during these literacy moments was the movement of their family experiences after Cole's diagnosis to the later-now here-now of chemotherapy, a here-now I felt in my there-now imaginings, my mental movie projecting their stories while simultaneously feeling, in their presence, their laughter, joys and avert glances toward needles and drips.

My presence in the hospital complicated some of their experiences, but sometimes deepened them as I provided an audience, modulating the rhythms of their storytelling, producing affects through laughter, grins, and empathetic-smiling exhalations of full-bodied attentiveness. These were worldings, where we knew their storytelling succeeded. We knew because it felt like a moment. Desiring lines were forces creating differences of felt connection in later-now here-nows, which were stories of past connecting experiences, experienced as connecting presents. I experienced one such moment before my walk back to campus. I felt the experience spill out into a moment, a worlding, when Cole offered important advice for hiking in the Smoky Mountains.

"Don't ever feed the bear honeybuns," he told me looking to the ceiling with his grin, coyly avoiding eye contact while his ironic quip settled in. His eyes movement was an eddy in the conversational flow that allowed humor to register. And, it took a few phases of relation-qualification for me to feel the humor, slow as I was to enter their shared experience.

"A bear honey...oh, don't feed a bear...wait did you feed a bear honeybuns?" I said nervously, though irrationally since bears had clearly abstained from eating Cole—feeling came first in my response, and before I could think it through Cole's mom giggled knowingly,

"Uhhh..." she continued to chuckle.

“No, my daddy did it,” Cole spurted quickly with pride.

“He still has his hands and everything?,” I replied now feeling that the story was unfolding closer to slapstick than slapping hungry bears away with sticks.

“There was a mama and three babies down from us and Cole’s daddy started throwing the honeybuns”

Cole quickly intoned in his father’s voice, “He said ‘I’m gonna get me a baby’.”

The pace of their story quickened and they parried back and forth.

“And his daddy started to make a trail to the truck, and then a car came and I was like oh god, and they were like that bear looks hungry”

“And she was in the back of the truck doing this with the picnic table,” Cole moved as if frightfully hiding underneath a flat surface.

“And I mean it was neat but he shouldn’t have done it.”

“Yeah, I bet the park rangers would get pretty mad about it.” I said this and then feared I had thrown a wet blanket over their sparking humor, but Cole refueled the moment.

“They was smacking that ground, ready to come after us” Cole’s left hand a paw clapping flatly against his bed on which he sat upright, his left arm motionless, veins visible, needle partially obscured, hand clenched.

“The other two kids jumped in the back window, but Cole was like ‘[whispers shit...or more like shhhhhhit in a prolonged whisper] I’m too fat ’ta fit through there”

“He was gonna have me for supper. But I got in that door *real* fast”

Cole’s rendering of the story alone affected vaudevillian theatricality, although the there-now experience of the story was enough to make me feel the rhythms of a comedic scene. For me, the moment was simultaneously here-now—in conversation—there-now—in my comedic

mental movie—both experiences charging an always about to burst anticipation of laughter, of—. For Cole, temporalities affectively collapsed in desiring motion toward the production of feeling while receiving chemotherapy. His full-bodied affection of (for) his mom, his dad, the mama bear, and of (for) himself running toward the truck door was a there-now experience of affective relation—his body evincing being there-now here-now in his storytelling. Cole’s was an unselfconscious motion toward enlivening the moment both for his audience—mainly me—and toward bringing the feeling of the past forward for himself and his mother.

In our moment, I felt their later-now as relations between parents and son moving themselves forward toward a future less certain than those of many families not living with a life-threatening illness. I helped to bring this literacy moment into being as an audience for their story, but as the moment fizzled toward experience-only I felt that this was a moment for them that was linked to other moments in the chemo suite in my absence: moments only parents and children can know, moments intensifying relations between their bodies in desiring motion toward unfinished futures.

Still, from what I could know as a foreign body, Cole felt alive here-now there-now in his body feeling his mother-father-bear-honeybun-truck window moment anew in a simultaneous *this-that* moment. Desiring lines merged, and branched off: lines moved from Cole and his family’s moment with the bear to the moment in the chemo-room; they merged with my shared experience of the chemo-room moment; they branched outward toward later-nows of storytelling with Cole’s family, nurses, any-*we’s* feeling the story in shared experiences; and they moved toward my pedagogical experiences with Cole in later-now writing sessions, video production, conversations, hanging out. Felt in later-nows, these desiring lines moved bodies in the production of the quality of lifeness: literacies enlivening experiences in affective relations.

But stories can also take bodies places they don't want to go, and desiring lines don't always move bodies toward comfortable productions. About a month after that walk home, a community institution<sup>6</sup> legally barred Cole's parents from visiting him outside of prescribed hours, and his grandmother assumed formal responsibility for his care. After Cole's mother and father were no longer allowed to visit him in the hospital, these stories felt different, often awkward as a result of his parents' absent presence in their telling. I felt the there-now moments in chemo suites that I had imagined between Cole and his parents but to which I was not privy, desiring lines taking me there-now somewhere I did not want to go here-now in their absent presence.

But we also still laughed when riffing on Cole's favorite scene: not being able to fit through the truck window while escaping the honeybun chasing black bear. We tried to bring his Grannie into the experiences, but they never really felt like something, like a moment. The dimming of affective intensity when we tried to bring his Grannie into the now even more temporally textured storytelling felt like a desiring toward *something* that had been—an unrealized later-now flitting past us on a desiring line from the bear-honeybun-truck-window storytelling moment with his parents. It wasn't that the story had lost its affect: it never *had* affect. The experience of storytelling while Cole received chemotherapy *was* the affecting relations between our bodies, how our bodies moved there-now in a moving here-now. The intense here-now of receiving treatment intensified the storytelling—the almost unacknowledged treatment an undercurrent affecting desiring toward an uncertain future between parents and son, which in turn intensified affective relations between our human bodies and the mechanical bodies of beeping IV pumps.

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<sup>6</sup> Respecting Cole and his family, I wish not to disclose information related to this situation.



Perhaps the absence of bodies present both in the original experience of bears and honeybuns, and in the experience of laughter during chemo dampened the affects with Grannie. Perhaps the place of the hospital room in contrast to the chemo suite was different in intensity, in atmosphere, generated a different in-place-affect. Perhaps the vulnerability of the first few rounds of chemotherapy charged the atmospheres toward worldings, or perhaps nostalgia's force forward was simply not as strong when his mother and father were not there to intensify the feeling.

The perhaps-es accumulate toward myself here-now, and outward toward the fears and self-consciousness of being a researcher in affectively charged spaces. They accumulate in fears and uncertainties around intruding within spaces where I don't belong, and around never fully being able to know what I am there to know. Perhaps, they were moments for Cole and not for me because I took myself out of *something*, thinking as a researcher more than feeling as a body. I hope, I really hope here-now in writing this, that my being a researcher didn't preclude our being together in moments.

Still, as I finished my walk back to campus—unwillingly tasting honey-buns and smelling bears—my thinking moved from nostalgia as forward motion to how I would describe the complicated feeling of temporalities in affectively charged literacy moments. Temporalities as they are *lived* and *felt* in the present are more than present tense. Desiring lines bring later-nows here-now, sometimes in nostalgic affective relations. These relations bond bodies. The present moves toward a tighter feeling future, as if wrapped in the blanket of story. Nostalgia is not a looking back in a desiring *for* reaffection in the present. Life is always in the middle of things always moving on: even looking back means desiring forward motion. The present is never just the present. I felt a palimpsestic present of nownesses in flux during the first bears-eating-

honeybuns moment with Cole and his mom. It was a worlding, an awareness of being in a moment where our bodies felt warmed and warming, those feelings of warmth constantly qualified as novel experiences of care.

## **Moment 2. Stories are Desire-stuck Bracelets Moving to Surgery, Moving-Somewhere**

I used Cole’s desiring stories as a way to engage him in digital storytelling. Because he had trouble developing structured narratives—something I noticed and something his IEP documented—we developed an interviewing strategy using the iPad on which we were to make our digital videos. Cole would choose a subject for his story, his recent trip to the zoo, for example, and I played interviewer, drawing out details. We would then watch his story, write down what we thought were the best bits, and generate a storyboard. After completing our first storyboard Cole decided that he didn’t like his story idea anymore. Fidgeting with his numerous rubber bracelets [Figure 10], he started talking about where each one came from and why he “oughtta keep up with them.” I was disappointed—annoyed—concerned—deflated—interested in his bracelet stories. We had spent over a week working through the first storyboard, and I, selfishly, wanted to show the hospital school staff that we were making progress. I wanted to give them something to grade and send back to Cole’s school. I wanted to be a successful “teacher,” as “teacher” fit the model of English teaching I had come to know in my high school teaching career.



*Figure 10.* Cole feeling his rubber bracelet.

But as Cole pinched the rubber on a bracelet, I felt my muddle of feelings and qualified the experience as one in which, attuning to Cole's desires for telling, for making, for using and developing his literacies, I had to let go of my *a priori* teacher sensibilities and follow *him*, the affects of his desiring, the desiring lines. I picked up the iPad and started interviewing him, asking him, in his words, why he held onto the bracelets. The story that emerged was unexpected and came up multiple times thereafter, often during silences when I was just visiting him, Cole on his bed or standing in the doorway, feeling in the invisible field between room and hospital hallway, rolling the bracelets along his forearm. More than a story, though, what emerged was a moment in which I first felt a bracelet attracting electric desiring for strength, friendship and life in forward motion, a desiring rod for striking desiring lines.

Tapping it with his finger, Cole said, "This one is Kayla's Troopers bracelet."

"Where did you meet Kayla?" I asked having yet to hear about her.

"In the, uh, 12 pod when she went to surgery. She had tongue cancer." Cole grabbed his tongue as if briefly feeling the barbarian bumps, "She named it Steve," he said of the cancerous growths.

Feeling nothing qualified but some sort of emotional potency begging to saturate and envelop the experience, I let out a somewhat meaningless, "Ahhh."

"And so, she like named it. And she like was going to surgery that day. So she wanted to meet me. You know like go to the teen room together and watch movies."

"Cool!" Wanting to connect with him, be cool myself, anticipating there-now what movies they may have watched so I could blurt them out, and he might feel yeah this guy gets it, he might want to write more, keep moving toward a cool finished prod—

"So we did, we was going to, but March 23 she passed away."

“Uh huh,” the moment coalesced. I felt my stomach sink, my body move toward Cole, though I remained motionless, my body and voice responding awkwardly, empathetically, my there-now body inattentive to Cole, going away to my experiences of death, how little experience I had with it, what I would say to him, how I would connect now, how it is more difficult to feel death in this emerging story for our digital project than kids watching movies in the te—

“But when she went to surgery the 23<sup>rd</sup> I gave her a bracelet says Faith,” he said showing me the shamrock green Faith bracelet on his other arm.

“Really, like that one right there?” I said zooming in on the bracelet, there-now trying to piece together the complicate chronology of Cole’s telling. When did he meet her? When did she go to surgery, when did she pa—

“Yeah, I got one too, so we keep up with it, and so we keep up with her mom and dad and family.”

The narrative chronology didn’t matter. I was thinking, again, like a composition teacher rather than feeling like Cole’s jointly desiring literacy body. Temporalities were collapsing in here-now desiring motions. I fumbled along, trying to feel and follow Cole, but Cole desired along toward telling as a form of textual and affective production that was not concerned as much with making me understand as it was making him-me feel *something* together here-now. My mistake, my awkwardness, was trying to feel Cole’s experiences as if they were my own, trying to connect with a feeling body to which I did not have access. When I started, naturally, unconsciously, feeling with him, alongside him, the desiring machine pushed forward more smoothly, the moment intensified. I allowed myself to just feel the story he was telling me and not to go there-now into a forced empathy of *thinking* how Cole *must* feel. Listening to his story about Kayla, hearing a toddler crying in the next room, glancing at tape peeling off his arm, the

needle it clung to loosening from his vein, my feeling of space and time thickened, was haptic, charged. My mind wandering there-now in a new direction, I wondered if he felt Kayla in her here-now thereness wearing his bracelet, the same one she wore to surgery. I felt that the bracelet was important for him to keep up with because it was sticky with desiring, and the desiring was inextricable from the feeling of her. The feeling, mattering bracelet, the stories, the affective relations between teller and hearing all coming to matter in this literacy moment, all immanent to the experience of feeling Kayla. The bracelets mattered because they were desire-stuck mattering potentials that illicit literacies in moments that Cole *felt* right, *felt* discomfort, *felt* longing, *felt* lifeness, *felt* Kayla.

In Cole's emerging story desire-stuck bracelets moved to surgery with Cole's friend, but they also move us (and her to us) together in her somewhere-ness of death here-now. We can only imagine, as bodies, that nowhere is a material somewhere. Desiring motions toward her somewhere-ness in death sticks with us and the bracelet, storying and worlding her presence in this literacy moment. She is felt in a story-arm-bracelt-hospitalroomsounds assemblage. From this moment, desiring-lines emanate toward a later-now of comforting confidence in the togetherness of affective intensities producing feeling and bouncing between friends, between Cole-(Friend's name), and Cole-everyonewhohasheardhistoryoverthebraclet whenever Cole looks down at, feels, and fiddles with his bracelet. Cole's literacy moments with the desire-stuck bracelet move all these bodies, generate intensities, propel Cole toward a less--if just a little less--fearful unfinished future with cancer and (a desiring) beyond. Fearful being a fitful adjective for a multiplicity of nebulous passions affected by a somewhere too often felt here-now. How matter—a bracelet—comes to matter, is in part an affect of literacy moments: Time and space are haptic dimensions of mattering charged by desiring literacies moving bodies through

unfinished worlds. Literacy, in this instance, is not a pencil making words on paper, but the feeling of a rubber bracelet affecting words that feel like Kayla, and that affect uncertain feelings.

This literacy moment felt somehow like the moments of laughter during chemotherapy, but not really. The feeling of temporalities was similar but the space felt different, heavy with bodies, mainly Kayla's, and different than the vaudevillian there-nows of my honeybun smacking-bears-imaginings. Bodies were moving, but so were non-bodies, non-matter—Kayla moving to us mattered most of all. This moment also felt different because I struggled through how to feel out my role as a teacher attempting to attune to moments, to desiring. I had to feel through my inapposite adult fear that we wouldn't have a product, a digital story, thus not only fighting my habituated teacher-identity, but my entrenched teacher-feelings. Attuning in the moment, following the desiring of bracelet-Cole-Kayla-me-as-bodies in motion toward *something*, *somewhere*, was a composition of desire. It was affective pedagogy weakly linked to laughter during chemotherapy, weakly emerging from Cole and I's more deeply resonate attunings.

### **Moment 3. Desiring-writing to Move**

Still, the digital stories never really worked out. Cole wanted “just to write” he eventually said. And together we wrote the longest compositions Cole had ever produced. The first brought here-now his family trip to the zoo, another of his favorite stories. The last recounted his journey with cancer, the word “journey” borrowed from the journal genre in which social workers engaged him. When he felt he was finished writing the story in pencil, we wanted to type it and show it to his healthcare team. Soon after, his pediatrician made a bulletin board in the teen room to display patient writing, and, to Cole's delight, he stapled a copy of Cole's story in the center under dye-cut letters that crowned him “feature writer.” Cole wrote all of his compositions

bouncing between a small spiral-topped Atlanta Falcons notebook I gave him, which he used for notes, jottings and ideas, and a large, bound and black composition notebook, which he used for recording more polished drafts. The distinction between the purpose of the journals for varied content was as important as the distinction between how their size affected motility—the journals’ lifenesses as, in part, their portability, speaking the there-now of potential movement.

Cole often wrote his “ideas,” or notes for his longer stories, in varied spots on different floors of the hospital, sneaking out of his room against the rules and getting him (and me) in trouble.

“I hate that I don’t get Pepsi cause that just have Coke,” Cole often exhaled in exasperation, “But that Wawa down the road has got it.”

Cole was not the only patient undergoing prolonged hospitalization to escape what at times felt like a confining space, especially to get a Pepsi. Yet, most of the time, such movement was prohibited. As in school, adults must account for children’s whereabouts, and in the hospital the need to protect, for example, contagious or immunosuppressed patients is paramount. The emotional experience of social, spatial and bodily containment sometimes, then, generates a desiring toward forms of movement counter to those that are institutionally sanctioned.

Cole’s affective countermobilities took him sneakily through the hospital to write in his Falcons notebook. When I visited, we reviewed his notes and talked about how to piece them together into prose. Early on I noticed what I thought was evidence of Cole’s continued struggle with chronology and narrative structure. My sense of an essay, especially the one we had together decided would chronicle Cole’s journey with cancer, was a linear narrative from diagnosis onward, like his journey journal. The journey journal cataloged, importantly, his chronological journey; it represented, in pictures and craft supplies, his linear movement of

treatment for cancer. As much as this journal meant to him, and as effective as it was as a healthcare tool, it wasn't this sense of temporality that was most affective for Cole. The there-nows of affective memory, of desiring-writing, are not chronological: there are here-now becoming memories producing affects. Each memory of a *moment* became a paragraph, the weak connections between which provided flow, not transitional phrases and clear chronologies. All of them singular here-now moments in later-now becoming paragraphs from Cole's jottings around the hospital. All of them were moments strung through with desiring lines from their inception to Cole's telling of them to me, to his prose essay. All of them,

“I'm gonna write about that helicopter to the hospital. Have you seen the launchpad where they fly outta?”

And then the next tutoring session,

“They had to start my chemo by mouth cause I got a rash by it. Wanna see the picture of the rash. It's in my journal.”

And then the next tutoring session,

“I threw up every time I moved, like this one time especially...”

And then the next tutoring session,

“I'd told'em all that I'm gonna kick cancer's butt like a football and they all laughed cause it was something.”

And then the next tutoring session,

“I was really sick that one time and they thought I might was gonna die and they was all around my bed.”

And then, Cole had difficulty describing the complex spatial arrangement of bodies in motion around his bed, a moment he experienced while critically ill, lying half-conscious in his hospital



bed. I urged Cole to draw the scene thinking that the drawing would work similarly to the interviewing strategy I had employed with the iPad. Cole drew the image in the place of a paragraph [Figure 11], and moved on to the next moment as if the drawing would suffice. The literacy moment coalesced when I asked Cole whether he wanted to go back and write about his drawing. I, an English teacher, again felt that this was a teachable moment, a moment in which we could address his struggles with writing. But it became a literacy moment, a moment that felt like something, when, looking over the picture Cole told me, for the first time, about his Aunt Emily.

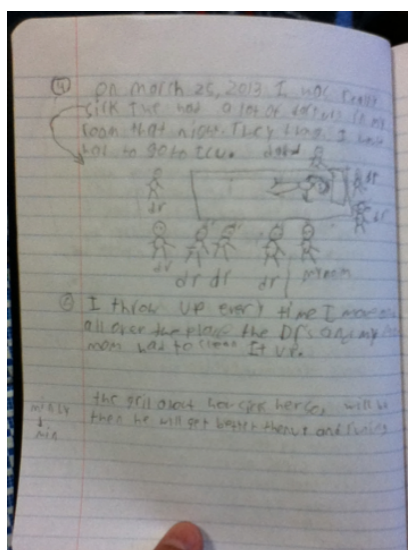


Figure 11. Cole’s drawing of doctors and his parents surround his bed.

Cole’s aunt was three years older than him and admitted to Children’s Hospital for cancer treatment only one day after Cole. Her treatment was not progressing as successfully as Cole’s resulting in her loss of the ability to speak and in her placement in intensive care during the time Cole and I were writing his journey essay.

“She’s like my best friend, you know? Since I am the one she listens to most and I know what she’s sayin when no one else don’t,” Cole sounding proud of his connection to his aunt, “We have a special relationship. Once we was swimming on a camping trip and she didn’t want

to get in the water and they all was like ‘Get in there it’s fun’ and all. But she would only get in swimming once I was. I was the only one could get’er in there.’”

As the story flowed, I moved on with Cole to write a new essay, one that would move his body to his aunt.

“We just read to her a lot now and watch the TV with her. Hey, I’m gonna write this about my aunt,” Cole said as he shook his head from side to side as if to chase his widening grin as he bent over the table to start writing again.

“About your aunt...your cancer journey essay?” As soon as the words left my mouth, I felt the moment and let go.

Letting go, I felt our bodies move in desiring and pedagogic relations. I felt Cole’s anxiety in relation to being in bed surrounded by doctors and his parents, who were again absently present to us there-now in his story, there-now in laughing-storytelling in the chemo suite, there-. Cole, perhaps, felt my anxiety about the struggles he was having in writing this scene or the lingering anxiety around his illicit movements around the hospital of which I was implicitly approving. We jointly produced a desiring motion toward a story about his aunt, another productive countermobility away from structured literacy pedagogies and toward affect. But this countermobility was more affectively complex: my feeling nervous about teasing out the story of his near-death experience, and of this bringing his parents into an even more complex affective relation of absent presence that, as an English teacher, I was not trained to handle. Bringing us to his aunt there-now in storytelling and writing, later-now in reading at her bedside, Cole actualized the affective intensities of his own being near death. His aunt, now similarly ill, provided a parallel experience in which we could address similar affects in writing. More importantly, though, we could bring family close again, as if writing for and to—indeed, taking

his body to—his aunt was affected by the stick-figure presence of his parents on the page—as if affected also by drawing his parallel experience.

This literacy moment felt like *something* because I was in a desiring pedagogic relation to Cole, wherein I moved with him in writing that would move him there-now to his aunt in composing a story, and later-now to her bedside to read it [Appendix 2]. Cole was attuned to the affects of storytelling—his there-nows of nostalgic forward motion, and our here-nows of sharing story affects. We were attuned to desiring lines, not to artificially imposed beginnings and endings of textual production: the text-making produced affect not the finished text. Desiring to use the story to move his body toward his aunt here-now in his sharing her story with me and later-now in taking it to read to her, we followed an affective pedagogy of desiring-writing to move, not a pedagogy bound by textual completion for textual completion's sake. We didn't avoid complexity—the complex spatial narration of his hospital bed scene. We engaged a new affective complexity of how to express his relationship with his aunt, continuing to write, writing to continue feeling. We followed the affects not the composition book lines.

Across compositions, Cole's was a desiring-writing to move: sneaking away from his room, and getting out of closing-in space to opening-out spaces of there-now writing imaginings, here-now perched on the auditorium, which he adored for the programming often put on there, especially visits from zoo animals. It was a desiring-writing to move figuratively there-now in imaginings of his own trip to the zoo, fishing with his aunt, taking me there-now with him. It was a desiring-writing to move himself to his aunt, to move them both closer to each other. It was a desiring-writing to move closer to an always unfinished, affective future that could not be predetermined or presaged by my years of training as an English teacher and literacy scholar. It was a desiring-writing to move forward toward a future more intensely felt, lived. The clanking

desiring machine when he could not write the spatially difficult arrangement of doctors around his bed was a clanking, clacking, sputtering of desire moving toward a new affective composition about his aunt: it was an affectively productive breakdown. Cole did not miss a moment to learn, we wisely moved the moment toward a more affective one: taking his voice aloud and in prose to his aunt. This was a literacy moment that, if *viewed* as a teachable moment, might not have been *felt*. Seeing and thinking the moment is not enough to spark some desiring literacies that are better, often only, felt.

### **Literacy Moments Weakly Connected**

These three moments were embedded within a larger felt temporality, a larger moment of extended pedagogic relations strung through with desiring motions: temporal, physical, and imaginative. The moments felt like *something* together because of this feeling of motion weakly linking them. They were literacy moments that felt connected by desiring motions across an affective pedagogy. They were moments unfelt by representational, d/Discourse, or linguistic frameworks, and feeling these moments, following their desiring lines, allowed me, as a teacher, to unframe my pedagogic orientation to finished products, to texts for text's sake, to writing seated at a desk or table, to needing to innovate with *something* digital. This is not an apology for affective pedagogic relations *only*. That would be the same mistake as *only* understanding literacies through representational portraits. This is my apology for not coming to know literacy moments sooner, for the desiring lines unstated, the literacy learning that didn't take place. The desiring lines from Cole's moments, from my moments with Cole, move outward to unframe framed portraits of literacy in the service of desiring-literacy learning.

### **Discussion: Attuning to Feeling in Literacy Research and Pedagogies**

Cole's literacy experiences inspire new questions for attending to literacy learning as phenomena of bodies moving along desiring lines unbound by texts and practices, for attending to literacy moments as they are lived and felt. Where and how do adolescent's desires move bodies in and outward from literacy experiences? How do desires affect worldings in literacy moments replete with passions from boredom to joy, replete, even, with boredom-joy? How can teachers attune to literacy experiences in the service of moment production *in addition to* textual production, and how could such attunement work in the service of sustaining and generating desires in learners wise with the experiences of lived bodies? From this perspective, learners move along desiring lines—along paths of impassioned (and dispassionate) production—toward always unfinished learning futures, and not toward the next grade(card). What compels forward motion in students' literacies along these passionate paths? Here, the question is not (always) *what* motivates, but *how* do feelings propel bodies along passionate paths dotted with moments connected by desiring lines. These moments might be a teacher and student writing there-now experiences of a critically-ill aunt, moving toward a later-now of reading the story in affective, social relations at her bedside. Along such lines, learning takes on the sense, the feeling, of life.

Three feelings arise most intensely from the creative nonfiction produced in my becoming reflection on literacy moments with Cole, moments embedded within our sustained pedagogic moment together: feelings about (1) research, (2) the nature of literacy, and (3) affective pedagogies. First, coming to know literacy more fully requires (nonrepresentational) weak *and* (representational) strong theories, not as dichotomized epistemologies but as inquiring duplicity within and across investigations of literacies in use. Although in this article I focused my inquiry on feeling out the weak emanations of literacy moments threatening to hold together,

to be *something*, I have done so hoping to generate feeling-thinking in literacy studies on the side of nonrepresentation. This feeling-thinking is an attunement to the often neglected affective textures of social life. As Stewart (2007) put it, this “is an experiment, not a judgment” (p. 1). Nonjudgmental experimentation is necessary both for literacy studies to advance toward a fuller understanding of literacies as they are lived and felt by human bodies, and for feeling out methods that align with affective research questions and theories. I argue for a speculative line of inquiry in literacy studies, to feel out the affects that are in excess of the moments researchers often feel themselves in—a speculative line of inquiry to sense the shimmers in what flits through representationalism’s prefab netting.

Literacy researchers must continue to assess the taken for granted paths of representation and text-centeredness that may obstruct movement along the desiring lines of nonrepresentation. Following desiring lines requires “a kind of attending to the textures and rhythms of forms of living as they are being composed and suffered in social and cultural poesis” (Stewart, 2008, pg. 71). Communicating these textures and rhythms in academia requires attuning to our own fears as literacy researchers. Bodies *always* make felt-sense, *always* feel-think: there is not one without the other. And yet, so often scholarly writing about literacy proceeds as if by academic and paradigmatic reflex, positing claims in terms of “I think” or “I argue”, as if “I feel” or “maybe” were too weak, antithetical to the scholarly enterprise. Traditional academic truth-telling in literacy research risks paring away the feeling of things. I feel though, and have felt through this article, that it is just this weakness that will strengthen researchers understanding of literacy, and teachers’ continued cultivation of rich literacy experiences. What moves a body here-now returns in the movement of thought in later-now research writing. Research writing as emergence analysis requires attunement to feeling in here-nows of affective relations with

participants and in later-now here-nows of academic expressivity, whether writing, presenting, teaching, or creating products communicative of affective experience.

Desiring methods come to know experience anew in thickening, becoming with, and feeling the difference that creative output affects in the process of working with “data.” They desire toward the production of difference both for the researcher and for the academic reader. They evoke duplicity in and- relations, e.g., fact-fiction, word-image, that open up new realms of truth that do not aspire to representation of things as they were. Emergence analysis messes up the data in respect of the mess that is every human experience and encounter—bodies, things, dust, grit, noise, color, still-tasting-lunch, smelling the street on my clothes, why didn’t I go to bed earlier, tonight, tomorrow, later, regret. Thus, warranting claims in emergence analysis requires not proving truth, but nuanced and thoughtful description of the *degree* and *kind* of truth presented. To what degree is my creative nonfiction true to my experiences with Cole? The genre provides greater access to my feeling of being with him (both for myself in writing and for readers in being affected) than more traditional qualitative codification of embodied experience seen so often in representational literacy research.

As a researcher, this attunement enabled my coming to know the nature of literacy moments with Cole as affectively textured experiences of time and space. These moments were textured with feelings felt through desiring motions that were temporal, physical, imaginative, and affective. Previous nonrepresentational portraits of literacy have stayed in the present tense, but, as my experiences with Cole evince, there is more present to life than only the present. As emergence concepts, later-now, here-now, and there-now add texture to evocations of social moments in writing, and they help researchers and teachers stay attuned to feeling as it emerges in phases of relational-qualitative duplicity, from moment to moment. These temporal textures

evinced the nature of literacy as, in part, a vehicle for intensifying experience by taking bodies there-now, later-now, or simply by charging here-nows in moments of affective relation. Further, literacies move bodies in desiring motions beyond temporal dimensions, e.g., physically—to his aunt’s bedside— imaginatively—in nostalgic forward motion, or in bringing Kayla to feeling. Researchers and teachers attuning to affect in literacy moments might ask: How and where can literacy moments move bodies?

Lastly, affective pedagogies require attunement to moments, but special attunement to our own constructed emotions as teachers. As my narrative evinced, I often failed with Cole and more often came close in failing to follow desires that felt so foreign, so intense, so culturally, institutionally and socially complex and different from my own experiences. It felt risky as a teacher to follow his desiring lines for literacy, and following them challenged my conceptions of what it means to teach just as it challenged my conceptions of the nature of literacy, of how human bodies engaged in literacy can feel. Research has shown that children need risky play to develop resilience (Frost, Wortham, & Reifel, 2008). What if teachers need emotionally risky experiences to develop not just resilience but affectively attuned pedagogies? How might emotionally risky experiences be involved in literacy teacher education such that teachers become better attuned to phases of relational-qualitative duplicity in the becoming of experiences and moments with students? How might this attunement contribute to the movement of bodies toward more affective pedagogies? Attuning to feeling in research feels risky because academia has constructed the risk. Attuning to feeling in practice, however, feels risky because the stakes—students’ desiring motions with literacies— are at stake. Both are risks worth taking as literacy research continues to deviate from desire paths.



### **Conclusion: Toward Difference in Literacy Research**

A common, if thin and waning, critique often emerges in response to nonrepresentational research: From where does experience emerge? What about the history, culture, and intergenerational knowledge that informs the desiring of human bodies (see e.g., Tuck, 2010)? As I have shown, however, emergence perspectives enliven history, culture and experience evincing their flows forward from human bodies producing difference in creativity and expressivity. This is the nature of literacies in use *as they are lived* in moments: to affect and be affected in and across experiences feel like more than they are, experiences that are sometimes weakly connected to each other, strung through with desiring lines. Cole used his literacies wisely, informed by his embodied experience of living with cancer: to move forward in nostalgic looking back; to move his mom, his dad, his aunt; to be moved in melancholy relations with his grandma, his experiences near death, and his friend, Kayla. These were desiring motions *forward*, the emergence of lives always in motion and producing experience anew along unexpected, unpredictable lines: This is life as it emerges from bodies wise with the individual experiences of having lived in social and cultural relations. This was liveness I as came to know it while mentoring Cole along the desiring lines of using his literacies, and I am affected, different for following those lines. I am not changed, that would be too strong a word for the feeling of difference I feel. I am the same person, but am differently attuned to literacy experiences, to life. The feeling of temporality in emergent literacy experiences does not exclude the past, it doesn't change it—that would be too strong a representation. Nownesses are not devoid of past experiences; they are replete with memory moving forward in unfinished lives that produce, experience by experience, difference. For literacies, this means, sometimes, following desires toward textual production in the service of affecting bodies: producing a

feeling of difference from engagement with and around texts. Affective ways of knowing and teaching literacies produce difference at time when change has become a tired word.

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